

Just a few weeks in, the amazing efforts and ingenuity of our restaurant teams to keep people employed and guests served is astounding. More hard decisions are being made – and tears shed – yet we press on and find new ways to provide. I am reminded daily that many of our toughest restaurant entrepreneurs have creative nurturing souls, and they are on full display right now.

At this point, restaurants have made staffing adjustments and are working on support structures for current and displaced team members, as well as the changing needs of guests. Focus remains on cost reduction, strict sanitation and distancing measures to protect employees and guests, and accessing grants and loans as the length of this pandemic remains unknown.

I'm a sucker for a good checklist. This one builds on the foundational practices the industry has adopted or emphasized as we begin to expand our focus to adapting the brand experience to this world in crisis. As you consider how these thought-starters relate to your brand, do so through the lens of community-driven, brand-relevant messaging that will be meaningful to the many impacted friends, family members and colleagues.

Use this time to restore faith and deepen relationships. We're all in this together!

FOOD & BEVERAGE OFFERING

Focus menu; package for home & essentials needs.

1	Focus Menu	Brand-focused signatures	Think about the need your brand fills, and how it's most relevant to today. Trim menu, reduce cost, consider carryability/containers.
		Supplier support	This industry comes together to help. Look for pricing, inventory and other specials.
		Menu access points	Open and update all channels: owned and paid, including 3rd party delivery/aggregators and printed to-go menus.
	Expand Beverage	Wine/Beer	Re-create a bit of the dine-in experience. Offer by the bottle, by the case, with food purchase, special promos and day of week/daypart specials. Think value: price in multiples, bundled with food & beverages.
		Cocktails w/w/o Alcohol	Check state laws. Offer a "just-add-booze" cocktail!
	Buy-Eat-Hold	Kits and multi-meal bundles, DIY meals & treats, including fresh food	Celebrations haven't stopped! Think everyday, holiday, occasions. Can you sell raw ingredients, heat-n-serve or cook/make instructions for those who enjoy and have new-found time to cook at home? Easter and Mother's Day are around the corner, and birthdays are every day. Take advance orders to pre-promote as people plan their new "normal."
		Sides, snacks and as-a-meal offerings	Details make it special: Soups, guacamole, dippers, dressings, casserole-style foods that make or complement a meal.
		Grocerant	Save guests stops and trips away from home by offering staple off-the-shelf grocery items. Picking up curbside is arguably safer than shopping in a grocery store.

SEAMLESS SPEED

Add frictionless, user-friendly, touchless order & pay systems.

2	Safety & Speed	Updated website	Put menu, online ordering and payment, pick-up and delivery options front & center. Make it easy-to-use, seamless, clear with images where applicable. If your brand is grateful for the business, missing guests (and staff), and taking extra steps to keep people safe, state it here.
		Working web links	Stay on top of these for both revenue and guest experience.
		Quick-order items feature	Make it easy for guests with quick-reference links to popular, profitable, carryable signatures and specials. Keep an eye on how behavior and purchasing patterns change.

2+	Safety & Speed	Vendor partner support	Partners who serve the industry are ready to help with frictionless, touchless online ordering, payment and processing. Start with existing vendor partners and expand to those innovating ways to quickly fill the need and keep teams staffed and guests served.
		Relocated register and display items	Dining rooms are closed, and guests are ever more reluctant to enter contact spaces. If you take onsite orders or pick-up/pay at the register, consider moving registers/terminals to the doorway, window or easy-access point.
		Safe-distance markers	Follow CDC and local authority guidelines, and mark order area to show safe distancing. Whenever possible, direct pickup guests to wait in vehicles as food is prepared.
		Curbside	This safest and most convenient guest pickup point may be here to stay. Designate spots, if applicable, and post phone number for easy-reference notification of arrival. Look at drive-up/curbside ordering options (such as OneDine, currently no contract/no fees). Convert your outdoor patio to a drive-thru or consider other unique-to-location means to make pickup safe and seamless.
		Touchless Pay	If you don't have online ordering, you may not need money or an agreement to quickly get this up and running. E.g., Toast has launched online ordering, OneDine has multiple options, including txt-2-pay, which can be set up in a matter of hours. Many other POS and technology partners are offering solutions and providing support to restaurants.

PROMOTION & COMMUNICATION

Give relevant value thru every channel. Communicate with grace and gratitude.

