

July - August 2020

# KENTUCKY

## RESTAURANT JOURNAL

The Official Publication of the Kentucky Restaurant Association

Employee Relations

Kentucky Restaurants  
Re-Opening Q&A

**Chefs That Sizzle**  
**Red State BBQ**

Trust Will Mean Everything  
to Restaurant Customers  
After COVID-19

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**Scramble includes:**

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Do you know a chef in your area who is creating a buzz with innovative cuisine, exceptional presentation or fresh new ideas?

KRA wants to tell the state about them in a bi-monthly feature in the Kentucky Restaurant Journal. Submit your favorite chef du jour to [lisa@kyra.org](mailto:lisa@kyra.org). Please include restaurant and contact information. Selected submissions will be featured in the magazine as **Chefs That Sizzle**.

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# A Word from Our PRESIDENT

STACY ROOF



I wish I could use this column to NOT talk about the COVID 19 pandemic that has dictated all aspects of our lives the past few months, but here we are. We made a few decisions when all this started. We decided not to publish the usual May-June Kentucky Restaurant Journal. Back in March and April – and even some days now – circumstances and rules changed seemingly every few hours. Whatever information we could have conveyed in that issue would have changed about 12 times between when it was written and when you read it. We also decided that we were not going to invoice for member dues for several months. We pushed pause, hoping whatever revenue you were able to capture you could use on immediate necessities.

We're starting that slowly now, but we understand if it is not yet the right time for you to renew. Not so much a decision, but our mindset has been that it is KRA's responsibility to protect and advocate for every restaurant in Kentucky. Membership lines are invisible to me as we take questions from restaurants all over the state.

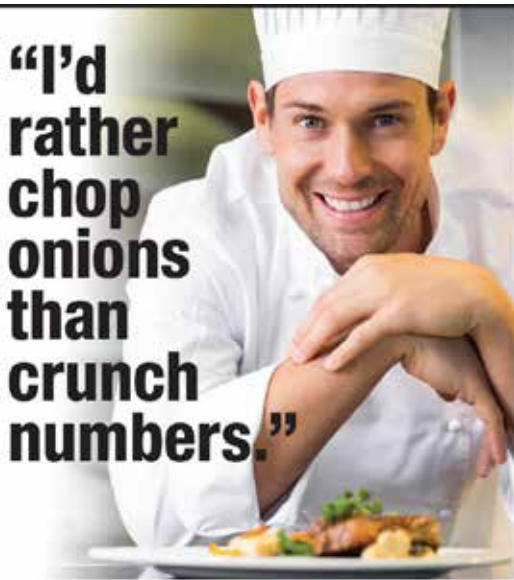
I hope if they are able to withstand this uncertain time they will become a member when their business is healthier. We have seen closures, and we will see more. It breaks my heart that circumstances beyond your control have turned every business decision you make into a make it or break it scenario, and I want you to know I have been and will continue fighting for you.

get delivery, buy gift cards!) and with the powers that be.

We partnered with Fleur de Lis Communications on a "Welcome Forward" campaign as restaurants began to open knowing how important it is for your customers to understand all the measures you're taking. Those PSAs were aired all over Kentucky with several thousand online impressions. Check out this stat – KRA had over 139 million online and print mentions in May alone! You may have seen me on the news or quoted in articles a few times.

I am proud to serve Kentucky restaurants, and I hope you will contact me or our office with any questions or issues you have. We are here for you, no matter your restaurant type or location. I thank you for the opportunity to advocate on your behalf.

**"I'd rather chop onions than crunch numbers."**



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I am astounded that our administration did not assemble and take direct input from a group of restaurant industry professionals as they began to make decisions. Early on, I expected such a group to be appointed as it was in most other states.

When a reopening date of May 22 was finally announced by Governor Beshear's office, I felt sure our reopening plan would be considered and we would see a document from the Governor's office before it was made available to others. Again, it did not happen that way – believe me, we asked and pushed, pestered and requested.

I want to assure you that your interests have been presented to the administration repeatedly. I have spent a lot (!) of time the past few months answering questions, deciphering Healthy at Work recommendations, conducting interviews, communicating with the Governor's office and working to keep restaurants front of mind in both the public forum (get carryout,

**KENTUCKY**  
Restaurant Journal  
*The Only Publication of the  
Kentucky Restaurant Association*

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## Unusual General Assembly Session

The 2020 session of the General Assembly did not adjourn in its usual manner. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the shutdown of the Capitol and the Legislative Annex leaving legislators to vote from their offices and advocates out of the proceedings.

The 60-day session of the General Assembly during a world health pandemic led to the passage of a one-year budget considering the economic impacts of the pandemic. The budget itself is based on pessimistic forecasts, which led to no funding increases for education, and state employee and teacher salaries. More than 900 bills were introduced during the 2020 session and KRA's government affairs team identified more than 200 bills as potentially impacting members.

### Key “wins” for restaurants this session included:

- Legislation allowing restaurants to sell alcohol by the package and by the drink for carryout and delivery;
- Restaurants were given the ability to sell raw foods during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pain of having to close during the pandemic could not be healed by these measures, they were some help;
- Another piece of the COVID-19 package allowed for employees whose hours were reduced to be eligible for unemployment to make up the difference in pay due to hours being cut.

### Other Issues

As is often the case, KRA members reaped some of their biggest ‘wins’ when halting many bills that would have negatively affected Kentucky restaurateurs. The biggest of these bills

proposed to amend the Constitution to allow the General Assembly the authority to allow local governments to levy additional local taxes including a local sales tax and a restaurant tax. The proposed Constitutional amendment was broad and was sponsored by Democrats and Republicans alike. In addition, a measure allowing all local governments to enact a restaurant tax failed to get a hearing. The Senate refused to take up a measure that would allow local governments to enact a local alcohol regulatory fee for all cities and counties except Louisville and Lexington.

Other measures on this session's list of filed-but-not-adopted legislation included bills proposing to raise the minimum wage, including the minimum cash wage for tipped employees, and empowering local governments to set a local minimum wage higher than the state rate.

Other proposals introduced but not passed included mandated paid sick leave for all employees; to roll back some of the workers' compensation reforms enacted in 2018; to require those with 50 or more employees to provide six weeks of paid maternity leave and to institute “predictive scheduling” by which employers would be required to provide a written estimate of the employee's work schedule at the time of hire and post weekly schedules at least seven days in advance.

### Health Department Inspection Fees:

Local health departments have repeatedly complained that they do not have the necessary resources to fully implement the food inspection program required under state law. In 2018, they tried to pass a reorganization bill that would have removed any restrictions on inspections fees and allowed the Cabinet

for Health and Family Services to set the fees by administrative regulation without any limits. The Restaurant Association's Government Affairs team opposed this measure and was able to get it amended to limit the increase to no more than 5% a year. While the Department for Public Health did file a regulation to increase food permit inspection fees, it was withdrawn after KRA pointed out the increases were significantly greater than what was allowed by statute.

Fast-forward to December 2019 when House Health and Family Services Chairwoman Kim Moser (R-Taylor Mill) introduced HB 129 referred to as the Public Health Transformation bill that was meant to return local health departments to their original mission and limit one-time public health grants and other changes to equalize funding across health departments.

Tucked in the multiple-paged bill was a provision that removed the statutory 5% restriction on fee increases, and KRA, on behalf of its establishments selling prepared foods opposed the increases. According to documents provided by advocates for the legislation, they argued that fees increases of more than 80% across the board were necessary to make health departments whole.

Restaurants and grocers argued that the food inspection program is a public health benefit and should be paid for with taxpayer dollars and not solely the responsibility of the food establishment. The measure passed the House Health and Family Services Committee, but was quickly referred back to the House Appropriations and Revenue Committee where an agreement was reached to limit the food inspection fee increases to no more than 25% in the first year and after the initial increase, the 5% yearly cap would then apply.

