



# RESTAURANT TOOLKIT

FOOD & BEVERAGE PLAYBOOK

# PARTNERS

This toolkit was produced by  
streetsense in partnership with  
**LISC**





# INTRO

The hospitality industry itself is a living, breathing, changing entity, with an energy and heart and soul unlike any other. But you know that, otherwise, you wouldn't have dedicated so much to this craft that you so love. With that in mind, we set out to create a tool kit that could be referenced for a myriad of situations you may come across, especially in the current restaurant and bar climate.

From adapting and pivoting to bring in additional revenue streams, to tips on menu engineering to how to communicate effectively with your customer as well as your fellow community of restaurateurs, this guide is set-up to explain a bit about the current state of the industry, highlight a specific example per chapter through a case study, then provide links to additional resources should you want to explore more.

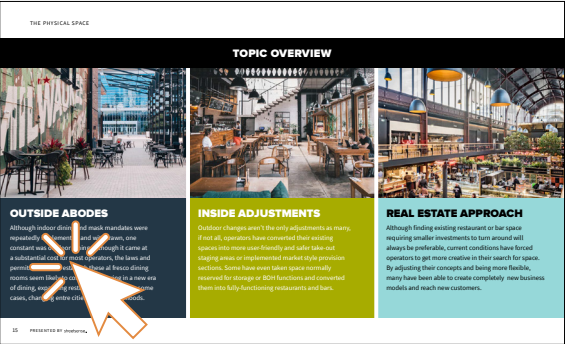
Each chapter is designed to stand on its own, complete with specific calls to action listed under each topic and supporting subtopic. However, with natural subject matter overlap, the entire document is hyperlinked throughout to bring the reader to corresponding parts within the document that may provide additional details and suggestions.

**We do hope you find this toolkit helpful!**

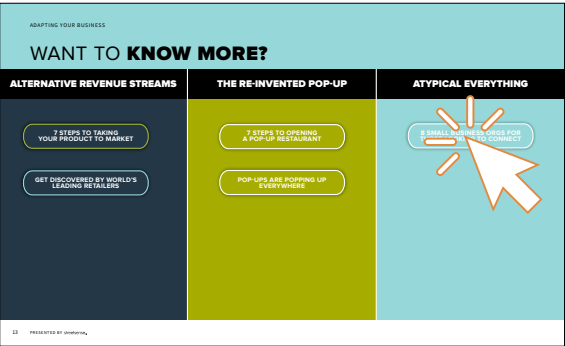




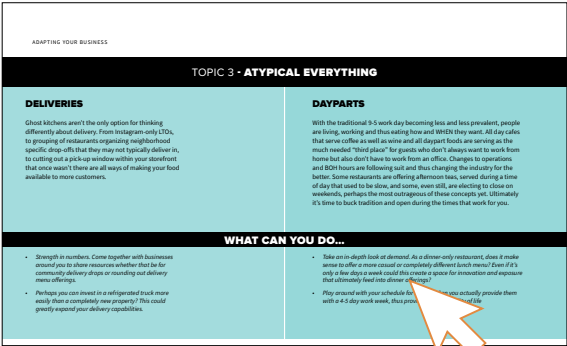
# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



Each **Topic Page** has a call to action to begin putting any individual strategy to work.

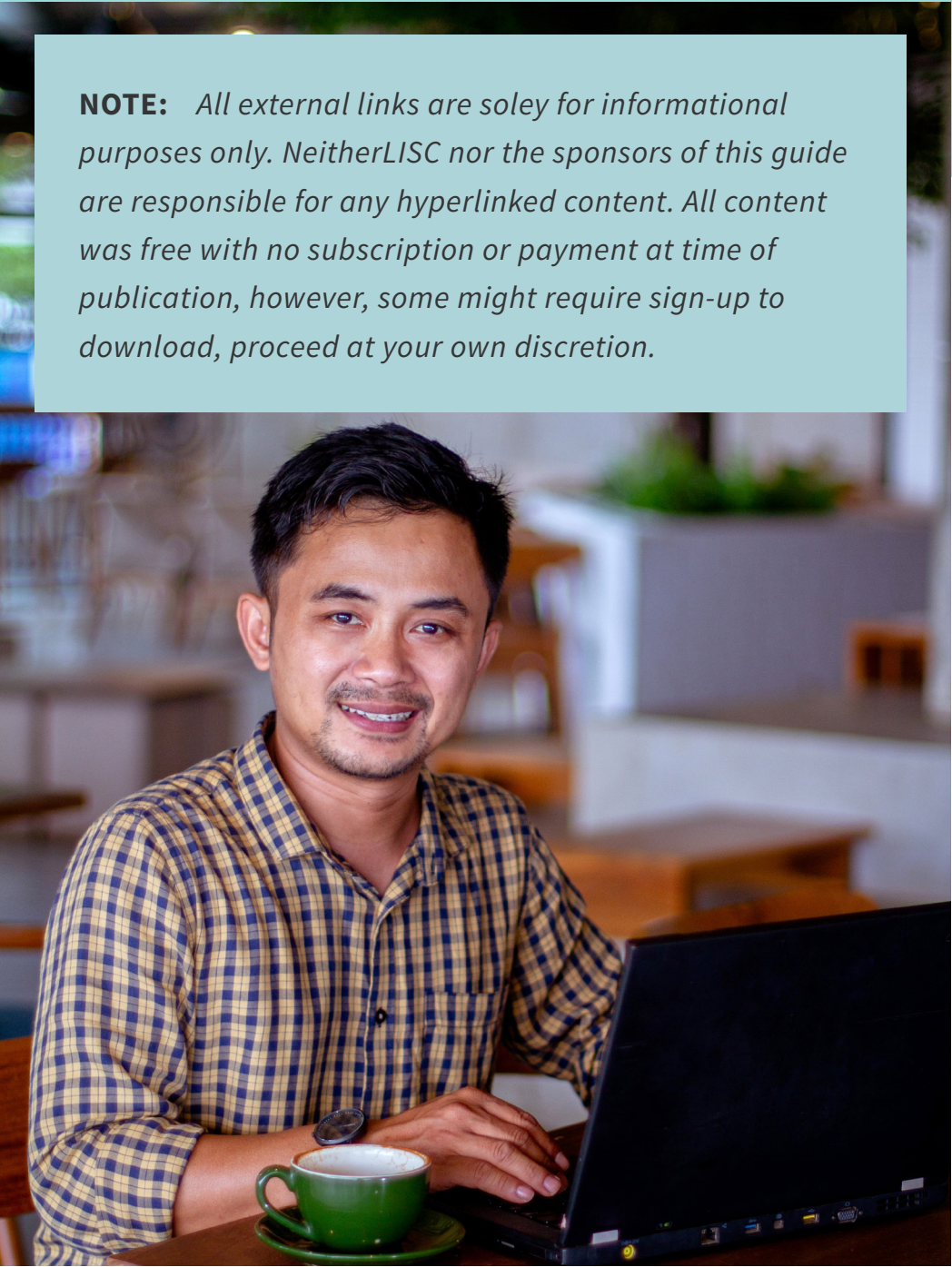


**Table of Contents** and **Topic Overviews** are hyperlinked to take you directly to each section with one click.



Example **Case Study** businesses and useful **Resources**, links and further information are available at the end of each chapter.\*

**NOTE:** All external links are solely for informational purposes only. Neither LISC nor the sponsors of this guide are responsible for any hyperlinked content. All content was free with no subscription or payment at time of publication, however, some might require sign-up to download, proceed at your own discretion.



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# ADAPTING YOUR BUSINESS

## *Think Outside the Take-Out Box*

First two years of the pandemic have required more flexibility and innovation within the industry than ever before. From Ghost Kitchens to unlikely partnerships, regardless of the exact pivot that was made, one thing was at the heart of them all: Serving your guest (and yourself) in new ways.





# TOPIC OVERVIEW



## ALTERNATIVE REVENUE STREAMS

With necessity being the mother of invention, creative solutions and intriguing pivots proved astounding resiliency within our beloved industry. Whether it was bringing in additional revenue streams or completely switching business models, there were adaptations made on every level; not only were they impressive but many of them saved entire companies.



## THE RE-IMAGINED “POP-UP”

While the idea of hosting a pop-up event or temporary venue isn’t new, the twists that have recently been applied to the general concept are making for even more creative, fun solutions for the industry. Out-of-the-box partnerships with non-culinary establishments, concepts-within-concepts and uncommon use of space and delivery methods are all becoming more common.

*\*Follow local masking rules and regulations.*



## ATYPICAL EVERYTHING

Thinking differently about everything we once knew also applies to times and types of service. From offering delivery only lunches to closing on weekends to adding afternoon teas and everything in-between, thinking creatively about what, WHEN and HOW service is offered is just another way businesses are thriving in this new world.

# TOPIC 1 - ALTERNATIVE REVENUE STREAMS

## PACKAGED + PREPARED FOR MARKET(S)

With nationwide shortages at grocery stores, many restaurants started selling products - everything from produce to paper towels - from their vendors direct to consumer. While that idea isn't necessarily novel anymore, taking it a step further to package and sell their own products and/or selling deli-style, pre-made dishes also helped establishments bring in additional cash flow.

## CLUBS + SUBSCRIPTIONS

Recently, take-out options have greatly expanded. Examples include restaurants offering almost a subscription-like set-up where guests can elect if they want 2, 3, or 4 meals per month from them, for however many months they'd like to sign-up, for a flat rate. The guaranteed revenue helps for planning purposes. Additionally, one-off themed nights can invigorate ideas and encourage guests to make a special trip.

## LIFESTYLE CURATION

In addition to the actual food, one of the greatest parts of dining out is the experience and ambiance. To help recreate these feelings at home, fine-dining establishments offered DIY versions of their more complicated dishes, complete with step-by-step how to's for assembly and over-the-top execution at home. Taking it even a step further, many included curated playlists and even scents with their meals.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ Determine what item(s) on your menu are your differentiators, i.e. what keeps the guests coming back for more. Can those items be packaged or bottled and sold - from your storefront? From grocers?
- ☐ Host your own market. Include not only items from your vendors but partner with additional local stores and restaurants. These items could be offered always or at select, pop-up time frames.

