



Getting More Out of Your Menu

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Reducing labor costs while offering more choice

One of the biggest challenges operators face is optimizing their labor spend. In fact, 90% of operators say that the reason they've had to raise menu prices over the past two years is rising labor costs, according to Technomic's *2017 Value & Pricing* report.

For most operators, the idea of adding more menu items just means more work and more training for employees, and that can cost a lot. However, sourcing easy-to-use, easy-to-clean equipment can be a way for operators to maximize their labor budgets. These machines are also often easy enough for customers to use on their own, which allows operators to set them up as self-serve machines, expanding their drink options without any added labor.

Equipment that's easy to clean and operate can speed up service and allow restaurant staff to serve more customers overall, as well as have time to accomplish other tasks instead of mixing individual drinks and cleaning blenders. The f'real foodservice blender is a prime example of this.

Building a craveable drink menu doesn't have to break the bank. Here's how operators can do more with less and boost beverage profitability.

Operators today are under more pressure than ever to turn a profit on their businesses. And with increased competition in all arenas, from quick-service stops to family-friendly chains to fine-dining establishments, it's tougher than ever to find a niche.

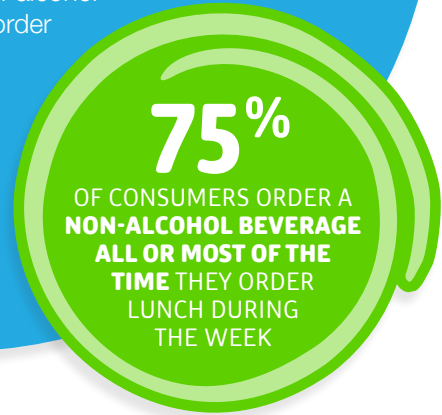
To stay competitive in today's fast-paced industry, operators need to offer a variety of craveable food and beverage options, all while minimizing labor and overhead costs. So how can restaurant operators balance these two objectives and stay profitable? The answer lies in doing more with less. Here's what that looks like.





Increasing incremental profit

Doing more with less also means capitalizing on consumer desires, whether they're aware of them or not. Sometimes, customers visit a restaurant for one thing only—a meal, for instance—but end up impulsively ordering something extra that catches their eye. According to Technomic's recent *Beverage* report, 75% of consumers order a non-alcohol beverage all or most of the time they order lunch during the week. That's a high number, so offering a wide variety of choices to entice customers can boost business—especially housemade beverages, which can attain higher prices and can increase profit margins.



Menu strategy for increasing appeal

Building menu appeal is another key for doing more with less. In practice, this means finding affordable and versatile equipment and ingredients that operators can use to create a variety of unique and craveable food and drink menu items that consumers will love.

Part of this challenge includes finding base options that appeal to a wide range of diners but can easily be turned into something unique with just a few special ingredients. For example, a vanilla milkshake base can be used to create different options, such as drizzling in caramel to create a vanilla-caramel shake, blending in coffee to make a vanilla latte frappe or adding fresh strawberries for a quick-but-delicious fruit-forward dessert drink, just to name a few.

Operators can also add in cardamom spice or lavender syrup for something more unique or exotic—a simple base program can create basic or unique variations. The same concept can apply for creating adult beverages (just add a shot of whatever liquor or liqueur you like), kid-friendly drinks (add sprinkles) or over-the-top options that are Instagrammable.

Often, beverage versatility can be achieved by finding products or programs that are easily customizable and offer the flexibility to serve different types of products to fit different dayparts, customers or seasons. This way, an operator can get more mileage from a single piece of equipment or base product without adding more cost and complexity into their operation.

Keeping it simple

Operators have some ideas for how to do more with less. They can implement speed-scratch options, promote deals and maximize labor spends. But one more thing that operators can consider is to just keep it simple.

While expanding menu options means offering the latest trends, it doesn't mean that operators have to menu the most complex options out there. Instead of serving drinks with ten ingredients in them—different liqueurs or spices, fresh or frozen fruit and sauces, for instance—it can be just as successful to offer drinks that are known favorites. While a chocolate-hazelnut boozy milkshake might be a hot seller now, a chocolate malt is always a hot seller (and it costs less to prepare to boot). Look at what's currently on the menu and consider if classic options might be better draws than complicated options. Classic flavors and seasonal options (**pumpkin spice, anyone?**) can be more successful than flash-in-the-pan concepts.



Without skimping on menu offerings, operators need to find ways to trim their budget while remaining competitive. By offering a variety of drinks, relying on versatile drink bases for speed-scratch options, increasing incremental sales with promotions, reducing labor and waste and simplifying the menu, this can be achieved in virtually any segment.

