

385 Restaurant Marketing Ideas



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1. Take Professional Photos of Your Food

The last few years have seen food become the second most searched category online, following adult content, which has led to the slightly taboo yet well-meaning term, Food Porn. Regardless of how you feel about this phrase, you can't deny that it represents a vast amount of people who like to look at food – which is prime pickings as far as potential customers go.

Because of this, you should be indulging foodies' fetish for well-crafted consumables, and creating beautiful imagery of your restaurant's food. But, a word of warning, food photography is decidedly tricky, with improper lighting rendering a delicious dish looking wholly unappealing. So, if at all possible, don't go the DIY photography route and instead hire a professional.

Once you have photos that will inspire foodies' taste-buds, get them onto the screens of your target audience via any and all social media channels.

2. Short Cooking Videos

People love when things are quick and easy. Create videos that show your potential customers how to create something quickly, like Oreo frequently does on their Vine profile. Do Facebook Live and thank your customers.

3. Be Transparent

If your customers don't know where your food comes from, or how it's cooked or prepared, they might jump to conclusions on their own. Use social media to educate your customers before they attempt to educate themselves.

4. Use Relevant Trending and Niche Hashtags

On social networks like Instagram and Twitter, hashtags can get your post in front of more people. Use hashtags that are both popular, and within your niche to get your content in front of the right customers. For example, if you're a coffee house in Jacksonville, Florida, add #Florida #Jacksonville #coffee to your post.

5. Ask Customers to Share with Hashtags

Pick a hashtag that contains your restaurant's name, and have customers share photos of their food using that hashtag. This can build awareness of your brand among their followers.

6. Geographically Target Paid Ads

Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms allow you to target ads geographically. Run an ad containing a coupon code targeted for your city, and tweak it until it performs as you'd expect. NextRestaurant provides a nice guide to creating ad managing Facebook ads.

When you advertise, make it easy for people to get directions to your restaurant. Check out this guide for creating Google Maps links that can automatically generate directions to your restaurant. Once you create the appropriate url, direct the ad clicks to it, and the directions will be given automatically.

7. Treat Each Platform as it's Own

Facebook isn't Twitter, Twitter isn't Instagram, and Instagram isn't Pinterest. People use each of these platforms differently, so be sure to use each platform for it's purpose to properly resonate with your target customers.

8. Respond to Messages and Comments

Social media is there for you to engage with your customers. If someone comments on a photo or sends you a message, respond to them. If someone asks a question and you don't respond, they'll see it as poor customer service and may never visit your restaurant.

9. Time Your Posts

Using social media management software like Hootsuite or Sprout Social can save lots of time. These services let you schedule your social media posts so that you can handle all of your social media management at one time instead of logging on multiple times throughout the day.

10. Create a Local 'Google My Business' Listing

Adding your business to Google My Business makes it easy for your business to be discovered on Google's search engine and Google Maps. It also makes it easier for people to find your website, contact info, and even see images of your restaurant.

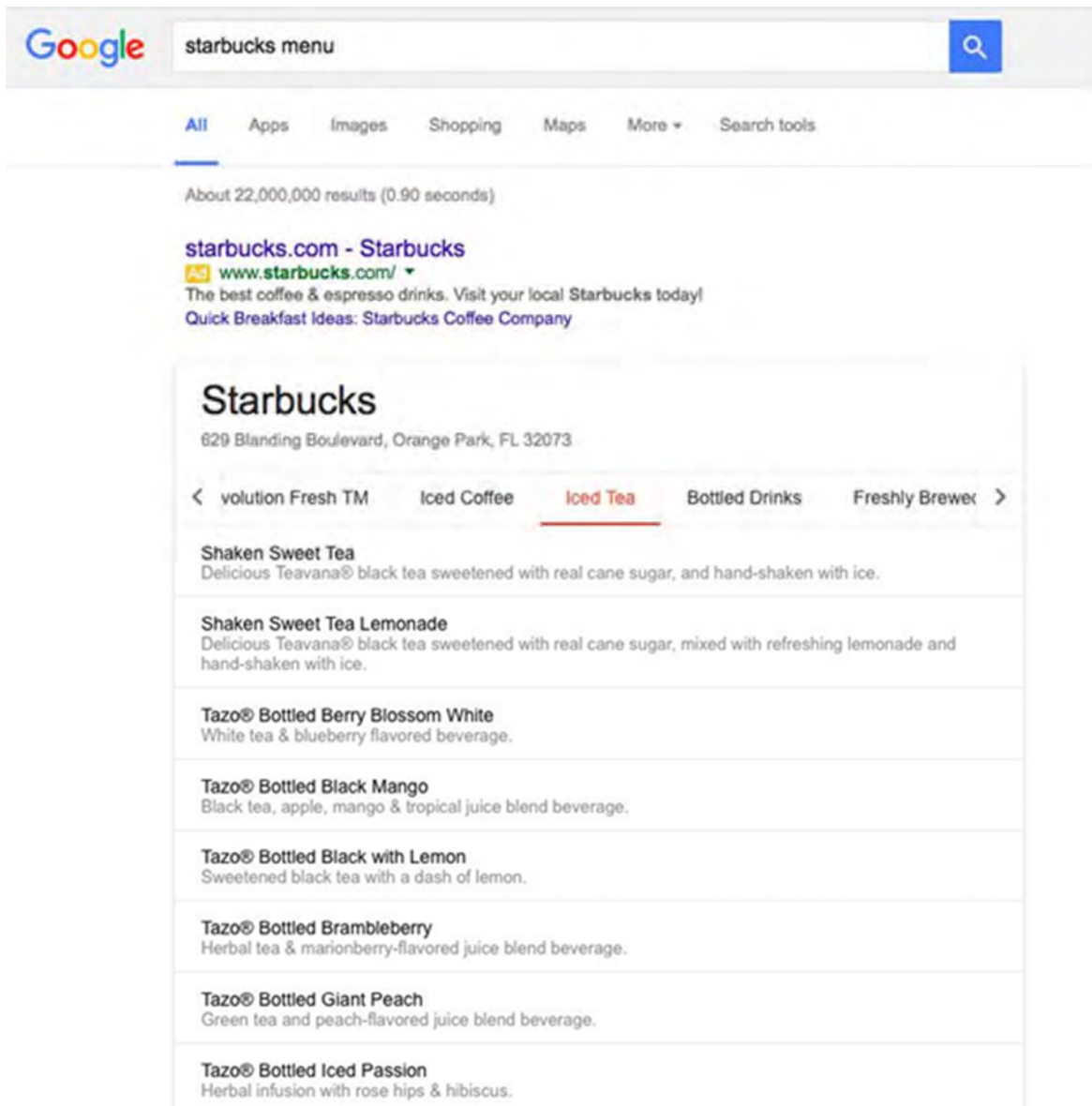
11. Be Found on Apple Maps

Many iPhone owners use Apple Maps instead of Google Maps, since it's the default maps application for the iPhone.

Apple maps uses outside sources to list businesses inside it's maps app, including Yelp and Localize. If your business isn't already showing up in Apple Maps, here's one way you can fix it:

1. Search for your location.
2. In the location detail click the "Report a Problem" link.
3. Choose the appropriate problem.
4. Choose "Other" on the Report a Problem screen.
5. Add your business data via the various fields and submit.

You can allow your menu to be searched on Google so it shows up like this:



People search Google for generic terms like "Coffee houses in New York" or "Places to get buffalo wings" more than they search for specific restaurants, so having your menu online in a way Google and other search engines can index it properly can help you get found by more people.

One of Google's major menu providers is SinglePlatform, as mentioned here. Trip Advisor and Facebook also use SinglePlatform for menu information.

There are other menu platforms you should consider submitting your menu to as well, including Zagat and Allmenus, since other platforms may be indexing these sources.

12. Build Links to Your Website

Building links to your website can help your site rank higher in Google, and can even drive more traffic directly to your site through those links.

For your restaurant, it could be valuable to build links on pages that list restaurants in an area. People actually click links on these types of sites, because they usually come across them looking for somewhere to eat.

Here are some examples of list posts:

Just search Google for list posts like these relevant to your city, and reach out to the bloggers to see if they'd be interested in coming in for a meal. After their visit, see if they'd be willing to add you to their list.

Links on sites like these can drive lots of traffic to your website and increase your restaurants rankings on Google, which can bring new customers to your restaurant.

13. Start a Blog

Blogging is a great way to get your website to show up in more Google searches. You can post weekly recipe's, stories about working in a restaurant, and even allow guest articles.

Here are some tips about starting a blog:

- Use your own domain. For example, don't use a yourwebsite.webhost.com domain, because then any search engine optimization efforts (work towards getting your website to show up in search engines like Google) you put in will go to the web hosting domain.
- Post Regularly
- Use blogging software like Ghost. We use Ghost for our blogging, and it's awesome. It's really easy to write and edit articles quickly, and it seems to perform extremely well in search engine optimization efforts.

14. Build Links to Your Blog

One of the most important factors for ranking in Google is the number of links pointing to your website. There are many strategies you can use to get links to your site, and Backlinko.com provides awesome tips for this.

15. Restaurant Apps

Make sure you're able to be found on any apps people might use to search for restaurants. Here are a few of the popular ones people often use to look for places to eat

16. Get Reviews on Yelp, Google, and Others

Getting positive reviews on Yelp and Google not only help convince people to visit your restaurant, but also increase your rankings in searches on these websites. You want your restaurant to be highly ranked for generic searches like "restaurants near me" or "places to eat."

Shopkeep provides some good ideas for getting reviews on review sites. It can be as simple as just asking customers who you know have had good experience.

17. Guest Post on Food Blogs

Guest posting on food blogs can be an effective way to generate awareness among food fanatics. Reach out to food bloggers in your niche about posting recipe's for their readers. Guest posting on blogs is also a very effective way to generate links to your website, which can help with your search engine rankings.

18. Don't Forget About Email

Email lists are a powerful marketing resource. You can use them to promote new menu items, events at your restaurant, or even send out coupons. You can maintain a mailing list with services like MailChimp.

These next few tips focus on building an email list.

19. Encourage Subscribers to Share Emails

Inside your email, include social sharing buttons or "Email to a Friend" buttons. This way, you'll gain access to friends of your subscribers, and your email list can grow organically. At the very bottom of the email, also include a "Subscribe" button so that those receiving the email can easily subscribe to your mailing list.

20. Offer Coupons for Mailing List Signups

Offering coupon incentives through your social media channels can be an effective way to grow your mailing list. Once they subscribe, send them the coupon for a percentage off their meal, or better yet, offer something for free.

21. In Your Email Signature

If you send lots of emails, include a "Subscribe" link in your email signature. Some people you're responding to in your inbox might be interested in what you have to offer, since they're contacting you in the first place.

22. In-Restaurant Promotion

If you have table tents in your restaurant, mention your mailing list on one of them. Provide some sort of incentive, especially something that can give instant gratification, such as a percentage off their current meal for showing the waitress the welcome email. Make it easy for them by including a QR code for them to scan, or a direct url to enter into their browser to subscribe.

23. Automatically Add Loyalty Program Members

Including members of your loyalty program in your email list can be a great way to send promotions and alerts to people who are already interested in you.

24. Partner with Other Companies

Know another company that has a mailing list that might be interested in what you have to offer? Give them something exclusive to give to their subscribers, like a free meal or entry into a contest, if their subscribers sign up for your mailing list.

If you have an established mailing list, maybe you can return the favor.

Just make sure your target audience aligns with theirs.

25. Build Customer Loyalty

Think about it:

Which would you rather have; 500 regular customers that spend \$1 each month, or 5 customers that spend \$100 each month?

On the surface, both are the same. Either option would lead to \$500 in monthly revenue. However, it makes more sense to aim for the 5 customer option because

acquiring new customers is expensive, and with each customer spending more, your revenue increases to a greater degree as you grow your pool of customers.

These next few are some tips will help you increasing customer loyalty.

26. Be In Front of Your Customers Daily

Find a way to be seen by your customers on a daily basis. This can be accomplished by getting them to follow you on social media, aggressive advertising, or letting them save your restaurants playlist with background music services like Dozmia for Business.

27. Start a Loyalty Program

It's basic psychology: people are more likely to revisit frequently if they get free stuff. Restaurant loyalty programs can increase visits by up to 35%, so starting a loyalty program is a no brainer.

If you don't want to create a loyalty program on your own, here are some loyalty program providers to consider:

People connect with others who share their interest, and this includes businesses. If your restaurant fits into the culture that your customers are involved in, you can build a stronger emotional connection with them. Support the community, weather it's local musicians, artists, or community events, and you'll stand above other brands going for the same customers.

28. Create an Amazing Experience

When people come to your restaurant, give them a great experience. Have an incredible, unique atmosphere, friendly service, fix mistakes quickly, and, of course, serve amazing food. It sounds simple, but exceptional service can turn one-time customers into repeat customers.

29. Offer Something for Free

Five Guys gives away free peanuts, and Olive Garden doesn't charge for bread. This works very well for both of these companies.