- ☐ Economies of scale favor your bottom line. Host a night where you offer only 1 item and it's an item not always on the menu creating both efficiency on your end but exclusivity to the customer.
- ☐ Consistent cash flow helps. Set up a type of "membership" where those guests may receive monthly perks or discounts.

- ☐ What really is the "soul" of your restaurant? Is it your staff - create a playlist based on each of their favorite songs? Or offer a weekly take-out-only special in their honor? Perhaps the "soul" is the grandmother that inspired you to start cooking in the first place? Can you send her favorite homemade cookies as an added perk to your carry-out meals?
- ☐ Anything that is uniquely "you" can serve as a small surprise and delight to customers, it doesn't have to be free food, think experiential and memorable.



TOPIC 2 - THE RE-IMAGINED POP-UP

PARTNERSHIPS

Certain products and services go hand-in-hand and when looking at the big picture, it could make sense to partner with those that are both inside and outside the industry. A hotel may need to offer room service but can't justify bringing on staff to do so, could you be their exclusive partner and deliver directly to rooms? A Chinese restaurant may have an already established delivery operation, could you "tag on" and offer your differing cuisine but split the cost of overhead? This could also gain you immediate access to a new area of town that is otherwise outside of your delivery capabilities.

GHOST + MINI KITCHENS

While a "traditional" pop-up includes a store-front, Ghost kitchens do not. Only available for delivery orders (and in some cases carry-out) also known as dark or shadow kitchens, these operate out other's kitchens, often unknown to the consumer. The obscurity is part of their allure. A really good, affordable hamburger being made out of a high-end Mexican kitchen, sure, why not?! On the other hand, if branding and marketing IS desired, a kitchen-within-a kitchen where you might offer a separate concept but its physical location is known and publicized might suit your needs.

SPACE + MENU SHARING

Perhaps there is a perfect spot that you have your eye on but it just doesn't make sense for your bottom line. Space sharing is becoming more and more the norm. You could operate the day part with breakfast items and coffee while another tenant comes in for evening sandwiches and wine. Similarly, another version of, and perk, to the pop-up concept is changing your menu weekly. Especially beneficial in the early stages of menu concepting, testing menu items in small groups could help you work out kinks but also keep guests coming back for more, week after week.

WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ If you don't know the businesses around you, get to know them. Join local industry networking groups, not unlike LISC and simply start a conversation, brainstorming ideas outside of your silo may help innovation (and cash) start to flow.
- ☐ Make a simple, "what do I have to offer" and "what do I need to gain" list, look to area businesses who could help fill needs and that you could contribute to as well.

- ☐ Look to expand your footprint into an area you might not be ready to fully commit to by testing the waters, either in a more traditional sense of a pop-up (see Physical Space Chapter) or by creating a Ghost Kitchen.
- ☐ Likewise, if there's a concept different from your current one that you want to try out, try creating a new "brand" to sit within your physical space, the flexibility that the word "pop-up" allows creates a freedom that your established brand may not have.

- ☐ Look at your overall, big picture strategy (the Real Estate Approach portion in our Physical Spaces Chapter may help you do that as well). Do you have an area of your store you could carve out for others? Do you have an area of town you want to expand into?
- ☐ On a smaller scale, has there always been a menu item you wanted to offer but weren't sure about. Limited Time Offers were the "original" small pop-up and serve just this very purpose.

## TOPIC 3 - ATYPICAL EVERYTHING

### DELIVERIES

Ghost kitchens aren't the only option for thinking differently about delivery. From Instagram-only Limited Time Offers (LTOs), to a grouping of restaurants organizing neighborhood specific drop-offs that they may not typically deliver in, to cutting out a pick-up window within your storefront that once wasn't there are all ways of making your food available to more customers.

### DAY-PARTS

With the traditional 9-5 workday becoming less and less prevalent, people are living, working, and thus eating how and WHEN they want. All-day cafes that serve coffee, as well as wine and all day-part foods, are serving as the much needed "third place" for guests who don't always want to work from home but also don't have to work from an office. Changes to operations and BOH hours are following suit and thus changing the industry for the better. Some restaurants are offering afternoon teas, served during a time of day that used to be slow, and some, even still, are electing to close on weekends, perhaps the most outrageous of these concepts yet. Ultimately it's time to buck tradition and open during the times that work for you.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *As the saying goes, there is strength in numbers. Come together with businesses around you to share resources whether that be for community delivery drops or rounding out delivery menu offerings.*
- ☐ *Perhaps you can invest in a refrigerated truck more easily than a completely new property? This could greatly expand your delivery capabilities.*
- ☐ *Take an in-depth look at demand. As a dinner-only restaurant, does it make sense to offer a more casual or completely different lunch menu? Even if it's only a few days a week could this create a space for innovation and exposure that ultimately feed into dinner offerings?*
- ☐ *Play around with your schedule for staffing. Can you actually provide them with a 4-5 day work week, thus providing better quality of life? (See more in our staffing chapter)*



# ESPITA + GHOST BURGER

A GHOST KITCHEN BRINGS IN REAL MONEY

*“We thought we were going to do maybe \$5,000 in Ghostburger sales per week,” says Espita managing partner Josh Phillips. “The first week we did \$25,000.”*

When DC Mexican restaurant, Espita, tried its hand at burgers and cheesesteaks they were hoping to bolster sales - yet even they couldn't believe the immediate and sustained results this new idea brought in. Using the same labor and equipment they always had and offering the new menu items only for takeout or delivery proved to be quite successful. They've attracted new customers and driven revenue without significant overhead costs; they launched Ghostburger within 2 weeks of idea conception and haven't looked back since! The addition of the ghost restaurant helped Espita exceed its pre-pandemic average weekly sales and allowed the restaurant to hire back five employees.

*Phillips says restaurants should play to their strengths when creating a new virtual brand. He encourages others to tap into their chefs and cooks for ideas. “Everybody cooks what they cook for a living,” he says. “Then they cook what they love on their own. People on your team might have a passion for something they can do very well. Explore that.”*





**CAVA DIPS >**

From working out of one kitchen at the time to now a processing facility of their own, first generation restaurant owners of Cava now offer 10 skus to all 474 Whole Food Markets, coast to coast.

**RIEL + LOUIE'S >**

High-end, dinner only Riel's added a take-out or delivery only, lunch time pop-up, Louie's. With this they are able to both showcase a new, more casual cuisine and capitalize on an underused kitchen during the day.

**SHOUK >**

"Hood Drops" are a rotating schedule of 20 different neighborhoods that get their food brought directly to them, on a scheduled night. All customers have to do is find the night for their area, order ahead and show up at the designated drop spot.

**ROSE'S AT HOME >**

Fine dining restaurant now offers a monthly dinner and/or wine club, available for pick-up or delivery

**BARILLA >**

Boxed pasta has become even easier to make thanks to playlists that are the exact length of time that a specific cut of pasta should be boiled. Restaurants are following suit and providing curated playlists for this make-at-home meals.

**SOUTHERN CHARM BISTRO >**

As a LISC grant recipient this neighborhood bistro was able to start offering cooking and baking classes and parties as an alternative revenue stream.

**DAME'S >**

This buzzy New York Restaurant makes more money by closing on Saturdays

**HA'S DAC BIET >**

Meaning "The Special" this pop-up truly embraces the idea of a weekly special, changing the menu every single week, based on whatever chef is wanting to experiment with. Only open Thursday-Sunday, so the rest of the week can be spent perfecting that week's dishes, the current location as been the same for about 3-months but even the address changes frequently with this absolute pop-up in all senses of the word.

**KIT >**

Brooklyn based KIT, short for Keep In Touch, is breakfast bar by day and wine bar by night...run by 2 different companies who share the space AND offer various pop-ups a space to showcase their products as well. Yes, there is a lot going on but the constant change keeps guests coming back for more

# WANT TO **KNOW MORE?**

ALTERNATIVE REVENUE STREAMS	THE RE-INVENTED POP-UP	ATYPICAL EVERYTHING
<div>7 STEPS TO TAKING YOUR PRODUCT TO MARKET</div> <div>GET DISCOVERED BY WORLD'S LEADING RETAILERS</div> <div>ECOMMERCE CHECKLIST</div> <div>GET FUNDING AND MANAGE YOUR FINANCES</div> <div>OPERATE AND PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS</div>	<div>7 STEPS TO OPENING A POP-UP RESTAURANT</div> <div>POP-UPS ARE POPPING UP EVERYWHERE</div>	<div>8 SMALL BUSINESS ORGS FOR THOSE LOOKING TO CONNECT</div> <div>PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES</div> <div>MEASURING SUCCESS</div> <div>PROMOTE AND GROW YOUR BUSINESS</div>



# PHYSICAL SPACE

*Al Fresco...Forever*

As indoor restrictions trudged on, outdoor and walk-up solutions evolved into functionally charming, downright desirable abodes that are likely here to stay. The way we interacted inside and even the way we look at real estate has changed.





TOPIC OVERVIEW



OUTSIDE ABODES

As indoor dining and mask mandates were repeatedly implemented and withdrawn, one constant was outdoor dining. Although it came at a substantial cost for most operators, the laws and permits needed to establish these al fresco dining rooms seem likely to continue, ushering in a new era of dining, expanding restaurant spaces and in some cases, changing entire cities and neighborhoods.



INSIDE ADJUSTMENTS

Outdoor changes aren't the only adjustments as many, if not all, operators have converted their existing spaces into more user-friendly and safer take-out staging areas or implemented market style provision sections. Some have even taken space normally reserved for storage or BOH functions and converted them into fully-functioning restaurants and bars.



REAL ESTATE APPROACH

Although finding existing restaurant or bar space requiring smaller investments to turn around will always be preferable, current conditions have forced operators to get more creative in their search for space. By adjusting their concepts and being more flexible, many have been able to create completely new business models and reach new customers.

# TOPIC 1 - OUTSIDE ABODES

## UTILIZING ADDITIONAL SPACES

What was once a luxury, outdoor dining became a necessity for every operator to survive. What started with simple tables and chairs evolved into completely built-out outdoor dining rooms, with those in cold weather or rain-heavy markets adapting with roofs and heating systems. Although wrought with permit and neighborhood challenges, these structures were eventually able to occupy street spaces where cars once parked. The jury is still out on how this will look in the future, but all indications point to outdoor dining becoming a permanent fixture.

