

# Foodservice Updates

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## Get a clearer view on your restaurant's performance

You read the Yelp reviews about your restaurant. You consider the preferences of your guests when developing your menu. You collect data in an effort to understand what you do well and where you might improve. But do you make an effort to be your own guest in your restaurant – or for your staff to do the same? You may be surprised at what you learn by taking a look at your business from the other side. Consider what you value most about eating restaurant food – either onsite or off-premises. Walk through the customer journey, both online and in person. A recent report from Modern Restaurant Management suggests how to approach this and what to observe. Do you feel welcomed by your brand? If you didn't have an association with your restaurant, would you want to return? What works really well? Do you think something is missing? Going through this process – and making it something your staff does as well – can reveal strengths and weaknesses in your business that you might otherwise overlook. As for your staff, encouraging their feedback as guests in your restaurant can also help them take ownership of your restaurant – and take responsibility for delivering great service to others. If they notice problems, they may have an easier time seeing how they can be part of the solution.



# Tech Talk

## AI auditing tools boost efficiency – as long as you're working from quality data

As the food supply chain has gotten more widespread and more complex, it's become all the more important to monitor it closely. Artificial intelligence can help with that. As food safety specialist Francine Shaw explained in a recent article for FSR Magazine, operators can use AI-based systems to continuously collect and analyze data from many sources, ranging from the FDA to public records, then verify that suppliers are following correct safety protocols. Such tools are available, affordable and can help build trust across your supply chain. Of course, as with all AI tools, they are only as good as the data they are trained on. It's important to collect accurate data within your operation and audit your AI applications often to make sure you're getting the most from them.



## Reduce waste with inventory tech



Is there room for you to remove manual processes from your inventory management? Adopting an automated inventory management system that integrates with your POS can help your business more quickly identify problems that waste resources. You can remove human error from the ordering process, forecast your needs more accurately, lower your food costs, and more quickly pinpoint where you're experiencing product theft, breakage, spoilage or other waste. Having real-time information at your fingertips simply makes you nimble. As this report from Restaurant Technology News indicates, these tools help you monitor stock levels and their corresponding value in real time, which helps you calculate recipe costs and ensure you're offering a profitable combination of items as you swap ingredients in and out.

# Trends

## Offer vegan dishes worthy of the spotlight

For many years, vegan consumers were left wanting at restaurants. Unless they were eating at a vegetarian restaurant accustomed to creating dishes that were naturally delicious without the animal products, they generally had to dissect restaurant menu offerings and eat something that had been altered from how the chef intended it. But the tide has turned in recent years, with sales of plant-based foods surging and more consumers actively seeking restaurants that offer fully curated vegan meals – across different restaurant types and across menu categories too. If you're serving more guests who like plant-based options, are you offering some vegan standouts – or at least some options that are just as tasty with the animal protein removed if requested?



## Discourage pests from invading

Before cooler temperatures encourage rodents and other pests to seek shelter in your restaurant kitchen, your staff can help you make your business a less hospitable place for them. Consider the perimeter of your property: Beyond repair work being done on your building to seal cracks and close other potential entry points, incentivize your waitstaff to keep pests at bay. They can be your eyes and ears around your restaurant, ensuring your outdoor seating areas are cleaned regularly, clearing finished dishes and cutlery promptly, wiping up spills, and identifying possible infestations for you before they become larger problems.



**#FoodSafety**

# #FoodSafety

## Restaurants with fewer outbreaks share these traits

Restaurants that are less likely to experience foodborne illness outbreaks tend to have a couple of key traits in common, according to research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It may come as a surprise, but their study found that factors such as a restaurant's food safety training, sick leave pay, and policies to keep sick workers from reporting to work are less connected to the frequency of outbreaks. However, restaurants with a certified kitchen manager on staff, and food safety certification training provided by a state agency, local agency, or restaurant corporation were less likely to experience outbreaks. As you work to improve your food safety record, consider how working with a certified third party could help reinforce what your staff needs to know – and also empower your kitchen managers to lead by example.



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## An inclusive workplace offers financial benefits too

Let's not sugarcoat it: Industries that demand long working hours and high quality from their employees can struggle with punishing cultures – and the restaurant industry is no exception. But in recent years, social justice movements have changed what kind of behavior employees will tolerate in their workplaces. Younger employees, often prime candidates for restaurant roles, are especially willing to demand that their employers provide a respectful culture – or they will leave for different jobs. At a time when employees have their choice of employers, it's in the best interest of restaurants to take positive action with regard to culture – and not just because it's the right thing to do. According to Gartner research cited in a report from US Foods, 75 percent of companies with inclusive cultures exceed their financial goals. Deloitte research found that 78 percent of workers believe that diversity and inclusion offer a competitive advantage. On the surface, it sounds like a no-brainer: Employees who feel included are happier in their jobs. They are more apt to reflect that positivity onto guests and stay in their roles for longer periods. Restaurants who employ people with diverse backgrounds and views are better able to understand the increasingly diverse population of guests they serve, which helps them forge better connections with (and sales from) their guests. But achieving a more sensitive culture requires a business to develop and follow clear policies about diversity and inclusion, as well as to commit to infusing the business with more inclusive values at every level. The US Foods report advises that operators start by ensuring they are complying with state and federal obligations to provide a workplace that's free from harassment and hostility. Then consider how well the diversity of your staff relates to your guests and reflects their diversity. Ensure your policies are in writing and communicated through training so that people can be (and are) held accountable for poor behavior. Finally, conduct regular sensitivity checks to ensure you're not missing tensions lurking under the surface. Give staff a safe space to voice concerns and then follow up to address them. You will set yourself on a course to build employee loyalty.



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:

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