With this compromise, the measure easily passed the House and went into the Senate Health & Welfare Committee. The Senate amended the legislation to remove a provision allowing the Commissioner of Public Health set property tax rates. The House agreed to the change and HB 129 was signed by the governor. The Department for Public Health filed a regulation on June 4 to increase food permit inspection fees.

### Local Health Department Fees

The Public Health Transformation legislation--HB 129--sponsored by Rep. Kim Moser (R-Taylor Mill) not only created a realignment of priorities for the health departments, as introduced it would have eliminated the cap on health department inspection fee increases that KRA worked to establish in the 2018 session. The cap on food permit fees stated that the Cabinet for Health and Family Services through regulation could not increase the food inspection fees more than 5% a year.

Health Departments argued that food inspection fees as currently assessed did not cover the cost of the food inspection program. The Restaurant Association argued that the program was not a benefit of the food service industry and that it should be paid for through general funds since it was a public health service. Moser agreed to return the cap of 5% after one year, but KRA pushed for additional changes.

The bill passed the House Health and Family Services Committee, but it was referred to the House Appropriations & Revenue Committee for further changes. The committee opted to put a 25% cap on any fee increase in the first year and each year after the fees could not increase more than 5% in one year. The Senate made an additional change to the bill that included removing language that gave the Commissioner of Public Health the ability to set property tax rates on behalf of local health departments. The measure included an emergency clause, so it is in effect now.

### COVID 19 Resources

We continue to answer questions and advocate for members, both with the health department and the administration. If you have an issue, please let us know. Kentucky's Healthy at Work Guidelines can be found at <https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthy-at-work>.

## Breakfast and Registration

9:15 a.m.

Shotgun Start 10:30 a.m.

Four Person Scramble

LUNCH PROVIDED

PRIZES BEVERAGES RAFFLE

BUFFET DINNER & OPEN BAR

Immediately following golf

### Pricing:

Golfer- \$125

Hole Sponsor - \$100

Foursome - \$500

Foursome & Hole  
Sponsorship - \$600



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NORTHERN KENTUCKY CHAPTER

## 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BEN & SHIRLEY BERNSTEIN MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING

Benefitting Mardi Gras for Homeless Children

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Golf Course at Twin Oaks



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Liz Leesman & Robyn Meyer for more information.

[llesman@commonwealthhotels.com](mailto:llesman@commonwealthhotels.com)

[rmeyer@commonwealthhotels.com](mailto:rmeyer@commonwealthhotels.com)





*Jim Lyon  
Kentucky ProStart Coordinator  
Jim@kyra.org*



The past few months have been trying times for all of us, but the ProStart® instructors have been up for the challenge. Meeting students via Zoom, having students make videos of their efforts, students creating full menus (including costing and pricing) for their home meals, the list goes on and on. One of the great things about the ProStart curriculum is the ability to utilize the different modules to allow for non-traditional instruction, like they had to move to since the mandatory closing of the schools. It wasn't easy, but these great instructors did a great job!



One of our Kentucky ProStart instructors who was highlighted in a previous article, Nikkia Rhodes, along with some of her students will be taking on another challenge where she will use her skills and those of her students for the good of the community.

The following was taken directly from The Lee Initiative's

Facebook page:

"The LEE Initiative is starting the McAtee Community Kitchen to send hot meals and grocery boxes to pick up centers in Shelby Park, Russell, and California neighborhoods. This kitchen is named in honor of Chef David McAtee, a beloved chef who devoted his livelihood to helping people in the community. With his family's blessing, we hope to honor his memory and his profession with a kitchen that will serve the Black community in Louisville, while also empowering the work of young Black leaders in the culinary space. We seek to honor the memory of Chef David McAtee and to ensure that his name, his mission, his love for his community continue.

Chef Nikkia Dawn Rhodes and her students will run this kitchen, with guidance and oversight from Chef Edward Lee. Nikkia is a graduate of The LEE Initiative's Women Chefs of KY Program and the director of the Iroquois High School Culinary Arts Program.

Thank you to our partners Children Shouldn't Hunger, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Ashbourne Farms, Dare to Care Food Bank and OneWest.

Logistics:

Hot meals will be served on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 4pm to 6pm.

The meals will be:

- 50 boxes, each with 4 hot meals at Trouble Bar (1149 S Shelby St.)
- 100 boxes, each with 4 hot meals, at California Community Center (1600 St Catherine St.).
- 100 boxes, each with 4 hot meals, at OneWest (2028 West Broadway, Ste. 104)

Groceries will be available at all three drop off points on Mondays only. The groceries will be 25 pound box of canned food and a 25 pound box of fresh produce.

For further details, or to donate, please visit [www.leeinitiative.org](http://www.leeinitiative.org)

If you would like to learn more about ProStart, become a partner or support the program through a financial donation, please contact Kentucky ProStart coordinator, Jim Lyon. You can email him at [jim@kyra.org](mailto:jim@kyra.org), or call him at 502-400-3736.





## July

- 4th - 4th of July
- 13th - ServSafe®  
Louisville, KY
- 15th - Tax Day
- 20th - ServSafe®  
Louisville, KY

## August

- 5th - ServSafe®  
Louisville, KY
- 10th - ServSafe®  
Louisville, KY
- 17th - 32nd Annual Firecracker  
Golf Scramble  
Woodhaven Country  
Club
- 18th - ServSafe®  
Louisville, KY
- 24th - KRA Board of Directors  
Meeting

## September

- 4th - Kentucky Oaks  
Churchill Downs
- 5th - Kentucky Derby  
Churchill Downs
- 14th - ServSafe®  
Louisville, KY
- 17th - 30th Annual Ben & Shirley  
Bernstein Memorial Golf  
Outing  
Twin Oaks Golf Course



# Q&A Questions Answers

Q.

There are so many factors around COVID 19 that our restaurant is dealing with. Our biggest issue is that no matter what capacity we are allowed to use in our dining room, the 6 feet of social distancing between tables makes only about 45% of our dining room useable. When will social distancing be lessened? Going to 50 or even 75% capacity doesn't help us at all!

A.

This is the number one pain point we're hearing from operators all over the state. Because the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other national experts are recommending social distancing at 6 feet, there is no way to know when that may be changed. Our best advice is to focus on ensuring 6 feet of space between face to face guest contact, and talk with your health inspector as that is where the interpretation lies.

Q.

We have a good supply of masks and other PPE right now, but we'll probably need new sources soon. Does KRA have any recommendations on good prices for hand sanitizer, facial coverings, gloves and thermometers?

A.

Several member companies are offering excellent prices on those items. We've had a lot of companies approach us over the past two months as you might imagine! Besides distributor and linen members and new member ProMed, we have a few other sources to share if you get in touch with the KRA office

Q.

How do other counter service restaurants handle distributing tips left by customers without violating Kentucky's tip pooling regulation?

A.

We asked attorney member Emily Litzinger, who has worked with several businesses that are counter service and have voluntary tip pools. The restaurants have one voluntary tip pool and the tips are split between the front and back of the house pro rata based on the number of hours worked during the relevant pay period. Sharing with the front and back of house is now acceptable under recent changes in the law provided that the employer is NOT taking the tip credit and paying employees at least minimum wage. The only catch is that the supervisor, manager, owners (or anyone with supervisory duties) CANNOT participate in the tip pool. Furthermore, if the employer provides custodial services (holds the money to be distributed), the account must be properly identified and segregated from other business records and open to examination by pool participants pursuant to KRS 337.065 (4). In other words, if participants want to review the records for some reason they have a legal right to do so. Emily is happy to work with members who have questions or would like to engage her to put together a tip pooling agreement.

How may we be of assistance?  
Call the Kentucky Restaurant  
Association at 502-400-3736 or  
email [stacy@kyra.org](mailto:stacy@kyra.org) with your  
question.



