

Foodservice Updates

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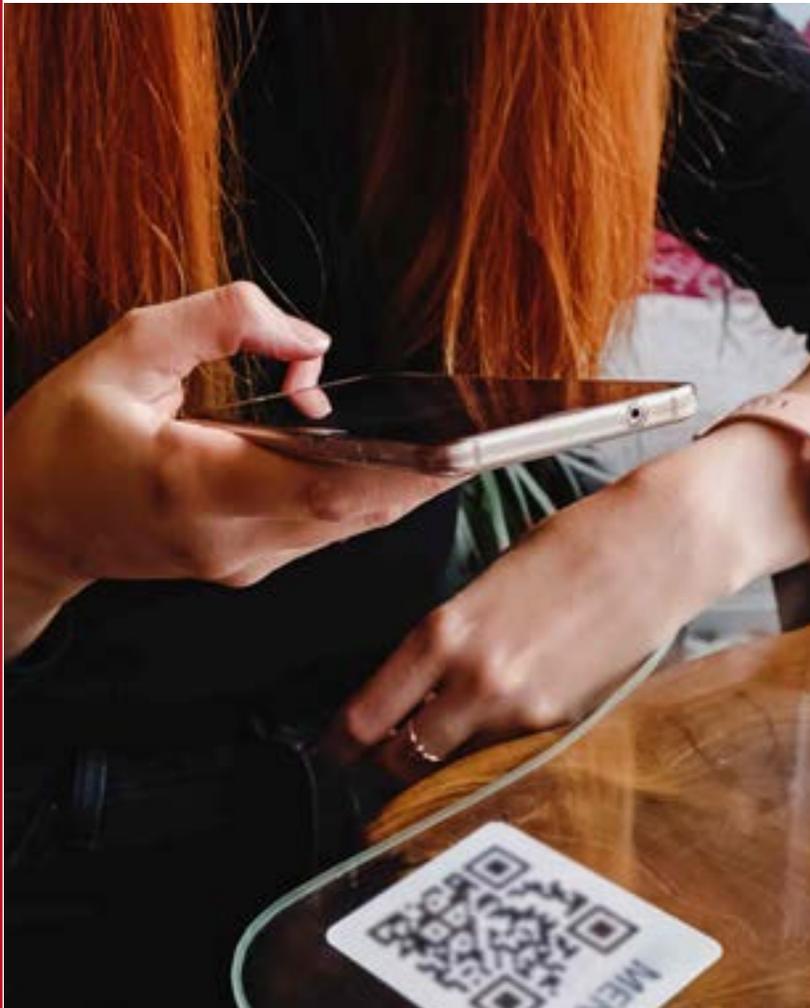
Without the RRF, lean on relationships

At the time of this writing, remaining hopes for the replenishment of the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) were dashed when the \$48 billion bill to provide relief to small businesses hit by COVID restrictions could not get sufficient votes to overcome a filibuster. Last year, the fund had helped restaurants struggling with the strains of the pandemic to pay employees and cover debts. However, of the more than 278,000 restaurants that applied for funds, only 101,000 restaurant applicants received grants before the Small Business Administration had exhausted its funds. For the remaining restaurants, the replenishment of the fund was especially critical. According to the National Restaurant Association, 62 percent of operators who didn't receive funding have racked up additional debts and 57 percent have fallen behind on expenses. The Independent Restaurant Council estimates that more than half of the 177,300 independent restaurants awaiting RRF grants could close without additional aid. So if relief isn't coming in the form of grants, where can operators find it? Start with your relationships. Find other operators in your situation and discuss how you might help each other through this rough patch by pooling staff or supplies, sharing expertise or even partnering in a different venture like a virtual kitchen. Lean on your strong relationships with landlords and suppliers and look for any leeway they might give you on existing contracts. Finally, talk to your guests. They don't want to see a favorite community business go away, so this is a prime time for them to demonstrate their loyalty. They might be able to help you brainstorm ideas to generate much-needed income and community support in the near term.



Can your data answer your questions?

After a period of two years when technology has demonstrated its worth across a wide range of businesses, restaurants are awash in new data – about their customers, equipment, sales, inventory and more. But any data you collect is only as good as the problems it actively addresses. Make sure the information you collect is working for you by regularly asking some questions of it: What are our most profitable menu items? What menu items need to be adjusted or could benefit from customization? How should I schedule staff during our busiest and quietest shifts? What clues do the data provide about items that could be ideal limited-time offers? Regularly assess the information you're collecting and identify any loose ends. Any data you generate should help you solve a problem or make an improvement.