You could give customers cucumber water, fresh mint water, or any kind of fancy water for free. It's small, but customers will notice, and see it as a gesture of appreciation.

Here are some recipe's you can use:

Cucumber Water

Strawberry, Cucumber, Lime, and Mint Water

30. Put on Regular Events

People usually go out to eat so they can socialize with others. Weather it's weekly concerts, game nights, or trivia, the social elements of these regular events can keep people coming back.

Find something that matches the theme of your restaurant, and your customers will make time to be there.

31. Keep Employees Happy

Employees can work as ambassadors for your restaurant. Their friends and family could be potential customers, and if they're talking with people they're close to about how unhappy they are at work, these people may not give you the time of day. However, if they talk about how great work is, their friends and family will be happy to support your restaurant. Here are some simple ideas for keeping employees happy:

Give them time off.

Give them benefits.

Recognize their efforts.

Maintain a positive internal culture.

32. Increase Average Check Size

Increasing the average check size can be an effective way to increase your restaurants overall revenue. These next points include some ways you can accomplish this.

33. Train Employees to Up- sell and Cross-sell

Up-selling is where you move customers up to a more expensive product. Cross-selling is where you recommend complimentary products.

Train your waiters and waitresses to understand menu items, and which ones go well together, so they can build the check while interacting with the customer by recommending different menu items.

If your restaurant is quick-service with menu boards, pricing can move customers up in item sizes. For example, if you have different drink sizes, make the price difference between small and medium bigger than the price difference between medium and large. Additionally, pricing large to small as opposed to small to large can make expensive items appear cheaper.

Here's an example:

LG - \$2.99

MD - \$2.89

SM - \$2.29

The customers thought process would guide them to the large item, since most customers think a small size isn't enough, and the large is only 10 cents more than the medium item.

If your restaurant is of a sit down style with physical menus, removing cents from the prices can make customers perceive items as cheaper.

34. The Right Music

The right type of music can affect consumers perception of price. Studies have shown that playing classical music instead of pop music in a high-end restaurant can lead customers to choose more expensive drinks, which can have a dramatic increase on the check size.

Business music services can help you choose music that results in increased sales.

If you show your guests the desserts in the same menu as the main course, then if your waiter or waitress goes to remind them about dessert, having already seen the options, they're likely to decline. However, if the server is offering up a dessert menu with detailed images and descriptions, curiosity will make it harder for your guests to resist.

35. Offer Bundles

Bundling meals together on the menu can result in drastic spending increases. If guests see two items offered together at a steep enough discount, they'll have a hard time saying no to the deal. It's good for both of you: they get a good deal, and you get a bigger check.

36. Use Images on More Profitable Items

Whenever I go to a restaurant, I'm more inclined to buy items that have images, because I know exactly what to expect. I imagine most guests are the same. Menu items with images and detailed descriptions are more likely to sell more frequently, so make these your most profitable items.

37. Limit Choice

Ever heard of the paradox of choice? It's a psychological theory that if people have too many choices, they won't choose anything. If you want to sell a more expensive menu item, limit it's options.

38. Make Items Appear Less Expensive

If you place a \$40 item next to a \$12 item, it looks very expensive. However, if you place that same \$40 item next to a \$50 item, it suddenly looks like a better price. Be thoughtful about how you place items on your menu, and about how it's price may be perceived.

39. Have Concerts

Concerts can be a great way to bring new people into your restaurant. Book musicians with a large enough fanbase and social media following, and it can really expand your brand visibility.

40. Text Message Marketing

Take the tips above about an email list, and apply it to a text message system. Text messages have a 98% open rate and a 36% click-thru rate, which are much higher than email open and click-thru rates.

41. Participate in Big Events

If there's a music festival or another big event coming to your city, you can get involved by handing out free samples, or even catering the event.

42. Offer Gift Cards

Gift cards can bring in new customers. You can even look into selling them at other local businesses for increased brand exposure and customer acquisition.

43. Use a Daily Deal Site

Daily deal sites like Groupon or Living Social will expose your restaurant to thousands of people instantly. Just be prepared for the large volume of traffic.

44. Partner with Food Delivery Apps

Food delivery apps like Door Dash or GrubHub can help expand your reach by offering delivery. Customers may also discover your restaurant by searching for the type of food you offer.

45. Maintain an Awesome Atmosphere

Music, lighting, and the color scheme of your restaurant all matter. The atmosphere is the first things your customers experience, before they even taste your food. You only get one chance to make a first impression, so make it count.

46. Brand Constitution

Before any other marketing activity is embarked upon, the first thing to do is ensure you have a solid brand constitution (brand promises, brand personality, brand positioning strategy, brand purpose and reason for being, brand standards, corporate identity, et cetera, all expertly planned, expressed, and documented). In marketing, you only sell differences, not similarities. Therefore it is important to evaluate all of these materials through the lens of competitive differentiation, alignment with emerging and anticipated industry and consumer trends, and the uniqueness of the brand story and point of view (is it newsworthy?).

47. Uniqueness

Your restaurant concept must be distinct or it will go extinct. There are over 16 million restaurants in the world and yours has to be unique enough that it is the one and only of its kind. The best marketing is word-of-mouth, and if your restaurant isn't worth writing about, it's not worth talking about. Don't be a copycat; the copies almost always go out of business before the original – and who wants to be (or buy from) a knock-off unless “cheaper” is the primary motivation? And no matter how hard you try, on any given day, someone else will be cheaper. So don't copy or try to be cheaper, try to be more unique, original and worth talking about (note, “betterness” is a hollow claim of the disillusioned, not a uniqueness).

48. An Elevator Pitch

When someone asks you what you do – what kind of restaurants you run – what do you say? If every member of your senior staff were asked to write down what your brand stands for or to give a description of your restaurants, would they all write down the same thing? If not, this is going to result in confusion rippling out far

wider than your corporate boardroom. As a company or brand leader, you'll want to give this a test and ensure that all levels of the organization are on the same page and describing the company in a consistent way. If word of mouth is the best kind of marketing, it makes you wonder why more companies leave it up to the masses to try to articulate their message. Evaluate not just for inconsistencies among the team, but also in terms of appeal. If you heard your elevator pitch for the first time, would it sound like something you'd heard for the first time (or some variation of 'good food, good service, good times')? Without using boastful claims or superlatives, describe your concept in a way that highlights what's different and special (and even newsworthy) about it. If you're an internationally known chain, consider an elevator pitch that centers on where the company is headed (rather than where it has been or what's already known about it). All too often, when the brand constitution is in place, it tends to get put up on a shelf in a 3-ring binder rather than lived in the system. An elevator pitch (and testing it occasionally as well as comparing how guests are describing the brand), is one of many ways to make the brand constitution practical in daily operations.

49. Invest

For starters, you'll need to appropriate a budget that's right for your concept and current conditions. The average is 3% of revenue. We typically recommend up to 6% of projected first year revenue for new locations (with 1/3 of that spent before opening). Never should a restaurant company have a marketing budget of less than 1% of revenue. Even when your company and concept is about word of mouth and relatively averse to marketing, you should still be building a war chest. Don't spend it if you don't have a good plan and reason, but at least put those funds aside. You'll need money for R&D, printing and production, web and social presence, content development, photography and other digital assets, media and public relations, CRM systems, charitable contributions, menu development, investment in certain aspects of your overall training programs, and plenty of other uses that don't classify as advertising.

50. Know The Trend

Change is accelerating faster than ever. And never before has this been

clearer: restaurant success favors those who innovate. Those perceived to be original—not by knowing the trends but by creating them—are those who leapfrog ahead. To stay out in front, you have to not only analyze the trends, you have to anticipate them. Better yet, create them.

51. Media Relation

Anyone with a checkbook can buy an ad, but not just anyone gets written about. There are at least 10 unknown chefs better than any given celebrity chef. The difference for why one is on TV and the others are watching the celebrity on TV is the one on TV hired a publicist and got smart on media relations. Every restaurant worth going to has a story worth telling. If you have a story worth telling, you need a publicist to help craft that story and communicate it to media and journalists who will in-turn make your brand famous. Famous (and even infamous) brands routinely do better than boring brands that failed to stimulate the media.

52. Signature Item

If someone walks in to your restaurant and asked, “What’s the best thing on the menu”, your staff had better not reply back with “It’s all good.” Think about it – take your affinity to your menu and loyalties of your staff out of the equation – doesn’t “It’s all good” fall flat for you if you hear it at another restaurant? It BETTER all be good (or what the heck is it doing on the menu?). What the guest is really asking with that question though is – “What do you do so fantastic that I will love it just for the sincere passion for which your staff described it and because this is the only place I can get exactly that dish prepared exactly that way?”

53. Sampling

If you have good food, the best marketing tactic you can employ is to give free samples. It works for nearly every product in nearly every industry. A free, no-obligation sample – if you really believe in your product – is the surest way to convert potential customers into actual customers. They try, they like, they come back to buy; you deliver at least as good the next time as you did the time before and you’ve got a customer for a very long

time. Why buy advertisements claiming you have great food when you could instead prove it without ever having to buy an ad? Earned media and word-of-mouth trumps paid advertising any and every day of the week.

54. Cause Marketing

Millennials spend more as a percentage of their discretionary income on eating out than any other demographic category; and they now make up the bulk of all foodservice transactions not only in the USA, but emerging markets as well (like Saudi Arabia, where 60% of the population is under the age of 20). And Millennials are also the most cause-oriented demographic, with 1-in-5 switching brands if it's for a good cause even if it costs more. Increasingly, consumers are aligning with good corporate citizens. The phrase "making the world a better place" really resonates with this new consumer sentiment; a fact not lost on Chipotle and Starbucks, for example (Chipotle's "Cultivate a Better World" campaign was sheer genius on this front).

55. Professional Photography

You probably do not give yourself your own haircut. So why would you take your own photos for your restaurant or hire it out to semi-pros? It's tempting with that new state of the art camera you just bought, but trust me, you are better off giving yourself your own haircut than having amateurs take photos of your restaurant or food and using them in advertisements or marketing collaterals. Go with no photos before ever using clip art, stock photography, or amateur-hour photos. You may think your menu and staff look great in those self-shot photos, but then again, doesn't every parent think their kids are good-looking? Get a pro or go without.

56. Memorable Packaging

If your takeaway items go out in generic "Thank You" bags, it is like naming your children "boy" and "girl". If your food is worth taking away, it's worth being taken away in branded takeout packaging.

57. No Discounts

If you discount your food, what you are effectively saying is that it's not worth full price. When you discount, you cut your already thin margins into even thinner slices. And how can you afford the best ingredients, best locations, best associates and give back to your community and industry if you can't justify a fair-market price and respectable profit? Sure, in every industry and society there are bottom-feeders who only want CHEAP, CHEAP, CHEAP (and businesses that cater to them). Like locusts, they swarm from one fertile and virgin ground to the next without an ounce of loyalty or appreciation. Is that who you want to set your table for? No matter how much you hurt yourself with how nose-bleed of a bargain you are willing to offer, there will always be someone else out there willing to do it for less. If you appeal only to the locusts swarming from deal to deal you will certainly hurt not only yourself, but your staff, facilities and future prospects for all involved. You charge what you need to be able to deliver an experience and forget about the discounts. Any damn fool can run a discount promotion, but not just any restaurant delivers memorable and meaningful hospitality, service and experience worth buzzing about. In the long-run, they always forget the deals (unless you let them really stick it to you); but they never forget the experiences (so charge what you need to deliver magic).

58. Data Capture

Tomorrow, hundreds, thousands, or even millions of souls will pass through your doors. The day after tomorrow, will you have any idea who they were?

59. Reputation Capturing

The Internet is populated by Trolls who find immense joy in slandering and bullying people and companies online. If you are famous (and great

restaurants are in their own right), you will have haters. Keep a watchful ear out for your restaurants reputation. While the Internet has made it far easier for Internet Trolls to graffiti your brand, it's also made it far easier for you to monitor what's being said about your business. Set up a Google Alert (it's free) and – for larger companies – consider more sophisticated reputation monitoring systems or adding the duties to your PR firm's deliverables. As CEO, you'll want to get a summary report at least weekly, but also have to be certain there is a crisis communications plan in place for serious issues that need to be addressed immediately.

60. Google Places (and other Geo -Searching Technologies)

You can find almost anything online these days. But how about your restaurant? Does this particular location show up on all of those mobile devices and Internet searches? While there is a whole lot to SEO, one no-brainer you need to make sure is checked off the list is that each and every one of your restaurant locations is listed in Google Places. Countless apps and third-party interfaces use Google Places as an engine to populate their restaurant recommendations. It's free, quick, and an essential box to check for your restaurant marketing.