## What the new Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act means for you

The legislation signed in June is good news for the restaurant industry, fixing some of the problems with the Paycheck Protection Program.

Thanks in part to efforts by the National Restaurant Association, small businesses, especially restaurants, have more incentives to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program enacted in April in response to the coronavirus crisis.

The deadline to apply for a PPP loan is June 30.

The Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act, a House-initiated reform bill passed by the Senate and signed into law by President Trump on June 5, fixes the problems in the PPP that prevented many restaurants from applying.

The changes to the PPP make it possible for more restaurants to take advantage of the program's loans, gives greater flexibility to those who have already applied in how and when they use the loans, and makes it easier for all recipients to meet the requirements for loan forgiveness. Here are highlights of the changes and what they mean for you.

- **Extends expense forgiveness from eight weeks to twenty-four weeks.** If you've already applied and borrowed from the PPP, you can choose to extend the eight-week period to 24 weeks, or you can keep your original eight-week period.

New PPP borrowers will have a 24-week covered period from the date of the loan, or until Dec. 31, 2020, whichever comes first. This extension and flexibility in which time period you use should make it easier for your loan to qualify for full, or almost full, forgiveness.

Many restaurateurs felt bound by the eight-week window because many of them were not even open to full employment capacity and doubted they would be in eight weeks when the first PPP was passed in April.

- **No longer requires 75% of loan go to payroll.** Now, you only have to apply 60% of the money you borrow on payroll expenses to meet the requirement for loan forgiveness. That means you can apply up to 40% of the money forgiveness.

you borrow towards non-payroll expenses such as rent or mortgage and utilities, and still qualify for maximum loan

Again, with the original PPP, the need to use 75% of the loan toward payroll in order to qualify for loan forgiveness was problematic because most operators were unable to hire to full capacity yet, but other expenses were pressing.

- **Changes the two-year loan repayment requirement.** For restaurants that apply now, the loan repayment term is extended to five years. The two-year term given to those who already received loans can be extended up to five years if you and your lender agree. The interest rate on PPP loans remains 1%.
- **Allows payroll tax deferment for PPP recipients.** The CARES Act allowed the restaurant's 6.2% portion of employees' Social Security taxes to be deferred, half of it until 2021 and the other half until 2022, but that was up until the moment your loan is forgiven. Now you can defer all those 2020 taxes, even after the loan is forgiven.

Deeper explanation: The time period for which the loan applies is 24 weeks (up from eight); loan forgiveness is the date on which the SBA determines the portion of your loan that can be forgiven (based on the paperwork you need to turn in). The old rules stated that as soon as your loan gets forgiven — say, June 2021, just as an example — then all the 2020 SS taxes you deferred would have had to be paid then. Now, you get to defer 50% of those 2020 taxes until the end of 2021, and 50% until the end of 2022, no matter when your loan (or a portion thereof) is forgiven.

Extends the June 30 rehiring deadline. In order to qualify for loan forgiveness, you now have until December 31, 2020, to rehire employees.

Expands rehiring loan forgiveness qualifications. In order to qualify for loan forgiveness, the PPP originally required you to rehire the number of FTEs you had before February 15 by June 30, 2020. Now there won't be any reduction in the amount of your loan forgiveness if you can show that in the period from February 15 to December 31, 2020:

1. You're unable to rehire the employees who were on staff before February 15;
2. You're unable to hire employees with similar qualifications for unfilled positions by then; or
3. Your restaurant is unable to return to the previous level of business before February 15, 2020, due to compliance with any COVID-19-related government restrictions still in place.





## Healthy Hand Washing Experience: Five Restroom Upgrades Restaurants Need Now

While restaurant environments are known for their adherence to cleanliness, the pandemic has elevated the awareness of hand-to-surface contact and placed an emphasis on proper hand washing.

“As businesses and public establishments reopen and Americans return to using facilities, all eyes are on public restrooms,” says Jon Dommissie, director of strategy and corporate development, Bradley Corp., a global manufacturer of restroom equipment. “Today’s commercial washroom will be of paramount importance in providing hand washing systems and supplies, and mitigating sickness-causing germs.”

Dommissie offers several considerations for keeping restrooms clean, maintained, well-equipped and prepared for a healthy hand washing experience:

**1. Post signage.** Reinforce cleanliness with friendly reminders about washing hands for 20 seconds per Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, maintaining safe distances between users, throwing away paper towels, etc. The Healthy Hand Washing Survey by Bradley Corp. shows that 40 percent of Americans increase hand washing when signs are posted.

“Posting updated cleaning schedules in restrooms also goes a long way in helping to reassure customers the facility is taking steps to ensure a clean environment and cares about keeping

them safe,” Dommissie said.

**2. Offer touchless fixtures.** Cross contamination of germs in restrooms can be reduced by using touch-free fixtures for everything from soap, faucets, hand dryers/towels, doors and flushers. Public health experts agree: “Under any circumstance, using touchless fixtures helps to inhibit the spread of germs in restrooms and buildings,” says medical microbiologist Michael P. McCann, Ph.D., professor of biology, Saint Joseph’s University. “The more we avoid restroom touchpoints, the healthier and easier our operations will be. Hands-free washrooms are a win-win for consumers and businesses.”

Research shows that consumers are highly in favor of using touch-free fixtures. “Ninety-one percent of Americans believe it’s extremely or somewhat important that public restrooms are equipped with touchless fixtures,” Dommissie said. “In fact, making everything touchless is Americans’ most requested improvement in restrooms.”

**3. Increase cleaning, sanitization and restocking.** Proper and frequent cleaning and disinfection is key for restrooms, especially for high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs, faucets, sinks, toilets, stall door openers and paper towel dispensers. According to the CDC, daily cleaning with soap and water reduces germs, dirt, and impurities on the surface, and should be done frequently,

especially if there is high traffic.

“It’s also important to disinfect surfaces to kill germs at least once daily, and more often if the restroom is busy,” Dr. McCann said. Finally, be sure to check and restock supplies regularly. Experiencing unclean low-stocked restrooms are pet peeves for restroom users.

**4. Provide trash cans and hand sanitizer near exits.** “Our research shows that 65 percent of Americans use paper toweling to avoid contact with restroom doors and faucets,” Dommissie said. “Keeping paper towels and waste containers near doorways can be helpful so people can throw them away upon exiting.”

Installing hand sanitizers outside restrooms is another way people can sanitize their hands upon entering and leaving the restroom.

**5. Prop open doors to increase visibility and minimize contact.** To limit the number of people in restrooms and encourage social distancing, a propped open door can give people a small window into seeing how many others are already inside. In addition, a slightly opened door allows people to maneuver the door with their elbow, as opposed to their hands.

For more information: <http://www.bradleycorp.com/handwashing>

# Plant-based Protein is Here to Stay

A major shift in meat consumption is far from “impossible”

Restaurant experts surveyed for the National Restaurant Association's Restaurant Industry 2030 report identify the growth in popularity of plant-based protein food products as the No. 2 most likely food-and-menu trend to over the next decade.

That's no surprise: Consumers' palates have been getting more diverse for a while, and suppliers and operators have been adapting to expand the range of options as a result.

## What does a “plant-based” diner look like?

Gone are the days when restaurant guests feel they should call ahead to inquire if there is a vegetarian option. Now, they expect entire menus devoted to vegan- and vegetarian-centric dishes.

According to Technomic:

- 59% of consumers say they eat meatless meals at least once a week.
- 49% of consumers say they would be likely to order a dish described as plant-based.
- 44% of consumers would order dishes described as meatless or meat-free.
- 33% of consumers are actively trying to reduce their meat consumption (without sacrificing taste).

These diners don't all classify themselves as “vegetarian” either. Now more than ever, diners are looking for more options, and that often means they are looking for plant-based cuisine as a protein source.

