

How to Take Menu Share in a Streamlined World

By Lizzy Freier, Senior Research Manager, Menu

Due to the impact of COVID-19, operators are streamlining their menus by eliminating SKUs, doubling down on core products and launching safer LTOs. In fact, Q2 2020 menu item mentions are down 3.3% year over year, including drops of 9.1% in add-ons, 3.3% in nonalcohol beverages and 4.5% in desserts, according to Technomic's Ignite menu data. As operators continue to make menu cuts, suppliers should look to the following best practices for taking menu share.

1 Dig into why and how operators are streamlining. Because operators are struggling with costs, labor, supply availability and prep time (given they don't have the same amount as they would for a dine-in experience), they're focused on menuing items that are historically best sellers, are profitable, can be

executed quickly (especially for the drive-thru) and can hold up during off-premise travel. Target your product pitches toward how they can help with each of those dynamics.

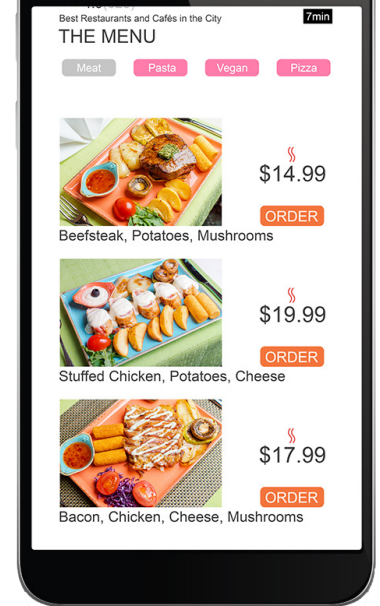
2 Consider how your products can be leveraged across the menu. Perhaps they can be promoted across varied dayparts, mealparts or menu categories, or even across purchase modes (e.g., dine-in, takeout, delivery, etc.). Multiple applications increase efficiency—something operators need especially now—on several fronts, from labor to storage to spend.

3 Bring operators current data on consumer affinity and demand for your item or brand and

drivers of that affinity/demand. Suggesting best-in-class menu formulations that drive sales and traffic among a broad audience is key; however, niche items could draw in a certain audience who otherwise may not have visited had that item not been offered.

4 Promote menu formulations that consumers are unlikely or unable to prepare at home. Whether recipes are too complicated or feature lesser-known ingredients, these items can draw consumers into restaurants.

5 Be proactive with operator partners. Ask them directly how you can help with their menu development as opposed to blindly pitching your products.





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About the Author



Lizzy Freier is a Senior Research Manager at Technomic, a Winsight Company, with a focus on menu trends. Lizzy covers trending flavors, ingredients, dishes and preparations for food and beverage at independent restaurants, emerging chains and top chain restaurant brands. She has also analyzed global trends. She has presented at numerous conferences in the U.S. and Canada on menu trend development for restaurant operators, manufacturers and distributors.

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