

COVID-19 Operator Insights Guide

Section 1- Business 101

Financial-

- Request your PPP/SBA loans or seek other funding options. Another \$350B added!
- Leases- Ask landlord for rent deferral/renegotiations and review equipment leases.
- Seek payment options/deferrals on utilities and other expenses where applicable.
- Reach out or petition local/state regarding sales tax deferments, etc.
- Insurance- file a business interruption claim and renegotiate insurance premiums and reduce worker's compensation premiums if reduced labor force. Check on employee coverage options.

Marketing-

- It's a NEW world and our industry is changing daily.
- Be seen. Reach out to the consumers.
- Use Social Media and all platforms to promote or update or share what precautions being taken.
- Use your voice as a business person to influence government to support the industry.

Operations-

- Safety, safety, safety
- Review all aspects of the operation including all noted in each section of these insights.
- What works for your specific operation or could be possible going forward?
- Turn your inventory/sell what you can... especially perishables
- Keep your distributor in the loop (pre-orders, certain requirements, share overall needs, etc.).
- Staffing- anticipate needs now and in the near future. How do you ramp it up and be ready.

Other-

- Utilize all available industry resources like your local Brown Foodservice Sales Representative.
- National Restaurant Association: <https://restaurant.org/covid19>
- UniPro's "Great Menu's Start Here" site has a myriad of Menu's, How To documents, and Industry Information for Operators. <https://www.GreatMenusStartHere.com>

Section 2- Safety/hygiene/Sanitation

Restaurants have always been a place for social gatherings. Over these few weeks Covid-19 has forced us to rethink everything. Curbside and takeaway have become the new norm. To get people back in our restaurants we need to demonstrate to the guests we have a safe environment. By following these steps, you will show your guests you care about their safety. These may in fact even become the new “table stakes” for the industry.

Standards/Policy-

- It's critical to receive/maintain superior health score. Whether letter grades such as A, B, C or others that use a numeric system. Your job is to score an “A” or 100%. Post it. Guests need to know your score. Market all your precautions and procedures being used.
- Follow all CDC and health department guidance on food safety and handling, [found here](#).
- If asked remind guest's there's currently no evidence COVID-19 being transmitted through food, [according to the CDC's guidance found here](#).
- All staff should be retrained and held accountable for the “New Norm” and “new standards”
- Establish a sick employee policy. Make sure if an employee is sick, they stay home. Your guest will notice and will be hypersensitive. [Food Industry Recommended Protocols when Employee/Customer Tests Positive for COVID-19](#).
- Limit access to your kitchen to only approved staff and suppliers.
- Make sure all employees, management and ownership have taken and passed ServSafe classes. Promote it! <https://www.servsafe.com/>
- Ensure your teams are washing their hands all the time. Use hand sanitizers. Have training and even a timer for washing hands properly. Limit the use of employee cell phones usage at work.
- If you have menu's clean and sanitize them after each use. Guests will notice or ask.
- Operators may need a “starting kit”- Include gloves, sanitizers, wipes, masks, thermal temperature equipment, aprons, signage, etc. as well as ALL THE INSGHTS!

Operations-

- Create “How to” or “Turnkey” programs for best of class Curbside or To-Go programs.
- Ensure all staff wears gloves and maybe masks. Get creative with graphics on the masks.
- Have hand sanitizer stations or bottles throughout the restaurant. Especially in self-service areas such as beverage or condiments stations. Maybe even gloves at self-serve beverages.
- Set up sanitizer stations for your staff to keep separated from those serving.
- Consider switching from the old “red bucket” or towel sanitizer to sanitizing table wipes. This will ensure your tables are cleaned with the proper sanitizing solution and impress guests.
- Consider after bussing/cleaning the table place a small sign signifying sanitation was completed.
- Be sure to also clean seats.
- Ensure proper glove use. Suggest or mandate a certain color glove such as blue or purple. Guests can easily see them in use. Especially consider for open kitchen/window concepts.
- Follow best practices for cleaning and sanitizing incoming cases. Remember the virus can be transmitted on corrugated cartons, etc. Use gloves.
- Make sure rest rooms are always clean. Assign a person. Post a cleaning schedule check sheet. Make sure soap, sanitizer and paper towels are always full. Empty the trash often. Have sanitizer station outside after the guest exits the restroom.