Vegetarianism and veganism are more than just trends. The Vegan Society purports that interest in veganism

increased sevenfold between 2014 and 2019.

To match the explosion in vegan diets, and to acknowledge that this trend may be here to stay, companies whose entire business model is built around meat have started to adopt plant-based alternatives.

not only burgers but meatballs, tacos, pizza and more. KFC has introduced Beyond Fried Chicken and Burger King has been advertising the Impossible Whopper extensively. Some suppliers, such as Nestle, are driving other options, including its vegan bacon cheeseburger, The Awesome Burger, tempting diners with vegan versions of bacon and cheddar cheese.

Imitation meat is not a new concept.

Boca Burger was founded in 1993 and was a popular item in freezers all over America. Boca's main ingredient is the same as the Impossible Burger, soy protein, so why is the Boca Burger irrelevant while Impossible Foods' are in high demand? A combination of innovation and demand are to blame. As vegetarian and veganism explode, companies have found ways to make vegan options taste shockingly similar to their meaty counterparts. That matters because 92% of plant-

based alternatives were consumed by non-vegans in 2018. As lifelong meat eaters begins to experiment with plant-based alternatives, fast-food chains are locked in a battle for brand loyalty.

If the trends continue, it looks like the side of the menu that offers plant-based options is only going to get larger. Just remember: Sacrificing taste won't win you any points.

Restaurants that want to stay ahead will need to continue to offer better tasting, healthier alternatives that allow consumers to make a choice that's right for them, and their taste buds.



## How is the food industry responding?

As restaurants look for new ways to cater to the tastes of Americans, suppliers and operators are looking for new ways to expand the range of options. Putting plant-based protein on the menu is becoming easier as suppliers collaborate with foodservice partners to meet guest expectations.

The result is a wide range of plant-based protein offerings as manufacturers work to make plant-based protein sources more widely available, and delicious. Yielding





# Trust Will Mean Everything to Restaurant Customers After COVID-19

Customers are going to the brands they know and love during uncertain times

Black Box Intelligence recently shared an interesting data point concerning “high-frequency spenders,” and how they’ve remained active during COVID-19. While sales plunged industrywide—56 percent in the back half of March alone—that doesn’t mean everybody’s taken to the sidelines. The company found, of those consumers that spent any money on restaurants (in the week ending March 27), 39 percent made at least five or more transactions. Bottle Rocket, a digital experience consultancy firm known for its work on Chick-fil-A’s app, released survey data that showed much of the same—restaurant loyalists continue to narrow down where they go for food during the pandemic, but they’re still going. Some even said they’re visiting favorite spots more frequently now than before.

What this suggests is simple, yet vital. The very core of why people are eating is going to change post COVID-19. Rethink food quality as the No. 1 reason people get off the couch. The decision will come down to trust. “Not products,” “Everything is going to be about trust and transparency.”

Tropical Smoothie Café CEO Charles Watson adopted a similar tone: “Customer

loyalty is pivotal right now,” he said.

To put it plainly, people are flocking to the familiar during a time when nothing feels normal. And when we emerge into a wary, strange new world, the same sentiment will ring true.

Consumers will put their dollars and personal safety into the hands of restaurants they trust.

Market Force Information shared an exclusive study looking into how consumers perceive restaurants amid COVID-19 conditions. How are their favorite brands responding to infection control? How is consumer behavior and attitudes changing toward things like contactless transactions and problem experiences?

The company, known for its annual benchmark studies, polled nearly 4,000 guests between April 6 and April 8. One of the big points to emerge: 80 percent of consumers said they continue to deal with the brands they know and love. Let’s dive into the rest of the results.

An overall look:

80% of respondents said they “completely agree” that the suggestion to stay at home and practice social distancing was appropriate. But only 6% believe the government has the current health crisis under control.

Additionally, 50% said the world will change as a result of coronavirus and 34% think their own behavior will never return to normal.

To the earlier point, 80% continue to deal with the brands they trust to ease some of these fears.

Keep in mind this is something that will linger. The restaurants that helped people get through the crisis will carry that standing into the future.

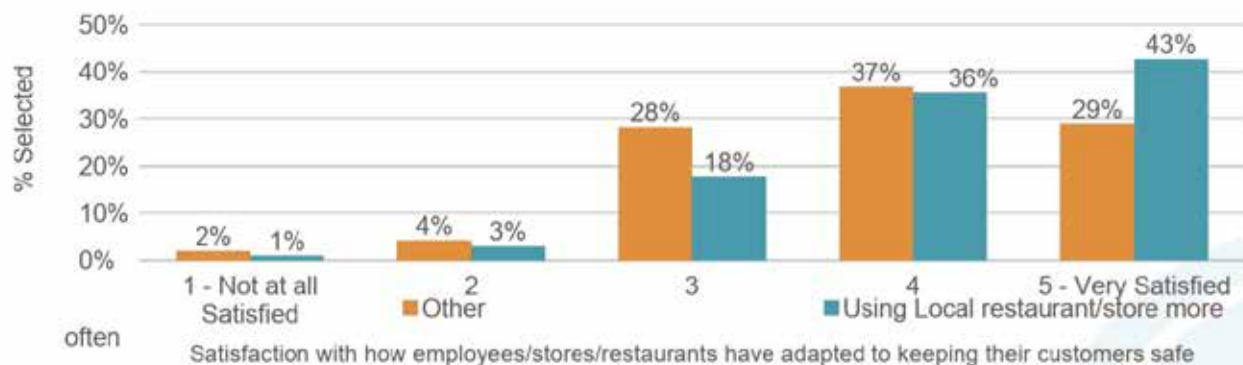
Market Force’s study suggested consumers are eager to support local restaurants. 44% said they have been purchasing more frequently from independent spots (not large chains) in recent weeks.

They appear content with safety measures, too.

## Are local restaurants taking more measures to keep customers safe?

- 44% have been purchasing more frequently from LOCAL restaurants or stores (not large chains)

Customers that use Local restaurants or stores reported higher satisfaction with how employees/stores/restaurants have adapted to keeping their customers safe



How would you rate your satisfaction with how employees, restaurants, and stores have adapted to keep their customers safe?  
Within the last 2 weeks have you been purchasing more frequently from LOCAL restaurants or stores (not large chains)?

9

Market Force discovered only 15% of customers used curbside pickup in the last two weeks. Adoption remains relatively low.

Among the customers that did so:

- 58% had used curbside pickup before COVID-19
- Only 27% were able to purchase all of the items they needed (this probably applies more to grocers)
- 43% were very satisfied with personal cleanliness/safety standards observed (compared to 39% in store)
- 26% of curbside pickup orders were inaccurate (Market Force credited this to a lack of availability).

A positive figure to latch onto for restaurants: Nearly 80% (79) said they plan to use curbside pickup even after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. So if there's a pop-up drive thru setup at your restaurant, it might be worth leaving it up for a bit, if possible. At least until there's a tangible, near-normal return to dine-in traffic.

Reasons for using curbside pickup even after restrictions are lifted:

- Time savings: 77%
- My order was ready on time: 53%
- Website was easy to use: 46%

- Alleviated my safety concerns: 36%
- No issues with the quality of the items selected by the shopper: 34%
- Cost of service fees is worth the convenience (where applicable): 33%
- I do not enjoy grocery shopping in the store: 32%
- My items were handled carefully: 31%
- No issues with the accuracy of my order: 31%

The takeaway: Curbside could be a key tool for operators to not only ease food safety fears post COVID-19, but also to provide a convenience element they may not have been known for before.

A question for sit-down chains, though, is how much of this off-premises shift will level out? Will restaurants hold on to some of the extra business they're seeing? Or will the fact it's mostly coming from core, dine-in customers (and not incremental) result in a quick reset? Will those guests just go back to the dining room?

