

Foodservice Updates

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Plant-based protein continues its climb

Is there a rush on plant-based protein at your restaurant? If so, you're not alone: According to new research from NPD Group, shipments of plant-based protein from foodservice distributors to restaurants were up 60 percent in April compared to the same month last year (and up by double-digit margins over 2019 as well). That growth persisted across alt-protein categories including plant-based beef, chicken, fish and conventional plant-based options like grains, nuts, vegetables, tofu and tempeh. And the rise of plant-based protein may be just getting started. Plant-based restaurants are popping up, even on the high end – like Eleven Madison Park in New York. Meanwhile, universities are developing programs based on the study of cellular agriculture and companies are investing in fermentation technology that could rapidly expand plant-based and even animal-plant hybrid proteins in the years ahead, the Spoon reports. As more players enter the market, expect increasing differentiation in plant-based proteins, such as options with global seasonings, premium options, and even plant-based proteins made in-house at restaurants, Technomic predicts. In your restaurant, it's a good time to test your guests' openness to alt-protein options and to assess how incorporating more of these items could support your operation through extending the shelf life of your ingredients, minimizing waste and shrinking your carbon footprint.



Restaurant tech grows up

Consider it one of the pandemic's silver linings. Before Covid-19, many restaurants were lumbering along with a patchwork quilt of technology – an outdated POS that made it difficult to pull information from the operation in an easy-to-analyze format, an overabundance of tablets to track orders, or any number of other siloed systems that were unable to eliminate time-consuming manual processes. But the demands of the pandemic have changed that, according to new research from J.P. Morgan and payment provider FreedomPay. Restaurant Business reports that the pandemic shifted restaurant leaders' tech priorities from serving immediate needs to anticipating where business was heading and being prepared for it. One key insight from the research is the importance of data to maintaining a restaurant business in real time, responding to rapid change and enabling growth. Has your technology matured in this way since the pandemic started?



AI's first big play

Before automation becomes more widespread in restaurant kitchens, look for it to enhance the ordering process. McDonald's, for one, recently started testing artificial intelligence at 10 drive-thrus in Chicago, the Spoon reports. So far, the locations that have used it have reported an 85 percent accuracy rate on orders, with only one in five orders needing intervention. Ideally, these AI-powered systems can dovetail with a restaurant's existing systems that track a guest's past orders and suggest additional items, expediting the ordering process and freeing up staff for other tasks.



One dish, multiple diets

How adaptable is your menu? Consumers nowadays not only have wide-ranging food preferences, but they also have a growing list of dietary requirements and restrictions, whether a need for gluten-free or dairy-free options, or simply items lower in salt or sugar. That could mean reinventing your popular burger or modifying your apple crumble. Across your menu, how well do your menu modifications or substitutions of key ingredients still manage to preserve the ideal experience of a dish?

Food Trends

Dairy Free Oat & Apple Crumble Bars

Ingredients:

- 1 C Green Apples, Fresh, peeled, cored, small diced
- 1/2 Tbsp Corn Starch
- 1 Tbsp Dark Brown Sugar
- 1/4 tsp Lemon juice
- 1/8 tsp Cinnamon, Powdered
- 1/2 C Old-fashioned rolled oats
- 3/4 C all-purpose flour
- 1/5 C Dark brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp Granulated sugar
- 1/4 C Vegan Butter
- 1/4 tsp Baking Powder
- 1 oz Oatmilk, Vanilla
- 1 1/2 C Confectioner Sugar



Instructions:

1. Combine, apples, corn starch, dark brown sugar, lemon juice and cinnamon in a large mixing bowl and set aside.
2. Combine oatmilk and confectioner sugar in a large mixing bowl.
3. Whisk until smooth and mixture resembles a loose icing.
4. Transfer in to a storage container, cover, and reserve under refrigeration until needed.
5. Combine oats, flour, 1/5 C brown sugar, granulated sugar, butter and baking powder in a large mixing bowl; Using a wood spoon, mix all ingredients together.
6. Continue to mix until mixture for the crumble is sandy in texture; Reserve 6 Tbsp(s) for topping; Set aside the remainder for the apple bar base.
7. Preheat a convection oven to 350 degrees F.
8. Line a piece of parchment paper across a 1/8th sheet pan; Spray with pan spray to prevent from sticking.
9. Evenly press 1 3/4 Cups of oat streusel on the base of the hotel pan.
10. Evenly spread the apple filling over the top of the oat streusel.
11. Bake for 30 minutes on the middle rack.
12. Remove from the oven, place on a wire rack and allow to cool under refrigeration for an additional 30 minutes.
13. Slice the block in to 6 bars.
14. Top each bar with 3/4 Tbsp(s) of oatmilk icing, and 1 Tbsp(s) of oat streusel, serve.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Danone



Ensure consistency in food labeling

Amid labor and supply shortages, it's more important than ever to be able to prepare items in bulk and find uses for all of them. Your labeling system can ensure you stay on top of food expiry dates and prioritize the use of items that have been placed in storage first, but an inconsistent system can lead to confusion on staff about the final usable date of a stored product. If that's the case in your operation, [Foodinspector.org](https://www.foodinspector.org) advises using colored weekday-style stickers that are applied according to the expiration date of an item – so a food product with a Tuesday label can be used through the end of Tuesday but should be discarded prior to any food preparation on Wednesday.



#FoodSafety

Preserve the taste of summer

Summer is prime time for fruit. If you are surrounded by a bounty of berries or other summertime favorites that you'd like to use later in the year, freeze them as close to harvest time as possible. To preserve quality and taste, rinse fruit in cool water in a colander and drain well. For fruits apt to brown or darken during freezing, dissolve ascorbic acid in water and then drizzle it over the fruit (or mix it into a sugar syrup if you're freezing the fruit in one). Berries do best if they are dried and placed on a tray in a single layer, frozen for 30 minutes and then packed into freezer bags or high-quality freezer containers. Peach slices can be prepared the same way, frozen for several hours on a tray and then transferred to containers for freezing



Foodservice Updates

Strengthen your supply chain IQ

Even Starbucks, a brand name synonymous with anticipating and meeting consumer demands, has been facing supply shortages lately. As the New York Times reported recently, the brand has been struggling to source key ingredients in its popular drinks and food items, as well as packaging products. There is likely more of this to come as food distributors look to source new-and-improved ingredients to suit consumer tastes, all while managing factors ranging from labor shortages to disease to extreme weather that can suddenly impact an ingredient's availability. Your technology is a critical tool to help you minimize your risk of running short on key supplies – or at least be aware of when it's likely to happen so you can adjust promotions and menu options proactively. For example, your digital supply chain tracking system should allow you to see your network of suppliers, enable you to spot fluctuations in demand in real time, respond to changes in supply forecasts, and place orders as demand requires – as opposed to according to a set schedule. It should also help you spot problems in your supply chain, so if there is a foodborne illness outbreak, you're better able to respond quickly to sequester the ingredient responsible and source replacements.



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