

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [Getting clear about labeling](#)
- [Food delivery on the rise? Strengthen your online security.](#)
- [Has your recovery been uneven?](#)

Managing costs by minimizing meat

Devoting more of the menu to vegetables isn't simply on-trend right now – it's also an ongoing strategy for managing supply chain snags and inflation concerns, particularly as restaurant pricing continues to outpace grocery store pricing. According to recent research from Nation's Restaurant News, 58 percent of restaurant operators of all sizes and service styles name supply chain problems and inflation as their biggest pain points right now. But at a time when consumers are looking for their restaurant experience to feel like a good value, operators aren't able to sacrifice service or menu development in an effort to cut costs. Could reimagining your menu help? A recent Restaurant Hospitality report says more chefs are looking to further reduce large-format animal proteins and incorporate vegetables in creative ways in order to counteract the high costs of ingredients, labor and transportation, as well as to better manage the availability of ingredients. That could mean pushing the vegetarian content on menus toward the 30 percent mark for restaurants that have traditionally served more meat. This summer could be a good time to integrate more local produce on the menu and preserve it in a range of ways for the cooler months – not in an aim to mimic meat but to offer an unexpected experience with plants. Combine these foods in vegetable-forward dishes with beans, legumes, hearty whole grains and other satisfying plant proteins to test potential applications in the center of the plate – and to gather guest input too.





Tech Talk

Food delivery on the rise? Strengthen your online security.

The demand for online food delivery has surged in the past few years and is poised for continued growth, according to Statista research. The National Restaurant Association has reported that for the first time, drive-through and delivery orders account for a larger share of guest traffic than on-premises dining. While this presents new opportunities for restaurants, it also gives threat actors an appealing target for fraud – particularly because frequent, low-volume transactions can make it easier for fraud to go undetected. You can take some steps to make your business a more difficult target for these scams, however. Beyond some basic protections such as enforcing strong passwords on your website and app, prompting password changes, and having people use multifactor authentication to access their account, Security Boulevard advises businesses to use a few safety precautions to prevent unauthorized access. For example, you can limit the number of login attempts within a certain time frame, or set up alerts whenever changes have been made to an account/password. Your fraud prevention software can also help by identifying the location of login attempts and flagging locations that seem off-base or which use a VPN to disguise their IP address – common signs that a threat actor is trying to breach a network. It's also important to keep your security software current by installing patches and updates promptly – unfortunately, fraudsters often take advantage of security vulnerabilities due to delays in installing up-to-date security measures.



Getting clear about labeling

Preparing food in the warmer months can expose food to conditions that can make it decay more quickly. And even in cases where foods are carefully and consistently refrigerated, foodborne pathogens can still grow – particularly in food like produce and deli meats that are popular options in the summer months. This makes accurate food labeling especially important. However, according to the CDC, one-quarter of restaurants don't label refrigerated and ready-to-eat foods with dates indicating when the foods are no longer safe to consume. This is more of an issue for independent restaurants than it is for chain restaurants, the agency found. But in the businesses where it is a problem, it's also common to find labeling discrepancies between when a food was prepared and when it should be discarded. This can mean the difference between exposing guests to foodborne pathogens and not. In your operation, are there clear, consistent practices for labeling foods so that employees can interpret them easily? Further, are all items being stored on a first-in, first-out basis? Accurate food labeling and storage can help busy employees more easily notice, on the spot, when an item needs to be discarded.



#FoodSafety

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Has your recovery been uneven?

By many measures, the recovery of the restaurant industry has been a great success story in recent years. The National Restaurant Association says sales are up (forecast to reach \$1 trillion this year), operators continue to hire (adding more than 28,000 jobs in March), and nearly half of operators report that competition is stronger than it was last year. But this success has been uneven, as a recent article in The Atlantic explains, and more common in businesses that have managed to ride the dramatic ups and downs of the economic environment. For instance, The Wall Street Journal reports that from 2019 to 2023, sales at quick-service and other limited-service restaurants increased at twice the rate of those at sit-down restaurants. Independent restaurants have been disproportionately affected too, with about 4,500 more closing their doors last year than opening them. Restaurants that have succeeded are often those that have harnessed technology and maximized efficiencies that have allowed them morph into different models throughout the course of the day – fast-casual café in the morning, limited-service later in the day, and ghost kitchen to fill the in-between times, for example. Such changes will likely alter people’s definition of what a restaurant is and what it is capable of offering. Meanwhile, this landscape is creating openings for new services designed to address the needs of independent restaurants, providing them with digital tools that can help them scale their operations and gain efficiencies in ways more typical of larger chains.



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