

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [Get back to basics](#) | [A ragù worth the wait](#) | [Protect against seasonal illness now](#) | [Making employees feel heard can support their safety](#) | [Take the people out of payment](#) | [Use tech to make it personal](#)

Take a data-centric approach to recruiting staff

The past few years have given restaurant operators a crash course in the importance of collecting data – about guests, ingredients, sales performance and many other factors. Have you applied this approach to identifying potential staff? By taking the time to analyze data about what works for your business – and not simply casting a wide net and hoping you bring in some good people – you stand a better chance to attracting and keeping staff who are well suited to your business. A recent report from Modern Restaurant Management advises mining employee data by taking surveys of employees. What is important to them about their position? What benefits would keep them in their job? How does your business measure up to competing businesses (both inside and outside of the industry) when it comes to pay, benefits, growth opportunities and job security? Perhaps you can identify even incremental improvements that could help you find and keep good people. Or, maybe those improvements aren't possible for you financially. In that case, having this information at your fingertips now can still be valuable in driving you to retool your business model. At a time when so much about a restaurant is learned online before a person even visits, give your website's recruitment page a tune-up – much like you'd make your online menu more mobile-friendly for a guest. Can an applicant quickly scan the page for basic information about your business and apply on the spot?



Take the people out of payment

We've all had that sinking feeling when a restaurant staff member presents a device to make payment and a range of potential tips are suggested on screen. While nudging a person to pay more than they had in mind may direct more money to staff in the moment, it doesn't leave a guest with the best final impression. Other pay-at-the-table offerings may help avoid this situation and offer added benefits at the same time. Modern Restaurant Management reports that text to order functionality has been becoming more popular as a replacement for downloading apps. There are benefits for guest and staff alike when a guest can text their order, receive a link that lets them pay immediately (adding a tip if they like), and save repeat purchases. Even in fine dining establishments, more operators are now incorporating such methods to give guests less physical interaction with staff when it's time to order and pay. Research shows it can encourage people to spend and tip more – and it also helps free up already-scarce staff for other tasks.



Use tech to make it personal

While it seems like every restaurant has a loyalty program these days, there is significant room for improvement: According to new research from Mercator Advisory Group, only 22 percent of consumers are satisfied with the level of personalization offered by their loyalty programs. Harnessing guest data can help you up your game. Make sure your program is connected to every place a customer can place an order with you, online and off, so you can collect transactional data and use it to personalize your efforts to upsell and cross-sell items, or to target them with exclusive limited-time offers or invitations. A QSRweb report says this approach can help you present real-time promotions that are more likely to hit the mark with guests, like offering a discount on two large pizzas to the subset of visitors who would normally order just one.





Gluten free fettucine with lamb fennel ragu and parmigiano sauce

Ingredients:

20 Oz. Barilla® gluten free fettucine
20 Oz. Ground lamb
5 Tbsp. Extra virgin olive oil
1 Yellow onion, small dice
3 Celery sticks, finely chopped
3 Garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 Leek, finely chopped
1 Fennel bulb, finely chopped
2 Tbsp. Oregano, chopped
2 ½ Cup beef broth
32 Oz. Chopped tomatoes
1 Pt. Heavy cream
1 ½ Cup parmigiano, grated
¼ Cup parsley, leaves
Salt & black pepper to taste

A ragù worth the wait

A ragù can be a menu workhorse – it’s satisfying, it provides variety by complementing a wide range of starches, and it can be reinvented with different proteins, spices and vegetables to suit your ingredient supply and clientele. Purists favoring a meat-based ragù can serve a classic Bolognese sauce with tagliatelle, or a melt-in-your-mouth lamb ragù with fettucine or wide ribbons of pappardelle. Proteins ranging from turkey to sausage can work too. Guests looking for plant-forward options need not miss out either – a mushroom- or lentil-based ragù can be a hearty (and convincing) substitute for the meatier varieties.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Bring heavy cream to a simmer. Whisk 1 cup of the parmigiano into cream. Cook for 1-2 min. And set aside.
2. In a skillet over med/high heat add half of the oil and brown the lamb.
3. Meanwhile, bring a pot of water to a boil and cook pasta according to package directions.
4. Add the remaining oil to the pan with onion, celery, leek, carrot, and fennel. Cook for 2-3 min. Then add garlic and oregano.
5. Cook lamb and vegetable mixture for 5-7 minutes, until vegetables start to soften. Add tomato cooking an additional 3-4 minutes.
6. Pour in broth into the mixture and bring to a simmer.
7. Drain pasta and add to lamb mixture with the remaining parmigiano, tossing well.
8. Pour parmigiano sauce over the top and garnish with parsley leaves.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Barilla

Protect against seasonal illness now

As summer wanes and cooler weather returns, flu season – and perhaps new Covid strains – are just around the corner. Take time now to put your business in a stronger position to respond to (and ideally prevent) staff illness. Fine-tune your cleaning and sanitation practices, as well as review your sick-time policy. Consider what potential medical benefits, such as a telemedicine benefit, might be useful to staff and workable for you. At the very least, make sure everyone is on board with proper and frequent handwashing – and provide sanitizer throughout your facility as an extra precaution. Adherence to proper handwashing procedures could go farther than anything else in helping to keep your team healthy.



#FoodSafety

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Making employees feel heard can support their safety

Unionization is on the rise at restaurants right now, and recent efforts to unionize several Starbucks locations and one Chipotle location have made headlines recently. In the case of Chipotle, employees of the Augusta, Maine store said faltering food safety practices, a rise in cross-contamination and negligence about employee safety contributed to their efforts. As restaurant operators continue to feel squeezed, which naturally pushes them to make difficult compromises about staff and safety, it's critical to continue to prioritize communication with staff. A recent Nation's Restaurant News report, which shared the views of labor attorneys on opposite sides of the issue, indicated that employers need to demonstrate to employees that they are listening actively to their concerns in order to find solutions – not simply reacting to demands.



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Get back to basics

Remember when the public was just coming out of lockdowns and happily shrugged off restaurants' limited hours, restricted seating, and unpredictable menus if it meant they could still enjoy a meal from their favorite establishments? You may have noticed that sentiment has faded a bit as consumers have lost patience with the ongoing pandemic. For many customers, the pre-pandemic mentality that "the customer is always right" has returned. They aren't afraid to voice their dissatisfaction with a restaurant meal – or simply offer unsolicited comments about how the operator could improve the experience. This is despite operators' ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, sourcing supplies, and paying larger bills for everything from ingredients to fuel. (A recent Eater report detailed the account of a much-lauded California restaurant that launched early in the pandemic but couldn't continue operating amid the many demands it faced in the current economy.) Times are far from normal and a looming recession adds to existing pressures, so consider running your business with the same rigor as you did early in the pandemic. That means focusing on the basics of why you're in business – know what values you stand for, who your ideal customer is, where you are (and aren't) willing to compromise, what core things you want to make sure you execute well right now, and how many staff members are needed to help you accomplish them. Then don't be afraid to stand your ground if guests ask for more.



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