

How to Prepare Your Restaurant for the Holiday Rush



Lure the customers who aren't digging into festive dinners.

Sure, many people will spend their holiday season eating home-cooked meals with their families, but not everyone will spend their time in the kitchen. In fact, a [2018 Bank of America report](#) found that while grocery spending increases as Thanksgiving approaches, millennial and Gen Z consumers are likely to go out the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

During the busy holiday season, your guests might spend a lot of time shopping or traveling to visit loved ones, so they will probably seek out your restaurant for both comfort and convenience. To give guests an unforgettable experience and boost your bottom line, you need to prepare early. Not sure what to do first? Here's where to start:



Menu

Examine last year's holiday season. What dishes did diners love? What were their complaints? Should you capitalize on a hot trend? Bring back your best sellers, but consider other items your customers might like.

Serve specialty items. Remember how successful the pumpkin spice latte trend was? Think ahead and design your own specialty drink that will entice diners. Consider creating festive desserts for a limited-time offer exclusively for the holiday season.

Offer limited catering. Now that you have thought about last year's holiday season, consider whether offering a slightly smaller catering menu is possible for your existing staff. If so, consider what dishes can reasonably be kept warm and fresh for customers.



Operations

Decide whether to open. Will you be closed for some holidays and open for others? In addition to reviewing last year's holiday turnout, look into which of your competitors will remain open during the holidays.

Open a party room. Encourage guests to book early and offer a fixed party or buffet menu to get a handle on headcount. Offering a private dining space could be another incentive for your existing loyalty program members to bring in larger parties.

Consider add-on amenities. Anticipate a lot of people driving to your restaurant? Maybe you can add a seasonal valet service. For restaurants located in colder climates, a coat check is a nice touch. Think of other seasonal amenities that will make your guests feel special and increase your staff's efficiency.



Staffing

Set service standards. Besides retraining your staff for the updated menu, discuss time-off requests and service expectations. Also, be prepared for possible turnover. Having enough staffers is crucial for ensuring a reasonable ticket time.

Consider seasonal staffers. Now that you've considered how last year's holiday season went, be realistic about the staff you need. If you can, hire seasonal workers early to provide solid service during high demand times. Make sure you have a basic guideline for **hiring and training the right seasonal employees**.

Create a balanced schedule. Don't overwhelm your full-time staff with the holiday schedule. **Craft a schedule** that is considerate of your team but also doesn't run afoul of workplace scheduling regulations.

Seize online opportunities. Tap into the off-premise market by reminding customers that they can order delivery or request reservations online. According to the **2019 Toast Restaurant Success Report**, 51 percent of customers ordered directly from restaurant websites and 38 percent ordered from restaurant aggregate sites. Create incentives for customers to order delivery or reserve catering services early. You could offer customers incentives for ordering within a specific timeframe, such as discounts, free items, or an increase in quantity.



Marketing

Send customers emails. Email remains an effective tool for reaching restaurant customers. Research shows that 87 percent of guests like to hear about restaurant specials and discounts via email and 72 percent of guests said they like to find out about new menu items via email.

Re-think your social media presence. Restaurants are busy on social media. In fact, 91 percent of restaurateurs promote their business on Facebook and 78 percent use Instagram. Do you decorate your restaurant for the season? Consider posting images of your holiday decorations with captions that remind customers to come in. Create your own hashtag and encourage customers to use it when sharing on social media. Make sure your holiday posts are tasteful, inclusive, and reflective of your restaurant's brand.

Donate to charity. Is there a local charity that you support every year? Highlight your charitable giving in emails to customers as well as social media posts. Let customers know if you're donating a portion of the proceeds to a nonprofit organization.

Position your restaurant as a reward. Your guests have made it through the year and they are likely running errands for people they love. Remind them that taking a moment to visit your restaurant is a way for them to treat themselves.



“When you sign up for Rewards Network, you’re going to notice it right away. It’s literally like turning the faucet on. They just pack the place. It’s an amazing system that seems to be getting better as the years go on.”

—Steve DiFillippo, Owner
Davio’s, Boston, MA
Rewards Network client since 2011

Want to learn more about how Rewards Network can help your restaurant grow?

Contact us today:

restaurants@rewardsnetwork.com
or visit **[RewardsNetwork.com](https://www.RewardsNetwork.com)**

The information contained in this digital content is provided for informational purposes only and should not be construed as providing tax, legal, accounting, career, or other professional advice. You should consult your own professional advisors before engaging in any course of action. Rewards Network assumes no liability for your use of, or reference to digital content. Customers who provide testimonials are not compensated for their contributions. We make no express or implied warranties or representations through the statements and/or opinions expressed by our customers. Individual results on the Rewards Network platform will vary.

© 2019 Rewards Network Establishment Services Inc. All Rights Reserved.

rewards
networkSM