

# Foodservice Updates

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## What does value mean to you and your guests?

We've been hearing it a lot this year: To generate traffic when consumers are hesitant to spend on restaurant meals, operators have to provide value – or at least the perception of it. But that doesn't necessarily mean offering discounts. According to Kinetic12, a consulting firm that works with emerging brands and identifies trends, there are many ways in which an operator can provide "value": You can offer premium ingredients – guests will be more willing to pay top dollar if you're offering high-quality food and it feels that way. You can offer a couple of portion sizes, so guests can trade up or down (this can be more palatable to guests who might otherwise notice that their usual-size dish is suddenly costing them more). Price is still part of the equation and you may well have guests who are looking for more budget-friendly options right now, so consider lunch deals, value meals and other promotions to draw traffic and allow people to mind their budgets. The service and overall experience you provide will continue to mean a lot, so prioritize your staff's interactions with guests and ensure your website and app are easy to navigate and communicate accurately about timing. Your consistent execution is important – guests need to feel like they know what to expect in terms of their overall experience with you. Even if you're cutting corners right now – whether it be with ingredients, serving sizes, staffing or something else – that shouldn't come through in the overall experience you provide. If guests feel they are suddenly getting much less value for their money, they won't return. Finding even incremental ways to elevate your brand's value can make your guests feel like your meals are a worthwhile purchase, regardless of what you're having to charge.



# Tech Talk

## One kiosk, many functions

Restaurant kiosks are labor savers, particularly if operators use their full range of applications. Beyond handling mobile ordering and payment, restaurants can use kiosks creatively to reinforce the brand experience, entertain guests and steer people toward particular menu items. According to Savor's Restaurant Technology Ebook 2023, restaurants are using kiosks to prompt guests to sign up for their loyalty program and provide updates on rewards. Some are using kiosks as interactive consoles that help guests pass the time with games that include branded content. Kiosks can serve as autonomous beverage service stations, allowing guests to customize and pay for their drinks. You can also promote particular menu items on kiosks by featuring mouth-watering photos and descriptions of the profitable items you're hoping to sell on a given day.



## Use tech to boost staff engagement – for free



Making staff feel appreciated – and more likely to engage with the business and remain on the job – isn't just about offering tangible rewards. The little things you can do to recognize a job well done, or acknowledge personal milestones like birthdays or work anniversaries, can all help you boost morale and make employees feel like they are making important contributions to the broader team. Harness your employee-facing technology to automate email messages and other alerts so you can trigger these communications as needed without a lot of manual effort.



# Trends

## Here's a tip

Tipping has become a fraught topic in recent years – both with staff and guests. Restaurants are continuing to find their footing with tipping and are testing approaches that feel as fair as possible to everyone, but that's not an easy task. In a recent column for Restaurant Business, Jonathan Deutsch advises operators to approach tipping changes in three key ways: First, be thoughtful. Review past data to anticipate how a new tipping model would affect each position in the business. Also be inclusive. Involve all employees in the conversation and make them aware of when the changes will be taking place – it will help you gain their cooperation with your final decision. Finally, be prepared to stick with your decision for a while. Making adjustments more than once a year is likely to feel jarring for your staff.



## Contain hygiene risks

Poor hygiene is among the biggest contributors to the spread of foodborne illness – and it can make seasonal illnesses easier to spread too. Make sure your staff receive reminders about proper handwashing technique, as well as which sinks are to be used for handwashing. Beyond that, reinforce your policy around the use of protective items like gloves and hairnets, as well as jewelry – rings, bracelets and watches can all harbor bacteria and be potential sources of cross-contamination. Staff should keep their own drinks covered with a lid and confined to break rooms.



**#FoodSafety**

## Beware of buildup

Restaurants are having to juggle tasks with smaller crews, so it might be easier to overlook tasks that aren't exactly urgent but can still pose problems when not completed promptly. One example of this is the residue that can build up on your equipment – slime that accumulates on soda fountain nozzles and ice bins, grease in grease traps, and food particles that aren't swept up can contaminate food, create fire hazards and attract pests. Are there areas of your operation that aren't getting cleaned as well as they could? If so, make sure everyone is clear about how to complete these tasks – if they are on your schedule but not being completed effectively, some training may help.





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## Could more cross-training benefit you?

A survey conducted by the National Restaurant Association earlier this year found that 79 percent of operators are having difficulty hiring. Hospitality and foodservice labor turnover, which is about twice the national average, adds to the costs and strain of finding staff. Whether you're currently short-staffed, or if you simply want to be more prepared and flexible when members of your team are ill, cross-training your team can help you. Employees who know how to perform multiple roles can flex with the shifting demands of your business, giving you better protection against absence and changes in the overall business environment. It allows you to redirect staff to other tasks if you happen to be over- or under-staffed during a shift. It can also encourage your team to be more engaged with their jobs if you're offering them opportunities to develop new skills and varying their day-to-day responsibilities. While additional training can demand resources, you might offer rewards to team members who provide on-the-job coaching to less experienced staff, and if you're already relying on automated tools to deliver training materials, you can expand their use to a larger group of staff. Who knows? Your cross-training efforts may help you to more quickly identify employees' individual skills and find ways to use them in other parts of your business.



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