

Foodservice Updates

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Making your brand feel personal and exclusive

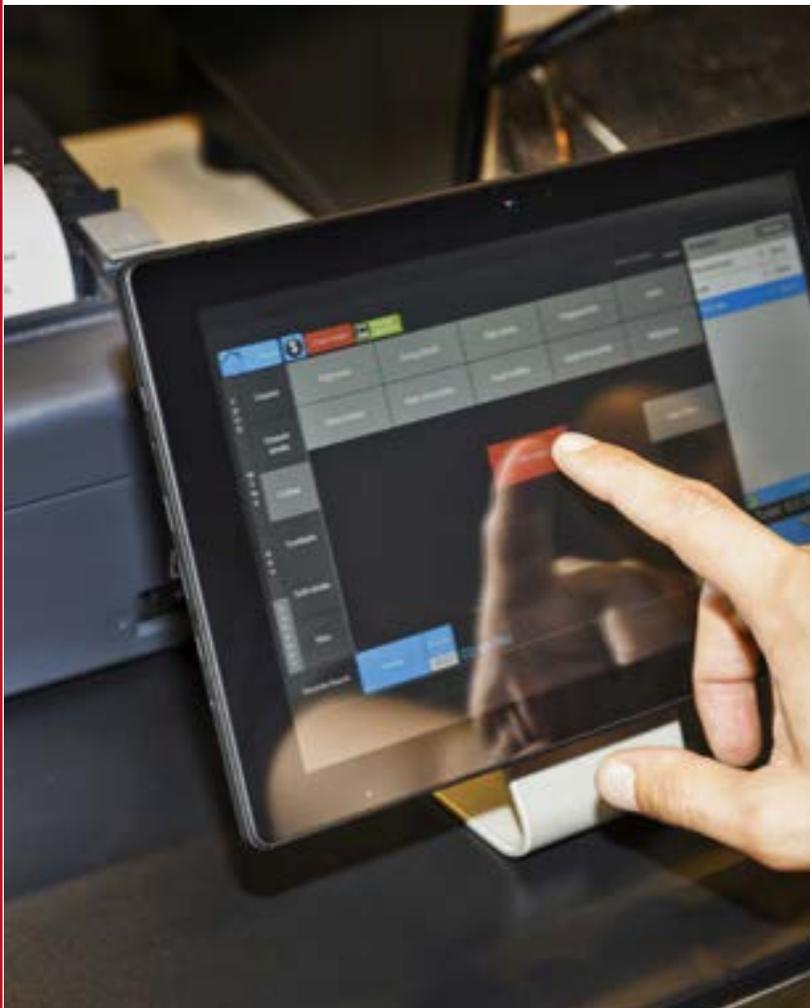
Does your digital marketing program offer the right combination of personalization and exclusivity? In the past year, that has been the winning recipe for Taco Bell, which has increased its customer base five-fold throughout the course of its new digital engagement campaign.

In a recent podcast interview with Nation's Restaurant News, Zip Allen, Taco Bell's vice president of global digital and omnichannel product experiences, said the brand has tried to maximize both of those elements in their campaign. Part of this involved the launch of a \$5 build-your-own-cravings box, which they made available to loyalty program members first. They have followed this effort by releasing new menu items to loyalty program members first via their app. Not only do these members-first offers make the program feel more special to customers, but they also drive sales through the app (and elevate the buzz surrounding any new items released). As a result, Taco Bell can gather more/better data on their customers, which they can then use to craft new promotions to further boost their loyalty. If you're trying to increase your digital sales and engagement right now – and you should be, since that is where the best insights about your customers live -- what can you do to ensure your digital channels feel like exciting, customized, special places to be?



Combining tech and sustainable packaging to drive loyalty

An app-based reusable packaging system that has been piloted in restaurants this year might provide a model for how sustainable packaging can improve sales and loyalty (and harness the valuable guest data that comes along with it). A company called R.ware (an offshoot of the reusable R.cup often found in stadiums) allows restaurants to get propylene hard plastic packaging in a range of sizes and styles that can be washed and sanitized multiple times. Restaurants are given a small collection bin equipped with an iPad. After guests are finished with a take-out container, which is labeled with instructions on how to download an app and scan a QR code, they can return the container to the collection bin and start earning rewards. Participating restaurants have freedom to customize those rewards to entice guests to return. In the process, they are reducing waste – and likely gaining some fans who want to reduce their takeout waste too.



How flexible is your tech?

Just like flexibility has been key to keeping restaurants running in the past year, it's also a critical aspect of any technology you're implementing. Your existing system should not only be able to handle your current sales streams but also be capable of scaling up in different ways to accommodate changes. Flexibility extends to the ways in which you are able to collect and present data about your guests and other aspects of your operation. Even if you don't know how the industry is going to evolve, your systems should be agile and user-friendly enough that you are getting the kinds of actionable information you need to be able to make incremental changes.