It's pretty much impossible to say with any certainty right now. But there's a good chance those same guests will feel more comfortable trying delivery/takeout from their favorite restaurants than they used to. Or perhaps some new customers were introduced to the brand during COVID-19 and will want to return to the dining room. Pretty hard to say for sure one way or the

other. Yet there's zero harm in trying to get the off-premises business humming.

Casual dining, a deeper look:

In Market Force's study, just 14% of people said they visited a casual-dining restaurant within the last two weeks they normally don't eat at.

A whopping 86% of casual-dining customers said they've stuck to the restaurants they are familiar with.

Reasons for visiting a new restaurant:

- Offered carryout or curbside pickup: 52%
- Local restaurant that I wanted to support: 47%
- Available menu items: 34%
- Less busy/fewer customers: 15%
- Offered contactless carryout: 13%
- Restaurants I normally visit aren't open: 11%
- Convenient store hours: 11%
- Cleaner location: 3%
- Other: 15%

Good news for these brands—cleanliness perception at casual-dining chains returned significantly higher than quick service.



45% of people said they were “completely satisfied” with personal cleanliness/safety standards they observed from employees (a full 6 percentage points higher than grocers). Quick service was just 32%.

For casual dining:

40% observed enhanced cleaning or sanitizing taking place during their visit. 62% saw a signage or communication that increased their confidence in the cleanliness/safety.

However, only 32% said they were “completely satisfied” with personal cleanliness/safety standards observed from employees.

- 1 (not at all satisfied): 3%
- 2: 6%
- 3: 23%
- 4: 35%
- 5 (completely satisfied): 32%

The digital picture

Market Force found that 53% of restaurant customers had used an app or website to order ahead in the past two weeks.

Apps/website usage by age group

- 18–24: 68%
- 25–34: 59%
- 35–44: 57%
- 45–54: 53%
- 55–64: 48%
- 65 and older: 40%

80% of current “order ahead” feature users said they plan to tap the service after COVID-19, too.

Why?

- Time savings: 73%
- Website or app was easy to use: 62%
- I like deciding on my order ahead of time: 57%
- My order was ready on time: 49%
- No issues with the accuracy of my order: 37%
- No issues with the freshness of my order: 27%
- Alleviated my safety concerns: 17%
- Other: 4%

What can restaurants do to encourage order placement adoption?

Turning focus to delivery:

Understandably, more people are trying delivery than ever before.

Market Force said 30% of people ordered delivery from a restaurant over the past two weeks. Thirty-seven said they order delivery more often than pre-COVID-19.

- More frequent: 37%
- About the same: 37%
- Less frequent: 22%
- This is the first time I've placed a food delivery order: 4%

Similar to other studies, Market Force noted that 90% of people are preparing foods at home more frequently during the pandemic. And people are looking for ways to make meal prep easier.

Frequency of visits to quick-service restaurants within the last two weeks compared to how often you visited three months ago:

- Less frequent: 57%
- About the same: 22%
- More frequent: 9%
- I don't eat at quick-service restaurants: 13%

Of those quick-serve guests, the vast majority are turning to drive-thru options. Close to 90% (88) said they've visited drive thrus within the last two weeks.

- Carryout: 47%
- Delivery: 27%
- Dine-in: 2%

21% of respondents visited a quick-service restaurant within the last couple of weeks they normally don't eat at.

The reasons:

- Offered drive thru: 52%
- Offered carry-out or curbside pickup: 32%
- Less busy/fewer customers: 21%
- Restaurants I normally visit aren't open: 17%
- Convenient store hours: 15%
- Offered contactless drive thru: 13%
- Offered contactless carryout: 8%
- Cleaner location: 6%
- Other: 25%

As mentioned in the casual-dining breakdown, customers are looking for more from quick-serve employees.

40% observed enhanced cleaning or sanitizing taking place during their visit. 62% saw a signage or communication that increased their confidence in the cleanliness/safety.

While 81% of customers said they were offered a contactless delivery option, confidence remains low.

Delivery service were more likely to offer contactless delivery:

Ordered from restaurant directly: 74%  
Ordered from a delivery service: 87%

Confidence with contactless delivery being a way to increase the safety of delivery:

- 1 (not at all confident): 3%
- 2: 4%
- 3: 21%
- 4: 32%
- 5 (very confident): 40%

<https://www.fsrmagazine.com/consumer-trends>





**Regain market  
traction and win new  
customers with  
low-contact  
interactions**

## **Low-Touch Economy: The New Normal for Restaurant Success**

As states look to reopen their economies, fast food and quick-service restaurants face the daunting task of meeting the needs of customers who have dramatically changed their behavior and preferences in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's no surprise that consumers now clearly prefer low and zero contact interactions to ensure their safety, and recent data reveals not only the extent of this abrupt change in preferences, but also highlights impactful trends that all brands need to consider seriously.

Many of the current changes in customer preferences will likely last for years – and may even become permanent. As a result, restaurants need to develop both short-term and long-term plans for responding to these trends. While these plans must be built on a low-touch customer experience, they must also include an off-premises strategy designed to optimize that experience. Brands that are the most successful in doing this will not only survive the current crisis, but also thrive and gain market

share over the coming years.

### **Mobile Makes a Low-Touch Customer Interaction Possible**

The COVID-19 response is accelerating the trend toward mobile investments that was already present in the restaurant industry. Studies conducted in 2019 revealed that 96 percent of Americans own a cellphone of some kind – with smartphone ownership at 81 percent – and that by 2025, over 70 percent of internet users will depend solely on their smartphones for access.

Bluedot's State of What Feeds Us report released last month directly connects the desire for low-touch restaurant interactions in response to COVID-19 with the use of smartphones. Consumers have increased their use of curbside pickup (33 percent) and the drive-thru (28 percent) compared to before the pandemic, and a significant number – three out of four – plan to continue using the drive-thru during the pandemic. To facilitate this, half of all consumers say

they are downloading one or more mobile apps to interact with familiar brands, and the majority say they are adding more mobile apps to limit their contact with on-site staff.

Mobile makes it far easier for brands to interact with customers through contactless transactions that are safe for customers and employees. For instance, payment happens on mobile, eliminating the need to exchange physical money on premise; menu selection happens on mobile, in the comfort of one's home; ordering on mobile, limits exposure inside restaurants; understanding mobile location makes for an efficient and time saving trip for the customer at curbside pickup and drive-thru. Mobile also creates an opportunity to attract, interact, and develop loyal customers who may otherwise not exist before. This is especially true for Gen Z and Millennials, who have an even higher smartphone adoption rate and present the largest opportunity for restaurants.



## Safety is Top of Mind for Consumers

Beyond COVID-19, top global quick serve restaurants are focused on how to leverage mobile technology to compete and grow in a post-crisis, low-touch environment. What should mobile facilitate to ensure positive brand interactions when there is no in-store, face-to-face counter experience?

Safety and taking necessary precautions are key. The Bluedot survey indicates that 43 percent of consumers are willing to explore new brands and new restaurants if they have a way to do so safely with a drive-thru or pickup option. And overwhelmingly, consumers feel safer at a drive-thru that offers low or zero human contact. Sanitization and safety information posted at the drive-thru is the next most important consideration. Brands must start by rethinking the end-to-end customer experience to convey health, safety and trust. However, over the longer term, consumers will also want frictionless and rewarding experiences. Restaurants will want to combine safety with efficiency, rewards, and even gamification.

## Optimizing Low-Touch Interactions Starts Off-Premises

A complete low-touch experience that is safe, efficient and brand-friendly starts off-premises with a mobile app. Beyond that, the app should deliver a full rewards experience, including custom offers, which also enables brands to present personalized upsell and cross-sell opportunities. Support for gamification also allows brands to establish a fun and exciting relationship, especially with younger consumers.

