

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- How can you strengthen your circle of trust? | Little bites, big cravings | Make safety visible | A better blueprint for food traceability | Contactless through tech | Transform your reservations system into a virtual waitlist

What's your event game plan?

Your event management protocol will naturally need an update.

“No one really had this in their playbook.” That’s what one conference planner said in a recent New York Times report about how the pandemic has forced changes to conferences and business meetings – and the hospitality surrounding them. Restaurant operators who hosted events before the pandemic have faced an equally steep learning curve. Now, as guests begin returning to dining rooms and we all look forward to being able to safely gather in larger groups for parties, weddings and less formal celebrations that have been put off in recent months, how can you plan accordingly? If you’re feeling ready to take bookings for events later this year and into 2021, your event management protocol will naturally need an update – and it’s something you can promote to your guests now to encourage their business and demonstrate your commitment to keeping them safe when they gather. As you think about replacing buffets and self-service stations, how can your menu, service model and staffing plan flex to accommodate it? Can you cover or wrap food items, plates and utensils to minimize cross-contamination? Serve individual plates to guests either at the table or in a buffet line? Transition to fixed menus that minimize waste and are easier to prepare and serve? Adapt your indoor and outdoor spaces to ease traffic flow and allow for better ventilation? Your service agreements – both with guests and any vendors you use – may need an update as well to help protect safety and ensure you are protected legally in case lockdown measures force cancellations down the line.

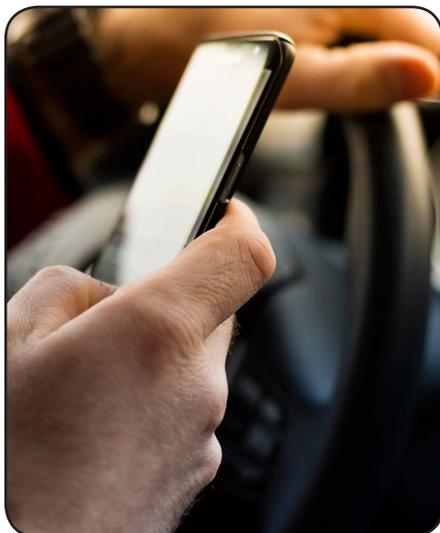


How can you strengthen your circle of trust?

Research shared in a recent Datassential webinar said 72 percent of consumers don't trust others to act responsibly when non-essential businesses (including bars and restaurants) reopen. As consumers begin to gather again, they don't necessarily want their restaurant experience to feel just like it did a few months ago. They have new expectations of not only business operators and staff but of the other consumers around them. While one irresponsible guest can negatively impact the experience of others despite your best efforts, there are steps you can take to set expectations for all guests before anyone even sets foot inside. The Datassential research found that the vast majority of restaurant guests favor such actions as requiring those picking up takeout orders to wait outside and having only one person in a party enter at once, offering seating only to those who have made reservations and pre-orders, prohibiting large groups and designating certain hours for vulnerable guests only. At the top of the list of actions consumers said helped to build trust: maintaining six feet or more distance from others (85 percent), having staff at the door to manage your facility's capacity (83 percent), requiring customers to sanitize hands upon entry (81 percent) and ensuring any guests at the bar have a seat (81 percent). Don't be afraid to overdo when it comes to communicating safety.



Transform your reservations system into a virtual waitlist



Virtual waitlists have benefits that can not only help you manage safety regulations now; they can also provide permanent benefits if consumers are open to using them post-pandemic. If you haven't used them before, they are like reservations systems in that they let people add themselves to a list online and allow you to let them know when to arrive, so they can avoid a long line at your restaurant. This frees up your staff to wait tables or bring food outside for curbside pickup. What's more, virtual waitlists allow you to have guests pre-order and pre-pay to limit interaction with staff and minimize their wait. That means fewer no-shows and faster table turns for you.

Make safety visible

Remember when restaurant safety was something guests valued but didn't necessarily need or want to see? How times have changed. Guests appreciate seeing how you're protecting their safety and it can make a difference in which restaurant they choose. The Fish City Grill restaurant brand, which has outlets in Texas and surrounding states, introduced a handwashing timer that goes off every 20 minutes to remind employees to stop and wash hands – all within earshot and in sight of guests. Can you take any additional steps like this to not just improve your safety practices but to make them more visible? This could include having team members wipe down front- and back-of-house surfaces within view of guests, posting in-restaurant signs and social media messages about your new cleaning protocol and employee safety measures, introducing tamper-proof seals on your packaging, or, if you offer in-house delivery, promoting the safety benefits of having a safety-trained restaurant employee protecting your customers' food in transit. You can also display a digital dashboard on a tablet at your cash register to keep guests informed of the last time a team member sanitized your dining room, restrooms and kitchen.



A better blueprint for food traceability

COVID-19 has not only demonstrated how important it is to wash hands and monitor personal wellness to limit the spread of the illness; it has also shown the vulnerability of the supply chain, both in terms of its likelihood of being interrupted and its possibility of contamination. In the coming weeks, the FDA will be releasing its New Era of Smarter Food Safety Blueprint. It will outline the agency's strategy to create "a more digital, traceable, and safer food system" in the next decade. It is expected to provide information on enhanced traceability of the supply chain, tools to help protect and prevent contamination caused by food ordered online, and guidance on further developing food safety cultures on farms, in food facilities and in homes.



Little bites, big cravings

Consumers clamor for Swedish meatballs. Just ask IKEA, which recently released their recipe for the iconic dish in light of rave reviews from customers. To add a little comfort to your menu, you can make your own version here as a shareable, crowd-pleasing addition to your appetizer or small plate selection.



Contactless through tech

Technology that enables you to transact business in a contact-free way can help you send a message to guests that you value their safety. Beyond offering contactless payments – a recent Mastercard study found that 74 percent

of respondents plan to use contactless payments even after the pandemic is over – restaurant operators are increasingly posting QSR codes on tables and at facility entrances to help guests connect to their menu via smartphone. Not only can having a QSR code help you minimize menu wipe-downs,

but it is also easy to get one via any number of websites that generate the codes for free.



The Best Swedish Meatballs



Ingredients:

Hillshire Authentically Crafted Meatball
1 tablespoon parsley chopped
1/8 teaspoon Pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tbsp. olive oil
5 tbsp. butter
3 tbsp. flour
2 cups beef broth
1 cup heavy cream
1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. In a large skillet heat olive oil and 1 Tablespoon butter. Add the meatballs and cook turning continuously until brown on each side and cooked throughout. Transfer to a plate and cover with foil.
2. Add 4 Tablespoons butter and flour to skillet and whisk until it turns brown. Slowly stir in beef broth and heavy cream. Add Worcestershire sauce and Dijon mustard and bring to a simmer until sauce starts to thicken. Salt and pepper to taste.
3. Add the meatballs back to the skillet and simmer for another 1-2 minutes. Serve over egg noodles or rice.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Tyson

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:

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