Mary B's Chicken N' Dumplings

Ingredients:

- 8 Frozen Mary B's Dumpling Dough Strips
- 2 quarts Chicken Stock
- 1 tablespoon Canola Oil
- 1 whole roasted chicken breast (pulled into medium size pieces)
- 3 Celery stalks (cut into half inch pieces)
- 3 Carrots (cut into half inch pieces)
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper as needed

Offer some comfort with nutrition woven in



As summer starts to cool off and fall arrives, your guests will start to crave cozy comfort foods like soups, stews and hearty entrées. At the same time, they will continue to be drawn to meals with healthy, fresh ingredients that can be enjoyed as weeknight take-outs on busy nights, as well as at the end of busy weeks. Do you offer a range of options that tick the comfort-food box and provide some plant-forward nutrition or other healthy ingredients?

Instructions:

1. Bring chicken stock to a simmer in a large heavy bottom pot and add oil.
2. Cut each dumpling strip into 4 even pieces.
3. Slowly add dumplings to chicken stock, stirring often.
4. Simmer dumplings in stock approx. 30-40 minutes stirring often
5. Add carrots and celery and simmer until cooked.
6. Add chicken and simmer another 10 minutes.
7. Stir in thyme and parsley
8. Season with salt and pepper and serve

Recipe and photo courtesy of J&J Snacks

Food Trends



Step up your delivery inspections

The intense heat people are experiencing in many parts of the country this summer, along with ongoing labor shortages and supply chain challenges, require some extra vigilance when it comes to food safety. Trucks may be taking longer to get foods to their destinations, providing more opportunities for food to be exposed to the temperature danger zone – particularly in record-breaking heat. Take extra care right now in checking deliveries to ensure food is being delivered at safe temperatures, is labeled with expected use-by dates, and shows no evidence of damage or decay (e.g. unsealed packaging or evidence of pests or freezer burn). Also be aware of foods that may be dangerous to eat due to the temperature spikes in parts of the country.



#FoodSafety

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Are manual processes creeping back into your food safety program?

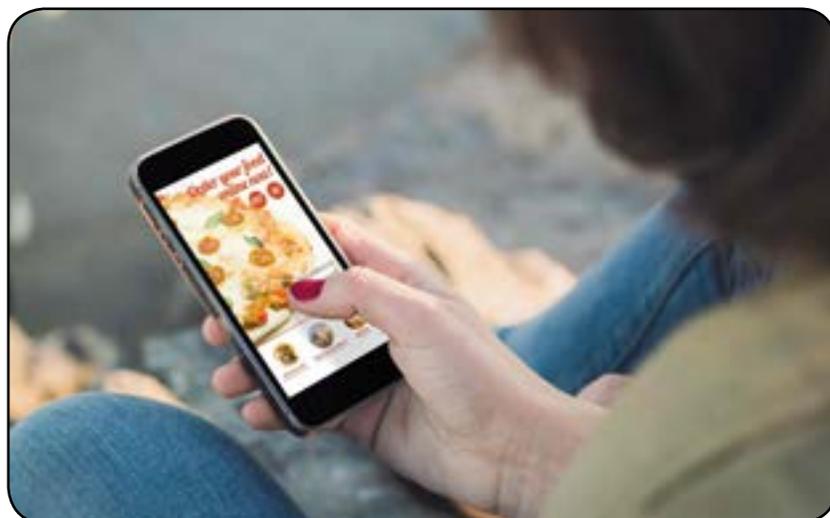
As you continue to build business back up after the constraints of the pandemic, you may be feeling the need to cut corners and revert to manual processes that you had been delegating to technology. Food Safety Tech reports that restaurants that had been using operational software to monitor food safety processes may be slipping back to the pen-and-clipboard method in an effort to contain costs on tech. Or, those that had been integrating more smart devices into their operation – remote temperature sensors or Bluetooth temperature probes, for example – may be using not-so-smart methods to track food safety practices if and when those devices break or need replacement. While this may be unavoidable in the near term, it just means that some extra precision is required at each stage to ensure your food safety standards aren't slipping.



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Could you outsource that?

Digital marketing has gotten increasingly important in the past year, with both off-premise and physical experiences at restaurants becoming more digitized. To make the most of your staff's time and your face-to-face interactions with customers, have you thought about outsourcing the digital marketing element of your business? It may be a better long-term investment if you have the resources. If you're considering delegating part or all of your digital marketing efforts to a third party, take into account the various tech tools and platforms you're currently using to reach customers and how effective they are. For example, does your website make it easy for customers to quickly find what they need from you, with a minimum of scrolling and clicks? Does it translate well to a mobile device? Is it always up to date – or does it fall to the bottom of the to-do list when it needs a refresh? How well does it stand out on Google when customers are looking for restaurants like yours? Think about your outreach to customers, whether email communications, posts to social media accounts, or responses to customers who have left online reviews. Assess the items that take too much of your time, aren't able to be completed promptly, or would generate the most profits for you if you weren't having to manage them in-house.



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