

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [Provide an escape](#) | [Great grains](#) | [Minimize sanitation hazards with digital checklists](#) | [Assure your guests of sous vide safety](#) |
- [Labor Pains](#) | [Could a chatbot boost your online sales?](#)

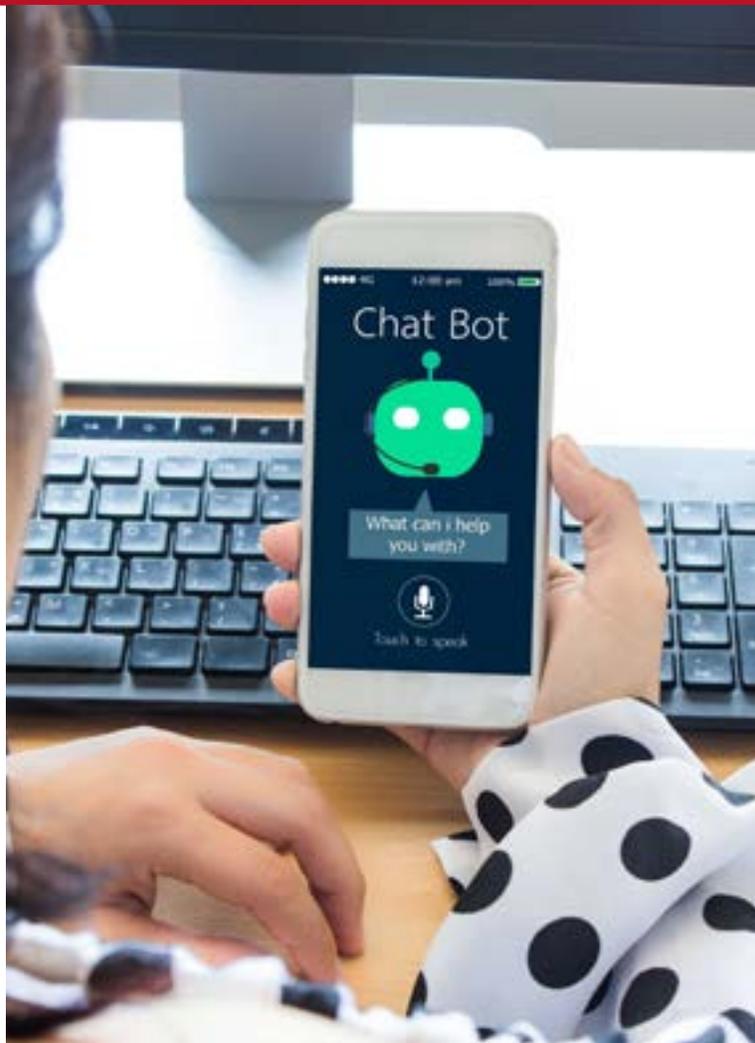
Plan an open-minded menu

Record-setting inflation and ongoing food supply problems have transformed menus – but chefs are finding that the transformation can be for the better. As Fortune reported recently, food inflation’s effect on the price of many popular kinds of seafood has resulted in chefs serving up lesser-known, exotic alternatives. One example: the snakehead fish available on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. It’s a frightening-looking cross between a catfish and an eel that happens to be a delicious crowd pleaser – and even better, only \$6 for a whole fish. Other operators have needed to remove much-loved signature items from their menu because the costs just don’t add up. The owners of Chicago’s Parachute removed their signature bing bread from their menu, not only because of the 63-cent profit it generated for the restaurant but also because lower-cost substitute ingredients weren’t cutting it and there was a significant amount of labor required to produce it. They wanted to move toward a more equitable system that compensates staff better, and the bread wasn’t helping them get there. Looking across your menu, are there items that drag down your profits, overall food quality or staff compensation? In a recent interview, Chef Kathleen Hoffman, senior culinary manager for U.S. Foods, said in the current climate, she is focusing on helping chefs create scaled-down menus that address all of those challenges: “We help them winnow their menu down so they do five things really well instead of 10 things just okay,” she said. “The days of the 20-page menu are over.” For chefs, this often means making the call to remove menu items that guests love and have come to expect. Just trust that doing so can actually help you protect your business for the longer term.



Could a chatbot boost your online sales?

If you're generating more business from your website nowadays, integrating a chatbot may help you better capitalize on the traffic coming to you. Chatbots have become an easy plug-and-play feature for more restaurants and can serve as a kind of virtual employee by suggesting food and drink pairings, upselling menu items, promoting offers and upcoming events, processing payments and soliciting feedback. They can also help infuse your site with your brand's personality – if you've ever ordered a Domino's pizza and encountered the brand's wise-cracking chatbot, Dom, you know how it works.