Pre- Planning-

- Do not use old product. Be prepared to share with your guests that your food is fresh. In the coming weeks there will be a rush of restaurants trying to reopen.
- Plan a menu that you can execute flawlessly. Work with your Brown Foodservice DSR and others to ensure they have your required items. Don't get lost when there is a rush of openings
- Create an opening order in advance for your Brown Foodservice DSR to ensure stock and availability.
- Review all "touch points." Consider a "touch free" environment for your guests.
- Sanitize/wipe your credit card machine after every use or go touch free.
- Time to get it all together- Clean carpets, floors, windows, front and back of the house thoroughly. Let your guest know you care and have provided a clean and safe restaurant.
- Consider continuing 6' social distancing rule.
- Give guests a chance to get comfortable being out. Consider distancing your tables or even use floor markings for proper social distancing.

New Norms? -

- Consider handing a guest their cup, lid, and straw for self-service beverage dispensing.
- All drinks might go in a To-Go container with lids. Even when consumed on premise.
- At full-service restaurants condiments should NOT be left on the table.
- Always deliver cleaned condiments such as salt and pepper shakers or use ramekins for any condiment previously that would be out on table... but now served with the meal.
- Self-service condiments- consider holding behind counter and asking if any are needed with an order rather than having them in an open and shared location.
- Use pre-packaged condiments for to-go and if extras are requested.
- Napkin dispensers may not be on the tables going forward.
- Any self-serve areas like beverages, salad and condiment bars might be reconsidered/removed.
- Silverware- Bring out with the meal while wearing gloves or after the guests are seated vs. already on table. Consider wrapping or putting them into a sleeve for hygiene.
- Use tamper evident/tamper proof packaging for To-Go.
- Some restaurants/businesses considering scanning guest's temperatures or their employees.
- Consider a plastic shield at your cashier or in areas the public is in close proximity to food.
- Sampling or self-serve may be a thing of the past.
- Expand your waiting area or consider moving it outside if possible.
- Consider plate covers for meals coming out to the tables. Remove at the table to ensure temperature and hygiene.
- More information can be found [here on the CDC website](#).



Section 3- Hospitality/Celebration

Restaurants are a place to celebrate, create memories, make deals, enjoy great food, gather and enjoy. Service your guests and they will come back. Restaurants that are open AND offering a good experience will come out of this stronger than those deciding to shut down and wait it out.

Hospitality-

- Remember the 5C's:
 - CARE- Care about your guest.
 - CUSTOMIZE- Everyone is different and will engage in their own way.
 - COURTESY- Use your manners, smile.
 - CLEANLINESS- Enough said!
 - COMMUNICATION - Greet, engage, introduce and say goodbye. Always be polite.

Exceeding expectations or How to differentiate-

- Always a clean well-organized restaurant
- Always greet your guests as they arrive, if a regular greet by name if possible.
- Remember your verbal greetings and sincere Thank You!
- Your Host should explain the “new normal” and stress key points you want guests to know.
- All your staff must be well-trained and even happy to be there. Can't fake excitement or hospitality.
- Have a menu that your team can execute perfectly. Might be good idea to pare it down.
- Make sure the food is correct.
- Deliver an experience...the right experience for that guest since everyone's expectation may be different.
- A Thank You note from the owner or manager with even a personal invite to come back.
- Make follow up phone calls to ensure their satisfaction. Call. Do not survey. Remember this is hospitality.

Remember the words of Walt Disney: “people can feel perfection”

Section 4- Promoting

Now more than ever it is time to promote your restaurant. Here are a few simple tips:

Media/Resources-

- Promote your restaurant on all forms of social media including those with algorithm data. Be sure all things are posted correctly. Use Video and clips where possible.
- Monitor your social media to ensure areas to improve and what is being said.
- Use Yelp and other online social media outlets. Post lots of picture of your food online.
- Set up your restaurant's Google + account to provide details when your business is searched.
- Geo target adds help when people are looking for good restaurant close to home. Invest where it makes most sense.
- Promote a "Local" campaign for customers in radio, local magazine, separate website, etc.
- Call Chamber of Commerce for a great way to stay connected or promote your business locally.
- Use Local media, TV, etc. Send food to station. Provide "local" story. Sponsor a remote telecast, etc.
- Leverage local food writers and bloggers.

Systems-

- Make sure you have a good website that is up to date. Have current menu, hours and all contact information. Show off your refreshed, clean, safe restaurant and cheerful staff.
- Review the on line ordering for overall ease, pictures, videos, etc. Maybe zero contact options.
- Review your phone system –enough lines, "on hold" music, "Thank You" and advertising.