Once customers arrive at a drive-thru or curbside pickup location, the low-touch experience must be fast and seamless. A correct and complete order should be timed well – ready upon arrival, fresh – as in non-soggy fries or melted drinks and handed to the correct vehicle with little to no interaction. Anything less will raise safety concerns and a poor customer experience.

Location-awareness in mobile apps makes this happen. For example, technologies such as geofencing, enable restaurants to know where mobile orders are coming from and

the estimated customer arrival time for each, enabling every order to be ready and fresh when the customer arrives. Location technology can also enable the restaurant to know when a customer has pulled up to the curbside-pickup location or drive-thru window, so the correct order can be sequenced properly and quickly delivered every time.

As we emerge from the pandemic, mobile and low-touch ways of doing business will be critical to enabling the country to reopen and the economy to recover, creating a new normal for years to come. For restaurants, there will be clear winners and losers in the competition for customers seeking safe and efficient experiences. Brands that create these experiences with an end-to-end mobile strategy that starts off-premises and is powered by location-aware technology will be able to drive increased loyalty and revenue.

<https://modernrestaurantmanagement.com/>



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# CHEFS THAT SIZZLE

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***Red State BBQ***  
*Barbecue the way you want it to be...Good.*

As most of us know, “the business” always teaches you something. Always. Through the entirety of the Covid epidemic our restaurant has continued to operate. We’ve maybe taken one half day off because we were short-staffed. That was several weeks ago now. It was a welcomed break, even for half a moment, so that we could all catch our breath. Up until that break the majority of the skeletal staff had worked four, five or six days a week. I could see the stress and strain and the toll it was taking on them. Fear of catching the virus. Getting used to the constant use of plastic bags and Styrofoam To Go boxes for EVERYTHING.

I remember in my early adult years working a busy saute station on a Saturday night, closing the restaurant, going to bed, sautéing in my sleep, only to get up the next morning for prep at 7 or 8am, and then back on the line for lunch. It was maddening. These kids were likely experiencing something similar, but with the addition of the constant ringing of

phones, the DoorDash tablet chiming away, the Eat Street tablet flashing constant, the repetition of grabbing for sharpies over and over for every order, cooks yelling “Order!” Counter persons yelling “Roberts!” or “Nicole!” or running out the door for curbside. Again, maddening.

But it’s the stress and the strain that really stuck with me for a while. Half the staff had been laid off. Some will never come back. (An unemployment check and other stipends from the government are hard to compete with when you can stay at home and play video games or catch up on all the Netflix binge-watching you can handle.) For the ones that were still with me I had to get them some relief or else they were going to start breaking down.

Besides the constant reminder that “communication is the most difficult thing in any business or organization,” I’ve always tried to teach my management staff about the balance between

external customers and the internal customers. You have to keep both happy. The external customer is frankly easier. Consistently great tasting food, great service, great atmosphere are all seemingly more easier than trying to figure out why one of your best people a mere two months ago just called in on a Sunday when they’re supposed to be clocking in only to tell you that they have a flat tire and they won’t be in for their full eight hour shift because of said flat tire... I angrily growled at the employee through my text “I just gave you a raise and you suddenly can’t work an entire day because of a flat tire?!!” Then came the “A-ha” moment. She didn’t realize she’d gotten a raise, and as such over the last couple of months had developed a feeling of being under appreciated. SO, she chose her moment and decided to call off. Problem is, I never communicated to her that she was getting a raise. Bad customer service on my part.



At our taproom in Georgetown we offered flat bread pizzas with several different options. Even though we lost the taproom to a fire 3 and a half years ago people still talk about the flat bread pizzas. This version was inspired by the taproom, but made in the Red State BBQ and offered during our barbecue pizza nights last Fall. This one is called the Pizza Pig.

---

## PIZZA PIG

10 inch flat bread

1 cup of baked beans

½ cup of pulled pork

¼ cup of chopped bacon

¼ cup of chopped (or sliced) andouille sausage

¼ cup of chopped onion

½ cup of cheddar cheese

¼ cup of sweet barbecue sauce



Take your baked beans and pour into a blender to create a paste-like substance  
Cover your flat bread with the baked bean paste  
Add your pulled pork, chopped bacon, andouille sausage and chopped onion  
Cover with the cheddar cheese  
Bake in the oven 8-10 minutes at 450 degrees  
With a squeeze bottle or spoon stripe the pizza diagonally with the sweet barbecue sauce.

---

After some social media posts and pleas, and flyers in To Go bags we finally had three new hires. Another employee who had gone home at the start of Covid was able to come back. And so began our process of taking the Covid 19 carry-out and curbside weight off the backs of some staff members. Another small ripple of new hires came shortly after and since the flexibility in scheduling has returned.

I had the good fortune of being contacted by some media outlets for interviews during the first eight weeks of C19. At every opportunity I made it a point to mention my team and state that I thought their efforts were heroic. And they were. I'd like to think that this team knows that I have their back. There've been times in the past that we get an absolutely absurd review that I take umbrage with. I'll respond to the customer and then send my response to a manager. The next day or so a team member will stop me, tell me they saw what I wrote and the conversation will go on from there. Now if we screw something up, my team knows

I'll be the first to let them know pointedly, but showing them I'm on their side in some of these other situations is important from a team building perspective.

Sometimes the team building happens organically. As I've watched my team over the past couple months, I've been very proud as to how they have melded together. When they're slammed it's like watching the sport of customer service. It's intense and they're focused. Through this process they have learned each other's strengths and weaknesses. This person is great here, this person is really good juggling the phones and so on. Even their problem-solving skills as a unit have improved. They have a system for the curbside, the carry-out, DoorDash, etc. They know to edit the order of the tickets depending on what customers are in the building and are ready for their food. They're even controlling the flow of the tickets by turning off the DoorDash or Eat Street orders so the kitchen doesn't get their brains beat in and so a stream of tickets doesn't end up dropping from the

printer to the pass or the floor.

Knowing our front of house model has changed and will likely remain counter service only (likely for the remainder of the year and maybe longer) the team has embraced the process and see what we are currently doing as a practice run.

I acknowledge, appreciate and recognize the dedication and effort of this team. Hopefully, we'll be able to take a moment for a group picture very soon to capture the essence of these remarkable people that came together and worked extremely hard under often difficult circumstances. It's taken over seven years to establish our culture, yet these past couple of months may never be replicated in how it truly came together. The names and faces may change in the years to come, but the level of expectation and excellence that this group has sought and worked toward will hopefully be the norm for years to come. A very bright spot through these very difficult pandemic times in "the business".



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# The Restaurant Industry CONTINUED IMPACT

Published June 12, 2020

To assess the economic impact of the coronavirus to date, the National Restaurant Association conducted a survey of more than 3,800 restaurant operators nationwide, May 15-25.