3	Channels	Open all relevant channels	If you haven't been there before, do everything you can to be there now: Digital, print, curbside, owned, earned, paid. One exception may be out-of-home; one channel that may see a resurgence is co-op direct mail. Contact current partners first to ensure you're allowing them to help in every possible way. Seek industry service and tech companies who are waiving fees and access to help restaurants during this crisis.
		Refine and follow metrics	What many of us were trying to accomplish has changed. Redefine how you measure success during this period, and be responsive to changing metrics and learnings.
		Neighborhood Marketing	There are four ways to increase sales: Trial, Frequency, Check Average & Party Size. Check average will be a changing value proposition in the coming weeks for those out of work, and on the opposite spectrum for those working long hours, willing to pay for convenience. Communities of residents on stay-at-home may be grateful for organized group deliveries that save them a trip out and offer a meal prep break. Look for the needs your brand can support in each of these growth areas.
		Leverage partners to help	We're all in this together, so tap partners who are working hard to help the industry in the short term, as well as in the long game: OpenTable and reservations platforms, POS, online ordering, data management, supply chain, NRA and state restaurant associations, community organizations to which you've donated in the past, etc.
	Digital	Email/eClub/Loyalty	As consumers, we cannot hear too often the changing details that impact us as we navigate current times. Loyalty and eClub members are most interested in hearing from you and are the most likely to support the brand, share info, buy gift cards, and take advantage of specials. Utilize all lists to opt in – eClub, loyalty, merchandise, events, POS, online ordering, 3rd party, etc. Consolidate & cleanse. Ask for reviews to help keep your brand's name at the forefront.

3+	Digital	Email/eClub/Loyalty	Use data learnings; Look for behavior shifts in product mix, how people are getting their food, feedback/requests/ questions are coming in. Tailor messages based on behavior. Technology providers can assist (e.g., Paytronix is designating members based on never ordered, ordered once, ordered multiple times to help clients tailor messages).
		Local chatter/community sites	Communities are finding innovative and uplifting ways to support their favorite restaurants. Cities/townships are mapping open restaurants, Facebook, Next Door, Patch and other digital community groups are tracking takeout, sharing pictures and information.
		Social influencers	Influencers once reliant on sponsorships are working their long game and building audiences as ad funds shrink in the current climate. Communicate, ask for help and show gratitude as they continue to share useful information.
		Social guest relations	Ensure that real people are responding to your employees and guests. Answering questions, responding with empathy, and proactively sharing info <i>where people are</i> has never been more important.
		Digital promo	Utilize your highest visibility and targeted mediums. Google My Business has changed to allow changes at scale. Facebook and Instagram are surging with online eyeballs. Yelp and others have rolled back fees.
		Personal, informal visibility	It's comforting to see familiar faces we love, and we're seeing an intimate side of brand personalities at home. Owners and leaders: be active in social, thank employees and guests for continuing to be part of our lives. Bartenders: show how to make cocktails, chefs invite you into the kitchen or show you how to make some of their recipes at home. Brand spokespeople: talk to media about community support through safety, service and other community engagement projects.
		Crowdsource promotion	Grassroots and community/industry-led promotions are gaining traction. Participate in national/regional promotions and promote thru all channels: #TakeoutTuesday, #CarryoutWednesday, #thegreatamericantakeout.
		Order, Pickup & Delivery	No-contact delivery
Expand methods of delivery	Deliver by bike, wagon, golf cart, anything that provides residential and essential worker delivery and keeps staff working. Many 3rd party partners are waiving and/or deferring payments: UberEats, GrubHub, DoorDash, and regionals.		
Drive-in/Curbside	Need help prioritizing? You need this yesterday! Designate spots, implement a drive-up/curbside ordering system in addition to pre-order with touchless payment, and communicate this new convenience and safety service through every+D52 channel.		
Establish repeat order system	This convenient way to order habitual meals we miss is particularly relevant for donut/bagel/breakfast and sandwich shops, juicers, fresh food/salad shops, and more. Pre-pay for repeating orders.		
Price/ Value	Focus on price/value equation based on the needs of the guests you serve	Are your guests essential workers on-the-job? Are they stay-at-home residents with income loss?	
		Value will become increasingly important as weeks go on. Focus on smaller price points where applicable: \$8/pp may be better than a \$32 4-pack. Exceptions are high-value package prices, e.g., Arby's 5 for \$10.	