61. SEO

You know what drives me crazy? Well, a lot of things, but one is anytime I see some business using dollar signs or stock photos of piles of cash to try to sell something. Eeek! It screams of snake oil salesmen and the “SEO” industry is riddled with them. A shame, really. Because the search engines (Google mostly), just outranked “personal recommendation from a friend” as the single most important source of information and referrals for restaurants. What that means is – your business has GOT to be found online. And SEO is perhaps the most under-used and under-emphasized tool for restaurant and foodservice companies today. Start with this – make a list of 100 phrases that if a prospective employee, investor, franchisee, partner, journalist, or guest were to type into a search engine (like Google) that you'd want to have your brand show up in the #1 position for consistently. Next question – how many of those phrases does your brand (and not just your brand really, you've got to think this through down to the logical end – which specific page on your site should a visitor arrive at should they type the phrase, see your page listed in the search engine results page, and then click through to?). A whole book

could and should be written on this subject specific to restaurant and foodservice marketers. What you should know for know though is that the #1 listed organic result for searches gets 37% of all of the traffic (put #2 and #3 together and they don't get that; and if you're on the second page of the results you're likely to see no traffic at all). This is staggering when you think about it. Think about phrases like "Bruch in...", "Best Steakhouses in...", "Best Restaurant Stocks..." ,...again, make the list of the top 100 you should own...do you currently?

62. Online Ordering

The major pizza chains are already processing more than half of all of their orders online and have been for a few years. They've gotten very good at it, in fact. Some moved on quickly to mobile orders and now several are already finding success with SMS/ text orders, Apple Watch ordering, and even simplifying ordering down to emoticons. Domino's even went so far as to say they are a technology company that sells pizza, not a pizza company with fresh technology. Being able to order online has now become a mandatory for all restaurants, not just delivery restaurants. What would you sell online if you don't order delivery, you ask? Start with gift cards, merchandise, special events, or even orders for pickup. Start practicing though and get used to the idea you are going to need to know a lot more about e-commerce in the future (regardless of how much you know about it already).

63. LinkedIn

This is not the best place for you to mass-market your concept or do carpet-bomb marketing, but if you are the type that subscribes to the idea of friends in high places, you will find LinkedIn to be one of the surest sources of new ones. Be respectful and follow the rules; do not go nuts trying to make connections out of your league. That said, you absolutely have to be on this platform and you should invest the time in

making new friends here. Need to find: New franchisees? New lenders or investors? Catering clients? New members of management? You will find all of that and more on LinkedIn. Of all the social media platforms out there, LinkedIn has the highest caliber of professionals. In a single week, I made new connections with senior management of hospitality companies posting more than \$200 billion annually.

Another way of thinking about it – within a week, I was connected directly to executives leading literally hundreds of thousands of employees; employees that will never connect directly with these executives in a full career, but I did with just a few minutes and clicks. If you want to be connected in this industry, you need to be linked-in (on LinkedIn).

64. Birthday and Anniversary Program

Half of all adults dine out on their birthday or anniversary. Okay, so there are 7 billion people on the planet...that means the biggest dine-out day of any culture or country is the day of birth or anniversary of those for that particular day. Sure, as a single day, many other holidays (like Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, etc.) overshadow those every day birthday and anniversary celebrations, but if you are promoting a restaurant or hotel and don't have a birthday or anniversary program in your marketing mix you are missing an opportunity.

65. Four Walls Focus

You should not spend a penny on advertisements that go out beyond your four walls until you have perfected internal marketing. Why would you spend money advertising to people who've never heard of your business and will likely never become customers no matter what, yet ignore the employees ("internal customers") of your business? The single most important audience of all of your stakeholders are your employees. Think it's the investors/investment community? Okay, what happens if your best investors get suspicious about the health of the business and go to the employees instead of your ad-men? You have got to earn the hearts, minds, and loyalties of your associates before you can ever expect to attract or keep a guest happy. Start first with the associates. Enroll and engage them. Then work from the heart-of-the-

house out (that means in the kitchen – getting signature items down pat, building competencies and capabilities, an enviable menu that's game-changing; then moving marketing to the dining room; then to the property-line; then to the neighborhood; then out via social media and media relations channels; then – after all of those areas of opportunity have been fully maximized and are working like a well-oiled machine – then you can think about talking to ad agencies and such). Great marketing will just kill a bad operation faster. You've got to work from the inside out. Resist the temptation to work from the outside advertisements back toward the internal experience. Sure, you can admire the national advertising campaigns of the world's

largest restaurant chains. But don't think they got to be that way by advertising the way they do now. They got to be big by doing what you should be doing now (in fact, in many ways, they are the ones forgetting what built them and being sold a false promise). A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Big chains became big chains not by national advertising campaigns, but by winning on a block-by-block, unit-by-unit basis. Far before they could afford national advertising, they knew to focus on building the company from the inside out (the associates, the product, the experience, the local connections...the other stuff came MUCH later).

66. Neighborhood Marketing

Research has shown that 80% of a typical restaurant's customers originate within a 10-minute drive-time of the restaurant. Even if your restaurant is located within a touristic or transient market, you'll still find this 'originates' rule to be true. While destination restaurants can draw from a much wider radius (for a lucky few, guests will travel the world and plan a special trip around a destination restaurant), the majority of restaurants should be focusing their outreach locally. Applebee's is a great example of a restaurant chain forgetting this important principle. The brand DNA was rooted in being the first national restaurant chain to be a "neighborhood bar and grill." Yet, over time, marketers forget this and rather than build their marketing from the bottom up on a block-by-block basis, they attempt to 'leverage our scale' with big budget national

advertising campaigns. No matter how large you get, you should keep your marketing oriented locally (investing from the inside out, and from the bottom up).

67. Menu Innovation

In our blog we have a lot of resources related to menu innovation, engineering, development, and design. We can't talk about restaurant marketing mandates though without addressing the menu. It's where the rubber meets the road. If the menu is off, the restaurant fails; no matter how good the other marketing was. You have to consider competitive differentiation, relevance and appeal to your audience, item placement, photography, copy, pricing, merchandising strategies, plating and presentation, and a whole lot more. Naturally, there's so much to it that books have been written on the subject and chains have whole departments dedicated to menu innovation (not just culinary and beverage R&D departments, but folks who do nothing else except menu analysis and engineering). I have written a book on this

(much of the content is available free on our site) and we also conduct public and private workshops on the subject. What I want to emphasize here though, is that your marketing team should be not only involved, but leading menu development initiatives (with your culinary and beverage teams reporting in to the marketing function) and that before you spend money on marketing be sure your brand and menu are where they need to be.

68. Beverage Innovation

When you go to the grocery store, you'll notice that there are an ever-increasing variety of new beverages available. Sure, Coke and Pepsi still get half an aisle for their sugary sodas, but more and more shelf space is opening up for alternative beverages – usually the more healthful and artisan stuff (coconut water, organic juices, probiotics, vitamin waters, etc.). Makes you wonder why you don't see more innovation happening with beverage in restaurants, doesn't it? It's because it is just one of those overlooked areas of opportunity. Whether you serve alcohol or not, you can do a lot for your competitive differentiation and profit margins by getting creative with beverage

innovations. Check our blog or signup for our newsletter for beverage trends to get more ideas. There's a lot happening with trends like house-made sodas and bitters, heirloom and farm-to-table ingredients, the kitchen-to-the-bar movement, nanobreweries, micro-distilled, house-infused cocktails, and much more. You should definitely be thinking beyond coffee, tea, and bag-in-the-box sodas. If you sell a commodity that everyone else sells, you have more complications with price perceptions and positioning than if you carry items less comparable.

69. Holiday Marketing

In the US alone, \$13 billion is spent on Valentine's Day with 35% of the gifts given being for dining/eating out. 80 million American's dine out on Mother's Day and 50 million eat out on Father's Day. More than 1 billion Muslims observe Ramadan around the world, with significant impact and opportunity on restaurants. Every culture in the world recognizes and celebrates a holiday and there is a holiday for nearly every day of the week (however obscure some of them may seem, there's at least someone it's important to). While you certainly shouldn't fill your promotional calendar with daily holiday celebrations and promotions, it is always striking to me how few restaurant marketing plans have thoughtfully constructed holiday

marketing campaigns. Every year when you build your marketing plan, be sure to start with a calendar that includes major internal and external events (holidays, sporting events, political calendars, etc.) to look for opportunities and avoid conflicts for other planned promotional activities.

70. Orientation and Enculturation

Starbucks spends far more on training than they do on marketing. They always have. And it shows in the guest experience. Starbucks workers see themselves differently than McDonald's employees, even while their pay may be similar. This is because Starbucks has done a far better job with branding – not branding in the sense of advertising, but branding in the sense of associate engagement and enculturation. The average cost of training a new hire is \$1,500 for crew-level positions; and the average employee turnover for quick service restaurants (QSR's) is 100% (with some as high as 300%). Often, the cost of

training is hidden in the labor cost as it's often not broken out separately. Even with just one location, it's clear that training is costly (and not training is even more costly). This is why I don't understand why so few multi-unit restaurant chains have invested in well-produced orientation videos, systematized skills assessments, instructional design, e-learning, training games and exercises, or cross-functional collaboration between the training department and the marketing department. Training should be as fun and immersive of an experience as playing a video game. If you're spending more on marketing than training, consider reallocating some of those funds.

71. Shift Meeting

You win and lose guests on a touch-point by touch-point exchange. If your managers are not holding pre-shift meetings, it's like a coach that doesn't have the time or concern to have a half-time coaching session. If your favorite sporting team lost and you found out the coach was just too lazy (or absorbed watching computer monitors in the back-office) to coach his team before the game and at the half-time point, wouldn't you feel that he was to blame (or at least that he could have done more)? If you or your subordinate managers are not having pre-shift meetings with the

associates, you're missing one of the most vital opportunities to ensure consistency and culture.

72. Limited Time Offer

Many large restaurant chains have gotten carried away with their LTO's and have over-used this tool; for many, leading to operational fatigue, bloated menus, and consumer confusion. However, LTO's will always be around as it is a promotional tool that taps into the economic and psychological principle of scarcity. It goes back to the days in human evolution when food was harder to come by than it is today with the ubiquitous drive-thru. When there was even a perceived fear of food shortages, it stirs something deep inside of us all. Scarcity is why diamonds are so valuable – companies intentionally keep the supply low to increase the rarity and therefore value. LTO's are a terrific short-term promotional tool to test new items and stimulate demand without long-term commitment or investment. This is one of the surest quick-hits for many restaurants; but careful not to over do it or you will dilute the effectiveness, confuse your stakeholders, and unnecessarily burden your operations teams.

73. Give More Than Expected

Call it a bakers dozen if you like, but be sure to always look for ways to give more than you promised and more than was expected. That will always go further than any contrived marketing campaign or promotional tactic in the long run.

74. Create a Loyalty Program

Did you know that customers in loyalty programs return twice as often? By creating a rewards program, you'll encourage repeat customers and build a rapport with your clientele. A punch card loyalty program is a great incentive for customers to continuously return to your restaurant. Instead of traditional paper punch cards, save a trip to the print shop and go with a mobile solution. CandyBar.co offers a digital loyalty punch card program with a small business friendly platform that is completely online.

75. Build Buzz with the Local Media.

Call local magazines, newspapers, news stations, etc. to come for a free meal and do a piece on your location. Build local buzz. Reviews will appear on their publications for their entire circulation/audience.

Fair warning: do a little research and be selective on who you invite. A gourmet critic will probably not bother with a tiny little hot dog stand, but if he does – watch out!

76. Check Your Online Listings

When people look for a restaurant online, you want to be one of the first names that comes up. That's why you want to make sure your business is accurately listed in as many online directories as possible. Yext is a free online tool that lets you scan local listings across multiple sites. .

77. Show Up On Top of Google When People Look for a Place to Eat.

If you have a restaurant that serves Greek food, you want your place to appear when a person searches on Google for “Greek Food” or “Greek Restaurants” or perhaps even certain signature dishes. The listings that you see on the top of the pages are usually paid ads. Learn that drive local traffic.

78. Look Ahead at the Events Happening in Your Local Area and Get Involved.

Give the locals and visitors a reason to choose you over their favorite chains. Is there a 10k race on Sunday? Why not offer a discount on lunch if people show their finisher's medal? If there's an election, why not offer a discount if they show a photo

of themselves outside their polling station? Small businesses need the support of people that not only live locally, but people and those that visit the local area too.

79. Reach Out to the Local Community.

Brett and Rochelle Bohannon, One Happy Restaurant

Community + Local Outreach can be used as an extremely effective marketing tool to authentically reach a target audience and have a tremendously positive impact on the local community. This method appeals to the consumer of today, who leans more toward the support of a business that actively displays heart and soul. Your neighbors – the people who live down the street from your restaurant and drive by on a regular basis – they are the ones who support you day in and day out. Target customers that live in the area with special discounts, coupons or even new menu tastings.

80. Make Your Website Simple & Sharp.

Over 80% of Americans look up restaurants online before going out, so it goes without saying that a website is important. What many restaurant owners forget is what customers actually use websites for: They need to view your menu, hours, address, or phone number. As interesting as your backstory or vegan Sumatra-inspired dishes may be, they are less essential. A user-friendly website will have the most pertinent information presented right away.

Learn more about creating your own professional restaurant website in under an hour, at a cost of less than \$3/month. Having a great website is what your customers expect, and while it may seem like a monumental task we'll give you all the information you need. to set it up.

