

# Foodservice Updates

## In This Issue

[The changing definition of restaurants](#) | [Cultivate your super fans](#)  
| [Protect summer hand hygiene](#) | [Take a look under the hood](#) |  
[Tech that enables staff management and connection](#) | [Encourage guest engagement](#)

## Could you forgo third-party delivery?

It's a question more restaurant operators are asking this year, as the cost of third-party delivery has increased beyond consumers' and operators' comfort zones. According to the National Restaurant Association's annual State of the Industry report, an average of 13 percent of restaurants have stopped using third-party delivery services – even though delivery continues to be in demand by consumers. The trend was especially apparent outside of the quick-service category. While only 7 percent of quick-service restaurants severed their ties with third-party delivery companies, 17 percent of fine dining and coffee and snack businesses did so. The research found that instead of forgoing delivery altogether, most restaurants are taking the function in-house. The move can give operators greater control over food quality and safety, speed of delivery, as well as a larger share of profits. But it does require some planning and resource management. If you're considering it, determine what geographic areas you want to serve and during what hours, how many staff you will need to support the effort, how they must be trained on everything from technology to off-premise food safety, and how you will mitigate your business liability if problems were to arise in the course of a delivery. What technology and tools could support you? Could a delivery management platform help? Test your service over a set period and track what went well and what needs to be improved. Also think about if and how you will promote this offering to guests – and if and how you want to use it to convert more orders to carry-out. In any case, collect data on how your delivery is going – both with regard to delivery times and reactions from customers.



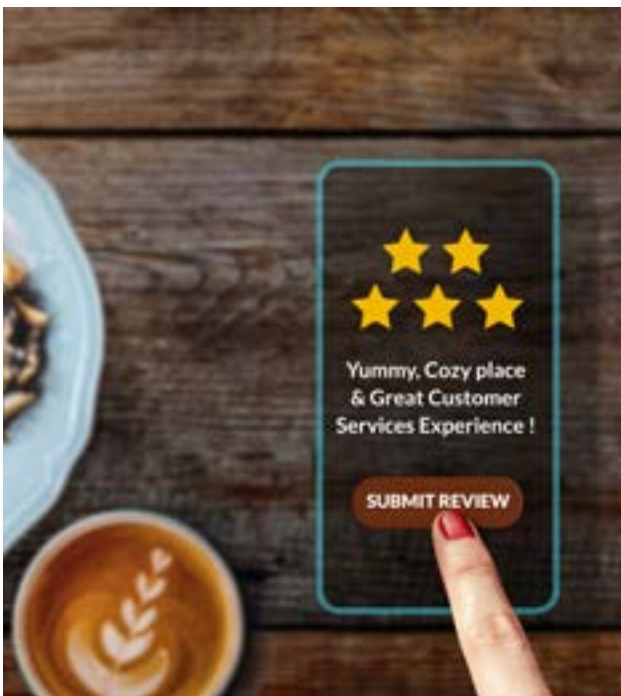
# Tech Talk

## Tech that enables staff management and connection

If you're not using technology to improve your employee engagement and retain staff, your competitors likely are – and that may well change the labor landscape for restaurants in the years ahead. According to Nation's Restaurant News Intelligence's 2023 Restaurant Technology Outlook, 47 percent of restaurants are interested in technology tools that support employee training and onboarding, 43 percent are interested in tools that support employee productivity, and 24 percent are looking for automated scheduling tools. AI is driving many of the new tools available in this area and delivering precise forecasts that allow operators to optimize staff headcounts according to demand, pay people on time, automate compliance, and gain more time to personally interact with staff and create the connections that encourage them to stick around. This will continue to be critical as wage increases and high turnover make it more expensive to train and employ staff.



## Encourage guest engagement



Your restaurant's presence online – and the tools you're using to ensure it is appearing in web searches – are gaining greater influence in light of Yelp's recent announcement that it has introduced new search features that use AI to generate smarter suggestions for users. The suggestions are reported to allow for more nuance in a person's search and thereby guide the person to the precise kinds of businesses they seek. Their reviews are also going the way of product reviews and social media in that people will be able to upload short-form videos to support their reviews, as well as react to others' responses as a means of encouraging people to engage with other reviews. Consider this in the language and tags you use on your website, as well as in your requests for feedback from guests. A video review from a loyal guest could be an especially valuable tool in helping you showcase your business – particularly if you offer a memorable experience.

# Trends

## Cultivate your super fans

A recent article in Eater points to consumers' subscription fatigue: People subscribe to so many services in their daily lives that asking them to add another can feel like a big ask. Nonetheless, UBS predicts the subscription market will boom to \$1.5 trillion by 2025, and restaurants are keen to join it. The more successful ones are finding ways to build exclusivity and even community around their offers. For about \$7 a month, P.F. Chang's Platinum Rewards Program, for example, allows members to jump to the head of the reservation line, earn double points on purchases compared to their unpaid Gold membership, and participate in "insider panels" that the restaurant uses to plan new business developments. While the pandemic supercharged the concept of bringing the restaurant experience home, the idea is here to stay – and restaurants that find ways to use these offers to elevate their connection to guests, whether that's in the dining room, at home or in between, could gain some die-hard fans. What do your best guests want to see from you?



## Protect summer hand hygiene

Hand hygiene plays a significant role in food safety – and the summer months can make it more important and more difficult to do frequently. Your staff may be serving guests in outdoor dining areas or pop-up stalls that take them farther away from handwashing sinks. They may be handling more surfaces when passing from outdoor to indoor air-conditioned spaces. Hot temperatures can cause busy staff to perspire. If the warmer weather brings a change in routine for your staff, consider how to build in handwashing breaks at regular intervals – and remind staff to wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and running water.



**#FoodSafety**

## Take a look under the hood

Even if you are diligent about keeping work surfaces clean and mopping up spills as soon as they happen, you may still be overlooking one area in your restaurant that can be a major source of safety and hygiene risks. As a recent report in *Modern Restaurant Management* indicates, nearly one-third of restaurant fires happen due to the buildup of grease in the kitchen hood. Fire hazards aside, when the hood isn't properly maintained, grease can accumulate on other parts of the kitchen, bacteria and bad odors can multiply, air quality worsens, and there is a greater strain on equipment, which can lead to equipment malfunction and higher energy bills. (The kitchen hood is a major energy drain for restaurants – and an appliance commonly updated with more sustainable options as a result.) To manage the risks, keep up with professional cleaning and inspections per manufacturer's guidance and in accordance with what foods and quantities of it are cooked there.



# Foodservice Updates

## The changing definition of restaurants

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In a recent Restaurant Dive report about trends shaping the restaurant industry, Darcy Kurtz, CMO at BentoBox, weighed in about how food inflation is making menus smaller – and driving chefs to be more inventive and flexible with the menus they plan in an effort to operate efficiently. She said she doesn't expect smaller menus to dampen people's excitement about dining out, because "the [restaurant] discovery process is becoming more visual. It's becoming more experience-oriented ... that will offset any decline [in interest] because the menu isn't quite as big as it used to be." The times seem to be changing the definition of restaurants – and it's becoming less about the food. Granted, it's hard for a restaurant with poorly conceived food to survive, but the experience a restaurant offers is increasingly the secret sauce it needs to thrive. And the delivery of that experience is evolving too. As Food Digital reported recently, restaurants are becoming community hubs in new ways – perhaps applying some lessons learned from the pandemic. As they think beyond food, they are increasingly opening themselves up as spaces for events, workshops, community meetings and other gatherings – that also happen to offer food. How might you open your restaurant's doors and reinvent it as a gathering place in an effort to build your brand and business?



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