

Foodservice Updates

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Make the case for restaurant meals

Inflation is a worry for nine out of 10 adults, according to a survey taken recently by the online research firm Momentive for The New York Times. As guests scrutinize more of their expenses, discretionary restaurant spending is a natural place for them to cut back. But on the plus side, demand persists for restaurant food – it may just look different for a while. As John Church, co-head of HSBC Bank's food and beverage unit, told The Food Institute, "Consumers are likely to trade down during inflationary times as they will want to continue to enjoy some level of out-of-home dining experience." Restaurant operators may just have to double down on strategies to get guests in the door. Right now, focusing on providing value can help. Offer combo meals that emphasize cost savings – like a family meal deal that may even provide some leftovers for lunch the next day. Create sense of urgency with guests by creating a rolling line-up of limited-time offers. Give people a reason to return by asking them if they want to receive special offers, then following up with deals related to foods they have enjoyed from you in the past. Take a page from your pandemic playbook and package up an experience – a cooking class or wine tasting, for example – that makes restaurant food or drink feel like a worthwhile outing or a go-to choice for someone looking to give a special gift. When you offer those experiences, talk them up on social media to inspire guests looking for memorable ways to gather with friends and family.



Do your online ordering channels pass the test?

Like it or not, the ease of ordering from your restaurant online may influence your guests' decision to order from you as much as the quality of your food. When is the last time you walked through the guest journey on your website or app? Ensure you're seizing opportunities to not only make the process faster, easier and less frustrating, but also to upsell and capture guest data. Acceptance of a range of payment options, including gift cards, is a given. Can your guests also arrange to add a tip for deliveries – or just because? Are you asking them if they want to opt in to text or email offers? Is your interface intuitive, with minimal scrolling and clicking – and does it look as good on a smartphone as on a laptop? Are you tempting guests to add an appetizer to their order or choose a larger-size drink for a small increase in price? Are you automating your menu prices across platforms? At a time when your menu prices are likely in flux and guests are watching, make sure the prices on your website and other online channels match the ones guests see in your dining room.



Retaining the human touch amid tech's rise

As restaurants adopt more technology – out of necessity if not for a desire for greater efficiency – restaurant service is coming to mean something different. Earlier this year, Datassential predicted that human service would become more of a premium offering, with a more obvious human touch expected at higher-end restaurants. But the line between technology and human-delivered service is likely to be hazier for everyone else. As you consider new front-of-house tech, retain the human touch by asking if it can elevate the service you offer – through faster and easier payments, and menu items and targeted promotions supported by individual customer data as opposed to broad assumptions.



Creamy Chicken Pasta Piccata

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds Dried Pasta
- 8 tablespoons Butter
- 1 tablespoon Chopped Garlic
- 5 3/4 cups Chicken Stock
- 2 cups White Wine
- 1 tablespoon Lemon Zest
- 2 1/3 pounds PHILADELPHIA CREAM CHEESE
- 1 1/4 cups KRAFT GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE
- 2 1/2 teaspoons Cracked Black Pepper
- 2 1/2 teaspoons Kosher Salt
- 2/3 cup Capers
- 1/3 cup Chopped Parsley
- 1 3/4 pounds Grilled Chicken Breast, sliced

It's chicken time

Move over, pork and beef. Inflation has elevated chicken to the world's biggest source of protein. Chicken consumption is growing three times as much as pork consumption and ten times as much as beef consumption, according to recent government reports. Its lower costs as compared to other animal proteins, as well as its appeal to flexitarians and across menu sections, make chicken an easy choice. Instead of making it the main attraction in your menu items in these plant-forward times, use it to elevate (or to help guests customize) a salad, stir-fry or pasta dish.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Cook pasta in salted boiling water just until tender. Drain and hold for service.
2. In a sauce pan, melt the butter over medium heat and then add the garlic and cook just until fragrant.
3. Add the chicken stock, white wine, lemon zest and cream cheese whisking until smooth and the sauce is hot.
4. Whisk in the parmesan cheese, pepper and salt.
5. Add in the capers, parsley, cooked chicken and cooked pasta. Toss until heated through and coated evenly to serve.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Kraft Heinz



Play it safe with marinades

We're all trying to do more with fewer resources right now. But that doesn't apply to your marinades. When training new staff, ensure they understand how to handle marinades safely – including always marinating in the refrigerator and most importantly, avoiding the repurposing of marinades for other animal proteins or vegetables. A recent U.S. Foods report advises, discard fresh marinades after one day and pre-packaged marinades by the expiration date – and in the event you use any reduced-oxygen packaging, ensure you have a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plan to support it.



#FoodSafety

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Built to grill

Popular as barbecuing is, preparing and serving food outdoors elevates its safety hazards. In fact, the summer months see twice as much foodborne illness as other months of the year. If you're grilling food outdoors for guests, be vigilant about food temperatures and rely on thermometers, not your eyes, to tell you when a food is cooked. According to the USDA, one out of every four burgers turns brown before it reaches the recommended 160° F temperature. (Hot dogs, chicken and veggie burgers should reach 165° F and steak is done at 145° F.) Remind staff to keep foods out of the temperature danger zone between 40-140° F. In the summer heat, it doesn't take foods long to drift into this zone, in which bacteria multiply rapidly.



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Next-level loyalty

Does your loyalty program give as much back to you as it does to your guests? While restaurant loyalty programs once relied on discounts to get guests to return, times are changing. To be sure, you want to use your loyalty program to track guest tastes and buying patterns and translate that information into action. But you can also take your program a step further by

harnessing it as an experience you can provide guests. As operators struggle with inflation and supply shortages, providing a memorable guest experience can be a superpower – and can help keep you afloat in these challenging times. How can you use your program to drive people to you?

Tap into guests' fear of missing out by offering an exclusive VIP menu to members. The loyalty program Thanx is helping one operator offer a hidden menu for their highest-spending loyalty customers – it unlocks after a guest spends \$200 in 90 days, according to a Nation's Restaurant News report. The hidden menu can include

fan-favorite menu items, be used to test limited-time offers, or simply offer items that are easier to offer to a smaller audience (and can help a restaurant manage inventory more efficiently). All of these potential offerings can create a sense of exclusivity that provides the extra nudge guests need to order from your restaurant right now.



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