81. Partner with Like-minded Businesses and Cross – Promote Each Other.

Like-minded could be a business that is near the restaurant or it could be a business that has a similar audience. For example, one of my clients' restaurants attracted a

number of customers who biked to the restaurant. They worked with a local bike shop to offer a discount to the bike shop's customers and the bike shop offered a discount to the restaurant's customers.

82. Create Live Menus with Lightspeed

Give your customers an amazing ordering experience right at the table. Lightspeed's point-of-sale system lets you create customizable digital menus in minutes with photos, descriptions, and additional dish details, like ingredients for those with food allergies, or wine pairings. Orders are displayed in the kitchen so staff can begin preparing them as soon as they are received. .

83. Write for Industry Publications.

One of the best ways to get coverage without spending a penny (besides for possible writing costs) is to propose content for publications that cover the food and restaurant industry.

This can be both online and offline depending on where your customers read. The topic to propose depends on what type of a restaurant you are but it can be about anything from how you keep your business efficient to how you are utilizing all new recipes to please your customers.

The idea is to be creative and come up with a topic that publications would accept and readers could find impressive. If you do this as a regular thing it can potentially get your restaurant very popular over time.

84. Promote User Generated Content.

My favorite marketing campaign was a contest we ran on social media, mixing it in with customers in the restaurant. We announced the contest on social media and also created cards to put in each checkbook to hand to customers when paying the bill. We asked the customers to take and post pictures with their favorite waitress or waitresses, including the specific hashtag.

It was a lot of fun and we had a lot of photos to use for guest appreciation Friday's on social media. We gave out gift cards, sponsored prizes, etc. and increased traffic through the contest and word of mouth.

85. Keep Your NAPs in Order.

Your NAP is your name, address and phone number. Google scours the web looking for your business information and it is critical that these

3 elements are the same wherever your restaurant appears on the web. The more consistently your business information is presented across different websites, the more weight it will receive from Google and this should help your chances of ranking higher.

86. Monitor and Respond to Online Reviews.

Small restaurant owners frequently overlook, ignore or respond inappropriately to their online customer reviews on Google, Yelp!, Trip Advisor, and more. Reviews can have a big impact your business; even one bad review might turn away new or returning customers. A good start is to set up a Google alert for the restaurant name so that you can monitor what is being said about your business.

When a negative review occurs, reply quickly to the reviewer in a friendly tone. Replying with negativity will only make things worse. You can apologize for the negative experience or ask the reviewer to contact the restaurant directly so that you have the chance to redeem the

situation. A thoughtful reply can turn a critic into a fan and it demonstrates a level of customer care that we all hope to experience when dining out.

87. Offer Online Ordering Without Breaking the Bank

Customers enjoy the convenience of ordering food right from their phones. Make sure you give your customers what they want without having to worry about your bottom line. Instead of using third party online ordering services like Seamless , Grubhub, or UberEats, and losing out on 30% of the meal ticket to their commission fees, use Total Loyalty Solutions and allow your customers to order online for a low, flat monthly cost to you, and keep more profit for your restaurant!

88. Setup and Optimize Your Google My Business Listing.

Google's My Business has taken over from Google+ Local and Google Places and has expanded over the past year or so. It's designed to help people locate your store, usually from a mobile device on the go. It's the big business listing that appears on the right-hand side of a search result. You can include location, opening hours, phone numbers and it includes customers' reviews out of 5-star ratings. Basically, it's an easy way for people in the local area to find your restaurant.

89. Hire an expert to improve your digital marketing.

Make your advertising budget go even further with some help from the pros at Hibu. They are one of a select few officially badged Facebook Marketing Partners in the US who also specialize in supporting small businesses. Hibu offers social campaign creation, management, monitoring and they'll even run social advertising campaigns for you. As a full-service digital solutions provider, they also offer website design, search engine marketing and optimization, display advertising, digital listings management and other services that will boost your online presence.

90. Advertise on Facebook.

My favorite marketing channel and strategy for restaurants is Facebook ads. You can target Facebook followers in your area, as well as user types, e.g. Foodie. Plus you can design ads to encourage a variety of actions: follow your Facebook page, give you an email address, or go to your website to take an action. Best part is, it's cheap. Just five dollars a day can get you in front of a huge audience.

91. Reach More Customers With Bing Advertising

Advertising your restaurant on search engines is a great way to get in front of potential diners when they're looking for a new place to eat. Although most people stop at advertising on Google, you shouldn't overlook other search engines like Bing. With over 30% of the search engine market share and 5 billion monthly searches, Bing can help you reach even more potential customers.

92. Join Your Local Chamber of Commerce.

Join your local chamber of commerce and connect with other members. Not only will this allow you more access to the local community but you will be able to host

more events and parties for members. By joining, you often get a link on their website which helps with search engine rankings.

93. Use Instagram Effectively.

Instagram can offer multiple marketing benefits when done correctly. Since people love to take pictures when dining or celebrating with friends, encourage customers to take photos and share their experience in your establishment. Learn how you can maximize your restaurant success on Instagram.

Set Goals for Your Restaurant Social Media Marketing.
Brandon Hull, Next Restaurants

Brandon gives amazing insight into social media marketing. For example, simply visiting your restaurant should not be your call-to-action. Brandon goes over what you need to know in setting results-oriented goals.

94. Use Your Most Loyal Customers as Influencers.

Consider creating an influencer marketing program for your restaurant to help spread the word. Make your loyalists excited to post pictures of your food and encourage others to visit your restaurant. Their reward can be as simple as giving them swag or a monthly gift card.

95. Wes Marsh, Director of Digital Strategy,

Word of mouth, and by extension social media interactions, are one of the best drivers of new customers to a restaurant. When your diners have a great experience, they may share it with others. And when they have a poor experience, they're even more likely to share it. When restaurants recognize and embrace this reality, they can focus on creating a great experience, both through their food and their service. Consistently deliver great experiences and you will succeed.

96. Add Sleek, Functional Digital Signage

Whether it's updating your static menu board to a digital menu board or including TV's to showcase promotions and your social media accounts, you can't go wrong by incorporating digital signage into your space. The best part? It grabs your customers' attention and creates a much more dynamic and interactive experience for diners.

97. Using Restaurant Marketing Software to Better Understand Your Customers

In today's increasingly complicated restaurant marketing landscape it's crucial to be where your customers are. Successful restaurants are using technology to drive bookings across the web, build detailed customer profiles and execute targeted multi-channel campaigns. Today's diners demand a personalized experience. Table Management systems enable restaurant staff to give the best customer experience throughout the diner journey, and opens up new marketing and communication channels that improve retention and repeat business.

98. Engage local food bloggers

You can't successfully promote your restaurant all by yourself. You need the help, audience, and expertise of other food bloggers.

These influential online entrepreneurs can promote your restaurant on social media networks and niche-specific discussion boards.

You may have heard stories about succeeding as a single body. It's not entirely true. The local food bloggers of this internet-driven age understand what you're trying to do, so they'll go all out to help you.

Business is about relationships and team building rather than going solo. The overall victory seen on the outside can be broken down to individual input of a larger crowd.

So how do you engage local food bloggers?

Well, you can invite them to share their cooking tips with your website audience. You may even host an event and invite a handful local food bloggers as keynote speakers.

Most of these local food bloggers have built up a strong following on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They can help amplify your marketing efforts – and drive more customers to your restaurant.

99. Grow your email database

Are you building your email list?

You know what I'm talking about, don't you?

In case you're not aware, it's a fact that if you're not capturing your website visitor's personal information (e.g., email address, phone numbers, address), you're not truly in business.

Sooner or later, you're going to hit a deadend in your business.

As a restaurant owner/marketer, don't be left out of this. Email marketing is not only for digital marketers, local businesses can take advantage of it, too.

However, when you pay attention and study your market, you can actually add more email and phone subscribers to your list – from those who are interested in foods and restaurant.

Building targeted list will produce better results for your restaurant business. Here are proven means to get it done effectively:

i). Collect phone: Often times, you would have people call-in to make reservations, ask questions about your menu, cuisines, services etc.

You may not be the one at the receiving end, but your restaurant staff or team member taking the calls should get the caller's mobile phone number, or/and email.

ii). At the point of purchase: You can give a voucher or discount coupon to your customers who come to dine at your restaurant, on the condition they give their mobile phone/email.

Putting up a good creative show can equally help you add more targeted customers to your list. In this case, even timers to your restaurant will drop their mobile phone number/email, once they have derived a value from your event.

You can find out the opinion of the majority of your customers before moving on with your messaging.

With your targeted list, you can either use a bulk SMS or email autoresponder to send your customers special bonuses/freebies, especially during occasions of their birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, etc.

100. Build a tribe with your landing page

A tribe is simply a loyal group of customers who believe, trust, and will do anything to buy from you. Building a tribe takes time, and it's better done with a landing page.

Keeping in Touch with Your Tribe



Your tribe may consist of happy customers, colleagues who are interested in what you're doing, or curious leads who signed up to receive emails, but whoever they are, you have to think about these loyal folks as you build a new marketing campaign.

- You keep in touch with your tribe in a few different ways; the most direct way to let your tribe know about your new offer – email them!
- Dedicated emails help you set up the context to introduce the main call-to-action for your new offer either to your entire email database, or just to the segment that you think will be interested.

VIEO

vieodesign.com

Restaurant owners are becoming aware of the need to build new landing page for their campaigns.

A landing page is your web page with a single purpose. When potential customers visit this page, it's a good opportunity to get their opinions, feedbacks, emails, phone numbers, etc.

Getting it done the right way is the only way to get the right results. So, here are a few suggestions:

i). Let your landing page load within 2 seconds: The human attention span is 8 seconds. Consequently, you need to build landing pages that are insanely fast, on both desktop and mobile devices that your audience uses to access it.

ii). Set the tone you desire on your landing page: Make it clear what the landing page is for. If you're giving early access to a new recipe or food club, then your page must be about nothing else.

101. Get active on social networks

Are you actively promoting your restaurant website and center on social media networks?

Michael Lukianoff, Fishbowl's chief analytics officer told CNBC in an interview that "social media gives smaller, independent, and regional [brands] a level playing ground to get their message/voice out."

In other words, you can't compete successfully with other restaurants without a strong presence on social media.

There are so many social media platforms, (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+), but you're not required to use all of them.

Through years of experience with restaurant businesses, I can boldly say that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest are the best – you should focus on them.

On the flip side, you don't have to take my word for it. You need to find the social networks that suits your brand and stick to them.

This you can find out by clearly getting to know the kind of audience your brand serves, your industry, the social marketing technique that works best for you.

Above all, only share relevant information on these social channels.

That's the only way to differentiate your restaurant from others.

Your relevance can be looked at, from the quality of the content you share on those channels.

Use the resources available to you, to create beautiful content you so desire, in the forms of mobile apps, and source for useful information online.

Sharing useful and relevant information is important, but you share it matters, too.

For example, take a look at what Grubhub is doing. Among other things, they make you want to eat the food – just by the way the presented it on their website.

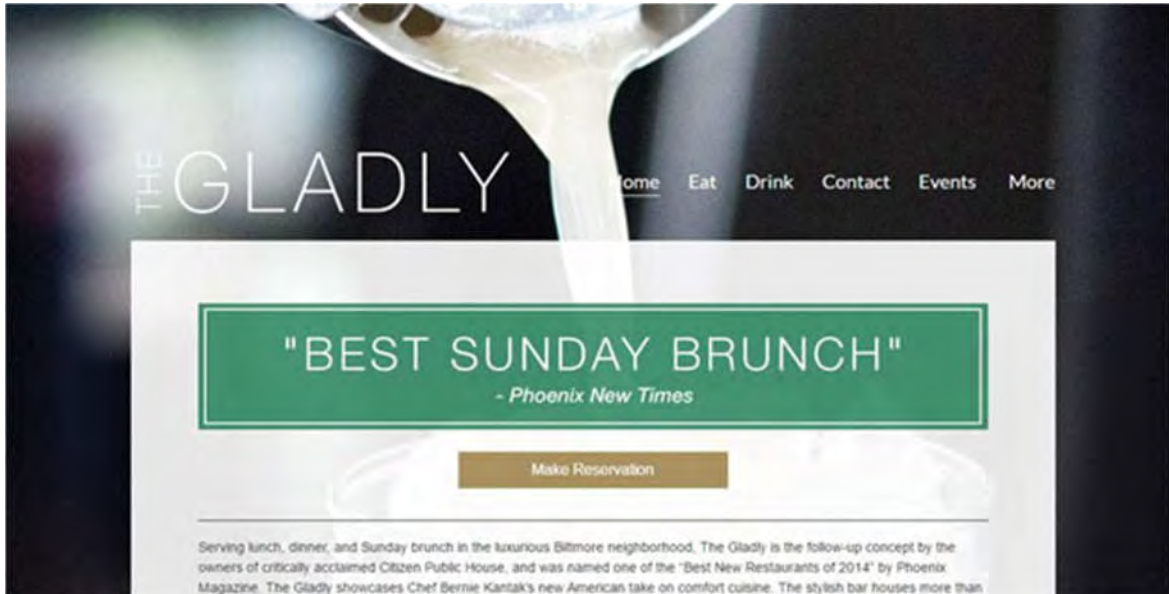
102. Have a functional, and professional website

You need a functional website to stay above the fold.