3++	Price/ Value	Gift cards	Generate revenue and cash flow with gift cards. They're a way people can support brands they love without leaving home. Consider giving commission to employees who sell them, or donate proceeds to causes.
		Merchandise	Merchandise is a great way to show our support for brands we love. Promote branded merchandise or get creative to develop merchandise for the times, especially if it can help support a timely cause (hint: furloughed staff).
	Short-term tactics	BOGO & Bouncebacks	Buy One Get One is among top-redeemed offers in all times. Bouncebacks are a timely and timeless incentive to purchase again.
		Qualifiers	Focus on value with conditions: \$X off when you spend \$X.
		High value/demand add-ons (no fee/low fee)	Give guests permission to bring food home by sweetening the deal: bulk beverages, 2-liters, specialty drinks/sides, staple/in-demand items (lots of toilet paper-to-table out there).
		Day of the week meals / Daypart meals	Tap new or classics: Taco Tuesday, Wine Weds must-haves.
		Holidays	Easter & Mother's Day are coming...Think themed meals, desserts, DIY.
		Pay-it-forward to help	People want to help. Consider ways to help guests supports you and others. Promote bulk or donated-with-purchase items. Pay for catering delivery to healthcare workers, senior citizen communities, or HOA neighbors. Who are your at-risk or vulnerable community members?
	Present-ation	Food photography	We still eat first with our eyes, and pictures help us understand exactly what we're getting. Promote signatures and new bundles. Make digital ordering easy with images. Show meals as plated or out-of-the-box; show bundled, casserole or catering-style meals as they come. While cell phone pics suffice in a crisis, consider exchanging meals for pro shots by a local photographer impacted by the times.
		Packaging	Food arriving safely and to standards for taste are evolving best-practice table stakes. Adhere to safety and preservation best practices: safety/tamper-proof, reduce waste, separated temperature and wetness, assembly direction.

BRAND EXPERIENCE

Hospitality, safety & community take many forms.

4	Branded Hospitality	Hospitality	Go the extra mile to deliver one-to-one service, extra care, and brand-centered experience. Show the best you have to offer and SHINE!
		Gratitude	Be transparent and serve with grace. A personal note of gratitude to keep your teams employed and your doors open to the community are heartfelt messages.
		Safety first	Communicate about enhanced workplace and employee safety protocol. Request employees – and guests – who have any symptoms stay home.
		Optics	Ensure extra safety and sanitation measures are not only accessible to staff, but visible to guests. Place hand sanitizer at pickup stations. For pick-up <i>and</i> delivery, wear gloves, even masks, as the CDC updates its guidelines for both service and consumers. Smile with your eyes!
		Presentation extras	Food can be beautiful <i>and</i> fun to eat. "Instagrammable" is of special importance right now.
		Partnerships & collaborations	Consider what is unique to your brand outside of your menu, and draw inspiration from the creativity of your staff and brand partners. Support local musicians with a link to their mood music, or local florists and other shops with a special offer that supports both guests and partners.
		Connect	Organize or help community organizers. Many are making masks, PPE, organizing around donation sites, feeding those who've lost incomes, etc. Can you feed them? Can you be involved in other ways?

FUTURE FORWARD PLANNING

Move forward: pride, planning, people, learnings.

5 Today for To- morrow	Plan development – Re-opening or re-grand-opening	We don't know when but we know we will get to the other side. Hiring, re-hiring, promoting, celebrating; the probability of a staged re-emergence is high. Assume social distancing and high-sanitation practices will still be in effect when dining rooms re-open. What offerings and services will sustain?
	Top Team	People are the heart of the hospitality business. Give love and support wherever possible, and ensure your top talent is secure. Add top talent newly displaced. How are you supporting and communicating with furloughed/displaced employees to ensure care today and long-term relationships of tomorrow?
	New and here-to-stay products, services, expectations and efficiencies	<p>Some things are here to stay by guest demand, enhanced service and revenue opportunity. We don't know what they'll be, so think ahead and revise considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relentless sanitation procedures and visibility; space/protection between parties when dine-in re-opens - Menu offerings and bundle/home kit items - Overall delivery/pick-up program - Speed, free delivery and no contact likely to top the priority list - Menu offerings and bundle/home kit items - Curbside pickup (silver lining for parents of young kids, vulnerable, and am/pm commuters) - Casual dining use of curbside, to-go, even drive-up/thru - Brand-direct versus 3rd party delivery - Alcohol delivery or just-add-booze cocktail to-go program - Repeat schedule pre-orders, family packs, DIY, and other promotion/process changes - Other enhancements - what are yours?
	Storytelling / Story-writing	This shared experience leaves no one untouched. Tell the stories to your guests and co-workers. Record the stories and ensure your history unfolds with moments and milestones you'll be proud to become part of your history.

Consult your financial advisor if you need guidance on applying for SBA loans that will help keep people on payroll, as well as for state and other grants (e.g., NRA).
 Check for updated CDC, national, state and local municipality regulations and guidelines as you consider ideas for your business.