

Foodservice Updates

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Where are your relief valves?

Just when Covid-19 was becoming more manageable for restaurants, the war in Ukraine is intensifying inflationary pressures on everything from wages to food supplies to equipment. No doubt, these are trying times for operators – and economists expect them to continue into next year. But these times can also provide opportunities to fix operational processes that have long needed attention and can no longer be ignored. As Keith Anderkin, chief supply chain officer for the fast-casual chicken chain Zaxby's, recently said in a podcast for Restaurant Business, "never waste a good crisis." Imagine how your business will be in a position to thrive in better times if you can get a handle on any weak points now. So what might you do to ensure you're operating as efficiently as you can? Fine-tune your communication with your marketing team so you're able to adjust your calendar of promotions in sync with your changing supply. That may mean focusing more on core menu items that are easier to source, then weaving in limited-time offers as needed to ease the pressure when supplies become scarce. Or it could mean strengthening your pipeline of menu items in development so you have a deeper bench to lean on when a key player isn't available. You might assess your current and future equipment needs and find out where a substitute piece of equipment may be acceptable – and get a jump on ordering something that is critical but comes with a long waiting period. It may mean taking a closer look at your labor and identifying how to ensure you're using it wisely in both front-of-house and back-of-house tasks. It's rare to be operating at a time when so many challenges are colliding. Making sure you're in close connection with all areas of your operation can help you understand any areas where you might find some relief.



Step up your cross-sell tech

Using data to make menu recommendations to guests is now a given – but the restaurants taking best advantage of it are digging deeper than simply suggesting fries with a burger. According to a recent report from Fast Casual, restaurants can leave valuable opportunities on the table if they don't use their data to cross-sell a wider assortment of items. For example, can your technology stack analyze the most-popular accompanying items ordered with a dish by your local/regional/national guests and then make tailored recommendations reflecting real-time data? Prompting a guest with a special beverage, appetizer or dessert – based on tried-and-true data on guest preferences – may help you connect guests with new favorite add-ons.



Is cryptocurrency in your future?

Cryptocurrency has been generating a lot of restaurant news headlines lately as more brands test accepting the decentralized digital currency for payment, as a franchisee fee, or (as in the case of Shake Shack) offering it as a reward for customers. But is this a fad – or the start of something big? At the moment, there are signs that its appeal may wane – President Biden issued an executive order calling for the government to assess the risks and benefits of cryptocurrency, which could mean increased regulation isn't far behind. Technomic research has found that only 1 percent currently accept payment in cryptocurrency and 4 percent anticipate doing so in the next couple of years, so it's difficult to see this offering going mainstream in restaurants anytime in the near future.





Brauhaus Pretzel™ topped with Sun Dried Tomato & Aged Pepper Jack

Ingredients:

5 oz. Brauhaus Pretzel™ 2-3 pretzels
Aged pepper jack cheese
Sun dried tomatoes

Time for a snack

For many Americans, mealtime has increasingly become snack time. According to a Harris Poll conducted last year, 70 percent of millennials say they prefer snacks to meals. Further, industry research indicates that a large percentage of Americans replace one meal each week with a snack – and some eat no formal meals at all. This means there’s room for expansion on your snack and appetizer menu. As the pandemic has shifted people’s eating patterns, could any of your offerings serve as mini meals for guests who aren’t eating as many entrées?

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350F.
2. Place thawed pretzel on baking sheet
3. Cover Pretzel with Sun Dried tomatoes and aged pepper jack cheese
4. Bake for 8 minutes and 30 seconds.
5. Place pretzels on a plate or board
6. Pair with your choice of mustard

Recipe and photo courtesy of J&J Snacks



Is your equipment okay?

Ongoing supply chain problems mean that replacing a piece of equipment or a needed part could easily take months. In the interest of both food safety and the safety of your employees, take stock of what you need to do to keep your key equipment running as it should. A study from NSF International found that 27 percent of quick-service operations switch off machinery because of a lack of expertise or time to get to the root of a problem, and 10 percent of quick-service managers admitted to skipping automatic cleaning cycles and ignoring error messages on equipment. Now is an important time to get to know how to best maintain your equipment and ensure your employees feel safe in promptly reporting when something isn't working properly.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Help your staff be TCS-aware

Warmer temperatures outdoors mean your equipment will be working harder to keep foods at the proper temperatures. Make sure your staff takes extra care with Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods, which are most vulnerable to pathogens. That includes meat, eggs, seafood, dairy, cooked vegetables, protein-rich plants, rice/pasta/potato dishes, raw sprouts, cut leafy greens, sliced melon and tomatoes, and cut garlic in oil. Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot by maintaining cold food at a temperature of 41°F or below and hot food at 135°F or above.



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Yet again, find creative ways to adapt

New research from Credit Suisse found that limited-service chains are charging an average of 20 percent more for third-party delivery. At a time when restaurant operators are especially cognizant of the limits of what consumers are willing to spend, that figure could well be over the line. While it's no surprise that delivery costs would surge amid steeply increasing costs for gasoline, along with other items needed to run a business, it means restaurant operators will, yet again, need to be creative about getting food to consumers. After all, the same surging fuel costs that are increasing delivery prices could also keep consumers off the roads. Is there an area of your business that might help you better manage rising costs – or make an off-premise meal more worthwhile? This is all happening at a time when people are especially eager to gather – and are finally feeling a bit safer in doing that – so could you focus on catering for offices that are bringing their employees back together more regularly, or for weekend picnics now that the weather is getting nicer? Could you participate in food festivals or bring a food truck to office parks or city centers where you have a steady stream of traffic on foot? Could you organize a single drop-off of food orders for companies with large numbers of employees onsite? Consumers are still eager to have restaurant food. The economic situation being exacerbated by the war in Ukraine just means restaurant operators will have to use their ability (well-honed during the pandemic) to quickly adapt to new challenges.



Team Four/Value 4 provides customized Supply Chain Solutions and Business Consultancy to the foodservice owners and operators throughout the United States. To find out how we can help your business save money contact us at:

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