THE INDUSTRY HAS LOST  
**\$120 BILLION**  
**IN SALES**  
IN MARCH - MAY

The restaurant & foodservice industry is predicted to **LOSE**



**\$240 BILLION**  
**IN SALES** by the end of 2020



**75%** of operators say it's **UNLIKELY**  
**THEIR RESTAURANT WILL BE PROFITABLE**  
**WITHIN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS**

**8+ MILLION**  
**RESTAURANT**  
**EMPLOYEES**  
**UNEMPLOYED**

at the height of the pandemic shutdown

## RESTAURANTS REHIRING:



**76%** that are  
**OPEN IN SOME CAPACITY**  
and **27%** that are  
**TEMPORARILY CLOSED**

**COULD OPEN**  
**BUT WON'T**



As the states start allowing restaurants to reopen their dining rooms, **RESTAURANTS COULD WELCOME CUSTOMERS BACK – BUT MANY AREN'T. WHY?**

### For restaurants OPEN FOR TAKEOUT & DELIVERY

**TOO SOON** from a public health perspective **66%**

**SAFETY & SOCIAL DISTANCING** measures are not yet in place at the restaurant **40%**

**NOT ENOUGH CUSTOMERS** to justify reopening **34%**

**NOT ENOUGH EMPLOYEES** to adequately staff the restaurant **27%**

Delaying opening because of the **8-WEEK PPP LOAN PERIOD** **5%**

### For restaurants TEMPORARILY CLOSED

**NOT ENOUGH CUSTOMERS** to justify reopening **55%**

**TOO SOON** from a public health perspective **47%**

**SAFETY & SOCIAL DISTANCING** measures are not yet in place at the restaurant **31%**

**NOT ENOUGH EMPLOYEES** to adequately staff the restaurant **23%**

Delaying opening because of the **8-WEEK PPP LOAN PERIOD** **17%**

# Kentucky Restaurants Reopening Q&A

*Mark Plumlee works as Sr. Copywriter for MustHaveMenus, an online menu design and printing service. He writes about food industry trends and restaurant management."*



On May 22nd, Kentucky restaurants were allowed to reopen their dine-in services after two months of state-mandated closures. Many have chosen to remain closed or only offer takeout, but for those restaurants that did reopen their dining rooms, I wanted to get a feel for how they were managing a return to dine-in after three weeks of operations.

I spoke with three Kentucky restaurants across the state about their reopening experiences. We discussed navigating state guidelines, overhauling cleaning and sanitizing, reducing capacity, and continuing to rely on takeout sales.

***When did you reopen? And at what capacity?***

**Collin Kenzie, Ted's Montana Grill, Lexington:** "We reopened our doors just under a month ago, and we've been operating at 33% capacity. Once we make it through that first month, per Kentucky guidelines, we'll ramp it up to 50%. We have lots of booths, so it's not too difficult to space everyone out and sit people every other booth."

**Connor Moore, Mellow Mushroom, Bowling Green:** "We opened up dine-in services on June 1st to 33% capacity. The plan is to bump that up 50% on June 22nd. Right now, we've closed off most our tables. We're down to nine or ten in the main dining room, and another ten to twelve outside on the patio."

**Pat Bosley, Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn, Owensboro:** "We reopened dining services on June 1st. We started slowly, but now we're ramping things up. We have limited capacity to 33% until July 1st, when it'll increase to 50%. We can set about 350, so we still have room for about 116 diners at any given time."

***How has your dine-in service changed?***

**Kenzie:** "We've gotten rid of all communal objects in the dining room, like condiments

and table cloths. All of our menus are now single-use, so we recycle them after each customer."

**Moore:** "Nothing's on the table. Everything — condiments, parmesan, silverware — is available upon request. Once a group leaves, we put a sign on their table saying it's closed until we have the chance to wipe it down and clean it. Every menu is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before it gets recirculated. We've also posted QR codes all around our restaurant so customers can access our menu from their phone."

**Bosley:** "Our menu service has largely stayed the same, but we had to shut down our famous buffet for the time being. A couple vegetables are no longer on the menu, and I haven't been running our ice cream machine, but the rest has largely stayed the same. A huge point of emphasis for us has been communication. We want to manage expectations the second people walk through the door so that customers don't get hit with unexpected wait times or the menu item they want not being available. This starts with the hostess, but I'm also doing more table visits than ever before."

***In addition to dine-in, are you offering takeout and curbside?***

**Kenzie:** "Our takeout and curbside really picked up during the lockdown, so we're going to continue leaning on those sales during limited dine-in capacity. We also trimmed down our offerings and are putting out a limited menu."

**Moore:** "To-go is still our biggest business. We have two employees on full-time takeout and curbside pickup duty."

**Bosley:** "We never closed our takeout down, and we're still offering walk-in pickup if you call ahead. We tried delivery with a third-party app, but we couldn't find a good fit. Before, the majority of our takeout orders were for sides. Now we're

seeing a big shift to sandwiches, entrees and full meals."

***How have your cleaning and sanitation practices changed?***

**Kenzie:** "We've always tried to exceed our customers' expectations when it comes to cleanliness, and we're continuing to do so. Our servers wipe down all surfaces and booths after each group of diners, and as I said, we're recycling menus after each use."

**Moore:** "Operations haven't changed that drastically. We've taken our old health and safety practices, and we've kicked them up to a whole new level. Commonly-touched surfaces are constantly wiped down. Employees are washing their hands and changing gloves more frequently."

**Bosley:** "Same practices, but increased frequency. Food safety isn't new to us restaurants. It may be at the forefront of our customers' minds more than it was before, but it's something we deal with everyday. Things that would have been wiped down three times a day are now being cleaned and sanitized every hour. Both interior and exterior doorknobs get cleaned now."

***How are you dealing with new challenges as they arise?***

**Bosley:** "A big thing for me has always been co-opetition [a mix of cooperation and competition]. I talk to all my competitors about how they're managing. Especially when the orders came down about reopening dates, I was on the phone with them discussing their plans. It's great to hear other perspectives and viewpoints, and at the end of the day, we're all facing similar challenges. Now, those challenges can differ depending on the restaurant. For instance, a huge part of my business is tied to tourism which has taken a massive hit. We're all in the same storm, but not all in the same boat."





# Pivoting From an Economic Downturn

Restaurants are in a scary and uncertain place. As states reopen, restaurants must deal with rehiring staff, redesigning floor plans to comply with social distancing, and battling customer hesitation dine-in again. According to the Texas Restaurant Association, half of the restaurants in Texas are hesitant to reopen. Since Georgia's push to reopen in late April, customers did not flood back to eateries at the expected rate. Many cite that even though they miss being outside, some are prepared to practice social distancing at home until October. .

The pandemic has fiscally walloped restaurants across the industry. Some may be thinking along the lines of Tiger King's Joe Exotic, that you're "never going to financially recover from this." We have some tips to help as you pivot from these challenging economic times.

## The State of the Economy

"We anticipate the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression," says

Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund. The economic outlook post-pandemic is bleak. We've rounded up some statistics to help paint a more accurate picture of the current state of the United States economy. While the stats might seem disheartening, it's essential to work with real figures. By finding the actual margins you're working with, you can not only remove some of the uncertainty but also make real improvements.

- We're experiencing the highest unemployment rate recorded since the Great Depression. The unemployment rate was 14.7 percent in April 2020.
- Leisure and hospitality industries recorded 7.7 million lost jobs as of April.
- The gig economy is predicted to suffer the most, at least until a vaccine is widely available.
- Lyft and Uber reported that rides decreased 80 percent at the end of April, while Airbnb cut 25 percent of its employees recently.

There is hope for a strong return in 2020 Q3, similar to the recovery in Asia during the SARS outbreak in 2003, with additional caution that this pandemic is unprecedented; therefore, economic recovery will take a while.

## When It Comes to Your Customers

It's no surprise that customers are nervous about returning to any establishments. Even with social distancing and cleaning measures in place, news sound bites warning of second waves of COVID-19, the rapid spread rate of the virus in reopened states, and no sign of a vaccine soon, customers are keen to stay home through October, even though they miss their old lives.

It comes down to how long the pandemic physically lasts that determines how long its associated fear will stay in the minds of the consumer. There's been a shift to online shopping.

*Continued on page 26*

In March, e-commerce saw a 14 percent increase. When a customer feels safe to patronize businesses again, they want brands to recognize that humans want to feel connected and be adaptable. Restaurants can accomplish this connection with story-oriented messaging by demonstrating their generosity, according to consumer psychologist Kit Yarrow. Companies need to shift from “being of service without being self-serving,” said Yarrow.

