

# Foodservice Updates

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## When data puts you in a daze

If you're not quite sure what to do with all of the data you've been collecting, you're far from alone. According to research from Nation's Restaurant News, seven out of 10 operators are not confident that they are optimizing their data – and this is true across different restaurant sizes and segments. It seems that while restaurants across the board appreciate that data is critical to business, the message about how to translate that data into actionable steps has gotten lost. If you're in this position, simplify things by starting with your POS system, since it's the nerve center of your business and determines what other functionality your restaurant has (or doesn't have) when it comes to data collection. A legacy POS system will stand in the way of functions you'd like to integrate down the line, while a cloud-based system will enable regular automatic updates and can give your operation flexibility to integrate new options. Have your POS provider review with you what your system can do, what data streams it can analyze and what integrations are possible with your current system – or if a newer cloud-based system is the first investment you'll need to make to compete in the long term.



# Tech Talk

## Incremental tech tweaks, big improvements

For many restaurants, the past few years have been a time of tech transformation. Restaurants that had the resources available to upgrade to modern POS systems and adopt other integrated technology in order to survive may not be looking to make additional significant investments in tech in the near future. Yet the landscape is always shifting and new tools are becoming available that promise to make business better and help operators work more efficiently. In a recent webcast with Nation's Restaurant News, restaurant experts weighed in on some of the low-hanging fruit that operators can target if they're looking to make incremental improvements. Some of the key suggestions included scheduling software (even something basic can improve employee flexibility and morale), software that aggregates online reviews and ensures you're not leaving any unanswered ones dangling, and forecasting functionality that dovetails with your purchasing and ensures you're minimizing waste where you can.



## Zero in on the sources of your back-of-house waste



As restaurant operators know, money is made at the back of the house. The steps you take to get a better handle on everything from portioning food to managing inventory translate into important savings. Adopting tools to monitor waste is a big one. Research from the Natural Resources Defense Council estimated that 22-33 billion pounds of food is wasted by restaurants every year, with about 7 percent of it wasted before it even reaches the customer. To get a better handle on how much food you're wasting, you have to track all possible sources of it. A report from The Rail advises operators to have staff keep a log – ideally a mobile app connected with your inventory management software – of every instance of spills, misfires, burned or ruined orders, spoiled or expired ingredients, comped meals, theft, and scraps from paring, cutting or butchering. Patterns may emerge from this that allow you to zero in on the habits and practices that generate waste for you.

# Social Responsibility

## Helping restaurants take care of their own

There has been a lot of focus on restaurant culture in recent years – and restaurants are making changes so the industry feels like a good place to work and one that can provide flexibility and security if something goes wrong. One safety net for restaurant employees has recently expanded its scope and it's worth having on your radar if, say, your restaurant experiences a natural disaster or one of your employees faces a medical issue or family loss and has difficulty paying household bills as a result. CORE, or Children of Restaurant Employees, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families in the restaurant industry make it through a rough financial patch. As Restaurant Business reports, it can provide funds needed to pay essential bills like rent, utilities, mortgage fees, auto loan payments, or required medical equipment or pharmaceuticals. The money is a gift, not a loan, and is not taxed as income. CORE is not a new organization but its scope has expanded in recent years in the wake of the rising number of natural disasters that have impacted communities and restaurant businesses around the country. The cause could generate goodwill with staff, whether as a fundraising recipient or a potential source of funds for an employee in need.



## When it comes to food safety, trust your nose

While you want the tantalizing smells of your grill to waft out onto the street and draw people in, any mysterious smells coming from your kitchen are far less desirable and could signal a lurking food safety issue. Certain odors that seem a bit off – fishy smells, sewage smells or mustiness, for example – could indicate spoiling or rancid ingredients, poor drainage or a pest infestation. If your kitchen or guest-facing areas don't pass the smell test, take a closer look at what potential food safety issues may be hiding under the surface.



**#FoodSafety**

## The safety hazards of an unhappy team

A sullen staff member can be more than just an annoyance for a restaurant operator or guest. If the person isn't simply having a bad day but doesn't care about providing quality service, it's a red flag for food safety risks. Angela Anandappa, the founding executive director of the nonprofit Alliance for Advanced Sanitation, said in an interview with Mashed that low morale at restaurants can signal inadequate training, poor management, high stress and staff turnover, understaffing, concerns about pay, and personality clashes. None of these problems inspire guests to trust you to prepare the foods they are about to eat. That's why it's important to regularly assess your working environment and observe staff in action to understand where morale issues may be lurking. An employee may need support, or perhaps a more pervasive workplace issue needs changing.



# Foodservice Updates

## Is lunch ripe for reinvention?

Lunchtime looks different in many cities right now. A recent report from Restaurant Business said that according to new data from tech supplier Toast, weekday lunch transactions in 19 of the country's biggest metropolitan areas remained down considerably in the first quarter of 2023 compared to 2019. The numbers suggest that the shift in post-pandemic work habits is having a continued impact on lunch business. When Americans do have lunch out, they are spending more, which could be due to higher menu prices, or because people are dining out in larger groups and placing bigger orders. In any case, the lunch day part has potential to become more of an experience driver in the current environment – a time for events as opposed to casual meals in the middle of the work week. Consider the new working habits of the organizations with offices in your area – or the people who reside in your neighborhood. Have hybrid work arrangements become the norm? If so, employers are likely looking for opportunities to bring employees together in meaningful ways on the days they do come together – and catered food can play a big role in that. If people living near you are working from home, they still need to eat – and maybe you can provide a meal deal, salad kit or delivery promotion that can make at-home break times feel like something to look forward to.



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