For you to be seen as an authority by your industry, your website must be designed to be practical and useful and professional.

Gladly, a Phoenix-based restaurant increased customer conversion by 70% after they designed a simple, but good-looking website.

In fact, when Gladly added a Notification Bar for Restaurant Week, to further engage the customers, it generated additional 374 clicks.



Your website doesn't have to be sophisticated before it can attract local customers to your restaurant.

In marketing, being “relevant and clear” is always better than trying to be clever and miss the essence.

One of the best ways to keep your restaurant website relevant and your value proposition clear is by producing helpful content.

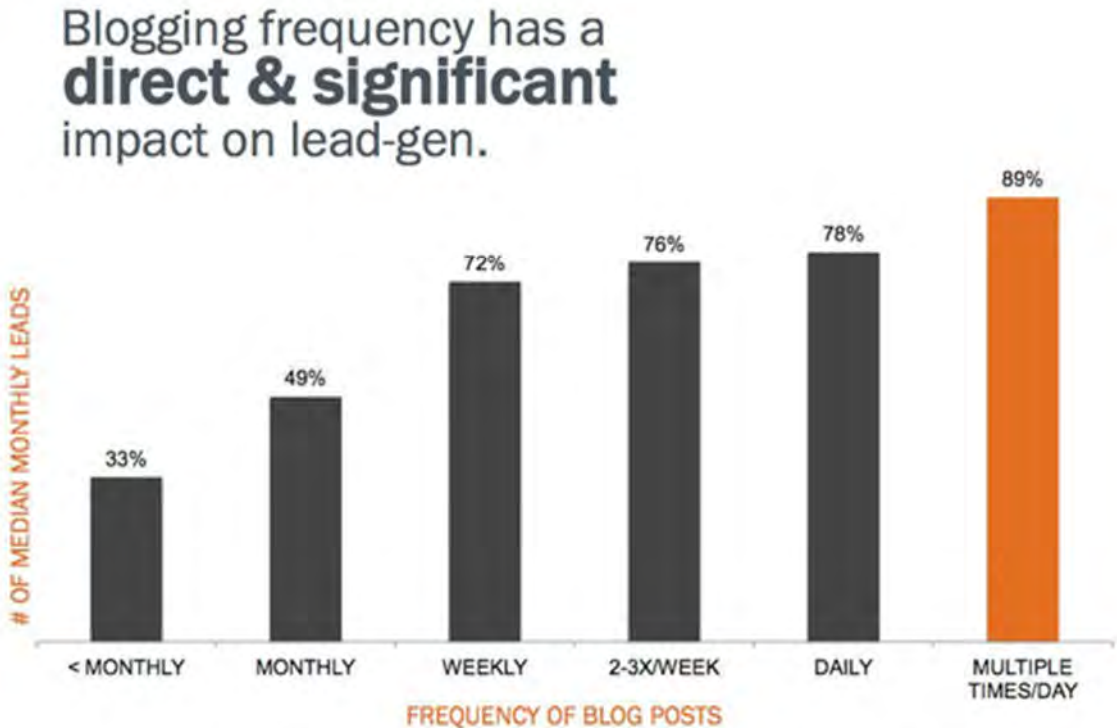
To avoid messing around with html, CSS or PHP codes associated with dynamic websites, it's advisable to start a WordPress blog on your restaurant website.

Let's look at it briefly...

Start blogging about food

Blogging is a powerful sales driver. When you start blogging, you generate leads. And leads become customers when you nurture them.

In fact, blogging frequently can increase your leads generation by 89%.



SOURCE: HUBSPOT, STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING LEAD GENERATION REPORT, 2010

If you want your food related content to be read, shared, and aid customers in making purchase decisions, you need to study your market – and understand the restaurant trends.

Making the decision to blog consistently isn't easy. Here are few tips to supercharge your food blog:

- a). Be original: Your audience will love you if your blog posts, articles, videos, and other multimedia content are unique.
 - b). User friendly design: Your blog design should make visitors want to stay. There shouldn't be any difficulty with navigating on your blog.
- Additionally, people should find it easy to comment, follow you on social networks directly from your restaurant blog, and share your content.
- c). Go beyond publishing: It's no longer enough to just write article and expect people to read it. When you publish your helpful content, promote it actively on social media networks.
 - d). Keep your blog open: Yes, don't do it all by yourself. Get other food bloggers to write content for your blog – and share their expertise with your audience.

103. Engage in local SEO practice

Local SEO (search engine optimization) is basically the process of optimizing your local business (restaurant) website and blog posts rank highly in Google for keywords that your audience inputs into Google search.



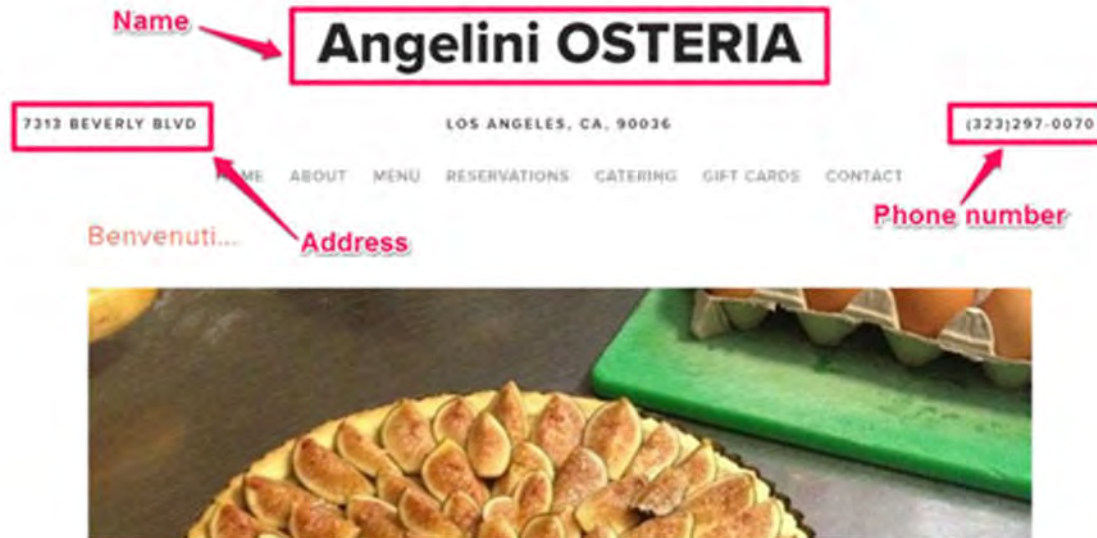
In local search optimization, you want Google to rank your web pages primarily for keywords that have your city, town, or state. E.g., where to eat in Boston, top restaurants in Los Angeles.

You can make use of this checklist from Smallbiztrends. The simple step by step approach involves the following:

i). Keyword research: Find the keywords that your audience is inputting into Google search. You can use the Google Keywords Planner or Keywordtool.io.

You may also ask your customers, friends, and family members what they usually type into Google search whenever they're looking for a particular restaurant or meal plan.

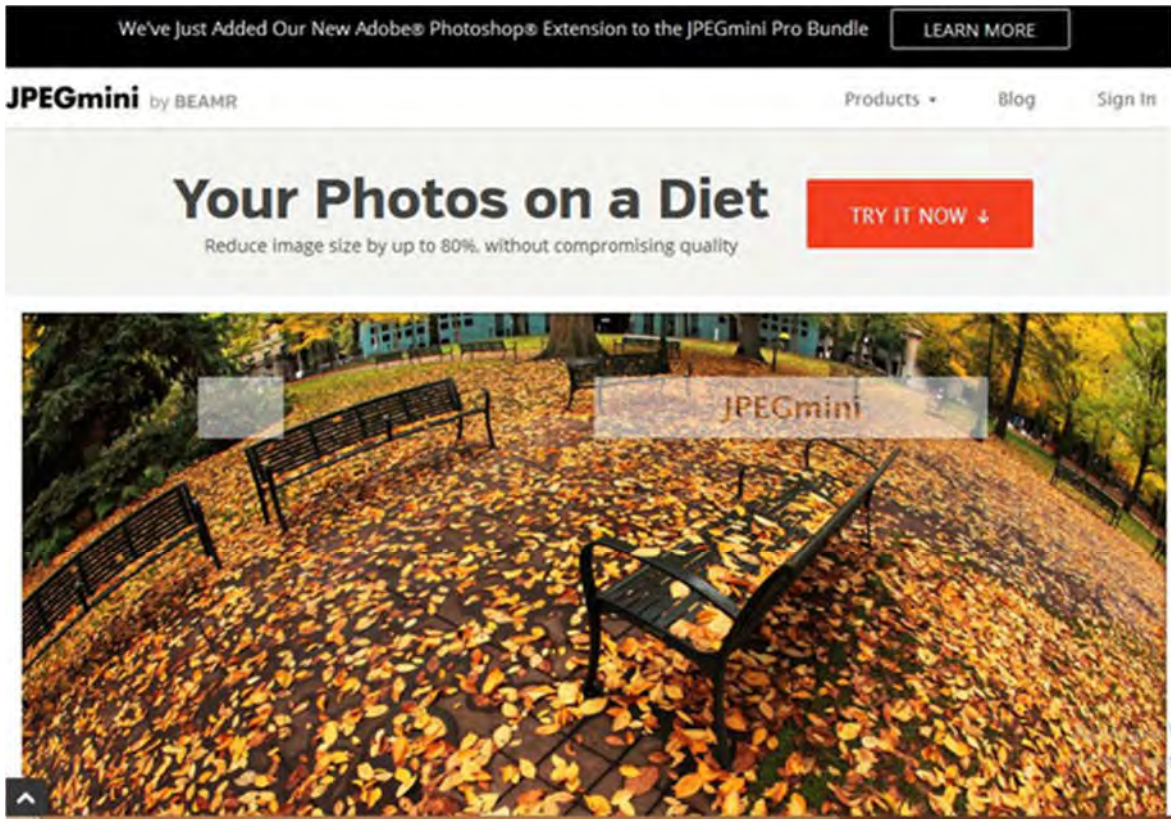
Since you operate a real business, you also need to check your title tags, meta descriptions, and Name, address, and phone number (NAP) information.



As shown by the image below. The first ring of purple, is the title tag, and the second which is in black, the meta description.

ii). Optimize your website images: The way search engines see images is quite different from the way we do. In order to get your site images search friendly, you need to pay attention to your file name, title text, alt-text, and size.

You can use JPEGmini to optimize your images and convert into JPEG extension.



iii). Claim your restaurant in Google Places: It's free. All you've to do is sign up at Google My Business.

iv). Improve your page authority: Before Google can confidently rank your content pages in their top results, you need to build links to those pages where you've published helpful content.

104. Integrate loyalty programs into foodie apps

Foodie apps are used on mobile phones. Examples are Tender, Off The Menu, Kitchenbowl, etc.

Considering the increased use of mobile devices, mobile phone users can now make some food decisions on the go now. Isn't it awesome?

Sadly, if mobile users can't access your restaurant or order a meal online, you can't really get along with the competition.



However, for these foodie apps to truly bring your restaurant success, you need to incorporate loyalty programs.

Loyalty programs are special programs that restaurants and businesses use to build deeper connection with their customers.

You need an understanding of your customers, and what motivates them to visit a particular restaurant over another.

Use foodie apps to collect user behavior data from your potential restaurant customers. It's expected that at the click of a button, your new and existing customers should be able to get the latest information

about your restaurant, meal plans, recipes, and other benefits.

Using mobile apps to further engage your customers is a powerful marketing idea that's proven to work. As an example, Jaspare's Pizza generated over \$117,000 with their restaurant app.



Make an irresistible “special” offer to social fans

It’s high time you get creative with your offers.

Don’t just make “offers” that your competitors can flip over.

Make it special.

Special offer can be a discount , a coupon, or just sending food over to your customers who may have participated in your contest either on facebook, or other social media channels.

Here’s an example of a special offer from 56 North Bar & Restaurant.



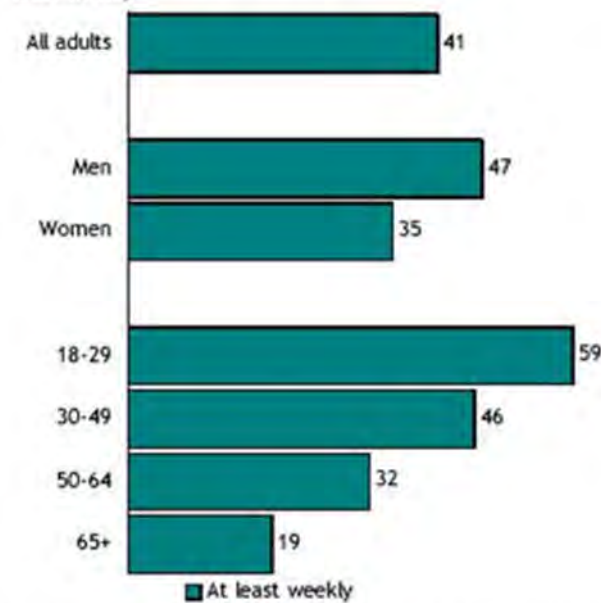
Not only is it going to make more people/customers order from your restaurant, it'd also create a buzz that would make your audience wait for your next announced contest.