## INDOOR-OUTDOOR BARS

The ability to transform your bar to serve both indoor and outdoor guests may not be possible due to space considerations, but if you are conducting a new build-out, this is definitely something to consider. Many hotels such as The Virgin Hotel Nashville have constructed bars that can be accessed by bartenders on both indoor and outdoor sides, allowing workers to move seamlessly between both areas, thus allowing for shared cooler, service and storage space. With to-go cocktails on the verge of becoming a permanent fixture in NYC and other major cities, to-go windows accessed directly from the bar area are a great way to maximize revenue.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Get creative with your landlord in your lease negotiations via percentage rent deals that allow for longer leases and landlord contributions to help fund your outdoor expansion.*
- ☐ *Sheds are being phased out and “Roadway Cafes” (where a portion of the curb or parking lane is utilized) and “Sidewalk Cafes” (outdoor seating on a portion of the sidewalk) are very “in”. Installing awnings, creating customized umbrellas and using portable heaters are all ways to set your outdoor area apart.*

- ☐ *Installing a temporary or “satellite” bar on your sidewalk or patio space can bring energy to those areas and allow for easy walk-up and to-go business.*
- ☐ *Do you have street-facing real estate? Could you capture walk-up and to-go orders by offering a small menu from your (newly-added?) window?*



## TOPIC 2 - INSIDE ADJUSTMENTS

### STAGING & PICKUP AREAS

The takeout and delivery boom have taken an ancillary portion of restaurant business and pushed it to the forefront. These operations are so big now that even higher-end restaurants are offering these options, and some new restaurants are being designed around them. Whether it's in the form of takeout windows or dedicated areas where a delivery driver or a consumer has a more seamless way to pick up orders, the need for space and efficiency has added yet another layer to decisions involving indoor space requirements.

### MODIFIED GUEST JOURNEY

Whether operators greeted guests at a counter or at a host stand, how customers interact with a space is crucial to their comfort and the success of the business. Whether you are adding a market/provisions component, implementing a more robust takeout and delivery program, or adding a to-go window for food or drinks, HOW customers move through the space is becoming as important as getting them there. Space planning is something to be taken seriously, even if it means seeking out help of professional designers or architects.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Consider creating a dedicated pick-up area for both customers and delivery drivers that also cuts down on costs due to less labor required. Clear signage is key in making this idea work without staff.*
- ☐ *Develop meal kits and provision programs that appeal to your customers. This can generate repeat visits and ease for those needing a quick meal option (see more in the Adapting your Business and Menu Engineering chapters).*

- ☐ *Developing an “Experience Map” for each type of customer can help you realize the full potential of your space. By putting yourself in their shoes and analyzing their pre-visit, entrance, ordering, paying, seating, purchasing provisions and eating/drinking mindset, you’ll be able to modify your operation to make their journey seamless and your operation more efficient.*
- ☐ *Specifically in regards to payment, consider if it would be more convenient for your guests to pay via secure, touch-free, point-of-sales signage; linked to on the resources page.*

TOPIC 3 - REAL ESTATE APPROACH

SMALLER FOOTPRINTS

The days of the massive full-service restaurant are certainly moving toward operators with deep pockets and/or real estate partners and portfolios that offer rates at lower than market value. This has forced smaller operators to recalibrate their concepts and operations. By editing and re-focusing their offerings, many have found that operating at a reduced cost has been a blessing by being able to focus on what they do well or even opening additional restaurants that specialize in a particular genre.

SHIFTING OPPORTUNITIES

In larger cities in particular, the new work-from-home trends have taken a massive toll on those operators who relied on office worker business. The shift of a large proportion of workers to the suburbs has forced those workers to adapt their tastes and home meal-preparation routines which has created new opportunities for operators that may not have before considered expanding out of their downtown neighborhoods.

FOOD HALLS + TEMP SPACE

The explosion of food halls across the country has provided opportunity for countless operators. The barrier to entry in the restaurant or bar space has been lowered via lower rents, smaller footprints, fully-funded build outs and captive audiences. The recent rise in the availability of unused space has also allowed for innovative concepts to appear in the form of pop ups and short-term residencies that allow new or existing operators to reach new customers and neighborhoods or test new concepts with minimal investment.

WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ Search for smaller spaces that are in the vicinity of your existing/larger operation. By opening up, say across the street, you can share resources including storage space, staff, ingredients and more.
- ☐ Negotiate, negotiate, negotiate. Building owners need their tenants more than the tenants need them right now, think creatively about lease terms and rev share and space usage to ensure it is benefiting you.

- ☐ Look into branching out. Enlisting a broker or approaching landlords in areas with a heavy concentration of work-from-home workers can reach those customers. Whether it's primarily a daytime concept for grab-and-go or an evening operation that offers a respite from their home offices, each can gain momentum quickly in unsaturated communities looking for a taste of their former downtown lifestyles.

- ☐ Approach landlords with existing vacant spaces, whether they're functioning food service venues or not. Many landlords who may have evicted a tenant early in the pandemic are now realizing their short-sightedness and are looking for ways to recoup some income or make relationships with potential partners.
- ☐ Explore food halls for available space, particularly ones that may not have a concept like or similar to yours.



# YELLOW

A BUSINESS WITHIN A BUSINESS

When star chef Michael Rafidi wanted to better serve the neighborhood while waiting to open his full-service restaurant Albi in Washington, D.C., he decided to take advantage of the space that would eventually house Albi's private dining room. The result was Yellow - a Levantine-inspired cafe, bakery and lunch concept that touches on the same inspiration, albeit with a more accessible to-go menu and handheld offerings. The sweet and savory treats blend French technique and Middle Eastern flavor, from za'atar and labne croissants to chocolate chip cookies with halva. The cafe also serves bagels flavored with urfa, a Turkish pepper, and topped with smoked fish on weekends. A true delight.

*As the day progresses, Yellow will offer a variety of mezze, including batata tots and tahini salad with summer vegetables, as well as four types of sandwiches served in wood-fired pita, including one with soft shell crab, spicy cucumbers, and a North African herb-based paste called chermoula that they mix with Old Bay, nodding to the local favorite seasoning.*

*By opening Yellow during a time of uncertainty, an entirely new concept and way of driving business was born without additional rent, staff or equipment while also attracting guests during the day that may never have considered Albi for dinner.*





## TO-GO COCKTAILS >

What has long been a staple of New Orleans culture now looks to be permanently be in the cards for NYC.

## HELEN'S WINES INSIDE JON & VINNY'S >

Real estate reserved within your space for a complimentary operator can elevate both businesses

## TUCKERS >

This LISC recipient changed locations during the pandemic, giving them a drive-through window which help bolster sales, especially when dinning-in wasn't allowed

## LITTLE RED FOX >

In addition to their typical restaurant, Red Fox added "a one-of-a-kind collection of prepared meals, specialty housemade goods, merch, and more." Working exclusively with other small businesses and producers, the market highlights some of their favorite local products.

## KARASU >

Although opened before Covid, Karasu is the epitome of maximizing extra space within an existing restaurant, as well as focusing on doing one thing and doing it very well.

## T-N-T FISH & CHICKEN >

By this LISC recipient pivoting from a brick-and-mortar concept to a food truck, they were still able to realize their food service dreams and are operating under lower overhead costs

## KISMET >

Los Angeles favorite took over a former burger stand down the street from their flagship and created a to-go window, takeout version of their popular rotisserie chicken, thus allowing for a unique brand extension and entry point for the larger restaurant. They are also able to staff both restaurants with the same crew and fill in any holes in the smaller operation with resources from the flagship.

## YELLOW ROSE >

Once it became apparent that take-out was going to be a major factor in keeping Yellow Rose afloat, this NYC restaurant constructed a drywall partition separating their dining room from the now, newly created to-go ordering space, decorating it to match it's kitschy saloon theme and integrating seamlessly with a take-out window saddling up to the bar.

# WANT TO **KNOW MORE?**

## REAL ESTATE APPROACH

REVISING THE  
RESTAURANT RENT GAME

RESTAURANT DESIGN CHANGES  
THAT ARE HERE TO STAY

## INSIDE ADJUSTMENTS

HOW TO CREATE  
A CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP

SECURE, TOUCH-FREE PAYMENTS  
WITH POINT-OF-SALES SIGNAGE



# MENU ENGINEERING

## *Quality Over Quantity*

Operational challenges such as supply chain bottlenecks and low staffing levels may have led to added fees and smaller menus, however, consumers appear to appreciate the causes, efficiency, and focus enough to overlook the higher prices....for now. Ultimately, Menu Engineering is an art and science; a living, breathing process that will need to adapt to ensure profitability.



TOPIC OVERVIEW



MENU CONCEPT

Menus drive the concept of the operation, whether it's a noodle bar, burger joint, upscale French or anything in between. Creating a menu that sells and is properly sized is crucial to your success. Being creative and true to your vision only works if you are able to work within the confines of your space, both from a labor/skill and equipment standpoint.



MENU PRICING

Once you have established your menu, reverse-engineering ingredients, suppliers, effort/time to prepare and cost of goods sold all play a part in the equation. If it doesn't work within the four walls of your kitchen, do not force it. Proper pricing will not only make your operation run smoothly, but will allow for smoother changes when you need to make them.



CURRENT FORMAT IDEAS

Keeping concept and pricing in mind, this is where you can play around with exactly how you will present your food. While individual plating will always have its place the creativity presently happening within the industry is allowing for larger formats, family style service, DIY meal kits to-go, and more - all with a large dose of comfort thrown in.



## TOPIC 1 - MENU CONCEPT

### IDENTIFYING WINNERS + LOSERS

It is more important than ever to be able to adapt, and the quickest way to do that is through your menu. Remember, you're in this business to please your guests, and their tastes, wants and needs will change. A major part of this process requires identifying what is working and what isn't. By highlighting your "winners" and either changing or removing your "losers", you'll be able to maintain your profitability.

