

Foodservice Updates

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Offer a referral program that retains staff

Well before restaurants ever had employee referral programs in place, talented staff members have been powerful sources of other valuable job candidates. So why not put some systems around this resource to ensure you are doing all you can to encourage staff to refer people to jobs with your restaurant – and then make it worth their while for them all to stay employed with you? You stand a better chance of creating a workforce of people who enjoy working with each other and limit the amount of turnover you have. Of course, there can be drawbacks to hiring employee referrals – potentially less diversity of backgrounds and skills, for example. To get what you desire from your program, Toast advises that you focus your program on a goal: Perhaps that's decreasing your job ad spending by 40 percent or hiring people who are likely to stick around for more than a year. Be clear about who you're looking for – share your job description and specific desired qualities of new staff members. If you hire a person referred to you by a current employee, tie rewards for both people to the new hire's longevity. Perhaps there's a reward after 100 days or 150 days – whatever amount of time you feel is short enough to feel attainable but also long enough for the new staffer to adjust to the job, learn your culture and make some contributions. You can also open your program up to the general public – maybe you have a valued customer who knows your brand so well that they would be a strong asset to you on staff. Finally, make it easy for people to not only refer a strong candidate but to be rewarded for the person's hire. Use social media, a form on your website, and your restaurant's tech tools to accept and track employee referrals and automatically issue rewards after the introductory period. Cash and gift cards are always good incentives for employee referrers, but rewards could be as simple as offering shift preferences.



Tech Talk

Don't leave "Internet of Things" benefits on the table

How connected is your kitchen? Adopting "smart" devices to handle tedious tasks – and to simply take on a share of the mental load required to help a kitchen run smoothly – can deliver many benefits. It frees your staff to spend more time interacting with guests. It helps manage cooking times so food isn't overcooked. It helps keep compliance records on track. It can alert a manager to problems with appliances so you can avoid losing a cooler full of inventory in the event of a power outage or equipment malfunction. This is one area of restaurant tech where it's a bit easier to make gradual changes as operators can afford to make them. What manual processes still exist in your kitchen that could be streamlined through Internet connectivity?



No skilled labor? Cobotics aims to ease the problem.



One of the biggest trends to emerge from the National Restaurant Association Show this year has been the rise of automated tools intended to be used not in place of human labor, but alongside it. This includes such innovations as a stir-fry machine that prompts its human counterpart when it's time to add ingredients, and a bowl-making, self-cleaning robot that can be used alongside humans in a food prep assembly line to cook and assemble meals. The common thread emerging from these new tools is that they don't require their users to have culinary skills to prepare a tasty, consistent meal – just the ability to follow instructions. As the technology becomes more widely adopted, it is likely to transform what tasks a restaurant needs staff to manage, how operators train staff, and how much training is even required to get new employees up and running.

Restaurants spark interest in new seafoods

So many consumers are eating with a conscience these days – scaling back on meat in an effort to lighten their carbon footprint and paying more attention to the sustainability of the foods they eat. Seafood is playing a new role here, with such items as seaweed and bivalves gaining traction in restaurants for their environmental and nutritional benefits. They both provide a number of key benefits to underwater ecosystems – and farming them has minimal ecological impact. While seaweed’s dietary benefits vary by variety, it’s generally a rich source of minerals and omega-3 fatty acids, as well as vitamins B, C, E and K. Bivalves contain more protein than many meats and plants, as well as omega-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc and magnesium. A recent Restaurant Business report predicts that restaurants could play a significant role in motivating more American consumers to integrate sea vegetables and bivalves into their diets.



Hands off

Bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods triggers about 30 percent of foodborne illnesses in restaurants each year, according to the CDC. In addition to following recommendations for frequent handwashing, using tongs, deli tissue or single-use gloves can provide a useful backstop protecting your restaurant's food safety record. Just make sure staff follow proper procedures for using, cleaning, and where appropriate, discarding, these items so you can prevent cross-contamination and avoid having staff use these protections in place of regular handwashing.



#FoodSafety

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Stay in the safety zone

Your staff rely on food thermometers to ensure that the foods they serve are done cooking and are being held at the proper temperatures. But this requires that they're using accurate thermometers – and dropping a thermometer or using one to measure the temperature of very hot and very cold foods in close proximity can result in faulty readings. To make sure your thermometers are accurate, calibrate them daily using a boiling-point and/or freezing-point method.



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What does cooling inflation mean for your restaurant's

At the time of this writing, it had just been announced that the U.S. inflation rate had dropped to 3 percent in June, a two-year low. It's long-awaited good news for restaurant operators. To be sure, waning inflation could boost restaurant business indirectly because consumers are more optimistic about spending and less concerned about the prospects of recession. However, the news isn't without some potential challenges. Restaurants continue to hike their prices faster than grocery stores, which a recent Restaurant Business report predicts could push lower-income consumers to shift their spending. Restaurants seem to be moving toward more moderate price increases, but it will continue to be important for operators to conduct ongoing analyses of their menu pricing, manage their inventory closely to stay ahead of supply chain snags, have back-up plans in place in case key ingredients aren't available, and to price menu items in line with those trends. If you need assistance in managing these changes – or in finding ways to bring some stability to your costs and continue to offer value to your guests in a shifting economy – contact Team Four/Value Four for help.



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