

Foodservice Updates

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The benefits of shrinking

Amid high inflation, you're likely having to make some tough decisions with regard to your menu right now – whether that has involved raising prices, swapping in more economical cuts of meat, shrinking portion sizes, or all of the above. While consumers are noticing the changes, there are some they mind less than others. In a recent Bloomberg report, Nailya Ordabayeva, a marketing professor at Boston College, said size reductions tend to go over better with consumers than price increases. "People tend to underestimate changes in object sizes," she said. "It's pretty convenient for companies to actually move size, move around size, more than they do price, because people do notice price changes more." Since American restaurants have been serving up larger portion sizes for some time, there is room to shrink them – and there are benefits to this. Aside from helping you cut back on waste and better manage your inventory, reducing portion size can also help your kitchen focus more on quality than bulk. What's more, your kitchen can be more nimble. You will be able to make quick and creative menu adjustments based on what ingredients are available, giving guests a good reason to come back and see what new items you're offering. To deemphasize the reduction in portion size, serve entrées, sides, beverages and condiments with smaller plates, glasses, ramekins and to-go containers – and plate foods creatively, filling empty space with high-value ingredients wherever you can. Once this inflationary period is behind us, it may make sense to keep these smaller sizes around for the control they are able to give you in the kitchen.



Do your new takeout containers leave a bad taste in guests' mouths?

The demand for off-premise restaurant food is going strong – but restaurants are still trying to find their footing when it comes to packaging. Bans of single-use plastic in some cities, along with guest demands for environmentally friendly options, are leading more operators to try compostable containers. But as Los Angeles-based operators have been finding in light of the city's forthcoming ban on disposable plastics, some of the compostable packaging alternatives can soak up sauces and otherwise alter the taste of a dish. As you consider alternatives to plastic in the packaging you use for catering and takeout, test how the material interacts with (and impacts the quality of) the ingredients you're packaging.



Manage rising cyber risks

As restaurants increasingly rely on online systems and tools to process guest orders and operate more efficiently, they need to take extra care in protecting their cybersecurity. The transition to new systems, as well as ongoing labor challenges, have created vulnerabilities that cyber criminals are eager to exploit. According to data released in late 2021 by Check Point Research, there was a 40 percent increase in cyberattacks globally over the previous year, with one of every 61 organizations worldwide impacted by ransomware each week. The risks are evolving, so operators should speak to their insurance broker to make sure they are aware of how to best minimize their exposure to threats including ransomware, malware, phishing and data breaches. It helps to provide ongoing employee training and limit the number of staff with access to sensitive information.





What's your big event?

When inflation is high and consumers are minding their budgets a bit more, they may need some extra incentive to dine out. Your special events and promotions can provide it. Looking at what you do best, as well as entertainment options that could complement it, what event might you create that would draw a crowd? Whether it's hosting an Oktoberfest celebration, World Cup party or simply developing a menu that relates to a popular community event already in the works, find a vehicle to make the choice to dine away from home an easy one.

Food Trends

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Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cups red onion, sliced
- 1 cup carrots, sliced
- 3 cups reserved au jus from Hillshire Farm® Chuck Pot Roast
- 1 1/4 cups red wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 cups ginger snap cookies, coarsely crushed (See Chef's Tips)
- 3 1/2 lbs. Hillshire Farm® Chuck Pot Roast w/Au Jus and Onions, sliced



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Heat oil in medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onions and carrots; cook 5-8 minutes, stirring occasionally until tender.
2. Add au jus and red wine vinegar; bring to a boil and simmer 10 minutes.
3. Add crushed ginger snaps and simmer 10 minutes or until cookies dissolve and sauce has thickened, stirring occasionally.
4. While sauce is cooking, heat sliced pot roast in a covered hotel pan for 15 minutes or until 145° F.
5. For each serving, fan 5 oz. of heated beef on plate and top with 1/4 cup of sauce.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Tyson



Manage smaller safety window in summer heat

Even before summer hit, many areas of the country experienced surprising spikes in temperature this year. As you prepare for outdoor events this summer, take extra precautions with food safety. An especially warm day will shrink the window of time when foods remain safe to consume. Any perishable foods can be left out for only an hour in 90-degree heat and other items should only sit out for two hours. When transporting food, ensure you're able to keep cold foods at 40°F and hot foods above 140°F, and make additional provisions to keep foods cold or hot if the weather is likely to pose a challenge.

