

Foodservice Updates

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Build a team for the long term

We've all heard the stories about how difficult it is for restaurant operators to hire staff right now. But as we emerge from the pandemic, the operators that have survived have learned lessons that can also help them thrive – and attract creative people who want to be part of that. Even though it may be tempting to return to pre-pandemic ways of restaurant management, the landscape has changed – and restaurant roles can (and perhaps should) change too. In a recent Eater report, New York restaurant operator Michael Schall said he was able to retain his staff last winter – even as people abandoned both the city and the industry – by rethinking the roles of staff he couldn't lose and guaranteeing their income for a set period of time. Kitchen staff were kept busy through the quiet months with his restaurant's newly created grocery and meal kit programs, and with odd jobs like painting. As restaurant life begins to feel closer to normal, consider how you can help your team build careers with you for the longer term. Can you use their help in extending the new income streams you created to keep going during the pandemic? Could you use your space and staff for new purposes – and at new times – now that so many potential guests have adjusted their work schedules? Could you create new multifunctional roles that involve technology or social media marketing now that we have seen the need for strong off-premise sales structures? As we return to somewhat-normal conditions, now is a good time to decide what lessons of the past year are worth applying permanently.



Think like a drive-through

Drive-through restaurants have done well during the pandemic. Restaurant Dive reports that the share of trips on Waze to businesses with drive-through options jumped 25 percent between the beginning and end of 2020. It's not difficult to see why: Drive-through restaurants' use of smart, artificial intelligence-driven menus allows them to adjust options depending on the weather and to upsell customers with tempting options based on their past orders. Some are now adopting technology that enables guests to order directly from their car while in line, minimizing wait times. But these solutions are not necessarily just in the purview of drive-throughs. When you look at your business and how you get food to guests, where are your bottlenecks? Could you enable processes in your operation that would help you attract traffic from potential guests on a nearby highway, call up guests' past orders and suggest additions they're likely to crave, or speed up your wait times by allowing a person to order from you easily before they even arrive?



Farm-to-table tracking

How well do you know the origins of the food you serve? Restaurants are able to collect a growing amount of information about the items they order – and that can enable much more powerful buying decisions and better management of food supply risks. Beyond fine-tuning inventory needs based on how your guests are ordering and helping you minimize waste, restaurant operators and other companies in the food supply chain are starting to use artificial intelligence to track and contain supply chain risks – say, tracking a recalled product and mining reams of data to identify trends from it or determine whether a specific supplier, distributor, or environmental problem is to blame. The company FourKites, which helps fine-tune shipment tracking for food suppliers ranging from US Foods to Tyson Foods, is one company bringing greater visibility to the supply chain.



Prime presentations

At a time when restaurant operators feel the need to do as much as possible with a simplified inventory of ingredients, the way you build and present a dish carries extra weight – and can make your restaurant that much more appealing to people eager to try a creative dish right now. Are there dishes on your menu that you could improve simply by presenting them in a surprising format? Before you swap out a menu item that isn't as popular as you expected it might be, ask if it's ripe for reinvention.

Food Trends

Turkey & Hashbrown Brunch Lasagna

Ingredients:

Non-stick cooking spray
8 ounces JENNIE-O® Savory Ground Turkey Crumbles
1 pound frozen shredded hash browns
1 tablespoon butter
10 eggs
1/4 cup heavy cream
kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
6 small flour tortillas
1/4 cup finely chopped chives
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Grease a medium baking dish with cooking spray.
3. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat turkey 2-3 minutes.
4. Remove from pan and keep warm.
5. Add hash browns to hot pan and cook, stirring often, until the hash browns begin to turn golden brown.
6. Season with salt and pepper and remove from heat.
7. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs and heavy cream until light and frothy.
8. In a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, melt butter.
9. Reduce heat to low then add egg mixture and cook, stirring often, until the eggs are just set.
10. Stir in chives, season with salt and pepper and remove from heat.
11. Add a layer of tortillas to the prepared baking dish.
12. Top with a layer of hash browns, eggs, cheese, and turkey.
13. Repeat to make 2 more layers, ending with tortillas, cheese, and turkey.
14. Bake until the cheese is melted and the hash browns are golden, about 30 minutes.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Jennie-O



Get out in front with your safety plan

As restaurant dining rooms reopen and the weather beckons people outdoors, operators may find themselves in the awkward position of wanting to welcome people looking to gather and celebrate, while also accommodating the safety concerns of guests, staff and inspectors alike. Establish a clear protocol for how your team is balancing these concerns – and share it on your website, social media and in your booking confirmations to help inform guests before they join you. Finally, empower your staff to gently reinforce your safety protocols as guests arrive – and as needed once they're dining – since they may still be getting used to the new rules of dining out too.



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What food safety practices can you offload to tech?

Covid-era changes to restaurant dining can make it easy to overlook the many other aspects of food safety that a restaurant team must remember. Can you tap into tech to help your staff avoid information overload? Food Safety News suggests incorporating such measures as electronic checklists to prompt staff about procedures and instructions, automated prompts to help them avoid keeping food sitting out for too long, or alerts about issues that could become problems if not addressed quickly – like rising temperatures in a cooler. Finally, digitize any remaining paper-and-pencil processes in your business, like compliance checklists or records.



Foodservice Updates

Are you ready for omnichannel eating?

Omnichannel eating is a top foodservice trend of 2021. That's according to the recently released annual food and beverage trends report from Innova Market Insights. Based on how Covid has changed people's daily habits in the past year, it's easy to see why the need to accommodate omnichannel eating is important for operators – and could be for the long term:

More people are working from home or away from the office, they may be working on different schedules than before, and these changes could be permanent. According to McKinsey & Co. forecasts, between 20 and 25 percent of the workforces in advanced economies like the U.S. could work from home between three and five days each week after Covid. As a result, the conventional day-part meal structure in restaurants may need to evolve with it as consumers demand food when and where they want it. Restaurants will continue to be valued not only as places to eat out or order takeout, but also as providers of

meal kits, meal segments, branded products or specialty ingredients that can elevate meals prepared by consumers at home. Much like grocery stores have evolved in recent years, restaurants may need to do the same well after the pandemic is over – and embrace the different ways people now consume food and beverage.



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