### VISUAL REAL ESTATE

There are certain practices and techniques to ensure that specific menu items are given preferred visual real estate on the physical version (in-store) and a different set of best practices for digital/online versions. As QR codes become more commonplace, a focus on ease of menu navigation is key. Additionally, how a menu is written is as, if not more important than how it looks. Of course, they both go hand-in-hand, however, and the description and use of keywords is the mechanism that triggers the customer's brain to visualize and even "taste" the item before ordering.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Work through a guided menu engineering course online (listed in the resources section) to identify what is working for you and what is not.*
- ☐ *Familiarize yourself with concepts on the menu that are Stars, Plow Horses, Puzzles and Dogs and how to handle each of them.*

- ☐ *Consider image size, quality and orientation when including visuals on a menu. See more tips on the resources pages of this chapter.*
- ☐ *When writing your menu, consider words like "crispy", "smothered", "caramelized", and "spicy", etc. to evoke customer feelings and differentiate dishes from not just other menu items, but from competing restaurants as well.*



## TOPIC 2 - MENU PRICING

### OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

By designing and engineering not only the right conceptual menu, but also the right menu for your space and capabilities, you'll be able to control all aspects of your business without compromising the guest experience.

When considering your space, looking at how much will be dedicated to BOH and FOH is important to then being able to decide on your equipment. Additionally, keep in mind that labor will eat up the highest amount of income and will ultimately decide what you can and can't execute. Finally, fixed costs such as rent, salaries, loan payments, license fees and insurance are the most controllable.

### EXTRA FEES APPLIED

You may notice additional fees (usually between 3-5%) being added to the bill at several restaurants. When questioned what the fees go towards, we have heard the responses ranging from towards health care for the staff, to cover rising food and supply costs, and to a pool for non-tipped employees. In most cases, when questioned about the fee, restaurants have offered to take it off but said usually the guests don't mind paying, especially when they learn more about what it's going towards. Why not simply roll this into menu item pricing? The reasoning could be 1. Not to bump up the restaurant into another price category in general and 2. In hopes these fees can eventually be lowered or removed as costs to the owner may hopefully come back down.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

☐ *Determine how to keep fixed costs stable and manageable as they can eat up a minimum of 30% of your revenue. Explore tools in your Restaurant Management Platform (see more in the Mobile + Tech Section).*

☐ *Consider adding a fee and if necessary, ensure staff knows exactly what it would go towards funding so you can be thoughtful about how this is communicated to guests.*

## TOPIC 3 - CURRENT FORMAT IDEAS

### FAMILY MEALS + MEAL KITS

With take-out dining at an all time high, large format meals were a natural evolution to traditional, single-serve meals. Easier for the kitchen to prepare and package and a perceived “more bang for their buck” to the consumer, these new meal formats are a win-win for everyone. Often giving a choice of say 2 mains and 3 sides, these are packed and proportioned family style. The items can be either already composed or packaged more to accommodate a DIY method (think: taco “kits” that each component is packaged separately and customers can build their own at home), either way feeding a group with one order vs. individually placed and thus packaged meal orders.

### FAMILIAR COMFORTS

It is no surprise that during uncertain times guests crave the comforts that they grew up with. Food is one of our strongest links to childhood memories and those often release dopamine and warm, stress-relieving feelings. Specific menu trends will start to show new twists on old classics - even international classics from around the world that served as comforts to many first-generation chefs, including congee, shakshuka, elote and cacio pepe.

Additionally, 63% of restaurants are now offering a smaller menu than they once did, proving you don’t need to be everything to everyone. Do what you do and do it well.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Look at your menu. Do any items naturally lend themselves to either bigger portions (think pasta, etc.) and/or an easy “meat + 2” concept from the diner and cafeteria days (i.e. the customer chooses their protein and from a few sides to create their own meal).*
- ☐ *Once decided upon, its all about getting the word out for these format options since they are a new offering. Be sure to place options on your online digital ordering and social media platforms (see Communicating Effectively chapter).*

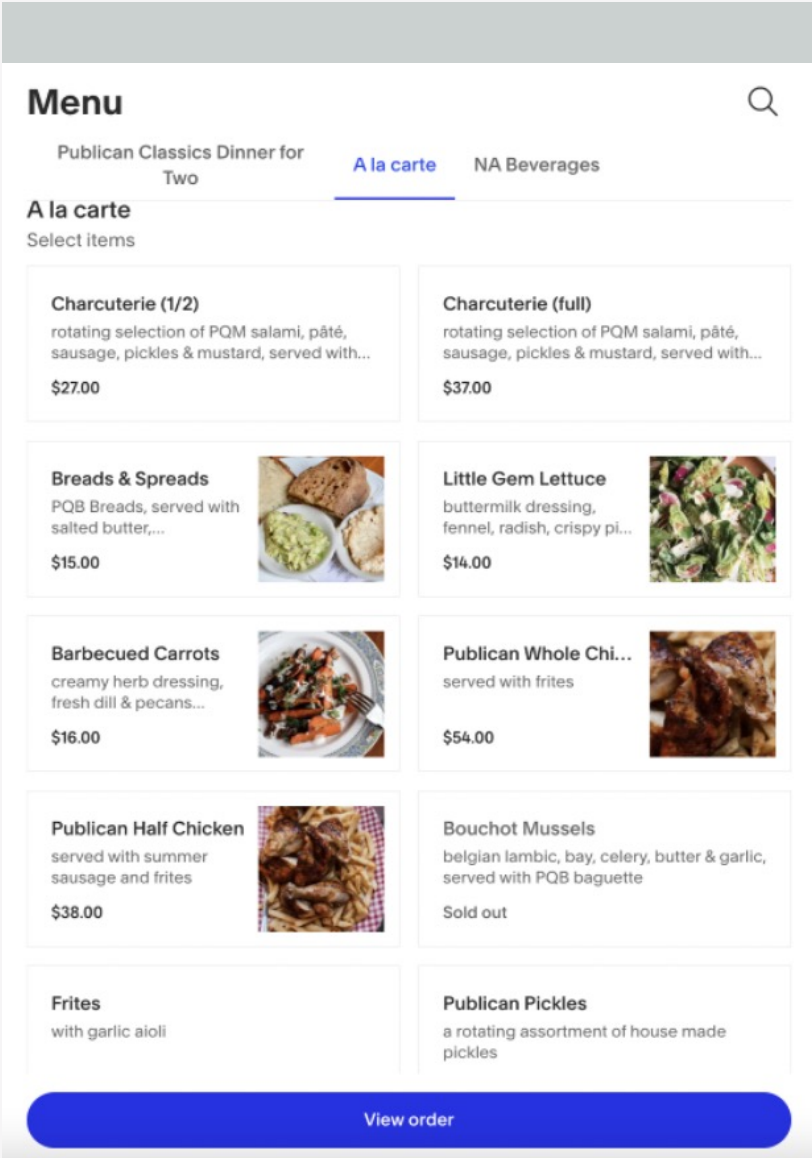
- ☐ *Cook what you love. Think about what made you fall in love with cooking in the first place, and start with those recipes.*
- ☐ *Pair down your menu to well-done basics. Keep it simple and authentic.*



# THE PUBLICAN

IN-PERSON VS. ONLINE MENU

Both of these menus are from the same restaurant, The Publican in Chicago. The menu on the left is the menu a guest who is dining-in would receive, the menu on the right is a menu someone looking to order online would receive. Notice many of the items are the same but they are formatted differently and a picture is provided online. The online menu also does not offer ALL of the items offered in-store, due to ability (or inability, rather) to travel. This is adapting a menu based on application, done well.





**REVERIE >**

Fine-dining spot offering platter of burgers and whole duck, to-go.

**MUCHAS GRACIAS >**

Latin pop-up not only serving a rotating menu of family-style meal kits for take-out and delivery but also providing free meals to families in need and donating a portion of sales to charity.

**CHI'LANTRO >**

a Korean BBQ fast-casual posts its step-by-step, build-your-own menu online

**TOP ROUND >**

LA-based sandwich shop uses Square to somewhat customize their online menu, keeping it simple, straight forward and easy to use

**PORT-AU-PRINCE  
HAITIAN CUISINE >**

previous LISC grant recipient, added packaged items such as hot sauce, marinades, full-cakes and bottles of crème liquor to their online ordering platforms.

**CASSIALA >**

This Santa Monica based, Southeast Asian concept posts it in-person dining menu online to show in all it's beautiful glory, enticing diners even from afar

**KALE ME CRAZY >**

this "superfood café" posts all of its menus online. Separated into 9 different categories, they are viewable or downloadable, as are their corresponding nutritional details



# WANT TO **KNOW MORE?**

## MENU CONCEPT (+ DESIGN)

- MENU ENGINEERING COURSE
- 7 TIPS FOR MOBILE FRIENDLY RESTAURANT MENUS
- THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RESTAURANT MENU DESIGN
- MENU DESIGN + PROFIT
- 10 STEPS TO CREATE A MENU FROM SCRATCH
- 50 EXAMPLES OF BEAUTIFUL MENU DESIGN

