

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [What local organizations complement yours?](#) | [Ice that's twice as nice](#) | [Responding responsibly to a safety concern](#) | [Prepare your business for outdoor service](#) | [Don't miss a chance to upsell or cross-sell](#) | [Offer a virtual experience](#)

Video made the restaurant star

There is just something about online videos that make a person engage. A study from Animoto found that Facebook videos generate 10 times more comments than other kinds of posts. A separate study found that Instagram videos receive 38 percent more engagement than image posts. (This likely explains why Instagram, which originated as a place to share photos, has somewhat controversially been trying to reinvent itself as a video platform in recent years.) And every platform wants to be TikTok right now for its ability to motivate people to not only watch entertaining content but also share it with friends. Video should be a key part of your marketing strategy because it can help you build stronger connections between the people who prepare your food and those who enjoy eating it. And they can be very brief – Animoto suggests small businesses post a good number of videos that are 15 seconds in length – with a hook within the first few seconds. Consider the talents on your team and how you can showcase them in ways that connect with people. Have a creative chef? Have him share his favorite cooking hacks, or interesting takes on how to work with a food item in different ways (the #TortillaTrend on TikTok is one example). Do you have a dish that can be customized in dozens of ways? Share some diverse examples – or better yet, ask your viewers to vote for their favorite or share their own concoction. Do you plate your dishes in visually striking ways? Create a contest in which you challenge your viewers to share their own outrageous platings. Who knows? You might just become a viral sensation and give your restaurant a valuable boost in traffic.



Don't miss a chance to upsell or cross-sell

In addition to helping you staff your business and prepare orders more efficiently, restaurant technology can help you ensure you're not leaving any potential sales on the table. Digital menus, mobile apps, loyalty programs, and systems for tabletop ordering and payment all provide opportunities for you to suggest menu add-ons to complement a dish, or prompt an order of appetizers, drinks or desserts that might not have happened otherwise. (And when combined with your loyalty program, to do so with personalized recommendations that the guest is more likely to crave.) Are you seizing the right tech opportunities to maximize your sales?



Offer a virtual experience

Experience is everything in restaurants right now – and a key part of how you demonstrate your value to guests. If you have a technology-forward brand, consider using virtual or augmented reality to offer an experience that makes guests crave your food. Maybe it could be a tour of your restaurant, a virtual cooking class or a 3D preview of a dish on your menu. Restaurant operators can work with a tech provider on a plan tailored to their business, or even use tools like virtual reality headsets or augmented reality apps to help.



Food Trends

Gluten Free Fettucine Spring Pasta

Ingredients:

20 oz. Barilla® gluten free fettucine
1 Lb. Chicken breast, diced
5 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil
3 Pts. Cherry tomatoes, halved
3 Garlic cloves, crushed
3 Zucchini, diced
4 Multi-colored carrots, sliced on bias
1 lb. Asparagus, sliced on bias
½ cup fava beans, frozen/peeled
1 cup artichoke hearts, quartered
½ cup pecorino romano (grated)
Salt & black pepper to taste



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375° f.
2. Mix 1 tbsp. of olive oil with tomatoes, salt and pepper. Place on a sheet tray and roast in the oven for 8-10 min.
3. Meanwhile, bring a pot of water to a boil and cook pasta according to package directions. Reserve 2 cups of pasta cooking water.
4. In a skillet over medium/high heat add remaining oil and chicken. Cook for 3-4 min.
5. Add garlic, zucchini, carrots, fava beans, asparagus, and artichokes, cooking an additional 2-3 min.
6. Add 1 ½ cup of cooking water to the chicken/vegetable mixture.
7. Drain pasta and add to the sauce with tomatoes and ½ of the cheese.
8. Mix well. Add remaining pasta water if necessary.
9. Garnish with remaining cheese.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla

Ice that's twice as nice



Gimmick or not, ice cubes that have been infused with all things edible and eye-catching is all the rage. These specialty cubes, which encase edible flowers, herbs, fruit and other items, went viral when a fashion influencer made a video showcasing nine different types of specialty ice cubes in her freezer. While they can add visual punch to your cocktail menu, they can also add interest and layers of flavor to lemonade, iced tea and iced coffee (try adding frozen cubes of coffee to avoid watering down the drink's flavor).

Responding responsibly to a safety concern

Has a guest ever voiced a food safety concern to you about your restaurant? It's not something you or your staff will ever enjoy hearing, but your response can go a long way in improving both the physical safety of your guests and the reputational consequences for your business. First, ensure your staff take any report seriously – even if it's the first time they have heard such a complaint. Gather information from the person about what they ate and when, as well as any symptoms they have been experiencing. Check food safety protocols (and the food itself, if the item is still being served) to determine if there were any gaps in safety procedures at the time the person was served. Contact health authorities for additional guidance and then follow up with the guest or guests



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Prepare your business for outdoor service

The warmer weather on the way will beckon people outdoors – and to restaurants that serve outside. Even if you have been serving outside through the winter, your spring and summer set-up likely requires some changes in protocol. Now is a good time to make sure your business is ready to shift gears and ensure that you have a number of safeguards in place: This includes weather protection like shades, heaters or maybe even cooling mists for guests; traffic protections – both foot traffic and auto traffic – to ensure roads and pathways next to and through your outdoor seating areas are free from obstructions; fire safety precautions and training if you're using outdoor heaters or cooking outdoors; and food safety and sanitation procedures to ensure food is served safely and outdoor surfaces are cleaned and sanitized regularly.



Foodservice Updates

What local organizations complement yours?

As the pandemic demonstrated, businesses gain strength from each other when they collaborate. Looking at your business, where are there opportunities for you to broaden your reach in the local community? As the warmer months approach and people are gathering over food at festivals, charity events and other occasions, think about how you can gain traction for your business through local partnerships. In addition to helping you strengthen word-of-mouth and online marketing of your business, your local partnerships can help staff morale and give them an opportunity to learn new skills and share ideas. Consider local wineries or breweries. Or businesses outside of the hospitality sector whose values complement those of your business or who offer experiences that can be enjoyed alongside the experience of enjoying your food. If you have a lot of local parents in your loyalty program, consider donating food or gift certificates to end-of-year school fundraising events. It isn't always about stepping outside of your restaurant either. Consider offering apprenticeships to local high schools or colleges, partnering with your local chamber of commerce or with large employers in your neighborhood to offer meeting or event space, or setting up an ongoing food donation to support local people in need. You're not just generating opportunities for your business – you're also building a larger support system.



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