## Actionable Steps and Tips

### Invest in technology across the board

Restaurants have been exploring implementing technology to help shift to an off-premise strategy. As restaurants prepare to reopen, they should put serious thought into any form of technology that allows customers to have a primarily contactless experience; cleanliness will be a priority for consumers post-quarantine. Eighty-seven percent of consumers would prefer to patronize businesses “with touchless or robust self-checkout options.” Pay-at-the-table kiosks, QR codes, digital menu boards, and automated drink dispensers may be in your restaurant’s future to attract customers post-pandemic.

### Communicate and Embody Cleanliness

Your cleaning process should be posted all over the restaurant, and you should take action to embody that. Do your customers see your staff disinfecting menus in between parties? Is hand sanitizer readily available? Whether you utilize an illustrated poster with associated pictures, you post signs on the door or

outline your social media processes. As a brand, you want to ensure your customers feel safe at your restaurant. Keep this in mind; you don’t want to be the restaurant where someone was infected with the coronavirus. Ensure your customers will have a safe restaurant experience once they venture out again.

### Consider Your Expenses

Consider your staffing needs as things reopen. Since shifting to off-premise options, what will your staff look like once the dining room reopens? The capacity of your restaurant will change, so how will you section out your staff? Your floor plan looks different, so how will that affect shift schedules? Does that mean less staff or more opportunities to work extra shifts? Consider any changes to your menu; will it be trimmed, overhauled, or stay the same?

Another side of your expenses will need to be marketing. Communicate with your customers. Keep them in the know and let them know what’s going on. Share new processes, whether with reservations and call-ahead seating, updated cleaning protocols, employee checks before shifts, and any other business changes. Now more than ever, it’s essential to keep in touch with your customers.

### Continue to Explore Other Revenue Options


For any time, it’s best to have several plans in place. In times of crisis (like this one), it’s a good idea to make sure your restaurant has other ways to generate revenue and stay afloat. How else can your restaurant make money? These are a few ideas to explore:

- **Gift cards** – your customer pays the money for the gift card upfront and guarantees a return visit to spend the gift card at your establishment.
- **Grocery options** – does your restaurant have the capability to offer grab-and-go items and shift into the grocery segment?
- **Continuing off-premise options and expanding on those strategies** – if delivery and takeout are already part of your restaurant’s business plan, how can you broaden those efforts? Can the restaurant add alcohol delivery to orders? Will you use a third-party delivery service to reach your customers? Don’t forget to attract customers to these options with deals!
- **Restaurant swag** – you can sell your brand; if you have merchandise with your restaurant’s logo, it can serve as another avenue of income.

### On a Positive Note


There’s not a question of if customers will return to patronize businesses in their states, only when. Your restaurant shouldn’t focus solely on making sales, but communicating with your customers to ensure that they have a safe environment to visit. As things slowly reopen, continue to explore other revenue options, expand off-premise strategies, and stay in communication concerning everything that is going on with your business. As with anything, the only way to the other side is to go through it.

<https://modernrestaurantmanagement.com/pivoting-from-an-economic-downturn/>




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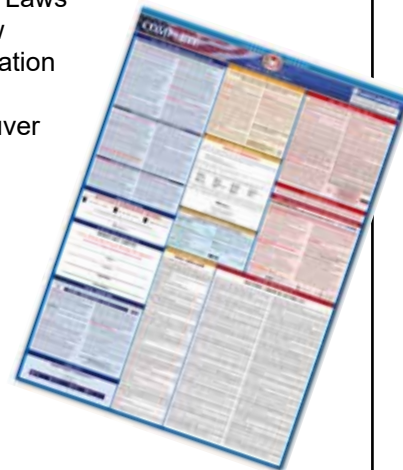
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- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA): The full text of the notice must be provided by each employer to persons entitled to rights and benefits under USERRA. Employers may provide the notice by posting it where employee notices are customarily placed. However, employers are free to provide the USERRA notice in other ways that will minimize costs while ensuring that the full text of the notice is provided (e.g., by distributing the notice by direct handling, mailing, or via electronic mail.)
- Family and Medical Leave Act: must be posted by private sector employers who employ 50 or more employees in 20 or more work weeks, and by all government agencies.

Individual notices may be printed from the US Department of Labor website at [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov) or an all-in-one poster containing these six federal notices may be obtained from the KRA office. Kentucky state law requires all employers post the following notices as well:

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# 6 ways menus may change due to coronavirus

As businesses reopen during the coronavirus pandemic, restaurants are quickly adapting menus to serve diners and protect public health.



In the wake of coronavirus, a number of trends are taking place, including a shift away from sharable portions, an increased focus on plant-based and seafood proteins and more comfort foods.

For the near term, operations will have to make do with a fraction of their usual number of diners allowed on premises, possible labor shortages in the kitchen, and supply chain changes. This new world will require new kinds of menus and service styles. Here's how menus are expected to change in the wake of the pandemic:

So-long shareable portions. "There could be a significant shift towards individual portions to address safety concerns in on-site dining," says Sojo Alex, senior associate, Envision Strategies. For example, tapas-focused restaurant Cooks and Soldiers in Atlanta will be reopening with a menu of more entrées and fewer small plates.

For home orders, however, sharable meals and family-style entrées still sell well.

More plant and seafood proteins. With interruptions in the nation's meat supply during the pandemic, more restaurants may be relying on other proteins on their menus. This disruption in the supply chain has also caused meat prices to rise

and many restaurateurs are choosing to move away from offering as many meat-based meals to avoid having to adjust menu prices.

For example, after the price of short ribs went up \$2 a pound, Max's Bistro in Fresno, Calif., has temporarily taken the customer favorite off the menu and replaced it with plant and seafood-based entrees.

Another approach could be to serve smaller portions of animal proteins, making up the greater portion of the plate with delicious, innovative plant-based sides.

Self-service may be shelved. To help minimize the transmission of COVID-19, the FDA has recommended restaurants discontinue self-service stations with high-touch points such as buffets, salad bars, and beverage stations.

When 15,000 Burger King, Popeyes and Tim Hortons recently reopened, they provided drinks from behind the counter instead of offering soda fountain-dispense stations.

Buffet-specialist Golden Corral also has changed its service model by shifting to family-style table service as well as cafeteria-style service in which only staff touches serving utensils to serve guests' portions.

Pizza Ranch has assigned servers to its buffets; customers approach and talk through what they'd like the server to plate for them from the buffet selection.

Continued focus on takeout. With restaurant capacity still capped in most states and some diners still hesitant to return to on-premises dining, takeout continues to be an essential revenue stream for restaurants even after reopening.

See Restaurants take action to assure customers it's safe to dine in

To that end, menus will likely veer toward dishes that travel well. "The new menus will have a focus on what is transportable as consumers' demand for curbside, delivery, drive-thru and any other form of pick-up continues," says Karen Malody, FCSI, principal, Culinary Options,



Streamlined menus. Food options may be more limited on menus to account for labor challenges, supply chain interruptions and to capitalize on menu items that bring in the core of an operation's revenue.

"There also will be ingredient cross-utilization to reduce the number of SKUs in inventory, which is essential for controlling waste and food costs," says Malody. "Having ingredients that are only used in one recipe won't cut it anymore." Diners should expect fewer customizable options as well, says Alex, to allow the operation to save time and increase convenience.

Cater to comfort cravings as well as health concerns. During periods of stress, people tend to eat more and show a greater preference for higher calorie foods that have nostalgic flavors. Reopening menus will likely include classic comfort foods, which often are also best sellers.

However, after months of more sedentary lifestyles and perhaps less-than-ideal eating habits, including eating breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks at home, restaurants expect some consumers to be motivated to order based on health. For instance, Chipotle Mexican Grill recently introduced five new Lifestyle Bowls for those who want to "get back on track with their health and fitness goals."

Whether menu changes will be long-lasting only time will tell. But in the meantime expect these menu tweaks to help maximize revenues and table turns and ease dine-in customer concerns.

<https://restaurant.org/articles/news/>



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