## MENU PRICING

- EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SURCHARGES
- MENU ENGINEERING - A GUIDE BY STREETSSENSE

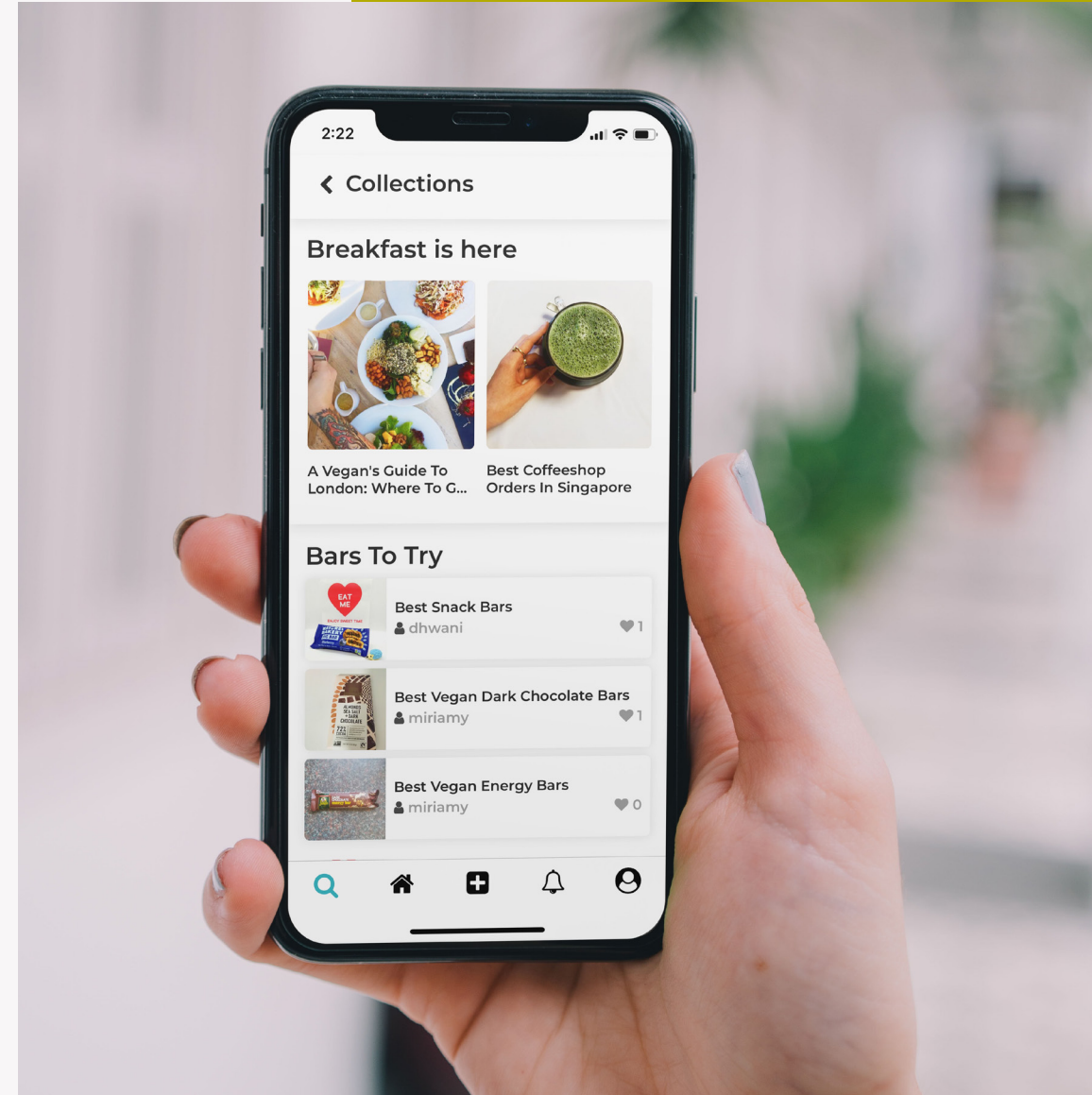
## MEAL FORMATS

- WHEN CHEFS BECOME STORYTELLERS
- MENU OPTIMIZATION

# TECH + MOBILE

## *Automation is Now the Expectation*

Pre-Covid the “tech movement” was slowly catching on, now thrust into the mainstream out of necessity, consumers are not only more comfortable with technology replacing humans but in some cases, it’s preferred.



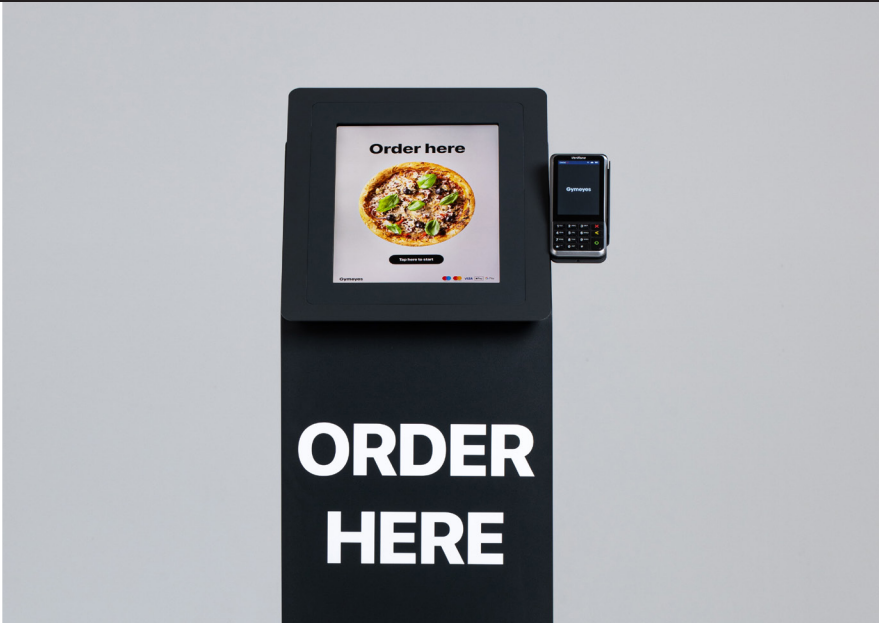


TOPIC OVERVIEW



DIGITAL ORDERING

Everyone has got it, but who is making the experience seamless for their guests? Once an afterthought for many operators, online ordering has become a primary business line for many and doing it well requires the right tech and new tools to master.



AUTOMATION

Low-touch service changed customer behavior forever and there have been some innovative ways to leverage technology to streamline service, give guests more control, and expand options for bridging the digital and physical space - maybe without so many tablets!



STREAMLINED LOYALTY

More digital orders mean more information and more ways to understand your best guests and that knowledge can be powerful. Loyalty programs, customer databases, and promoting to your customers directly or en masse has become easier than ever. Everyone wants to be a VIP, so many guests don't mind hearing from you more if you are rewarding them for their patronage.

# TOPIC 1 - DIGITAL ORDERING

## ONLINE ORDERING

The lifeblood of almost every operation for the past few years, everyone has stepped up their game. Effective online ordering starts with a great restaurant point of sale. If your online ordering interface is clunky or complex to manage, consider an owned solution with a modern, cloud-based POS. Third-party services can help bridge the gap but effective integration is what makes all ordering work best. For example, providing the option for the guest to store their credit card, makes future transactions easier and organizing information online for the guest so that the easiest way for them to order the best way for you is critical.

## QR CODES

Once a relic of a bygone digital era, QR codes have surged back with their ability to direct touchless service cues but some have been implemented better than others. New third-party technology has emerged that can help streamline and craft a more frictionless QR code experience for browsing and ordering. Though no longer the only option, innovative use of QR codes in waiting or queuing areas or as a supplement to serviced offerings during different day parts can help you control your labor and ensure a seamless experience.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ Evaluate how well your POS system works for you and how well it manages owned ordering and third party integrations. Some suggestions are available on the resource page if you are struggling
- ☐ Ensure that all of your weblinks online, on your business listings, and on your own website direct to the appropriate channels, owned or otherwise
- ☐ Explore web-based solutions that can help refresh your online ordering menus and web presence

- ☐ Evaluate where QR codes might continue to work for you long term - limited table service, to-go ordering, queueing stanchions, full service QR management
- ☐ Explore more robust third-party tech solutions to manage your QR code use more effectively
- ☐ Run through your guest experience anywhere you plan on leveraging QR and clearly communicate with guests how to most effectively put them to work



## TOPIC 2 - AUTOMATION

### SELF-SERVE

Food service outlets across the globe from airports to McDonald’s have adopted some version of in-store self- ordering kiosks to serve their guests. While this has not, to date, been a traditional component of an a la carte restaurant or bar, the pandemic may make this a viable option for guests looking to limit face-to-face contact but now looking for added convenience. Additionally, innovations like wait-list apps for streamlined expo service and tableside payment technology - POS provided or third-party - have given back control to the guest in a way that can help reduce friction during service.

### ORDER AGGREGATION

The influx of online orders for many has been a source of much-needed revenue but it has also created a web of ordering services, third-party order management, and sometimes a literal wall of iPads and chargers. Streamlining the online ordering services so they work for you requires effort but once set up, can help you manage different orders from different services all in one place. If you don’t choose to use only one online ordering platform exclusively, these services can help you bridge the gap between your third-party platforms, your POS, and your kitchen and critically, give your managers and BOH a live look at all of your active orders from different platforms.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Explore whether kiosks or self-service mobile ordering have a place in your operation and look for appropriate and expert technology solutions in the resource guide*
- ☐ *Examine if the implementation use of wait-list, paging, or tableside payment technology would help ease pain points in your restaurant and check out some of the players in the resource guide to see some of these platforms in action*

- ☐ *Explore a more integrated online order management within your point of sale if already using a cloud-based POS*
- ☐ *Check out the self-managed service multi-channel online ordering platforms listed in the resource guide as well as the order aggregation services that let you keep multiple delivery services running smoothly and effeciently*

## TOPIC 3 - STREAMLINED LOYALTY

### CUSTOMER DATA

Knowledge is power! With innovation in point of sale technology, the explosion in online ordering, and smarter mobile tech, getting granular on your customer behaviour has become more accessible. An upgraded point of sale system is often a critical component of navigating the wealth of data now available to you about your guests. Many modern POS systems can give you a glance at visit frequency, tie customer data and ordering patterns together, give you a look at your most loyal - and free spending - guests as well as help you build a robust and thoughtful loyalty platform that reward repeat visits. Third party ordering platforms also own a tremendous amount of customer data - including home and email addresses - that can be used to build an understanding of who your guest is and what else they may want.

### EMAIL MARKETING

Access to your customer data is the first step. Taking action to effectively communicate with them through technology is the next. Email marketing isn't always seen as a nuisance, especially when it's smart, provides value, and isn't overwhelming. There are several techniques on streamlining and maximizing email marketing efficacy and efficiency but it all starts with having a solid database of live and loyal customers and a message that encourages a call to action. Crafting a marketing calendar shouldn't be done on an ad hoc basis but should be tied to your other in-store and online campaigns and should probably always reward people somehow for clicking through their inbox. Use our resource guide to learn all about the platforms that can help make reaching your guests most effective.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Run through some tutorials on reading and leveraging customer data from your online ordering platform*
- ☐ *Check out some of the loyalty program platforms available on your POS or through third party integrations linked in the resource guide*
- ☐ *Explore how you can reward and engage with your most regular guests once you know who they are and how to reach them*

- ☐ *Consider pulling down all your email data off multiple platforms - ordering platforms and your point of sale - to build your*
- ☐ *Read some of the resource material on building effective email marketing campaigns through third party services*
- ☐ *Work on a monthly calendar of promotions and communications that can help build an email marketing plan*



# LUCKY CAT VEGAN

NEW DIGITAL CONCEPT LEVERAGING CUSTOMER DATA

For Lucky Cat’s customers, while stumbling upon an amazing vegan option might seem like well, pure luck, the restaurant’s concept was actually backed by analytics. Turns out, Uber Eats guests within a 5-mile radius of owner/chef Navin Hapriprasad’s brick-and-mortar restaurant Spice in the City, had been searching for words like “plant-based” and “vegetarian”. Armed with that information, Navin was able to put his culinary talents and entrepreneurial drive to work, brining ghost-kitchen concept, Lucky Cat Vegan to life in two weeks.