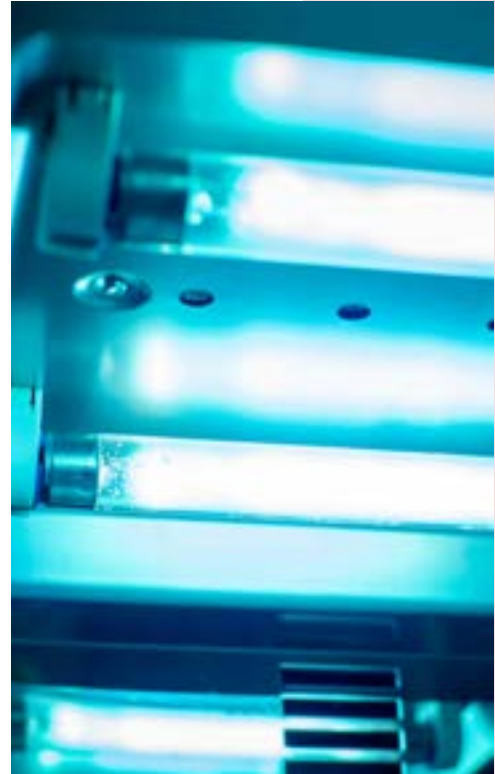


#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Could UV-C light make your food safer – and longer-lasting?

When Covid hit and we learned more about how the virus was transmitted, more operators began to experiment with the use of UV-C lights used to kill the airborne virus and make indoor dining feel like a safer option during outbreaks. The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) recently began using a system of UV-C germicidal bulbs at its four locations in response to Covid. In a recent Fast-Casual webinar, “Emerging Trends in Restaurant Health,” David Behnke from the CIA discussed the safety benefits he has seen from the technology. The use of these lights could have the side benefit of reducing food waste as well. A decade ago, Middleby Bluezone, the supplier of the UV-C model used by the CIA, used this technology to address the challenge of getting fresh produce to U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. It placed one of its UV-C light models in shipping containers to the Middle East to destroy mold and bacteria en route, enabling the technology to extend the shelf life of produce.



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Remember the 5 P's

As current economic conditions make it critical for restaurants to do as much as possible with fewer resources, it can feel like an impossible task to have to innovate. Yet, innovation is a critical reason consumers eat at restaurants: According to Technomic research, consumers order new or unique items from restaurants 25 percent of the time. At a session of the recent National Restaurant Association Show, experts weighed in on how to maximize menu innovation efforts when operators are feeling stretched thin. It comes down to five P's: pivots, preparation, proteins (and plants), personalization and predictions. Combining existing ingredients in new ways is an easy pivot that can refresh a menu. Your preparation of a dish can also transform it: consider charring or pickling vegetables to inject new flavor into your menu, or freezing a cocktail to give it a slushy texture. As animal proteins have become difficult to source, chefs have had to get creative with new cuts of meat – and also with plant proteins at the center of the plate. Now is an ideal time to experiment with more plant-forward entrées. When a consumer knows they can order something just the way they like it, you can win their loyalty, so consider how you can make your menu feel more personalized by offering a choice of condiments, sides and/or grains. Finally, weave in some of the year's trend predictions. You can be on-trend but not trendy by taking an ingredient on the rise in menus – even something as simple as a seasoned salt or a spice – and adding it to your food and beverage menu in new ways.



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