



ARE YOU RETAIL-READY?

*Heat and Eat Pre-Made Dishes
as an Alternate Revenue Source*

As restaurant operators navigate the uncertainty brought on by COVID-19 closures, many are seeking new ways to generate revenue. In response to this, some grocery store chains have created a platform to offer heat-and-eat meals from their customers' favorite local restaurants. Not only is this a potential new source of revenue during tough times, but also a way to attract new customers to your restaurant after the COVID-19 crisis is over. There are, however, several steps to successfully getting your most popular dishes into stores. Here are some things to consider before taking the plunge.



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Not quite ready to take on grocery store shelves?

No problem! You can skip most of these steps and start selling heat-and-eat meals right away, out of your own establishment. With the popularity of meal prep preceding COVID-19, there's potential for a long-term appeal to consumers who enjoy the added convenience.

Because heat-and-eat meals to-go can be prepared in advance to ordering, it will also be important to know which foods you serve reheat and travel well. [Click here to learn more.](#)

► PACKAGING

Retail packaging for heat-and-eat meals should be appealing and functional. Customers who already know your brand should immediately recognize it, and those unfamiliar should be drawn to it. To preserve product quality and integrity, you should use packaging materials that are functional across common reheating methods where possible. Ask your Marketing Associate for local packaging details and availability.

Remember customers shop with their eyes!

Pay attention to presentation in heat-and-eat containers.

► PRICING

Consumers who would normally dine-in at your restaurant will be thrilled to see their favorite dishes can now be found at their local grocery store. But unlike eating at your restaurant, heat-and-eat dinners will miss classic elements like atmosphere and service. Customers may expect to see that reflected in the price. It's also important to research state-specific tax laws and competitor pricing within your local grocery stores.

► CUSTOMERS

Determine your market. Know how well your product sells, and to whom. You might conduct a survey with your customers to gain insights into which grocery stores they shop frequently in order to identify your prospective buyers. When you approach store buyers, this information will help make your product more attractive and position you and your company as potential business partners.

► LABELING

Specific FDA guidelines and state-specific laws apply for selling packaged food to consumers directly or to other businesses for sale to consumers. But in many cases, there are special exemptions if you plan to sell minimal units for a short period of time, such as a temporary revenue stream during the COVID-19 crisis. For most operators, [this label template](#) will be fine. You can simply fill in the details and get it printed from a local print shop or online store. Additionally, you can seek help from the grocery supplier resources for any labeling guidelines that may be specific to that grocery store. For more detailed labeling instructions for long term endeavors, see Sysco's [Retail Labeling Guidance](#) to learn more about labeling packaged foods for retail.

► CONTACTS

Networking can be the key between a successful grocery campaign and a missed opportunity. Before you make the call to sell your product, make sure you are talking to the decision-maker. Most grocery stores have dedicated buyers in charge of what goes on their shelves. Find out who the right contacts are and learn the best way to set up an appointment to present your products.

► SELL YOUR PRODUCT

Once you secure an opportunity to present your products, make sure you're prepared with all documentation like market research, sales records and customer testimonials. You should also bring plenty of samples for both the packaging in all sizes and tastings of the dishes you plan to include. Food samples should be cleanly plated and served at the ideal temperature for the dish, even if you are required to wait a while.

Get more tips, tools and resources at [Foodie.Sysco.com](https://www.foodie.sysco.com) or contact your local Marketing Associate for more information.

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