*Not only was Lucky Cat a great example of how data based on what customers are searching for can help shape your next concept, the ghost-kitchen concept of it also helped Navin expand with minimal risk and provide more hours to his staff. A win-win for everyone.*





**WAITLISTME >**

Waitlist and paging app for full service restaurants

**GOTAB >**

Contactless and self payment technology built for restaurants

**BBOT >**

QR and ordering platform

**ONEDINE >**

Self ordering and table management software

**UPSERVE >**

POS with online ordering platform and multi-platform management

**TABLESAFE >**

Table payment software with easy integration

**OTTER >**

Industry leading online order management tool

**CHOWLY >**

Integrated third party online ordering

**TOUCHBISTRO >**

Self ordering technology and second-gen POS services

**TOAST >**

Innovative tech-forward restaurant point of sale system

**BARPAY >**

Mobile order and payments solutions for restaurants

**DELIVERECT >**

Multi-platform order management



# WANT TO **KNOW MORE?**

## DIGITAL ORDERING

- OVERVIEW OF THIRD PARTY AND POS PROVIDERS
- OPTIMIZING ONLINE ORDERING CHECKLIST
- OWNED ORDERING AND THIRD PARTY
- HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE QR CODES
- LATEST RESTAURANT TECHNOLOGIES

## AUTOMATION

- SELF SERVE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DELIVERY TECHNOLOGY
- STORE VISA INFORMATION ONLINE W/ ZERO LIABILITY

## STREAMLINED LOYALTY

- CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY
- EMAIL MARKETING FOR RESTAURANTS
- EMAIL MARKETING FIELD GUIDE

# CREATING COMMUNITY

## *Better, Together*

Perhaps unlike any other period in the history of restaurants, it has become apparent that conditions must change. The community as a whole is coming together to mentor, support and nourish each other...  
and we will all be better for it



*\*Follow local masking rules and regulations.*



TOPIC OVERVIEW



INDUSTRY CULTURE

The pandemic wasn’t entirely bad - it upset the status quo of not only how customers engaged with restaurants but also how the industry is celebrating and empowering the restaurant community and its workers.



SUSTAINABILITY

Local Farming, edible packaging and plant-based everything are more than just buzzwords. Brands are putting real money behind these earth-friendly movements, and in turn are recognizing the rewards as well.



GIVING BACK

Cooking for the needy and hungry during the pandemic has brought a greater focus and new vision for chefs who felt compelled to spread their love of cooking; from school lunches to front-line worker donations, chefs reinvigorated their own passion for the industry and artistry they hold dear.

## TOPIC 1 - INDUSTRY CULTURE

### FOSTER MENTORSHIP

It is more important than ever to foster a community of learning to be able to adapt to the changing nature of the business. This community can be made-up of groups of owners, business leaders or operators who share a common cause or mission – women business owner group, BIPOC business group, independent restaurant coalition – or even an informal network will serve as a brain trust and forum to bounce ideas off of. Additionally, as the owner of your business, it is important to serve as a mentor to your own staff, in-house. Providing them with career guidance and skill development (even if not always directly related to their current position) can benefit everyone in the long run.

### CREATE A BETTER WORKPLACE

Now workers are as in demand as ever and workplaces – restaurants in particular – need to stand out to attract the talent needed to operate effectively. We cover actionable steps toward enacting benefits and pay that improve the livelihood of your workforce in our chapter on Staffing but there is an on-going workplace culture shift that needs to happen as well to provide a safe workplace, better leadership, and truly focusing on employee development. Take a good hard look at where you are and take actionable, measurable steps towards where you want to be as an employer and manager of people.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

☐ *Google is your friend, make empowering your people and empowering yourself a mission toward improving the industry culture by finding like-minded leaders to commune with which will allow you to uncover interesting ideas and opportunities and be better prepared for an always dynamic business environment.*

☐ *Consider starting with an employee survey (linked to in the resources page) to see where you stand and start to quantify your own performance as a business leader at creating a better workplace. From those results, talk with employees and find out more, even opening the floor is a huge step in the right direction.*



TOPIC 2 - SUSTAINABILITY

LOCAL FARMING

With recent, glaring supply chain issues and the rising costs associated with them, consumers are looking to more local options, cutting out the often, long-distance middleman and sourcing more of their food through local CSA (short for Community Supported Agriculture) boxes and the like. While sourcing local is nothing new to restaurants, the customers are now more educated and expect the restaurant to be as well, including what is done on the back end, concerning food waste and footprint.

PLANT BASED PREFERENCES

While only 2% of Americans identify as Vegan, plant-based foods are now in 53% of American households; searches for plant-based recipes and sales of plant-based meat alternatives have also soared. All this to say, the consumer is asking for plant-based items while dining out as well. Heck, Eleven Madison Park pivoted to an entirely plant-based menu.

EDIBLE PACKAGING

America produces 42 million tons of plastic waste a year ... but thanks to consumer demand, tightening regulations on single-use products and corporate sustainability goals, those dire numbers are changing; so much so edible packaging alone is expected to be a \$2B industry by 2030. Dare we say, even biodegradable straws are getting better?

WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Look into local, smaller vendors that may be able to get your product quicker as well as look into partnering with food rescue companies that will match your excess product to those in need.*

- ☐ *Gradually introducing your guest to meat-free and dairy-free option could lead to a whole new revenue stream and embrace that it's a movement that is here to stay; consider adding some items to your own menu - showcase and highlight those dishes and see how they do.*

- ☐ *Something as simple as educating yourself on current planet-friendly options and choosing which ones work best for your business are a step in the right direction.*
- ☐ *We hate to make this all about PR but if you truly believe in the actions you are taking to help the planet, let those be known via social media, menus, etc. the customer appreciates knowing.*

## TOPIC 3 - GIVING BACK

### DONATE

Everywhere we look, there are worthy causes to donate time, money or product to. A food-related example comes by way of No Kid Hungry; with many of out of work and kids whose sometimes only meal came from school-provided lunches, now out of school, food insecurity also got larger over the last few years; as many as 55% of kids go to bed hungry. Sometimes the best way to help yourself is to help some one else, we've seen hundreds of restaurants adopt this motto even in their times of need and communities have rallied around them, tenfold.

### ADVOCATE

Frustrated with government pandemic response, or lack thereof, chefs and owners are taking matters into their own hands by advocating for what they need and for some, even running for the very offices that decide on things like aid and regulations to ensure their voices are heard.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Pick a cause near to your heart. If it's food related for you, look for such as charities such as No Kid Hungry and World Central Kitchen.*
- ☐ *Simply planting a garden and sharing its harvest or teaching a neighbor some very basics of cooking all could go a long way.*
- ☐ *As we know, "it starts at home"; If you want to know more about setting up the futures of your own employees, look to our chapter on Staffing.*

- ☐ *Join and attend informational sessions hosted by the Independent Restaurant Coalition (linked on the resources pages).*
- ☐ *Familiarize yourself with industry-positioned groups such as RRF - Restaurant Revitalization Fund.*



# THE LEE INITIATIVE

LET'S EMPOWER EMPLOYMENT

The LEE Initiative started in Louisville, KY in 2018 after Chef Ed Lee and Co-founder Lindsey Ofcacek saw a need for more diversity, more training, and more equality in their own restaurants. “We wanted to redefine what it means to give back to our local community based on our research, our experiences and most of all, our instincts. We are in the business of hospitality. We are in the business of solving problems. We put the needs of our customers first. So why should it be any different when we approach the complex social issues that arise in today’s restaurant industry?”

## PROGRAMS

- Women Culinary and Spirits Program
- Restaurant Workers Relief Program
- Restaurant Reboot Relief Program
- McAtee Community and Training Kitchen

*During the pandemic, The LEE Initiative distributed over 2 million meals, invested over \$1.5 million in small farms, and gave over \$1 million in grants to Black-owned food businesses across the country.*



## DOMINO'S >

Why Domino's Pizza bought and gave out gift cards to local mom-and-pop restaurants.

## ADVOCATE >

Witnessing government and systemic failures first-hand as a restaurant owner pushed Francesca Hong to advocate for food industry workers in Wisconsin's State legislature.

## COMMUNITY >

More than just networking, leaning on your community for collaboration can actually be a survival tactic.

## LAULIMA >

This LISC recipient wasted no time doing good with received grant funds. Together with local farmers, vendors and non-profits they created an allegiance to help support other restaurants and families in need.

## FOOD INSECURITY >

Chef Kwame Onwuachi on fighting food insecurity in his hometown neighborhood of the Bronx.

## KUSINA PHILLY >

Another shining LISC example, this Filipino restaurant converts into a soup kitchen on every last Monday of the month, feeding those in need for free.

## MALONE COFFEE >

LISC recipient and community favorite, this coffee roaster added a new food truck as well as pushed most of it's business online to take-out and delivery and was able to thrive in part due to the UberEats platform



# WANT TO **KNOW MORE?**

## INDUSTRY CULTURE

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION  
SURVEY

RETAINING GREAT WORKERS

## SUSTAINABILITY

PURCHASE EDIBLE CUPS

FOOD WASTE  
MANAGEMENT APP

CSAS NEAR YOU

WHY ELEVEN MADISON PARK  
WENT VEGAN

ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY

## GIVING BACK

WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN

NO KID HUNGRY

# COMMUNICATING EFFICIENTLY

*Be Accurate, Be Accessible, Be Authentic*

In a digital world, the consumer expects you to be everywhere, and at all times. The key comes in doing all that...while still feeling like a personal, real brand.





TOPIC OVERVIEW



DIGITAL FRONT DOOR

Every bit as important as your physical storefront, what potential guests encounter when they are looking for you online is more critical now than ever. Even in-house regulars will begin engaging with your digital offerings – to share directions, to make a reservation, to check out your new menu - before they ever step foot in your restaurant. Take action to keep your “digital front door” neat and tidy, oftentimes it’s free or low cost, it’s relatively easy to manage, and there is a wealth of resources to help you get up to speed online.



FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT

Creating compelling online content can be intimidating and sometimes iterative but at the end of the day it’s about communicating effectively with your guests. Getting guests to engage and talk with you, about you, and ultimately for you is how you can leverage social media to turn customers into advocates. Pay for play has it’s place with today’s influencer generation but it’s certainly not the only way to build a strong following that is authentic to who you are.



TRACKING SUCCESS

One of the most compelling reasons to get to know the digital tools that are available to help businesses communicate effectively with your guests is to learn how to know what’s resonating and what may or may not be working for your business. Knowing what works is a recipe for developing discipline and focus around a calendar and setting and tracking incremental goals can help minimize the time spent while maximizing your return.

## TOPIC 1 - **DIGITAL FRONT DOOR**

### **GOOGLE MY BUSINESS**

Often, even more critical than your own website is buttoning up your Google listing as it is one of the most critical steps a restaurant or bar can take to direct online traffic online to the right place. Guests often use Google to find your business, even when they already know you exist to get directions, look up your menu, locate your social media profiles, read reviews, and now more than ever, to order online. Managing your online presence through Google is free, relatively easy with lots of available video tutorials, and you can control how people engage and interact with you before they even land on your homepage or show up to your front door.

- ☐ *Make sure you own your Google listing, know how to use it, and know how to optimize it (see resources page for links to tutorials).*
- ☐ *Make sure all the information is accurate, pictures are representative of your quality, reviews are fair, the description and information about your restaurant is compelling, links redirect to the right place, and that your listing is optimized for online ordering*

### **WEBSITE FUNCTIONALITY**

Consumer attention spans – and thus – your window to gain business online – are short. It’s crucial that once you have someone’s attention on your website that it works well for both desktop and mobile views. It should be as easy as possible for customers to navigate. Restaurant websites need to meet an ever-growing set of consumer demands, but they also need to function equally well – or better – on mobile phone as on a desktop.

- ☐ *View your site through the eyes of a guest on both mobile and desktop; navigate to your site and gauge the quality of the guest experience.*
- ☐ *Start with a simple, but highly effective restaurant website checklist to make sure that no matter how slick your web design is, that you are meeting the needs of all of your different consumers.*
- ☐ *If you are stuck and don’t know where to start, we have low cost, high function, restaurant website design specialists listed in the resource section.*

### **ENTIRELY DIGITAL 3RD PARTY PLATFORM MANAGEMENT**

Whether you like it or not, your business shows up on third party platforms like review sites, unauthorized ordering platforms, and travel sites. The offerings, ratings, and feedback that appear on these sites can make the difference between securing a new order or getting passed by for the next option For review sites like Yelp and Trip advisor, it can be difficult to get unfair reviews removed but you can always dispute the accuracy of any review privately on the platform. The best thing you can do, however, is to respond back politely and professionally and actively manage customer feedback.

- ☐ *Run a google search on your business regularly and click through a few pages of results, respond to your reviews, take ownership of listings on review sites and make sure all of the information on third party ordering sites is accurate.*
- ☐ *If you do not want to be on an ordering site, they must remove you upon request. Our resource pages has links on how to manage your online reputation effectively and how to delist yourself from third-party platforms which aren’t helpful to your online business strategy.*

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO...**



## TOPIC 2 - FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT

### COMPELLING CONTENT

There are core principles that EVERY social media post should contain in order to ensure your content is poised to start a conversation - effective captions and engaging visuals. Captions should be brief and direct and leverage the tools each platform has to enhance the traction of your posts. Luckily, engaging visuals doesn't require an expensive setup or a professional shoot, learning some basic compositional techniques and how to get the most out of your camera phone can go a long way in content creation.

### CELEBRATING COLLABORATION

Creating a conversation with your customers on social media can help you grow your digital following and help convert guests into advocates. It is important to understand when you should post and how often as well as what you do to foster communication with your guests both with your posts directly and with comments and messages. There are a number of ways to organically build a following by having a meaningful conversation with collaborators, friends, vendors, partners and guests on your social media channels. It is important to be authentic, and organically built followers generated through compelling content are infinitely cheaper than paid social content.

### INFLUENCER CULTURE

Like everything else with social media, there are pro's and con's to engaging influencers (either in an official capacity or more organically) to well, influence other potential guests to visit your business (both online and in person). With Gen X and Millennial customers stating they are 99% more likely to choose a restaurant based on social media and online reviews, its no wonder why more and more restaurants are turning to "influencers" as an affordable marketing method. Developing brand-evangelists can pay-back tenfold, even if it's not always easy to pinpoint the "buzz" that influencers can create.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ Visit the Instagram learning center which has highly curated tutorials on how to craft great social media content. Start with those that teach you how to use simple frameworks to build out compelling ideas, posts, and campaigns.
- ☐ Also, if you have an iPhone, use our resource page to find out more on using it to post professional quality photos with some photography basics and step by step settings guidelines.

- ☐ Read our Instagram Guide for Restaurants which gives you a step-by-step breakdown of how to put to work effective captions and comment, build an online community of collaborators and partners, how to best leverage stories to reward your most loyal followers, and the different mechanisms in place to encourage and maximize user engagement on Instagram. It has a ton of examples and links to more resources, dive in!

- ☐ Some steps to take before choosing an influencer: make sure they have a high number of real followers, not paid for or worst, bot followers. This can often be gaged by follower names and engagement levels. Next, determine if their followers match your restaurant's target market. They need to be on-brand with your point of view and voice

## TOPIC 3 - TRACKING SUCCESS

### MARKETING CALENDAR

The biggest mistake that we see small businesses make is inconsistency with their posts. Business should post 2-3 times a week and never let their feed lapse more than one week. To keep things lively and authentic on your feed, highlight user generated content, post behind the scenes shots of your restaurant, talk about new menu development, highlight your staff, post about community engagements. This kind of content will provide a balance to the more tactical posts or stories like deals, offers, and specials.

### GOALS & ANALYTICS

With most things digital, it's easy to see how you perform. For restaurants, we recommend getting used to using Instagram Insights to learn about your guests' activity, monitor your followers, understand where people are finding your content, see how successful your posts are and make small benchmarks for growth such as increasing your total following, driving likes and comments, increasing views, and driving interaction and engagement with your content.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Create a monthly calendar and fill out post ideas for each week in one sitting rather than posting ad hoc. You'll be surprised how many ideas you can come up with after reading through some of the resources linked at the end of this chapter.*
- ☐ *If you are still stuck, engage your staff, many of them probably post at least once a day themselves and might have some great ideas.*
- ☐ *There are several social media calendar tools to help you schedule advanced posts so you do not have to physically log in and create content each day. See resources section for more.*

- ☐ *Set simple and achievable goals to ensure your efforts are fruitful. Craft a measurable goal and track your progress regularly by monitoring your insights page.*
- ☐ *Get to know the basics of analytics and how to put it to work in maximizing your effectiveness online by reading up on how data can drive decisions.*
- ☐ *Familiarize yourself with both paid and free tracking resources such as Hootsuite (paid) and Google Analytics (free) and use a combination of these to look at your entire online presence.*



# THE ORIGINAL CHOP SHOP

SIMPLE, ON-BRAND INTERACTIONS GO A LONG WAY

The Original Chop Shop, a fresh fast-casual with 17 locations across Texas and Arizona, fires on all “digital media cylinders”. From extremely engaging Instagram feeds that encourage tagging and posting for contest entries, to a well-designed, user-friendly mobile app, to offering a referral bonus to GUESTS if they help find someone who gets hired to their team - they are a shining example of two-way digital communication done right.

With upwards of 24,000 Instagram followers alone, on-brand posts are made, and interacted with daily. By posing questions within their captions, they encourage customer interaction, further supporting that notion by always replying to said customer comments. Select #hashtags are always posted alongside content, again ensuring the biggest reach possible per each individual post. Even if a guest has never visited one of their physical store-fronts, the brand vibe and welcoming spirit is clear on all digital touch points - their website, review websites such as Yelp and Google, social media, mobile and any other place you may find them listed!

*Interacting with existing customers is critical in acquiring new customers. Timely responses to user inquiries satisfy customers and urge them to refer more business to you. Check out The Original ChopShop’s [social media](#) channels for some great examples*





## TIKTOK KITCHENS >

These delivery-only kitchens will serve up some of the trendiest recipes made famous by the social media app.

## GILLWOODS >

while this LISC recipient and St. Helena mainstay has seen more than their share of set-backs, they continue to pivot whether it be adding all new outdoor seating or creating an online farmers market with local vendors – all of which were communicated clearly on their website through a specific landing page that all online visitors were directed to

## WOOF'S >

This LISC recipient and do-gooder bar does so much for it's local community (from regularly hosting fundraisers to pop-up shops displaying local artists), it has an entire section on their webpage dedicated to “giving back”

## SOCIAL COMMERCE CAMPAIGNS >

3 Retailers who drove sales and created seamless online shopping experiences, and what you can learn from them



# WANT TO **KNOW MORE?**

## DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

- DIGITAL RESTAURANT INTRO -  
GUIDE BY STREESENSE
- RESTAURANT WEBSITE  
CHECKLIST
- THE COMPLETE GUIDE  
TO GOOGLE MY BUSINESS
- HOW RESTAURANTS SHOULD USE  
GOOGLE MY BUSINESS & LOCAL SEARCH
- GOOGLE ADS,  
YOUTUBE VIDEO
- OPTIMIZE YOUR  
ONLINE PRESENCE
- REMOVE YOUR RESTAURANT  
FROM THIRD PARTY DELIVERY APPS

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- TEN RESTAURANTS USING SOCIAL  
MEDIA SUCCESSFULLY
- BEST SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT  
SOFTWARE FOR YOUR NEEDS
- COMPLETE GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA  
FOR BARS & RESTAURANTS
- INSTAGRAM FOR SMALL BUSINESSES-  
A GUIDE BY STREETSENSE
- HOW TO USE  
INSTAGRAM INSIGHTS
- INSTAGRAM STATS  
THAT MATTER
- YELP & TRIP ADVISOR  
FUNDAMENTALS
- RESPONDING TO POSITIVE AND  
NEGATIVE REVIEWS
- FACEBOOK, SET UP A  
BUSINESS PAGE
- USING FACEBOOK  
ANALYTICS
- SNAP CHAT, SET UP A  
BUSINESS ACCOUNT
- A QUICK GUIDE FOR USING  
TIKTOK FOR BUSINESS
- PAID SOCIAL MEDIA  
ADVERTISING

# STAFFING

## *The New Meaning of Team-Building Exercises*

There isn't one restaurant or bar on the planet that hasn't been affected by the pandemic somehow or some way. The most prevalent it seems is the overwhelming shortage of workers. This has caused a change in the relationship between restaurant and employee, but the news is not all bad. Workers now recognize their value and have the power to make demands, which causes change.

