



POST-COVID RECOVERY: Best Practices for Managing Menus

Many patrons have returned to restaurants since the height of COVID-19, but some 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.

- **Increasing prices**

Your business has faced increased food costs from meat, poultry, seafood and produce due to supply shortages across the country. You may be wondering if raising menu prices is the best way to combat your rising food and operating costs. The majority (72%) of restaurant patrons don't object to occasional menu price increases with about 2/3 saying that increases are most acceptable if kept at 10% or less.¹ It's important to consider all the factors when taking an increase. Make sure your service and quality warrant the new prices. Consider taking small increases on lower profit items rather than an across the board price increase. Prepare your staff to talk about the reasons for the price increases with customers. Keep in mind, you are not alone, price increases are being seen not only in restaurants, but also in grocery stores, at the gas pump and at retail for most household staples.

- **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.

- **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 promote 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.

[Click here to download our menu engineering template.](#)

- **Shift the use of menus**

Consumers are accustomed to not seeing a printed menu in the restaurant these days, and it allows you to be more agile in your offerings and update pricing more often. 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. Make sure to update your Facebook page and website frequently to communicate menu changes. [Click here to create your own QR code.](#)

- **Provide promotions & LTOs**

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.³ 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.



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- **Family bundles**

Family bundles are here to stay, with 38% percent of patrons saying that they would likely continue ordering them post-COVID.² As prices continue to increase, Americans 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.² 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 missed dining out at restaurants during the pandemic, not just for the food, but also for the sense of normalcy it evokes. The majority of patrons who have gone back to dining out have said it's because of the emotional benefits they receive like relaxation, joy, satisfaction and indulgence.⁴ 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.

- **Continue to 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.

FOR HELP IN UPDATING YOUR MENU, [CONTACT OUR SOLUTIONS @ WORK TEAM](#) OF MARKETING EXPERTS TO WALK YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS.

¹ Datassential Consumer Omnibus, December, 2021

² Datassential, Here I Come, May 20, 2020

³ Datassential, Money Matters Webinar, April 17, 2020

⁴ Datassential, And So It Begins Webinar, May 1, 2020