

Foodservice Updates

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Would your guests subscribe to you?

Consumers are willing to pay a subscription fee for everything from podcasts to vitamins to tech gadgets these days. So why not their favorite restaurant? According to research from the Global Banking and Finance Review, 70 percent of business leaders say subscription-based business models will be central to their future prospects – and yet for many businesses across different industries, subscriptions remain an area of untapped potential.

When it comes to restaurants, subscriptions for drinks, food and really anything consumers crave may be an emerging way for foodservice businesses to monitor loyalty to their brand and build in some longer-term sales security through recurring revenue. Grub Street reports that Panera, for example, which launched a monthly coffee subscription service for \$8.99 last winter, is now considering other ideas including a lunch subscription service focused on kids who are learning from home this fall. It's easy to see why: A parent who has paid for their child's lunch subscription is more likely to make a point of coming to Panera for lunch – and perhaps ordering a meal of their own. If you have been offering meal kits or dessert boxes or family-style dinner bundles during lockdown, these items could easily convert to subscription-based services that not only give you some advance warning to source the items you need in your inventory, but also help you secure some recurring revenue for the uncertain months ahead.



Creating the right delivery strategy for you

As restaurants have struggled to accommodate the need for meal delivery during the pandemic, a number of cities have stepped up to limit the steep fees third-party delivery providers can charge. Restaurant Business reported in late July that Philadelphia – which had just joined the effort alongside cities including New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Portland, Ore., and Washington, D.C. – would immediately cap total fees on delivery orders at 15 percent. The report said delivery commissions could not exceed 10 percent of the order total, and separate nondelivery fees could not surpass 5 percent – until 90 days after the end of the current public health emergency. As for what happens in other cities, and, for that matter, across the country after the threat of this pandemic passes, restaurants need to dissect their data and understand their customer base so they can negotiate the best terms of third-party contracts. Even with the major providers, there is room for small restaurant brands to bargain – particularly as provider consolidation remains likely. This Fast Casual report (<https://bit.ly/33vocmi>) provides some tips about the best ways to secure a fair deal with third-party companies – including what you should know about your profits, customer habits and existing ordering channels to get the best leverage when negotiating an agreement. If you think in-house delivery might work for your restaurant with a little guidance, you can also check out the Native Delivery Best Practices Work Group, an effort launched by the Restaurant Technology Network.



Stability through loyalty



As COVID-19 spikes threaten to force restaurants into a cycle of loosening and tightening restrictions, loyalty programs may provide some much-needed stability. In a recent interview with The Spoon, the president and co-founder of Paytronix said during the worst of the downturn, one customer – who was representative of what the company observed with others – saw sales from non-loyalty members drop 75 percent, while sales from loyalty members fell just 20 percent (and their spending was not significantly lower than pre-COVID levels). It's likely, for this reason, that major brands including Starbucks, Wendy's and Taco Bell have been either introducing or upgrading their loyalty programs recently – adding new benefits and offering more convenient app-based payment methods. What can your restaurant do to entice customers to become more loyal to your brand?

Stick with the safer shield

Face masks don't exactly have a reputation for comfort: they get hot, hurt the ears and steam up a glasses-wearing person's lenses with every exhale. So can a clear face shield serve as a more comfortable substitute? Unfortunately, no. A report from MIT Medical confirms, COVID-19 spreads primarily from person to person through respiratory droplets we generate when we talk, shout, sing and simply breathe – and a face shield can't contain those droplets like a mask that fits around the nose and mouth. However, since social distancing is the key approach to preventing the spread of the virus, a person can wear a shield along with a mask around their neck that can be pulled up when they are within six feet of others -- if the nature of their job allows for that.



Do your pre-and post-COVID safety communications match?

If, before the pandemic, your restaurant generated most of its business through dining room sales as opposed to through off-premise sales, your staff may be used to communicating far differently about your menu. If your team was near-perfect when it came to suggesting substitutes and communicating about allergens during conversations at a guest's table, have you found a new system for replicating those communications as effectively either electronically or during the shorter in-person interactions that are common now? As the National Restaurant Association reports, the increase in off-premise sales and the decline in on-premise sales mean your servers don't have as direct of an opportunity to discuss food allergies and sensitivities. So it's important (and, in some locations, required) to update your allergen profiles as your recipes change – and to make sure that information is readily accessible in written form – on your website, app, or at your restaurant for those who order food in person. That's especially true to remember as you update your menu for a new season or substitute new ingredients due to shortages.



Put your own spin on a classic

Is there a classic dish you remember eating as a child that was pure comfort? If you're looking to inject some reassurance or nostalgia into your menu (and don't we all need it?), try creating



your own version of a classic dish by experimenting with surprising spices, incorporating seasonal produce or even a creating a unique presentation that breathes some new life into a food people thought they knew.

A virtual recovery

Back in June, the National Restaurant Association named virtual gift cards on a list of restaurant tech tools that it predicted would best support the industry's recovery from the pandemic. Virtual gift cards – as opposed to the plastic ones that clutter a person's wallet – make contactless, fast payment possible, so they're well suited to these times.



Further, since more than 70 percent of gift card recipients spend more than the face value of their cards, according to research from Givex, they can help lift check totals. Are you offering and promoting virtual gift cards on your website, app and social media platforms?

Mexican Meatloaf



Ingredients:

Cooking spray

4 pounds JENNIE-O® All Natural Ground Turkey, #0230-08

2 (15-ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained
2 (15-ounce) cans whole kernel corn, drained and rinsed

1 (4-ounce) can fire-roasted diced green chiles

2 cups mild chunky salsa

2 (1-ounce) packages dry taco seasoning mix

1 ½ cups plain dry bread crumbs

6 egg whites

2 (28-ounce) cans enchilada sauce, divided

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
3. In a large bowl, mix together the ground turkey, black beans, corn, green chiles, salsa, taco seasoning, bread crumbs, and egg whites until thoroughly combined.
4. Form the mixture into a loaf shape and place it into the prepared baking dish.
5. Pour half the enchilada sauce over the meatloaf.
6. Bake for 45 minutes.
7. Remove from oven and pour the remaining sauce over the meatloaf.
8. Return to oven and cook until it is well-done, 165°F as measured by a meat thermometer.
9. Slice and serve with pan sauce spooned over the slices.

Recipe and photo courtesy of Jennie-O

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