105. Collect and sort customer behavior data

Putting customer behavior data and sorting them is essential if you must increase daily orders. It helps you make better decisions – and ensures that your restaurant offers aligns with customer's expectations.

How Often Do You Eat Fast Food?

Percent who say they eat at a meal from a fast food restaurant at least weekly



Question wording: About how often in an average week do you eat a meal from a fast food restaurant (like McDonald's or Burger King)? (open end)

PewResearchCenter

What specific information should you focus on?

a). Personal info: This includes the customer's full name, sex, age, location, and earnings. Of course, you can collect this information by studying a customer's order history.

b). Personal disposition: This involves their attitude/behavior while they were using your restaurant's product/service, as well

as when they visit your restaurant.

It also involves the reason they would choose yours over another, what they hope to get from using your restaurant, etc.

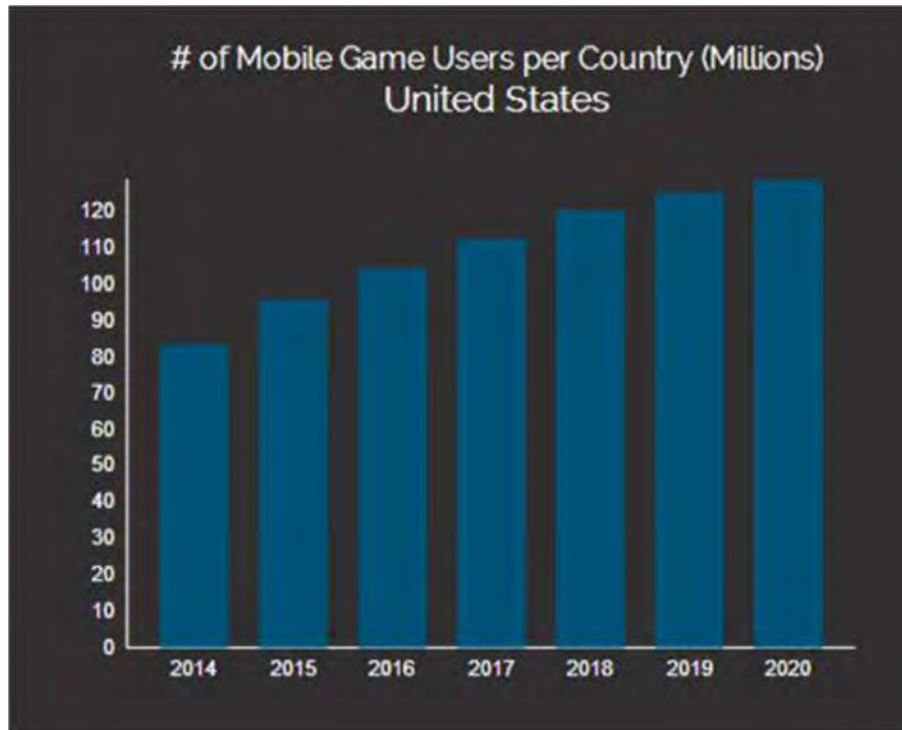
When you're armed with these vital data about your customers, you'll most assuredly serve them well.

106. Gamify customer experience with mobile

Gamification is a popular marketing approach that works, especially for restaurant businesses.

Gamification is the concept of using game design elements in non-game applications, to make them more fun and engaging.

For one, there is an increase in gaming in the US and other parts of the world.



The high demand by customers for quality service has made running a restaurant a daunting task. Because, there are hundreds of new restaurants springing up around your locality, as I write this.

Since the introduction of mobile app which makes it easy to access a product or service from anywhere at any given time. It has become difficult for marketers to increase sales, by solely depending on offline marketing strategies.

Mobile searcher are the most targeted group of customers you can ever get. According to KISSMetrics, 78% searches for local business search made on a mobile device resulted in a purchase.

In order to increase and retain your customers, you need to optimize your marketing tactics – using gamification tactic.

And considering that almost 155 million Americans are regularly playing game, if you can approach these people in this gaming language that they understand, you'll definitely acquire more customers to your restaurant website.

Adding a little fun to your restaurant business; through mobile apps, or online reservations will dazzle your audience and help you achieve your goal.

To get started, create simple games that will be launched on mobile apps. You can use Buildfire app builder, which comes with a lot of templates related to food, healthy living, fitness, and so on.

Remember that when people use this game, they are more likely to order from the restaurant.

With the use of innovative ideas, your game should definitely stand out from the rest.

Be creative. Add more features to make the game more fun for your users. For example:

Providing a quick and easy ordering feature for gamers to place an order within the game interface.

Pricing calculator to make it easy for them to check the price of what they want, and make a choice based on their budget.

Added benefits for high scorers in the game, should be awarded with free meal from your restaurant. It'll encourage more people to play the game regularly, not only for fun, but also for what they stand to win if they attain a certain score.

Request modification to help your customers adjust their order.

107. Use Facebook retargeting ads regularly

Most people will not order from your restaurant at first visit.

It's estimated that only about 5-8% of your website visitors will convert on your page. Question is, "how do you recover 95% of leads who ignored your offer the first time?"

That's where retargeting (also known as remarketing) comes into play.

Unlike popup ads, people actually like retargeted ads.



Retargeting can be executed on several platforms, but Facebook seems to be the best for most marketers.

I've personally better conversion rate for retargeted ads using Facebook than Google AdWords.

Facebook retargeting is a powerful marketing technique that you can use to serve ads to people who visited your restaurant website initially and left without placing order, or participating in your contest.

This is how it works:



Retargeting ads effectively can help you build your customer base, and increase revenue.

For example, Nissan, a Japanese car manufacturer sold over 160 cars through leads generated from facebook ads.

Postano, a company that works with brands on social media strategy, through retargeting, saw a 278% conversion rate lift in 60 days.

When a potential customer visits your restaurant website or landing page, a cookie is added to the visitor's browser.

That way, when you retarget ads, such as will be triggered by the user, the moment they visit any of the publisher networks through their browser.

As often as these people see your ads, they urge to place order will grow. This is why you see TV commercials for a particular product.

Retargeting basically drives potential leads back to your website, by targeting the users who have previously visited your website.

108. Leverage Yelp reviews to inspire customers

In the world of marketing, word of mouth has been confirmed to have a great positive impact in lead conversion. Customers are more confident when they read reviews on a product.

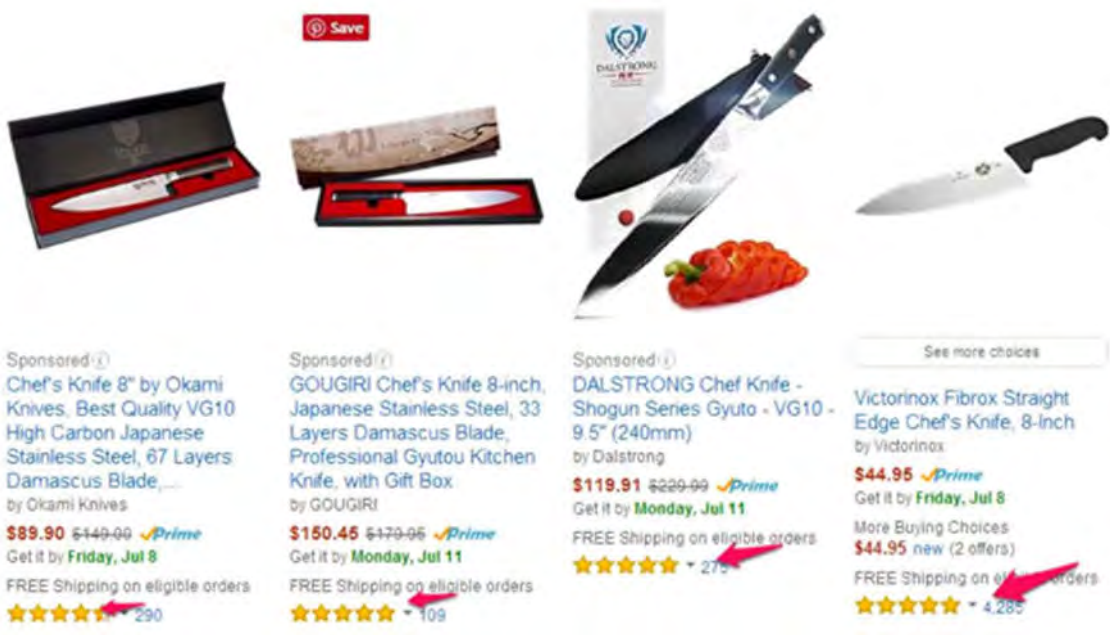
85% of consumers say that they read online reviews for local businesses, up from 76% last year.

Source: SearchEngineLand 2013 Report

Data from the Search Engine Land 2013 Report, “85% of consumers say the read online reviews for local businesses, up from 76% last year.”

One of the reasons why Amazon grew to become one of the largest online store, is the priority they place on customer reviews. They even append customer reviews to specific products to persuade new customers.

You can actually use this to your own benefit, too.



Yelp is the best way to find local businesses. Rankings are based on positive reviews from each local business.

If you want your local business to be accessible on Yelp, you need to become active on social media networks where your Fans and Twitter followers can amplify your reach by leaving positive reviews about your customer service, recipes, snacks, and restaurant.

109. Connect and build relationship with local food bloggers

The high inflow of professional chefs have made the restaurant business more competitive than ever, coupled with high customers demand for better service.

If you want to get more sales in this business model, start building relationship with local food bloggers. In case you don't know, the top rated organizational goal of B2B content marketing is brand awareness.



You can build a strong brand by connecting and building relationship with other bloggers in your industry.

According to a post by Sethlui, you can get instant exposure just by engaging the two most famous food bloggers in Singapore, Ladyironchef or Ieatishootipost. With them you can get up to 300,000 visitors a month to your restaurant website.

Are you concerned about reaching out to a large number of people? Blogging is a great way to do that and probably gain customers. The chart below shows the impact of blogging on customer acquisition.

Blog frequency impacts customer acquisition.



SOURCE: STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING, HUBSPOT, MARCH 2012

Local food bloggers can contribute to the success or downfall of your local business. To be on the winning side, connect with them.

110. Setup your Google+ account

If you're already active on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, what about Google's own Google+?

Google+ is a social network like no other.

Although, having a Google+ account doesn't mean that your local business website will rank in the #1 position.

But when you grow your connection and add more people to your circles, this can bring more people to your restaurant – whether online or offline. With over 25 million users – you benefit from Google+

How Google+ can boost your restaurant business:

You can reach out to large number of customers on the platform, or circle when offering promotions.

Since you can select group or circles you wish to send message to, Google+ makes it easier for you to specify people who will receive your message.

You can easily promote your brand to more than 20 million active Google+ users. You can edit them about your dishes, recipes, and huge benefits of eating at your restaurant or ordering from your website.

With the use of video conference feature , it's more easier for you to relate with your customers on Google+.

Above all, it helps to improve your search engine ranking on Google. Since Google+ is a product of Google. It'll tend to rank you higher than brands that are only on facebook, in order to encourage more people to use their platform.



111. Use geo -targeted keywords in your ads

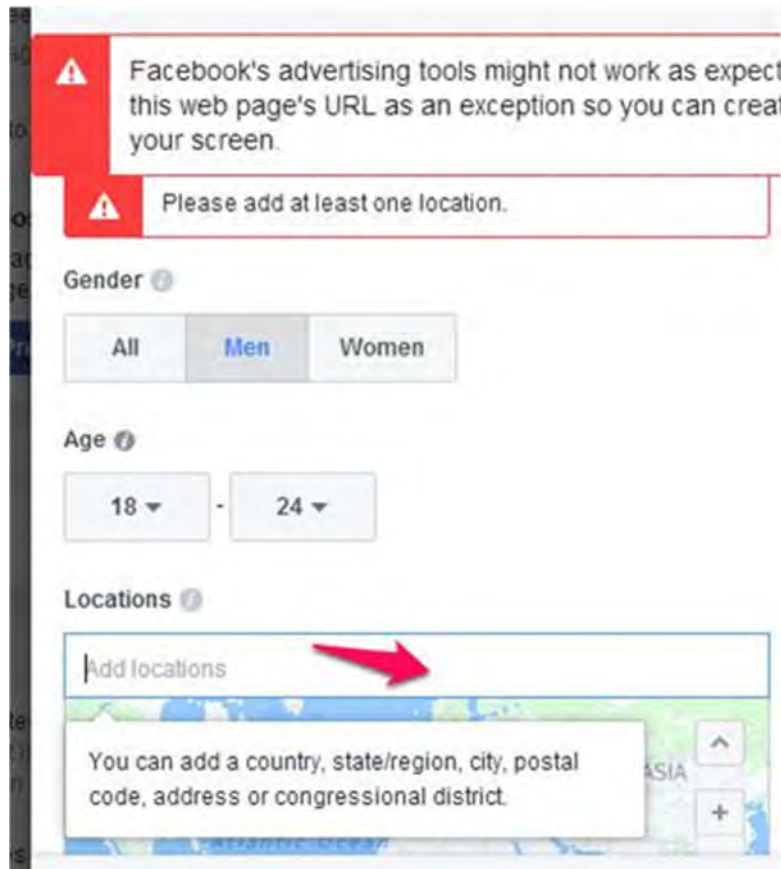
Do you know that using geo-targeted keywords in your ads can help you acquire the right customers? Geo-targeting is important every local business, not just restaurants.

