

Foodservice Updates

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Double down on loyalty as an inflation antidote

During this period of high inflation, some restaurant leaders are noticing a reduction in sales or traffic, though this has been uneven across restaurant brands. A recent CNBC report indicated that at McDonald's and Chipotle, lower-income guests were spending less and higher-income guests were visiting more often. On the other hand, brands including Starbucks, Bloomin' Brands and Restaurant Brands International say they aren't seeing major changes in guest spending. Regardless, it's a good time for restaurants to focus on nurturing loyalty — particularly fine-dining and other high-end brands that may experience more of a dip in business during an inflationary period. According to a recent survey of over 2,000 American consumers by LendingTree, half of consumers said retail, food and other loyalty programs are more important to them than ever. You can encourage consumers to make your business one of the ones they continue to visit in a rocky economy if you focus on offering special experiences — members-only dinner promotions, wine cellar tours or sommelier talks for your wine-enthusiast guests, or early access to reservations for a special event. Attract more guests who are similar to your favorite visitors by creating a referral program that offers a free appetizer or drink on their return visit, or some extra loyalty points in both accounts after a new guest signs up — it may help you bring both people back when they are looking for a place to dine together or with a larger group of friends. At a time when technology is replacing some interpersonal connections between your staff and guests, ensure that the ones you do have with guests are high-quality — remembering their names and food preferences, ensuring their payment is especially seamless, and simply welcoming them back like friends can go a long way.



A streamlined solution for apps

Much like restaurant operators juggling an assortment of disjointed equipment and software, consumers often have a range of apps cluttering their smartphone screens. There are multiple accounts to track and nothing is connected. Getting a consumer interested in signing up for yet another app in this environment can be a hard sell. According to a new study from PayPal and Pymnts.com, there is considerable interest in “super apps” that connect retail, restaurants, grocery, banking and a range of other essential and nonessential services. Such technology could also make it easier for restaurants to reap benefits from their affiliation with complementary brands. Consumer trust in cybersecurity is one stumbling block standing in the way of such technology, but expect new offerings to emerge. In the meantime, consider how you might benefit from tech solutions that eliminate app clutter for guests and offer consumers an even more streamlined purchasing experience that includes their favorite brands — including and beyond restaurants. It could give your business a boost when it comes to attracting and retaining guests.



An association for virtual restaurant brands

While virtual restaurants have created helpful new income streams for restaurants, they haven't been immune from problems. Copycat scams, inconsistent application of health and safety standards and intellectual property infringement have occurred in some places, threatening public perception of the industry. In the interest of addressing those issues and bringing consistency to virtual restaurants, the Virtual Restaurant Association was formed recently. It is seeking to provide free memberships to virtual restaurant companies that demonstrate their commitment to health and safety, brand integrity, intellectual property and profitability. If you have launched a virtual restaurant or are thinking about expanding your business with one, consider following the development of the group at virtualrestaurantassoc.org.





Crab Cake Sliders

Ingredients:

Buns:

16 1.1 oz. Soft Dinner Rolls Item
Olive oil (for brushing rolls)
Old Bay® seasoning (topping rolls)

Crab Cakes:

Olive oil (for frying)
17 oz crab meat
½ teaspoon garlic (minced)
1 egg
2 ½ tablespoons Mayonnaise
1 ½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 ½ teaspoons old bay seasoning
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup diced celery

2 tablespoons chopped parsley

½ cup pretzel/bread crumbs

Slaw:

2 cups shredded celery (peeler)
1 cup red onion (thin sliced)
1 lemon (juiced)

¼ teaspoon salt

Tartar Sauce:

1 cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons red onion (minced)
2 tablespoons Pickles (minced)
½ teaspoon capers (minced)
2 tablespoons lemon juice
½ teaspoon garlic (minced)
1 tablespoon pickle juice
¼ teaspoon pepper

Say it with sliders

Is there a more perfect appetizer than sliders? They're shareable, customizable and have Instagram-worthy visual appeal. What's more, they have evolved well beyond the mini meat-patty variety. Consider creative slider options for your vegetarian, flexitarian and pescatarian guests alike – or even create a customizable sampler platter that suits the tastes of the group.



