

Foodservice Updates

In This Issue

- [Design your own loyalty program](#) | [Drinks with extra wow factor](#) |
- [The hazards of decentralized food safety](#) | [Does your food storage system pass the test?](#) | [Use digital signs as an engagement tool](#) |
- [Make self-service feel more personal](#)

The buffet is back — could it work for you?

When buffets were quietly closed during the pandemic, it might have been hard to imagine that in just a few years, they would come back better than ever in a number of ways. But that's where we are now. According to a recent New York Times report, even though a number of buffet restaurants have closed in the past couple of years, sales, demand and investment are up at others and are catering to a wide range of budgets. Even if your restaurant hasn't operated a buffet in the past, it's a format worth considering. Innovations in buffet design and presentation in the past few years have made buffet service a labor-friendly, waste-reducing option for operators and an experience-rich option for guests. They are also a safe choice for groups trying to accommodate a wide range of dietary preferences and make everyone feel like they have gotten a good value. First, the service structure of buffets has evolved to include more individual portions and enhance food safety. It's more common to see pre-portioned and -plated items that guests can grab and take with them — as opposed to dishing out large portions that are too much for them to finish. Presentation has also taken a step up, with more premium, Instagrammable options on offer, as well as food stations that lend themselves to theatrical food preparation by chefs. On the food safety side, the increased availability of self-contained hot and cold food storage units are helping operators maintain food temperatures with greater precision. The greater use of individual portioning supports food safety too, allowing guests to limit their time standing over (and likelihood of breathing on) the buffet line.



Tech Talk

Use digital signs as an engagement tool

Beyond using digital signage in your restaurant to help drive sales, there are also opportunities to use it to boost communication and engagement with your team. As a QSR Magazine report suggests, you can use it to list a leaderboard of performance metrics on your team to encourage healthy competition -- or even use it as a training tool itself. You can share messages about your values that help engage people in your culture, as well as to recognize the achievements of staff members. Day to day, use it as another vehicle to deliver just-in-time messages to staff to make sure everyone is up to date about key information.



Make self-service feel more personal



Is your restaurant adopting more guest-facing self-service automation and technology to streamline service and ease labor challenges right now? If doing so feels like you're making your service less personal, there are steps you can take to ensure your guests feel like they have been receiving your best service — whether it's from your app or from a member of your staff. A recent report from Automation & Self-Service suggests customizing the user interface: For example, increasing font sizes and presenting content in a wider range of languages can make the user feel more confident when interacting with your brand. Then encourage the guest to create an account on your system so you can offer personalized content and recommendations related to their tastes and ordering patterns. This will speed up their subsequent ordering processes — and also improve your chances of increasing their check sizes with items they enjoy. You can then use that data to send them promotions that are likely to connect with them at the times they are most likely craving your food. Finally, offer some help to navigate your system. Chatbots and virtual assistants can answer questions, but also be aware if there are parts of your ordering process that are bottlenecks or result in abandoned carts so you can smooth out your ordering process from start to finish.

Trends

Drinks with extra wow factor

Building a worthwhile dining experience isn't just about the food. More restaurants and bars are trying to make the experience feel a little extra special — and well worth the cost of dining out — by changing up the glassware other elements of beverage service to help make the experience more memorable for both alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinkers. Consider the bird-shaped cocktail glass at Bohemien Bar in Brooklyn, or the Smoke on the London Roaster coffee cocktail served in a red telephone booth at Barquila in Mamaroneck, N.Y. Other restaurants are scoring points for presentation with creative fruit purées and garnishes. Everything from toasted marshmallows, to caramel apple slices, to strips of bacon, to gummy bears are appearing as fun finishing touches in drinks to make the experience of dining out feel more worthwhile.



The hazards of decentralized food safety

Across your restaurant and any additional locations you operate, do you have standard record-keeping systems, training processes, operating procedures and compliance tasks that apply across the board? Identifying any areas of your restaurant that are out of sync with other parts of your operation can go far in helping your business. You will be able to better identify patterns in your food safety and pinpoint varying interpretations of procedures that may generate problems. Your staff will learn the same skills in the same way. This helps you provide a consistent experience for your guests, as well as ensure that your staff from one location can easily slip into roles in a different location when labor needs or development opportunities arise. Finally, you demonstrate to regulators that you run a business that is committed to doing the right thing — as a result, you'll be in a good position to work in partnership with them to build upon your strengths.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Does your food storage system pass the test?

How well can you trust that your methods for labeling and storing food are helping you avoid cross-contamination and food spoilage? Check your inventory and make sure items are labeled correctly and that you're following a first-in, first-out system for using ingredients. By labeling foods accurately and ensuring that you're using them by their use-by date, you can minimize your waste and avoid triggering a potential foodborne illness or allergy.



Foodservice Updates

Design your own loyalty program

Restaurants aren't one-size-fits-all, so restaurant loyalty programs shouldn't be either. Yet many restaurants operate this way. If you're offering blanket rewards for different tiers of your program, or not allowing for some choice on the part of your guests, you may be leaving sales on the table. A guide from the guest engagement company Paytronix suggests some approaches restaurants should keep in mind to offer a program that most closely reflects their brand and the preferences of their guests. It asks you to consider five factors: First, think about how to best engage your guests. Conduct a survey so you understand what motivates them to come to your restaurant -- and what would drive them back to make incremental purchases over time. Second, build in the flexibility to run promotions that suit your brand. Do you want to build continued interest around a signature menu item or other unique aspect of your brand? Third, make it easy for your staff to use the program with guests -- to promote it, answer questions about it, and provide updates to account balances. Fourth, choose only the options that allow you to earn a financial return and plan clear steps to achieve it. Finally, capture key guest information that helps you segment offers. Your longtime guest with kids may well be interested in different offers than the newer guest who comes in once a month for happy hour -- and that should come through in their offers. In addition to providing an overview of the popular programs in use and how they can be customized, the Paytronix guide also includes a worksheet that can help you evaluate program options and determine which features best suit your needs.



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