

Foodservice Updates

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Rethink value

Enticing guests to splurge or treat themselves can be a tough sell when consumers are pinching pennies. But people still have to eat, so reinforcing the value you provide — not necessarily the low prices but the quality of the overall experience — can make coming to your restaurant a justifiable expense for guests. A recent report from Modern Restaurant Management shared how a range of different brands have been promoting value to guests, including a \$5 off dine-in offer for a limited time this summer in an effort to help guests pay for gas, and an “inflation relief” menu that slashed prices by as much as 75 percent for a limited time. Offering discounts can only happen for so long at a time when restaurants themselves are also straining to eke out profits, so whether you’re cutting prices for a limited time or not, it’s just as important to think beyond the monetary value you provide. As you plan your promotions in the months ahead, think of the value you’re providing from different angles. Maybe you can help your guests solve a problem, like the offer above that helps guests pay for gas. Perhaps you can offer social value by bringing people together at a happy hour or other event. Maybe your brand is one that can offer psychological value because of the care you take in offering healthy options or your commitment to sourcing from sustainable suppliers. Weaving several kinds of value into what you offer can strengthen the offers you provide. Your efforts don’t have to be elaborate: Even a simple thank-you message to guests on your website and social media can help boost the good will that brings people back.



What tasks can you offload to tech?

According to a recent survey by the National Restaurant Association, 65 percent of restaurant operators say they lack sufficient staff to support customer demand. As a result, when customers call in orders or reservation requests to restaurants right now, more of those calls are being transferred to lines supported by artificial intelligence. There are clear benefits — it's easier to collect guest data, and a bot won't get rattled during a busy shift or miss upselling an order. However, even the most established brands have been experiencing some growing pains with the adoption of this technology in recent months. Would your guests be amenable to connecting with you via AI? If not or you're not sure, could you incentivize guests to place orders online or via app instead?



Tech softens boundaries between foodservice concepts

Rising costs, along with the struggle to attract and retain labor, are hastening the automation of a wide range of restaurant tasks. While up to now, most kitchen automation has been supported by human intervention, newcomers to the market are blurring the lines between quick-service/fast-casual restaurants and sophisticated vending machines that can serve warm food and drink. In the process, they are gaining the ability to keep costs low for customers. Newly launched Mezli, for one, has been called the world's first fully autonomous robotic restaurant. It serves up a full hot menu of healthy grain bowls, sides and drinks without any human intervention — and their bowls start at \$6.99.





Crispy Popcorn Shrimp Po Boy

Ingredients:

- 1 Sub Roll 6 Inch
- 2 fl oz Ken's Signature Creole Chili Pepper Sauce
- 1/4 cup Chopped Tomatoes
- 1 oz Lettuce Shredded
- 5 each Pickle Slices
- 4 oz Crispy Fried Popcorn Shrimp

Strengthen your sandwich game

At a moment when consumers are looking for convenience, portability and affordability, your sandwich menu can meet some, if not all, of those needs. Consider changing up the proteins you offer between the bread or prepare them in new ways, adding some global flavor or spice to the accompanying condiments, and weaving in some in-season produce. Your sandwich menu can offer you some low-risk areas to test your roster of limited-time offers as well — something that will keep guests interested in returning.

Food Trends



Instructions:

1. Cut roll in half and brush with Ken's Signature Creole Chili Pepper Sauce.
2. Fry shrimp until golden brown.
3. In roll, place shredded lettuce, tomatoes and pickles.
4. Top with fried shrimp, drizzle with sauce and serve with choice of side.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Ken's

Shield your safety as seasonal illnesses climb

We're approaching the time of year when the rise of seasonal viruses can more easily mask some of the pathogens that cause foodborne illness. Doubling down on the food safety training practices that can prevent common foodborne illnesses like norovirus, salmonella and campylobacter may help you prevent larger problems. Washing fruits and vegetables carefully, cooking foods the proper temperature, keeping items left out for serving — such as gravies — at safe temperatures, and frequent hand washing with soap can all help reduce your risk.



#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Chip away at food safety monitoring effort

The prospect of a health and safety inspection can cause anxiety for restaurant teams, but it doesn't have to. In addition to your ongoing training efforts, zeroing in on different parts of your operation on a rotating basis can help you reduce the overwhelm of managing overall food safety while ensuring you're not overlooking something important. As winter gets closer and the warmth and aromas from your kitchen call pests inside, consider double-checking your food storage practices. Confirm that all items are stored at least six inches off the floor and in proper containers that prevent contamination. Ensure containers are accurately labeled. Store any dangerous chemicals away from food or tools that come into contact with it. Check appliances and food contact surfaces to ensure they are in good condition and free from any food residues that can attract pests.



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Find a winning LTO formula

Limited-time offers are a critical tool for restaurant operators right now. While most restaurant brands won't be so lucky as to land on the next Pumpkin Spice Latte or Shamrock Shake, LTOs still bring benefits that are especially helpful in uncertain economic times. They can motivate guests to return more often, inspire loyalty by helping your most frequent guests build rewards more quickly, and help you innovate on a shoestring by providing you with a vehicle for testing new ideas. They can also help you stay front-of-mind with guests throughout the year by giving you a regular stream of content to promote. Holidays and changing seasons can provide natural inspiration and launching points for new LTOs. Even the best idea won't take off without a plan to help it succeed, so lean on your marketing and communication tools to generate awareness and interest. Get the word out about each LTO on your email list and provide an exclusive offer around it. Design a contest to generate buzz on social media around your offer, and make sure that all promotions — email, social media and in-store — link back to up-to-date information on your website. Make it easy for guests to get more information about your offer by using a QR code on all materials and linking it to key information on your website. Throughout the process, collect data on the response from guests that you can analyze in an effort to both feed your future plans for LTOs and also course-correct where needed.



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