Instructions:

1. Take out frozen rolls and arrange them on a parchment lined sheet pan. Cover with plastic wrap and let thaw for about 1 hr.
2. In a small mixing bowl combine all tartar sauce ingredients and whisk until well incorporated. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit in the refrigerator.
3. In a small mixing bowl toss together slaw ingredients, cover with plastic wrap and keep in the refrigerator.
4. When rolls are thawed let them proof covered some place warm until they double in size. Then brush with olive oil, sprinkle with old bay and bake for 14 minutes @375°F. Let cool then slice ½ inch from bottom with a serrated knife.
5. In a large mixing bowl combine crab cake ingredients. Form patties about 3" in diameter.
6. In a frying pan, heat about ¼ inch olive oil medium heat and begin cooking crab cakes. Once golden brown on the bottom, flip and repeat for all. Put cooked cakes on sheet pan.
7. Build Slider as such: bottom bun, tartar sauce, crab cake, slaw, tartar sauce, top bun.

Old Bay is a registered trademark of McCormick & Company
Recipe and photo courtesy of Ken's

Food Trends

Identify your barriers to food safety

Even if you have the best food safety procedures in place for your operation, some obstacles may be standing in the way of your achieving the results you want. Perhaps the problem stems from inconvenient locations for hand sinks, insufficient tools to carry out kitchen tasks, or language barriers getting in the way of clear communication. Perhaps due to the high rate of employee turnover in the industry, you're having to move more seasoned staff to tasks like food preparation and serving while assigning new workers to cleaning and sanitation duties even if they haven't had adequate training. According to Steritech, there is a direct correlation between manager turnover and the quality of line-worker training and the overall performance of a store. (The improvement only levels off once a manager has been on the job for 10 years.) That makes it especially important to prioritize the training and retention of new managers who can spot errors early and ensure key sanitation efforts don't slip.

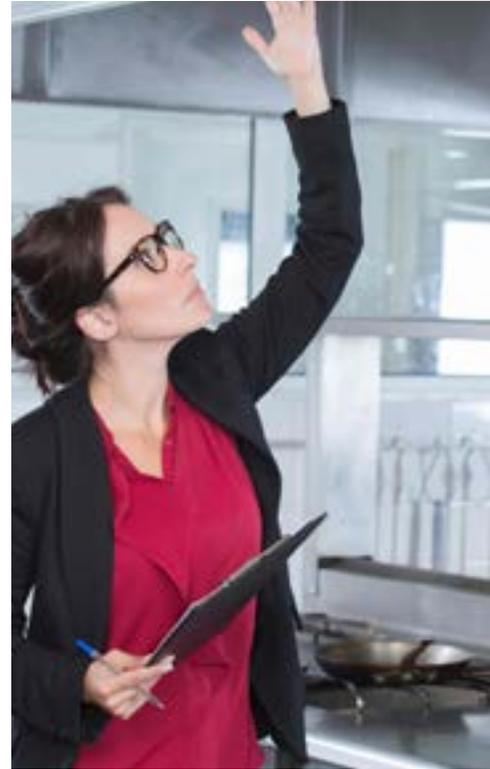


#FoodSafety

#FoodSafety

Recruit a food safety squad

Every restaurant needs a support system to uphold food safety standards and ensure they don't go downhill during certain shifts. Recruiting a team of advocates can help you build and strengthen your food safety culture — especially if you manage to win over as advocates any staff who are initially skeptical of the effort. In addition to helping you ensure day-to-day food safety tasks don't fall through the cracks, your safety squad can take on larger initiatives on a cyclical basis, starting with the problems that pose the biggest risks to the business.



Foodservice Updates

Train your menu understudies

Some ingredients simply gain a cult following. That has been the case with avocados in recent years, whether as part of the internet sensation they created when spread on toast or simply as a salad topper, smoothie ingredient or guacamole base. But in a period when near-constant climate challenges, inflation and supply chain woes are impacting so many ingredients at once, avocados are one of many ingredients to carry an increasingly out-of-reach price tag these days. The U.S Department of Agriculture said average avocado prices spiked 30 percent in late July over the same period last year. They are just one example of how operators can't rest on their laurels when it comes to menu engineering and menu planning in general. Each item on your menu should be popular and profitable. If you're not ready to take a popular item off the menu, consider how you can offer it at a higher price point or with more economical ingredients. Being known for a signature item can be a blessing in good times and a curse in others — consider the brand challenges of Wingstop when chicken wings suddenly became scarce. It's crucial to keep testing new ideas so that when one popular ingredient is unavailable, you have a couple of understudy dishes ready in the wings. Offer them as limited-time specials or in VIP test tastings for your best guests so you're regularly collecting data on what's working, what's not and what substitutes can be swapped in with the greatest acceptance from guests. Who knows? You may accidentally create the next avocado toast for your guests.



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