Labor Pains

Is your labor pool feeling a bit shallow? You're far from alone. In the National Restaurant Association's May 2022 tracking survey, 58 percent of operators said recruiting and retaining employees is the top challenge currently facing their business. Some tactics to improve your ability to attract and retain staff: Weed out dangerous or dirty tasks – try to either automate them or improve them. Incorporate more tools and appliances that don't require skilled labor to use. Embrace speed-scratch and other ready-to-go ingredients that cut down on labor. Put your training on autopilot so your managers and staff can spend more time with guests or on food preparation. Finally, leave tempers at the door.





Great grains

One of the positive effects of the pandemic has been consumers' reprioritization of health – both mental and physical. According to HealthFocus, nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults say they're now more focused on their own health than they were a year ago. That is coming through clearly in the functional foods and beverages they are choosing to optimize their immunity, weight, everyday energy and endurance. It's all the better if what they consume is also sustainable. Whole grains tick all of those boxes, offering protein, fiber, B vitamins, antioxidants, and trace minerals, as well as potentially reducing the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some forms of cancer. What's more, the Oldways Whole Grains Council says whole grains use less water than other crops, making them a more environmentally friendly choice. Look for ways to integrate more whole grains into your pastas, salads and sandwiches – either as a standard ingredient or customizable option for your guests.

Food Trends

Whole grain spaghetti vegetable lo mein

Ingredients:

- 1 ¼ Box Barilla® whole grain thin spaghetti
 - 5 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil, divided
 - 3 garlic cloves, minced
 - 1 Cup cremini mushrooms, sliced
 - 1 Cup shitake mushrooms, sliced
 - 1 Cup carrot, julienned
 - 1 Red pepper, julienned
 - 1 ½ Cups snow peas
 - 1 ½ Cups baby spinach
 - 1 ½ Cups brussels sprouts, shaved
 - ½ Cup red cabbage, sliced
 - ½ Cup cauliflower florets
 - Salt & black pepper to taste
- Sauce*
- 8 tbsp. lite soy sauce
 - 2 Tbsp. honey
 - 3 Tbsp. sesame oil
 - 1 Tsp. fresh ginger, minced
 - 2 Tsp. chili paste
 - 6 green onions, sliced thin
 - optional proteins are 8oz. shrimp, chicken breast or tofu



Instructions:

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil, cook the pasta according to the package directions.
2. Meanwhile, in a skillet over medium/high heat add olive oil, garlic, and vegetables.
3. Cook until tender/crisp.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk together the ingredients for the sauce.
5. Drain pasta and add to the vegetable mixture along with the optional protein.
6. Pour sauce over pasta and mix well.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla



Minimize sanitation hazards with digital checklists

If you're still using manual checklists to manage food safety tasks, making the switch to digital can provide benefits in multiple areas. Beyond just helping you ensure tasks are completed, digital checklists can provide labor-saving assistance at scale – allowing you to view evidence of task completion across multiple locations at once, while also helping you predict food safety threats remotely. A Food Safety Tech report says that if a manager notes that the tables in the dining room are overdue to be cleaned, for example, they can alert employees to the problem and prompt action – something likely to be missed if that task were to be tracked manually.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Assure your guests of sous vide safety

Sous vide food preparation has been on the rise as a means of using labor effectively and ensuring food quality and consistency. At a time when consumers are increasingly aware of restaurants' use of plastic, it can help to arm your staff with some facts about the plastic pouches used in sous vide cooking. As Food Safety Magazine reports, it's common for consumers to view plastic as a material that can pass toxins on to the food and drink that come into contact with it – but plastics used at the restaurant level are safe and nontoxic. In fact, suppliers of sous vide pouches are required as part of their HACCP plan to guarantee safety in a few specific areas, according to A.J. Schaller, Executive Chef of the Culinary Research & Education Academy: "Food service operations that cook sous vide should be using pouches that have no oxygen transfer rate, no endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and also are rated for high temperatures," he said. During these environmentally conscious times, an added bonus of sous vide bags is that more biodegradable, compostable varieties have been coming to market too.



Foodservice Updates

Provide an escape

If being short-staffed has had a negative impact on your online reviews, take heart that you're not alone: According to Yelp's State of the Industry Report, complaints over short-staffed restaurants shot up 229 percent in the first quarter of the year. But some positive – and telling – news came to the surface as well: Slower service and higher prices have not deterred guests, who have shown continued interest in both indoor and outdoor dining options. In fact, NPD Group reports that on-premise restaurant visits climbed 38 percent during the first quarter as compared to the 45 percent drop at the same time last year. At the same time, people are being drawn to dining options that offer an experience: Yelp reported openings for conveyor sushi spiked 500 percent, dinner theater increased 240 percent, supper clubs rose 200 percent and themed cafes climbed 75 percent over the same period last year. Of course, last year looked quite different from this year in a number of ways – and now we're looking at the likely prospect of a minor recession (and a rise in unemployment) on the horizon. To be sure, the constant fluctuations in the economy and ongoing labor challenges will keep operators on their toes in the months ahead. But the good news is that consumers will continue to look for positive experiences that provide an escape. Where possible, consider what experiences you can offer guests that require minimal labor – whether through automation, pop-ups, or rotating menu items that have an experiential element.



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