How to/Suggestive Selling-

- If you have been closed or only providing limited service, consider a small re-opening event. This will help give the kitchen some needed refreshers and also promote your business to locals.
- Collect as many emails as possible and "TALK TO YOUR GUESTS." Utilize On Line orders or even the old fishbowl business card drop in FREE lunch promo helps to collect email addresses.
- Use discounts if needed such as BOGO- buy one get one, or a free dessert or appetizer.
- If you do not have a rewards program it might be the time to establish one. This can create loyalty intention with incentives.
- When guests order something include a featured side or app that is cost effective. Give them a little note or explain you wanted to share something you really like with them as a Thank You.
- Capitalize on the "family" connection by offering kids free meal or a free dessert.
- Consider cross merchandising with other LOCAL businesses that compliment your restaurant. I.e., bring movie ticket or hairdresser receipt to get a drink, etc.
- Review your social responsibility/community give back programs. Maybe sponsor first responders, health care, etc. with donations or meals.
- "Chalk the Walk" campaign to draw folks in as walking by using color chalk/graphics/humor.
- Create daily specials, package deals, bundles, kits, key staples to add on to your order like eggs, milk, bread, etc. to increase your overall ring.
- Offer DIY cooking kits, recipe tips and how to or even a chef cooking class.
- UniPro's "Great Menu's Start Here" site has promotions for the operators.



Section 5- "Right" for the times

There has never been a better time to look at your menu. Evaluate what sells and what doesn't. Consider what may require extensive prep or lots of special ingredients. You don't have to give up what you make that is unique or special. However, with these uncertain times it may be wise to "skinny things down" for a bit. What will customers appreciate and even demand? How can thrive?

Safety, labor saving, packaging, etc.-

- Simplify your menu, reduce slow moving high labor items from your menu.
- Consider using speed scratch instead of full scratch.
- Consider pre-portion instead of cutting in house on items such as steaks and seafood.
- Consider pre-washed and processed produce.
- In some cases, look for high quality pre-made items instead of back of the house prepared. Remember you can always garnish to make it your own.
- Consider what ingredients can be used in multiple meals/dishes.
- Use products with safety seals or wrappers (i.e., straws, cutlery, cups, etc.).
- Product integrity- What holds up or travels well for To-Go or delivery?
- What items sold best during curb side timing you want to feature in the dining room?
- Can you offer individually wrapped/packed/sealed items to customers?
- Sell grocery, refrigerated, produce or COP boxes of product To-Go.
- Consider selling beer or wine.
- Who else is doing what? Use great ideas from competitors. Keep up with competition on social media and web posts.

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Section #6- How To

In the “NEW” norm, accuracy, getting repeat business, menu refinement, staffing, delivery and other factors are important. Even before Covid-19 curbside, takeaway and delivery have been growing in popularity. It is critical to get it right as well as to ensure that your takeaway business does not overpower the dine in business. Remember, this is hospitality. Even for To-Go business. A bad experience can cause lost business and bad press. Make it special. Create a celebration. Exceed your guest’s expectations ...and they will come back.

Curbside/To-Go-

- Understand how much take away you can handle, too much you end up hurting the dine in guest and their service expectations.
- If possible, have a separate area from dine in where to-go orders are assembled.
- Have a dedicated to-go staff.
- Consider convenient in and out parking, processes and entrances. Have proper signage.
- Have the proper take out packaging. If you are casual to fine dining, is a foam box the best impression you can make? Think about liquids. If a guest is ordering soup, ensure it arrives without spilling. Put it in the correct sealed container and then place it in a zip lock bag for added protection. Your guest will appreciate all this.
- Be accessible to your guests, what options do they have to place orders. Curbside, call ahead on-line delivery. Make ordering easy. One click!
- When using a third party and for even in-house delivery, make the packaging tamper proof.
- Have appropriate to-go flatware. Use your distributor professional sales representative to help identify the proper items to build a To-Go packaging platform.
- High quality To-Go packaging. Perhaps, compostable may be required or preferred by guest.
- Re-heating instructions are a nice touch.

Get it right-

- Remember serve HOT FOOD HOT, COLD FOOD COLD!
- Make sure the food is correct/Get the order right.
- Remember appreciation and “Thank You” from ALL staff.
- This is your opportunity to brand your business, To-Go bags of quality and or design become walking advertising as guests repurpose them for use in public.
- Write a personal note on a takeout box thanking the guest and include snippet of information or story about the item they chose to build a connection.
- Before orders are placed capture information about any dietary restrictions, preferences.
- When orders are placed, ask if they are celebrating anything. Include a free dessert.
- Wine pairing to help create the special occasion.
- If legal in your area, ask for a cocktail order.
- Send a Thank You note from owner/manager and invite guest back.
- Use To-Go/takeaway as springboard to dine in on a future date with a “bounce back” card or free something or even discount next visit in a certain time frame.
- Consider partnering with LOCAL other business for other discounts or promotions.
- If you use a third party such as Uber Eats, Grub Hub, etc. Test them. Have a friend/family member order a meal. See how it arrives. Don’t let a third party hurt YOUR business.