



# REOPENING YOUR RESTAURANT: Best Practices for Menus

While more states are beginning to allow dine-in service, it's essential to be aware that it may not be a full house from the start. Some of your customers, who are craving the dining experience, will be excited to dine with you immediately. On the other hand, a majority of patrons are expressing some hesitation to return to restaurants and will continue to leverage the convenience of delivery and takeout.

Different patrons are looking for different experiences, so it is vital to diversify your menu to meet the needs for all. Below are some menu best practices and suggestions for you to consider.

- **Continue to focus on core menu items**

Streamline your menu to help consolidate inventory and create menu items that cross-utilize more ingredients. Leverage the product mix report from your POS system to help you identify what items customers are ordering, so you can confidently decide what to remove. Keeping poor selling items on your menu can eat into your bottom line, but eliminating these unpopular choices can save you precious time and money.

- **Feature items that travel well**

Curating your takeout menu might involve a bit of trial and error. Think carefully about which items on your menu may go cold or soggy when placed in a takeout container for too long. For instance, french fries are notoriously hard to keep crisp. Some decisions may also be based on the type of takeout containers you're using. This is especially important as restaurants are increasingly turning to tamper-evident packaging to provide customers with peace of mind amidst heightened fears about food safety.

- **Highlight menu items with greater profit**

Menu engineering can be a great tool to help you identify menu items that are more profitable referred to as "stars" and "puzzles". Strive to offer as many of these items as possible and call attention to them by highlighting on your menu, running specials and whatever it takes to call attention to them. On the other hand, "plowhorses" and "dogs" are less profitable, but may still serve a purpose on your menu based on popularity or the need to provide specialized options.

- **Provide promotions**

Patrons are more particular in their needs than ever, with more than two-thirds of younger consumers more likely to maintain specific budgets, adopt frugal tactics or switch to cheaper brands.<sup>3</sup> The good news is, pizza is affordable and can feed a whole family for a great price. Offering weekly specials and promotions will get customers back without slashing prices.

- **Offer foods you can't make at home**

Whether it's a customer favorite appetizer or a specialty pizza limited time offer, 24% of patrons are willing to spend more at restaurants on foods they can't easily make at home.<sup>3</sup> When offering weekly specials or limited time offers, be creative with ingredients that are already in your pantry, but unique enough to entice your customers to order from you for dine-in, carryout or delivery.



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- **Increasing prices**

As the coronavirus pandemic has led to food shortages across the country, your business has faced increased food costs from meat, poultry, seafood and produce suppliers. You may be wondering if raising menu prices is the best way to combat your rising food and operating costs. While 54% of patrons say they are okay with a slight increase in menu prices immediately after dining rooms reopen,<sup>2</sup> it's important to carefully investigate if raising menu prices is best for your operation and to consider all the factors. Does your service and quality warrant the new prices? Does it make sense to take small increases on lower profit items rather than an across the board price increase? Is your staff prepared to talk about the reasons for the price increases with customers?

- **Family bundles**

Family bundles are here to stay, with 38% percent of patrons saying that they would likely continue ordering them when the pandemic subsides.<sup>1</sup> As Americans become more price conscious, they will appreciate family meals that give them a bang for their buck. With this in mind, consumers are looking for comfort foods, with pizza & Italian food being two of the top three that they want in a family meal.<sup>1</sup> To increase demand, separate your restaurant from the competition by offering mix-and-match choices, customizable meals for each person, allowing them flexibility in their selection.

- **Round out the meal experience**

Patrons miss dining out at restaurants, not just for the food, but also for the sense of normalcy it evokes. The majority of patrons want to go back to dining out because of the emotional benefits they receive like relaxation, joy, satisfaction and indulgence.<sup>4</sup> It remains important for your staff to be trained and prepared to walk your customers through a full meal experience and not overlook upsell potential by offering them appetizers, entrees, sides, beverages and desserts.

- **Shift the use of menus**

With the Center for Disease Control highly encouraging the use of disposable menus, it allows you to be agile and creative on your menu. Make sure to update your Facebook page and website frequently to communicate menu changes. To reduce printing costs and menu contact, leverage a QR code to place on your front door or dining tables to drive your customer to use their phones to review your menu.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO PREPARE YOUR RESTAURANT FOR REOPENING, VISIT [GRANDCHEESE.COM/COVID-19-TOOLS](https://www.grandcheese.com/COVID-19-tools)**

<sup>1</sup>Datassential, Here I Come, May 20, 2020

<sup>2</sup>Datassential Custom Research, May 2020

<sup>3</sup>Datassential, Money Matters Webinar, April 17, 2020

<sup>4</sup>Datassential, And So It Begins Webinar, May 1, 2020