Why waste waste money on Google AdWords, when you can make more money through effective targeting.



For instance if your restaurant is located in US, there is no need targeting Canadians. Trust me, this is where most restaurant marketers miss it.

Facebook encourages geo-targeting as well – where you’re given the chance to select country or state to aim your ad. Take a look:



Using geo-targeted keywords, you get to focus more on people that are likely to come to your restaurant.

In a nutshell, if your restaurant is located in Los Angeles, then you need to aim your ads to local consumers in that location, since you're closer to them.

112. Send out promotional email newsletters

“Email newsletter is the best way to maintain customer relationship on the internet.”

Jakob Nielsen

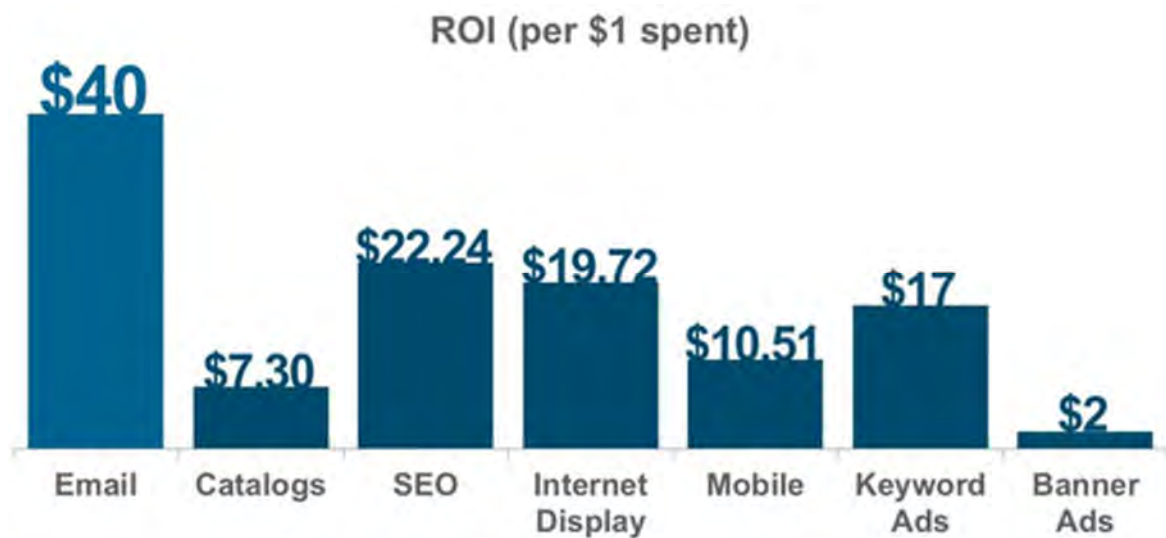
As a restaurant owner/marketer, you've got to understand that sending email newsletter, can help you reach a targeted audience. According to Adobe, if you invest \$1 in email marketing, you can derive up to \$40 ROI.

For your newsletter to be effective, and convert subscribers into customers, you need to send relevant offers coupled with educational content.

Recent study shows that 70% of emails are opened in search of a deal or discount.

Focusing on sales promotion alone will discourage email recipients.

Better yet, offer a discount or deal that recipients can't resist.



113. Use dedicated solo ads to run a campaign

What are solo ads?

I thought you should know this by now. Anyways, solo advertising is the process of sending educational and promotional emails to a third-party email subscribers.

When you're doing solo advertising, you're leveraging other restaurant's email or phone list.

If you want to achieve better results, don't try to sell your products to strangers. Because, obviously, your first email to subscribers who don't know you will sound strange.

Use that opportunity to offer something for free.

Ideally, use solo ads to build up your own list. When you're marketing your restaurant online, you can't get ahead with a targeted list of hungry customers.

To get started, look for food bloggers, online restaurant marketers, and fitness experts with loyal subscriber list. Then, strike a deal with them, and use their list to grow your restaurant.

114. Offer a deal in the local paper

Why not take advantage of local newspapers to bring in new customers to your restaurant?

Offering a deal in the local paper can equally improve your reputation, and up your brand. If you're just starting out, creating massive brand awareness is critical to your success.

Since the cost of advertising on local newspaper is not that expensive, you can use it to offer discounts and deals. Just like free things, people see it as an opportunity to spend less and save more.

Overall, you'll see increased orders when you offer discounts on your dishes. More so, people hate to lose. Consequently, they'll take action on your offers.

The Argus READER OFFER

FREE DESSERT AT UMI GRILL ON BRIGHTON SEAFRONT!

Dine for Less Bite-Size serves up a helping of great deals at a huge variety of local restaurants every Friday. This week, UMI GRILL is offering a free dessert when you buy a main meal.

HOW TO CLAIM
Call 01273 749651 to book or pop in. Quote "Dine for Less Bite-Size". Offer available up to Saturday, May 8 2010 inclusive. Present the voucher printed below to your server before ordering.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS This voucher is non-transferable. It is valid only at the restaurant named. It cannot be exchanged for cash. Only original vouchers are valid. Subject to availability. Dining hours only. Offer valid for dine-in only. Not valid for take-away. Offer valid for the duration of the promotion. Some restrictions may apply.

VOUCHER
BUY ONE MAIN COURSE AND GET A DESSERT FREE*
*Valid until 8/5/10. One voucher per two diners.
If you would like to see about future food and drink offers from The Argus and UMI GRILL, please give us your email address. We will not pass your details to third parties.
Email: _____

UMI GRILL, 64 Kings Road Brighton BN1 1NA 01273 749651 www.umigrillbrighton.co.uk

UMI GRILL

TOMORROW – THE CHANCE TO WIN LUNCH FOR FOUR AT BRIGHTON FESTIVAL'S HQ CANTEN

115. Focus on promoting your Restaurant's brand

The most important thing about your restaurant business is your brand.

Don't be too engrossed on the profit. Work hard and smart to get your brand name on every of your customer's mind and lip.

And there are so many ways to build a brand in your locality. Let's briefly consider a few of them:

i). Sponsor a local sports team: Taking the bold step to sponsor a local sports team can help your brand in a tremendous way.

You could provide them with new branded jerseys. Since they have lots of viewers both live and on TV., you'll enhance your brand identity – and impact your community.

iii). Donating food in a community events: Volunteer to feed people during special events organized in the community. It gives people the opportunity to know your restaurant and feel obliged to visit often.

iv). Donating money at community fund raising events: Either donating anonymously or publicly, the community will appreciate your effort.

And definitely want to patronize you, since they know you'll contribute to their fund raising in the nearest future.

116. Use guest blogging to create more attention

Guest blogging is another way to grow your business online. As a restaurant owner, you are probably equipped with lots of experiences.

GrooveHq, a customer service company used guest blogging to grow from \$0 to \$100,000 in monthly revenue.

Use your experience and knowledge as a restaurant and food professional to build your business. Picking topics that you can write like:

How To Successfully Get More Customers To Your Restaurant

How You Can start a Small Restaurant Business and Succeed. 7 Ways To Get Repeat Orders From Your Customers Easily

Contributing useful articles to other blogs that have lots of visitors is the quickest way to build your own audience, and redirect customers to your restaurant.

26 Blogs That Helped Our Startup Grow From \$0 to \$100K in Monthly Revenue



Alex Turnbull wrote this on Mar 12, 2015 [53 Comments](#) [1,575 Shares](#)

There's no shortage of amazing business content online. Here's what we've gotten the most from.

In comments, emails and interviews, it's one of the most common questions I get.

117. Offer coupons and discounts

Are you offering coupons and discounts?

If you're not taking advantage of it, you'll struggle to get more customers to your restaurant website or eatery.

For one, coupons are powerful engagement drivers. Socially Stacked stated that 42% of customers prefer a coupon code when ordering a product. But that's not all. Take a look at this infographic:

Make no mistakes about it, customers will always look for free gifts, or coupon codes. In this competitive marketing era, you need to provide more than "good" service to your customers.

Treat them with honor. Appreciate them. And always look out for ways to build interest in them – concerning your product.

COUPONS & DISCOUNTS

40%

of shoppers prefer receiving discounts on purchases over loyalty program points or a gift basket

68%

of consumers strongly believe that digital coupons have a positive impact on a retailer's brand

40%

of users look for or redeem coupons on mobile devices



118. Start a food truck: take your business out there

Instead of waiting for your customers to come, go all out for them.

After all, they deserve all the best treatment and appreciation from you. Just like offering a coupon code gets them excited, a food truck will equally build in them the desire to purchase from you.

With food truck, your restaurant is mobile and versatile. Maybe you're in a location with a fierce competition. This is the only way to move beyond restrictions.

Here's the harsh truth: Majority of the customers you will sell food to may never come to your restaurant.

But with food truck, you can reach them. This will also advertise your restaurant and strengthen your brand to the customers.

Most important, the relationship could be very strong someday, such that if you didn't go looking for them, they will come looking for you. Isn't that awesome?



Don't sit back in your restaurant, blaming the economy. Stand up and reach out. They are waiting out there.

119. Use online reservation Restaurant tool

Online reservation restaurant tool is a software that allows you to manage your orders. It's not easy managing a restaurant, but with this tool, it's fun.

Statistics found that more than 16,000 restaurants are using online reservation tool to take orders from their customers, especially in the US.

With this tool, a guest can book a place to eat. The tool also manages traffic, rewards customers, create brand awareness of the restaurant and motivates people to write reviews.

It gives you ample time to attend to other things while business goes on.

It may interest you to know that 73% of restaurants have seen the need of this tool, and want to upgrade their operation this year. You've to see the need to use this software. It will save a lot of stress.

CUSTOMER REACTION TO OUR NEW MA



GET YOUR FREE SAMPLE HERE

Online Reservation Platforms Help Boost Restaurants' Revenues

TECHNOLOGY // AMANDA BALTAZAR // SEPTEMBER 2012



This online reservation tool carries all the necessary information needed by customers to make informed buying decisions. All in all, it can boost your restaurant's revenue.

When you make life easy and simple for customers, they'll buy more.

For example, the ease of staying in the office or home and ordering a favorite meal, and receiving it within 10 minutes could help you win lifelong customers to your brand. With this tool, you will always be busy delivering orders from your online opentable.

120. Loyalty Programs

Partnering up with online food apps should definitely be a consideration as part of your restaurant marketing plan. Partnering with online apps encourages visitors to check out your restaurant through gamification and customer loyalty programs, which offer visitors a free purchase or discount for visiting a certain number of times.

Popular foodie apps that offer integrated loyalty programs include:

You could also kick it old school and hand out punch cards. They aren't quite as cool as apps, but they still show that you value customers and appreciate their loyalty!

Need more ideas? Download our free guide for 69 Creative Marketing Ideas to Boost Your Business here!

121. Yelp

Yelp has tremendous power in the restaurant industry, and having a strong backing of positive Yelp reviews is like having a flock of golden geese – reviews from Yelp can do wonders for your business. I've written an entire blog post devoted to helping you get more Yelp reviews, so peruse that at your leisure.

The most important thing to understand about Yelp is that people can and will review you, even if you don't set up an account. For that reason, as a restaurant owner you should absolutely be proactive and dress up your Yelp account so it works for you, rather than against you.

This means adding as many details as possible, such as:

Photos, and lots of ‘em
Store hours
Location
Menu
Price Range
Wi-Fi/Outdoor Seating/Parking/etc.

Do your best to add as many details as Yelp will allow.

The other big thing to keep in mind when it comes to Yelp is how you handle feedback. It’s great to thank Yelpers for their review, whether positive or negative.

If you get negative feedback, always answer in a polite, professional manner. I have a whole section in my Complete Guide to Yelp post about how to handle negative reviews, but the nutshell version is to always play the gracious host.

If you’re responding to the negative review publically, thank the reviewer for the feedback, apologize for the incident, and promise to improve in the future. You may also want to consider contacting the reviewer privately for more information about any negative incidents. Some business owners offer to send gift cards to Yelpers who have had less than favorable experiences, hoping to get them back in the door for a second chance. I’ve seen this work in favor of many businesses, as reviewers are often flattered at the consideration shown and are more generous in their critique knowing the restaurant owner values their opinion and is working hard to improve.

122. Be an Insta-Ham

Having a strong Instagram presence is another semi-obvious (but too important to ignore) restaurant marketing tip. Use Instagram to promote your business’ best visual content.