While painful in the short run to already-strapped owners and operators, the long run will (hopefully) create a more loyal and dedicated worker who is truly invested in the company.

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TOPIC OVERVIEW



HIRING & TRAINING

While the industry is seeing a recovery, it’s still a dogfight to attract workers. The interview process is no longer a one-way street as potential employees demand to know everything about your culture, their growth potential, and your community involvement. Training needs to also evolve to meet the needs of the new environment by cross training workers in all aspects of the operation, from front to back of the house.

*\*Follow local masking rules and regulations.*



SHORTAGES

The restaurant workers shortage has been well-documented and continues to pose challenges never seen before. Running a leaner operation has become essential and have even forced some to hire on-demand employees via temporary hiring apps to fill staffing needs and also switching to industry-specific scheduling software to make switching shifts easier. Offering sign-on bonuses is another method that has seen some success. Use technology and get creative.



PAY STRUCTURE

With worker shortages devastating the industry, owners and operators need to come up with not only better pay, but follow the lead of major employers in other industries by offering benefits that entice workers to jump back in as well as not leave for other opportunities. Creative new pay models are being implemented in all types of restaurants and getting on board is essential to anyone looking to attract and retain talent.

## TOPIC 1 - **HIRING + TRAINING**

### **SOFT SKILLS**

Hiring and training have become much more than showing a qualified and experienced new hire how to perform the specific functions of their job. Soft skills are just as important and traits such as communication, teamwork, time management, critical thinking, adaptability and problem solving are needed more than ever. Hiring for potential and not just knowledge is paramount so when faced with a hiring decision, looking for candidates with a willingness to learn, an adaptive personality, and good cultural fit can be even more important than finding the next “expert.”

### **FOH + BOH CROSSOVER**

Covid has forced every operator to re-imagine their staffing needs and training everyone on both FOH and BOH is an effective way to increase morale, empathy and most importantly, legally split tips across the entire staff. When everyone understands how everyone else’s day goes, the staff feels more invested because they realize what the other person is going through and can both empathize as well as help out.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO...**

- ☐ *Before starting your interview process for an open role, consider what kind of soft skills are important in this role and prepare specific questions to assess those skills. Ask all candidates the same questions, focusing on not only their answers, but their reactions and interactions with you.*

- ☐ *As an owner or operator, throwing yourself into a position or shift, whether it’s as a host, dishwasher, or even prep cook can increase the tip pool as well as cover for any staff shortages.*
- ☐ *Incentivize staff to learn both sides by implementing BOH revenue sharing and FOH tip pools so that everyone is invested in the same way. A few articles in the “learn more” section of this chapter highlight how restaurants have been able to make this work.*



## TOPIC 2 - NAVIGATING SHORTAGES

### SUSTAINABLE HOURS

Manageable hourly shifts and adequate breaks are a huge component in your culture. A “right to disconnect” should mean work is left at work unless an emergency arises, and restaurants should encourage their employees to embrace healthy and active lifestyles. If operators want their employees to stop viewing their jobs as a transaction, then they must look in the mirror and ask themselves if they are transactional in how they are treating their employees.

### THE CUSTOMER IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT

Restaurant customers have always been entitled, particularly when they can exert their power via a tip. For several reasons, however, many of which would require a psychology degree to explain, customer behavior has reached all-time lows, resulting in even more workers leaving a beleaguered industry. With many employees at a breaking point, they need to be empowered to deal with ridiculous demands and difficult customers...and they need to know you, as their owner, have their back (always within reason, of course).

## WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ *Consider schedule switches for managers that allow for more days off in exchange for working slightly more hours for less days (i.e. four 12 hour days instead of five 11 hour days).*
- ☐ *Conduct a cost/benefit analysis that factors in what it will cost you in time, recruiting and training for a new employee compared to what you will spend in increased operating and training costs for current employees.*

- ☐ *Start to re-think what hospitality means, starting with your staff by taking a staff-first mentality that shows that you have their back and in turn, they will have yours. Simple changes like allowing them to say “no” can begin to train customers that they can’t have everything and need to treat people with respect in order to receive it back.*

TOPIC 3 - PAY STRUCTURES

PROFIT & REVENUE SHARING

One school of thought when opening any business has been to provide key staff members with a share of the business. In hospitality, this may mean giving your GM or Chef a few percentage points to make them more invested in the business, thus creating an added incentive for them to go above and beyond. But what if you provided that to everyone regardless of their level? Many operators are being forced to answer that question.

TIP VS. NON TIP

Long before Covid, the tipping debate was one of the most discussed topics in the restaurant world. Although designed to distribute pay equally across the staff, operators are hesitant to switch to a non-tipping model for fear of how customers would respond to paying more for their meal or being hit with a mandatory service charge. The tipping model is so ingrained in the American psyche, that changing this behavior has proven difficult for those who have tried. But for a struggling industry, it may be the only route to ensure better pay, working conditions and benefits.

BENEFITS, 401K & PTO

A given in most industries, staff benefit programs have become essential to restaurant survival. Health benefits, 401k plans and paid time off are being used to not only lure prospective employees, but more importantly to keep the ones they have from switching to industries where these benefits are standard practice.

WHAT CAN YOU DO...

- ☐ Consider a profit-sharing model for staff whereby anything past a target profit margin can be split 50/50 with your staff in a quarterly distribution for anyone that's been with you for over a year. See examples in the "learn more" section of this chapter.

- ☐ If switching to a service charge model, take time to explain to your customers that it is designed to maintain a living wage for the staff without driving up the cost of their meal. Transparency is key.
- ☐ Have systems in place to deal with and be flexible with customers who bristle at the service charge by allowing them to tip traditionally.

- ☐ Talk to fellow owners and operators about the companies they have worked with to develop benefit programs and whether or not they're satisfied with the providers.
- ☐ Look into adding non-traditional benefits such as chiropractic care, gym memberships and financial planning and literacy services as these can also go a long way with employees feeling valued.



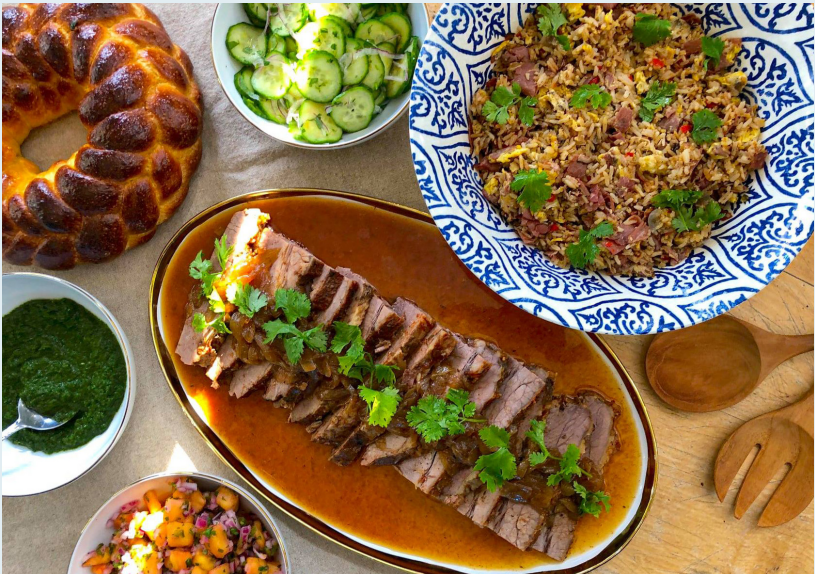
# CALL YOUR MOTHER

EXPANDING EMPLOYEE BENEFITS IN A PANDEMIC

While Call Your Mother was busy gathering national press accolades and industry awards, opening additional outlets across Washington DC, and even visits from President Joe Biden, owners Andrew Dana and Daniela Moriera were also trying to figure out how to treat their ever-expanding staff like co-owners and retain as many as they could, all while in the midst of a never-before-seen pandemic. “Early on, we just sort of made the decision that, if we were going to go down, we’re going to go down with our whole staff”, Dana said.

Cutting their own salaries was the ultimate put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is moment, giving their share to the most needy of their employees. Their next move was to expand employee benefits while many other owners were cutting them. From English and Spanish lessons to professional advice on how to open a bank account, sign a lease or get a home loan to fitness classes. Dana and Moriera believe that when you provide benefits, revenue will follow. This philosophy has been proven as the company has grown 120% year-over-year growth.

*As they continue to grow, promoting from within has also been a key component. All hiring and promotions at their new locations have come from within. “A lot of our staff has been with us for five years,” said Dana, “and we have told them: This is going to be a place where you can build a career.”*





**PROTECTING STAFF >**

Stories from the frontlines where entitled customers are making things even more difficult on operators.

**SANTA FE BK >**

How one Brooklyn restaurant is retaining talent through creative cross-training.

**PIZZA PARADISO >**

Why one DC restaurant changed its tipping model after 30 years (and it's working).

**CHE FICO >**

How investing in your staff can pay huge dividends.

**CASSAVA >**

From being one of the first restaurants in the US to require proof of vaccination, to equal tip outs for all positions, what does it take for this San Francisco favorite to run an ethical restaurant



# WANT TO **KNOW MORE?**

## HIRING + TRAINING

RE-IMAGINING THE RESTAURANT  
EXPERIENCE HELPS STAFF TOO

WHERE INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT  
LEVELS CURRENTLY STAND

## NAVIGATING SHORTAGES

HOW TO SURVIVE  
LABOR SHORTAGES

## PAY STRUCTURES

MAKE UNLOVED JOBS  
MORE ATTRACTIVE

PAYROLL MANAGEMENT

**THANK YOU.**