

Restaurants and delivery services offer a vital alternative to those who are at home but are unable to make their own meals. It can also keep your business profitable without significantly raising operation costs or forcing you to expand your facility. When your only option is carry out, consider the following as you package a successful program. If order is being handed to the customer or curbside, gloves should be used.

FACILITATE EASY ORDERING

It's critical to know what ordering methods appeal to your customers. The most common ordering methods are online and by phone. You can also receive orders via text-message and restaurant apps on mobile devices; this is especially popular with teens and young adults. Your online menu must be accurate on all online platforms.

MONITOR ACCURACY

You have one chance to get the order right. Utilize an accurate order-entry system, such as POS software, and continuously teach staff to complete tasks correctly and efficiently the first time. Check for accuracy during and after order production. Ensure the food is what the customer wanted. Verify that every item the customer ordered is present, like bread, sides, napkins and utensils. Go over the order with the customer when they pick up whenever possible.

USE STURDY PACKAGING

Takeout packaging must maintain the quality and integrity of your food. Containers should be durable, prevent leaking and resist breaking. Food items and utensils should be correctly packed and stacked in bags or boxes. Packaging that allows for reheating is another big plus. Keep in mind items that may be heavy, oddly-shaped, saucy or need to stay crispy. Take note of appropriate cutlery kits and opt for those that are wrapped instead of loose. Add a moist towelette to every order and show that you are making an effort of safety and peace of mind.

MAINTAIN FOOD SAFETY

Hold food at safe temperatures until the customer picks it up. Keep hot foods separate from cold ones. Ensure that food will remain at safe temperatures during transport as well. Provide customers with clear instructions on how to store and reheat food. Placing 'use by' date stickers on all packages and containers is helpful, too.

PUT THOUGHT INTO THE MENU

An easy-to-read, audience-centric menu is crucial. The menu should include all food choices that can be transported safely and easily, variety and affordable price points. Go through your existing menu and determine which dishes travel the best, are easy to replicate effectively and find a vessel that will facilitate these items.

ASSIGN THE RIGHT PERSONNEL

Schedule staff appropriately. Assign specific roles for taking orders, processing payments, monitoring quality control and, if necessary, delivering orders. Customer-contact personnel should be prepared to address customer concerns, as well as advise how to store and reheat food. Staff whose primary duties may not be utilized at their fullest should be trained to answer phones, expedite orders and running food.

GROW THROUGH BRANDING, MARKETING & SALES

Takeout provides a great opportunity to market your brand and your business, as well as to drive revenue. Many of your neighbors will want to patronize local businesses during these uncertain times. Make it easy, as this will help drive revenue and get food into homes. Consider branding your takeout packaging with your company logo and tagline or marketing messages. Market and promote the service on your website and social channels. Keep track of all contact information for customers who order online, by phone, and on mobile to facilitate marketing directly to those existing customers.

SET UP A TAKE OUT AREA

Consider having a separate counter or parking area for takeout orders. Treat it as its own business with clear, proper signage. If there's not enough space for a separate area, you might use the end of the bar. Make sure those who picking up go to get their orders.

