

Foodservice Updates

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Old dogs, new tricks?

The market for virtual kitchens is forecast to reach nearly \$14 billion, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 12.5 percent, according to new research from Market Research Future. Virtual kitchens represent adventurous new territory for the restaurant business, replete with both opportunities and risks. On the opportunities end, virtual brands could potentially give a great boost to restaurant businesses that lack a strong online presence. As this recent report from Eater describes, Kellogg's, a 24-hour diner that has been operating in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, for decades, recently partnered with Profit Cookers, a company that creates and licenses brands to restaurants. Kellogg's runs 18 of Profit Cookers' virtual brands out of its diner. In practice, a consumer looking for an egg and cheese bagel online will see the option pop up from one of those 18 brands – all of which have a generic sound to them, almost like they were designed to maximize search engine optimization. The virtual brands tap into the expansive menu offered by the diner, while the diner benefits from the virtual brands' expanded hours and delivery radiuses. The owner of the diner says the partnership has brought in \$40,000 in additional sales. Of course, this new era in off-premise dining has plenty of risks and unknowns to work out as well. Restaurants that farm out their food under a range of brands are expanding their reach but also diluting the brand experience. It's difficult for the consumer to know where their food is coming from – and unclear who is responsible in the event of a food safety or quality problem.



One automated tool, multiple applications

As restaurants use automation in an effort to tackle labor challenges, they are also aiming to get a better handle on food safety challenges, consistency issues and consumer preferences. For example, Panera has been using the CookRight Coffee system from Miso Robotics to power their popular coffee subscription program. The system uses artificial intelligence to monitor coffee volume and temperature, which allows the brand to free up staff for other tasks. But beyond that, the technology also provides predictive analytics to inform the restaurant of what kinds of coffee customers are ordering and when – so it can then provide (and promote) the options that are bringing customers into the restaurant under various conditions.



Back-of-house Big Brother?

Out of necessity, robotics and automation are finding new places in restaurant kitchens – to help offload mundane tasks and, in some cases, to keep an eye on staff in an effort to minimize errors and maximize efficiency. According to a recent report from Restaurant Dive, technology known as computer vision is gaining ground in the foodservice industry as a means of identifying inaccuracies in orders and notifying staff who can step in and correct them. It also has the ability to gather data about how staff work together, then provide analytics about who collaborates well in which positions. Providers of the up-and-coming technology include Lifestream AI, Presto and Agot AI.



Kahlua Pork Luau Sliders

<i>Ingredients:</i>	½ tablespoon pepper
24 1.25 oz. Flaked Wheat Dinner Rolls	¼ cup pretzel/bread crumbs
2 oz honey	Cabbage Topping:
2 oz water	¾ small cabbage (shredded)
Toasted sesame seeds (bun topping)	5 oz crushed pineapple
Mini Burgers:	1 teaspoon garlic (minced)
2 lbs lean ground pork	¼ teaspoon salt
8 oz crushed pineapple	1 tablespoon vegetable oil
¼ small cabbage (chopped)	Dressing:
2 tablespoons garlic	6 oz mayonnaise
1 oz soy sauce	1 oz soy sauce
1 ½ tablespoons salt	11 oz crushed pineapple

Little bites, big taste



Stretching your menu and making it more exciting can be as simple as changing up your presentation. How might you add interest to your appetizer menu by shaking up guests' expectations about a classic option? Try creating your own spin on sliders, serving wings with a new dipping sauce, or offering spring rolls with spicy Mexican fillings.

Food Trends

Instructions:

1. Take out frozen rolls and arrange them on a parchment lined sheet pan. Cover with plastic wrap and let thaw for about 1 hr.
2. In a large mixing bowl, make burgers by combining all burger ingredients until well incorporated. Portion out to about 1 ½ oz meatballs then smash into mini patties. Place patties on a parchment lined sheet pan and bake @350°F for 8 minutes.
3. Once rolls are thawed let proof covered until doubled in size.
4. To make cabbage, in a heated pan with oil combine all cabbage topping ingredients. This is a quick cook to brighten cabbage and slightly soften, maybe 1 minute.
5. In a small mixing bowl combine mayo and 1 oz soy sauce to make the dressing. Transfer to squeeze bottle.
6. In a small mixing bowl combine 2 oz honey and 2 oz water until honey is dissolved to make honey wash.
7. When rolls are proofed (doubled in size) brush well with honey wash, top with sesame seeds and bake for 14 minutes @375°F. Let cool then slice about ½ inch from the bottom with a serrated knife.
8. Finish off burgers in a pan, grill or Panini press to re-warm and melt cheese.
9. Build burger as such: bottom bun, soy mayo, Pineapple, burger (1 or 2), cabbage, soy mayo, top bun.

Recipe and photo courtesy of J&J Snacks



Farm-fresh food safety

Consumers crave farm-fresh produce as the weather warms up – particularly as local, plant-based diets become bigger priorities. But as you race to churn out fresh vegetables on your menu, make sure you’re keeping food safety hazards in mind. As food safety expert and barfblog.com publisher Doug Powell has said, “Fresh produce is the biggest source of foodborne illness in the U.S. and North America, and it has been for at least a decade.” The Center for Science in the Public Interest reports that fresh produce has been responsible for 629 outbreaks over the past 10 years, making nearly 20,000 people sick. To limit the spread of illness, make sure you familiarize yourself with your suppliers’ food safety practices and values.



#FoodSafety

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Stay safe this summer

If you're taking part in outdoor festivals this summer or are otherwise serving guests outdoors, take steps to avoid creating the conditions for bacteria to multiply. Make sure you keep cold foods cool (41°F or colder) and out of the temperature danger zone. Store ready-to-eat foods like fruit in separate coolers from raw meat to avoid cross-contamination, and have separate utensils, plates and cutting boards on hand when preparing and serving raw and ready-to-eat dishes.



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Are your guests climavores?

According to a new study by the consulting firm Kearney, 80 percent of consumers indicate they have some awareness of the impact their food choices have on climate and the environment – a trend the report calls “climavorism.” Do you know how your guests feel about the proteins on your menu – and could you offer customizable options that allow them to make climate-conscious decisions about what they order? More restaurant brands across the country are making this possible. The Kearney research dovetails with a vast expansion of plant-based proteins appearing on menus nationwide, from the plant-based panko chicken being offered as an add-on ingredient to any dish at Noodles & Co. to the black bean patty and egg white breakfast sandwich on offer at Dunkin’. As you consider new menu options, how might you expand the presence of plant-based proteins – both those that are intended as meat substitutes and other dishes that are naturally plant-based? Can you make them shine not simply as understudies to meat but as appealing options in their own right?



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