Harness the human benefits of automation

While automation's rise is no surprise, considering labor challenges and how automation can help address them, we are likely to see new applications that actually help restaurants strengthen human connections. If you're considering the use of automation in your restaurant, focus on where it can best bring efficiencies to your business. For example, how could you use it to offload repetitive tasks – and retain staff in the process? Could you use the information you collect through the automation of tasks and challenge a talented member of your team to translate it into new initiatives to build your business?



Red lentil spaghetti with roasted cauliflower and shitake mushrooms

Ingredients:

- 2 ¼ Box Barilla® red lentil spaghetti
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 4 Tbsp. butter
- 2 shallots, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 Tsp. fresh thyme leaves, chopped
- 3 Cups shitake mushrooms, sliced
- 3 Cups cauliflower florets
- 1 Cup white wine
- 1 Cup vegetable broth
- 1 Cup heavy cream
- ¾ Cup parmigiano cheese, grated
- 2 Tbsp. chives, chopped
- Salt & black pepper to taste

Pasta that packs a nutritional punch

We could all use a little comfort these days – and as comfort foods go, pasta ranks pretty high. But at a time when many consumers are craving foods that soothe but also those that promote better health, restaurant operators need to offer options that tick both boxes. Pasta made from alternatives to wheat flour – whether chickpeas, quinoa, red lentils or another source – can help. While these pastas are not necessarily low-carb, their elevated protein and fiber content make them reliable options to offer guests who want comfort without the guilt.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375° f.
2. Toss cauliflower in olive oil and roast in the oven for 5-7 minutes or until brown. Set aside.
3. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a boil, cook the pasta according to the package directions.
4. In a skillet over medium heat, cook the shallots, garlic and thyme in the butter for 3-4 minutes until slightly golden.
5. Add the mushrooms and cook for 2-3 minutes, season with salt and pepper.
6. Add wine and reduce by half. Add the broth and cream then bring to a simmer, season to taste.
7. Add the roasted cauliflower to the sauce.
8. Drain the pasta and combine with the sauce.
9. Remove the skillet from the heat, add the cheese and garnish with chives.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla



Don't let protective gear distract from food safety

Personal protective equipment has become a common sight in restaurants in the Covid era – and it serves an important purpose. However, the gloves and tongs your team use to distance themselves from foods may serve to make contamination less front-of-mind in the midst of a hectic shift. After all, if you have a glove between your hand and the raw chicken you're preparing, you may be more likely to mindlessly touch a surface that can then be contaminated. Make sure your kitchen staff change gloves between tasks, wash hands frequently with soapy running water, and sanitize food preparation surfaces routinely to minimize the risk of spreading contaminants around your kitchen without knowing it.



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Targeted, tech-based food safety

At a time when you're likely working with a smaller staff and/or onboarding new employees on a regular basis, it's especially important to be able to deliver food safety training that keeps pace with a wide range of training needs. Technology is of critical help here. Are you currently able to use digital tools to provide your team with short training videos or on-demand guidance from any device – as well as track employees' progress in meeting training objectives? Doing so is an efficient way to ensure you stay in compliance with regulations and protect food safety. Ask Team Four for help in using technology to deliver targeted training that helps protect your food safety program.



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From compost pile to menu star

Do you have guests who like to know that what they are eating isn't only good for their health but is also environmentally sustainable? This mindset, which has become more widespread since the start of the pandemic, is likely to expand further as American consumers struggle to manage high inflation. The average American family of four wastes \$1,500 of food each year, according to Earth.org, and rising grocery bills make it that much more important to minimize waste. Chefs are in a powerful position to continue to move the needle when it comes to the consumer mindsets and habits that generate food waste. While chefs have long found creative ways to use excess vegetables in soups and other dishes, minimizing waste is now less a case of slipping a less-than-perfect carrot into a stew than actively promoting menu specials because they contain ingredients that might otherwise go to the compost bin. Nation's Restaurant News reported recently that Michael Guies, chef at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, developed a pop-up menu feature dubbed the Low-Waste Bowl. The bowl's ingredients, which change depending on what is available, have included such items as roasted carrots, herb-braised celery and watermelon rind pickles, as well as grains like brown rice or sorghum. The common elements woven through the bowl are that they feature healthy ingredients and cut down on waste. The popular feature has won industry accolades and helped the foodservice operation glorify ingredients that may be slightly past their prime but still have health-preserving (and money-saving) benefits.



Team Four/Value 4 provides customized Supply Chain Solutions and Business Consultancy to the foodservice owners and operators throughout the United States. To find out how we can help your business save money contact us at:

1-888-891-3103 or visit our web site at www.teamfourfoods.com and www.valuefour.com