

# Foodservice Updates

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## Cater to guests the right way

At a time when having multiple income streams is vital for restaurant brands, catering services can be an important contributor to the bottom line. Last year, business-to-business catering sales rebounded to 2019 levels, according to remarks by Jim Rand, founder of CaterStrat, at an education session at the recent National Restaurant Association Show. What's more, he said segment leaders such as Panera and Olive Garden don't command a majority of overall catering sales, so there is ample room for smaller brands to carve out their own niches in catering for consumers and events. Now that COVID-19 seems to be receding into the distance, consumers and organizations are looking for opportunities to gather with friends and staff again. Fine-tuning your catering capabilities now can help you take advantage of summer sales and also give you some momentum to capture catering orders leading into the holiday season. As a recent Restaurant Dive report advises, developing business in this area requires many of the same approaches operators use to strengthen other parts of restaurant sales right now: ensuring orders are accurate, consistent and quick. (This is especially true for corporate catering, for which a restaurant generally doesn't have more than one or two chances to recover after an error with an order.) Having a catering-specific ordering platform can help support these customers, along with a marketing strategy to spread the word about your brand and its catered offerings.



# Tech Talk

## Could your in-app experience be even better?

Is your mobile app worth the real estate it occupies on guests' phones? Evolving loyalty programs are making it more enticing for consumers to get the apps of their favorite restaurants. But this also means that restaurants have more – and better – competition when it comes to offering a smooth, personalized in-app experience to users. What does an easy in-app experience look like? It's largely about offering guests simplicity, speed and easy access to the personalized information they want. At the recent National Restaurant Association Show, leaders from Paytronix and Red's Savoy Pizza took to the stage and offered one example. The Red's Savoy app includes an "order again" button to make it faster and easier to input future orders, a loyalty points tracker right on the home page, and a message section that allows for personalized communication with guests.



## Dashboards for better decisions



Restaurants can generate reams of data to run their businesses more effectively. But reviewing data about such wide-ranging elements as your guests, inventory, traffic, employee productivity, supply chain and marketing is only effective when you can know how and when these elements impact each other. Much like how a kitchen display system synthesizes orders from multiple sources and translates that information into clear directions for employees preparing food in your kitchen, a dashboard can track multiple collections of data from across your business and demonstrate how they impact each other so you can make more informed decisions. Do your current tools allow you to do this – or is there valuable information slipping through the cracks that would be beneficial to weave into the overall analytics you have for the business?

# Trends

## Show your sustainability IQ

Has the term “regenerative agriculture” come onto your radar yet this year? If not, Datassential’s new report on the year’s food trends predicts it’s only a matter of time before it becomes part of operators’ vernacular. The phrase has been appearing with increasing regularity on food packaging and marketing, as well as on menus. Regenerative agriculture refers to a wide range of farming principles and practices designed to restore crop and soil biodiversity, remove carbon from the atmosphere and sequester it in soil, improve water quality, and make agriculture more sustainable as a result. While it’s not a new idea, it weaves together a number of modern sustainability practices found in agriculture. Sustainable foods continue to attract the attention of consumers – currently, 70 percent of consumers believe the food they eat should be grown on farms that use sustainable practices – so restaurant employees will need to be conversant about their own brand practices and values in this area.



## Your staff shouldn't stand out for this reason

You want your team to attract attention for the quality of food and service they offer – not for the jewelry they are wearing. Jewelry can be a red flag for inspectors and guests alike. Items worn on fingers and wrists can make it more difficult for staff to wash their hands thoroughly and are unlikely to be sanitized sufficiently on their own to meet food-service safety standards. This increases the potential for jewelry to harbor bacteria and expose food to pathogens or other contaminants. Jewelry may also catch on machinery or other items and accidentally drop into food or pose a safety risk to staff.



**#FoodSafety**

## Don't be the hottest restaurant in town

It's likely to be another summer of extreme heat. That can make your restaurant a less comfortable place to work, which impacts employee safety as well as your guests' experience. Consider adapting your staff uniforms to accommodate high temperatures, avoiding outdoor service during the hottest parts of the day, promoting menu items that generate less heat during preparation, keeping outdoor service areas as cool as possible with fans and shades, and ensuring staff are getting ample breaks for water and rest. Also, since now is not the time for your HVAC system to let you down, make sure its service record is up to date and you're able to keep your kitchen and indoor seating areas well-ventilated and cool.



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## Take a page from your COVID playbook

When you think back to how you set out to connect to potential customers during the pandemic, does it feel like anything has changed since then when it comes to both your marketing and interpersonal communication with guests? It wouldn't be surprising if so. After all, restaurants hardly had a chance to recover from COVID lockdowns when they were suddenly thrust into managing rising inflation, supply chain snags and ongoing labor challenges, among other difficulties. Operators moved from one existential crisis to another, but the emotions these crises evoked have been very different. The pandemic brought out a softer, more emotional side to communication – something that may have been lost in the months since. It's worth taking a look at how your efforts to connect with guests during the pandemic were effective then because they could be what solidifies guests' loyalty to you now. How did you make people – guests and employees – feel supported? How did you share your restaurant's story in different, human, surprising ways? A recent Modern Restaurant Management report about the importance of emotional intelligence in business communication shares some signs that your restaurant could be lacking it: A few examples include leaning on one message for all guests versus employing more personalized communication, providing inadequate responses to guest feedback, and emphasizing more on what you're offering as opposed to how it benefits guests. Knowing this, could you make any improvements to how you're connecting with the public? The past few years have been hard – but don't let them harden the human approach that continues to win with consumers.



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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