Show off your storefront, get up close with your top dishes, and use this social media main stage as a place to play around with your brand identity. For example, an all-natural health food store might try snapping pics of people kayaking, cooking, farming, or other activities you think your fan base will enjoy.

Also be sure to have some fun with hashtags – whether jumping on the hype of existing popular Twitter hashtags like #ThrowbackThursday or inventing your own, hashtags are a great way to have some fun with fans.

Instagram is a no-brainer for those in the food business – learn even more about Instagram marketing here.

123. Send Out an Email Newsletter

Remember, your restaurant newsletter doesn't have to be weekly – in fact, users will probably appreciate a less flooded inbox if you simply send them a newsletter every month or so.

Use your email newsletter as a chance to celebrate your success, discuss new menu items, or share special discounts. Need some email newsletter templates or layouts? No problem!

124. Promote User-Generated Content

User-generated content (lovingly dubbed UGC) is a great way to develop personal and intimate engagement with users. Host a photo contest by asking customers to share their favorite meal at your establishment, and share the entries on a dedicated content page (and/or share submissions across your various social networks). Consider awarding some random lucky contestants with a free appetizer or other prize!

Hosting and promoting user-generated content shows customers that you appreciate them, turning occasional visitors into die-hard devotees.

125. Show Off Your Staff

In an age of robotic customer service reps and soon to be self-driving cars, the human element is severely lacking. Show off your 5-star staff doing what they do best! Seeing happy, smiling employees does wonders for your reputation, as customers long to be served by joyful workers.

Showing off your pleasant employees also provides major reputation points – happy workers say a lot about a business, and fans are sure to take notice.

126. Monitor Your Social Media Presence

Social media marketing strategies are an undeniable force in today's world. Pamphlets and delivery menus slipped under doorways simply won't cut it anymore.

Often, the restaurants with a strong social media presence as part of their restaurant marketing plan are the ones that fare the best, and in the competitive food industry, ignoring social media is a death sentence.

Of course you'll want to create a Facebook business page and a Twitter account to share special discounts, exclusive coupons, photos of your newest dishes, and promote your own news accolades. But setting up your accounts is only half the job – it's also essential you keep up with activity happening on your social sites. There are many great free and paid social media management tools – a few popular free options include:

HootSuite: A one-stop dashboard for keeping tabs on all your social media networks. Create custom streams, schedule posts, and more.

Buffer: Buffer makes it easy to find, schedule, and share articles across your networks. Staying active and posting valuable articles (that your fan base will enjoy) is key for social success.

Also check out this list of easy Facebook marketing ideas for any type of business.

127. Share Positive Press

Another major restaurant marketing tip – when you're mentioned in a news outlet or magazine, be sure to show off your good publicity on your website and via social media. Fans will spread the word, and newcomers will be encouraged to visit in person when they see trusted sources celebrating your restaurant.

128. Set Up Google Alerts

Google Alerts notify you when your business name (or other designated keyword term) appears in a new piece of content on the web! This makes it easy to keep tabs on who is talking about you and your accolades. (If Google Alerts aren't working for you, try Mention, another web monitoring application.)

129. Food Blogger Outreach

When you're a new restaurant, you may find it difficult to generate reviews and hype about your business. One great way to get reviews and press on the web is to invite food bloggers to your restaurant to give you a try, and consider offering a free meal or appetizer to get them in the door. Politely ask if they'd be willing to review your restaurant and share their experience online.

You can't outright ask for a positive review, as that would be dishonest, but it's fine to simply ask them for an objective restaurant review. Some bloggers might decline your offer, but the more you ask, the better your chances are of getting some positive feedback and generating more interest online.

Some food bloggers have big followings, and getting their attention can have a huge influence on your restaurant. Even just one write up or mention from a major foodie can be a huge for restaurant promotion efforts. For more ideas, check out what we've come up with here.

Verify Your Restaurant's Online Details Are Accurate

Eaters love to do research online – in fact, 89% of consumers research a restaurant online prior to dining. This is why it's of vital importance that all your restaurant details are online and up-to-date, including

address, phone number, hours, your current menu, etc. The stronger and more accurate your online details are, the better.

Develop Your Restaurant's Brand Identity

Building your restaurant's brand identity can have a big affect on your social media performance. Your goal should be to build you restaurant's identity around your target customers.

Does your food target patrons who prefer healthy eating? Or does your

restaurant have a more beer-and-wings kind of vibe? Understand who your target patrons are, then build your brand around what they are interested in. Reflect these interests on your social media platforms and in your promotional material.

130. Time Those Tweets

Twitter can be a true treasure for restaurants, and timing your tweets can have a big influence on hungry stomachs. Try crafting and scheduling tweets at different times of the day to specifically target the breakfast, lunch, or dinner crowds (depending on your offerings).



131. Have a Sleek Functional, Online Menu

Users love to do research online before ordering from or visiting your restaurant. Don't make users scramble to find your menu – publish a high-quality, easy to read menu that is up to date and accurate. Not sure

how? Some delivery sites like those mentioned below offer to publish your menu online for free. Open Menu is another great site that can help you get your menu looking sleek and stylish (it even offers some handy social integration, for both paid and free users).



Still, you'll want to make sure to have your menu published on your website, since that's often the #1 piece of information users are looking for when visiting your site (along with hours, location, and contact info).

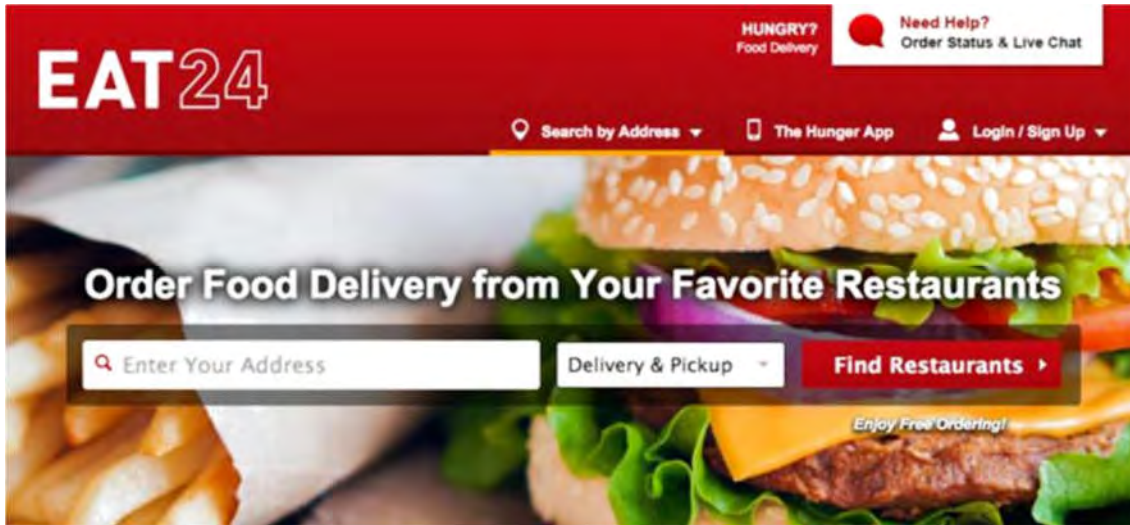
If you don't have a good menu online and available for customers, most of your other restaurant marketing strategies are basically useless! In this day and age customers need to have access to an online menu, otherwise they'll simply look elsewhere.

132. Partner Up With Delivery Services

In today's online-driven environment, ease of use is the name of the game. Many online delivery services streamline the ordering process, and internet-savvy patrons often love taking advantage of such delivery services.

Consider partnering with services like:

Seamless
Eat24
Foodler
Delivery.com
GrubHub



Some customers may even discover you for the first time through services such as these!

133. Offer Coupons and Discounts

Providing coupons and discounts for your restaurant is always a surefire way to bring customers running. Offer a free dish to your new email newsletter subscribers (we can show you how to get more of those too).



Alternatively, you can try advertising a discount through Groupon or Living Social – if you go that route, you’ll get a TONS of exposure, but you’ll end up paying a hefty portion of sales to the deal website, so keep that in mind.

134. Online Reservation Tools

One fine dining restaurant marketing idea is to consider signing up for

Open Table. Open Table is an online reservation tool that lets customers book reservations for your establishment online! Patrons love it when you make life a bit easier for them, and Open Table already has a base of loyal customers you can tap into.

135. Use Mobile Ads

It’s predicted that this year, half of all paid clicks on Google will come from mobile! Restaurants are one the best candidates for mobile ads, as users are often looking for nearby dining options while on the move. Mobile ads tend to be cheaper than desktop ads, and mobile boasts impressive conversion rates.

What’s really cool is that Google Ads allows for all kinds of mobile customization and targeting options that let you get the most out of your bids. For example, you can increase your bids around dinnertime, when users are often looking for fast food on their mobile phones. Boosting your bids during the dinnertime period increases your chances for showing up for a specific query. This means you could be the first ad to show up for a “pizza” search when pie-hungry users are on the search for a slice. If you’re a restaurant marketer, don’t miss out on digging into a slice of the mobile ad pie (we’re talking deep dish).

136. Fish Bowl Business Card Giveaways

Let customers drop their business cards into a bowl for a raffle. The reward can vary – a lunch for the winner and 10 friends, a 2-hour happy hour with discounted drinks, whatever you feel like!

Not only are these raffles fun, but you can also make use of those business cards by emailing customers. Let them know that while they didn’t win this time, they can sign up for your newsletter to be notified of their next chance to enter, plus the

opportunity to hear about discounts and other offers they'd enjoy. Then tadaa – you've got yourself a bunch of super valuable new newsletter subscribers!

137. Source Local Ingredients

Customers love to hear that they're eating local, and sourcing local ingredients from nearby can do a lot to boost your fan base and give you a positive reputation in the community. If it's not out of your budget, definitely consider this option!

138. Email Marketing

“If you're not already using email marketing, well: it's your new best friend. Email marketing can have an incredible ROI for restaurants...Send out a weekly or bi-weekly news blast with a favourite recipe, an employee success story, a customer of the “month”, and social media post of the week.”

-Hannah Ash

Marketing Communication Specialist

Graphical Networks

Email marketing will never go out of style. Its main draw is that it requires users to sign up for newsletters, making it one of the few marketing channels directed at an audience that wants to receive the message. This gives you some latitude in how to approach it.

Because you're among friends you can be a little casual, even personal, giving your readers behind the scenes glimpses and creating an air of an exclusive community. In addition to recipes and shout-outs to customers and employees alike, you can include special discounts and offers to subscribers that other customers can't get. The goal of every email is to keep your customers engaged, excited about your restaurant, and give them an incentive to return.

As for results, email marketing is unmatched for ROI. The Direct Marketing Association's latest data shows a return of nearly \$41 for every dollar spent on email marketing. So start collecting email addresses and get to writing.

139. Social Wi-Fi

“I’d recommend...introducing wi-fi solutions within the restaurant. Adding this option allows the business to offer wi-fi to customers in exchange for an email address or by signing into to their Facebook/Twitter social profiles, which also allows clients to capture customer’s email address.”

-Deepa Khatri

Marketing Coordinator and PPC Specialist

FM Outsource

Did you read the last idea and think, “Yeah, but how do I get all those email addresses?” If so, don’t worry. We’ve got you.

Offering wi-fi is a no-brainer for many types of restaurants. Cafes, quick-serves, coffee shops, sandwich shops—all of these kinds of casual eateries can increase traffic into their dining rooms with the promise of free wi-fi. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t get something more out of the deal, though.

Social routers like Wavespot automate the collection of contact info, by requiring a Facebook, Twitter, or email account to use the wi-fi. This has a number of benefits, chief among which is that all methods get you customers’ email address, and mechanism for getting them to opt-in to email newsletters.

It also connects you on social media, where the marketing opportunities are endless while giving you a potential new audience with friends of your customers. Social routers can be used to create custom offers to customers, giving incentives to customers to return, wherever they may be.

140. Location Location, Location,

“Utilize Snapchat Geofilters. Restaurants need to be taking advantage of this Millennial-driven app! Snapchat geofilters are overlays on Snapchat photos/videos that are branded to share where you are or what you’re up to, available within a geofenced area (around your restaurant, for instance).”

-Landon Ledford

Founder & Fractional CMO

Double L Brands

A smartphone equipped with location-based services is a real game-changer for marketers. With Geofilters, Snapchat gives a businesses a way to inject themselves into users' stories, broadcasting to various segments of the service's 10 billion views a day.

Location works both ways, though. It's great to tell people where you are, but it's even better to tell them when they're close by. With apps like Foursquare or Boppl, their users don't even need to have heard of you to be notified that you're nearby and offering discounts. It's a great way to get newcomers through your doors.

To keep them coming back, though, it's best to go with your own branded mobile app. You don't need to drop thousands on a coder to develop your app. DIY app creation tools, requiring zero coding, are very much a thing. Along with online ordering and payment, reservations, and loyalty programs built-in, your app can be the driving force behind repeat visits. Using GEO fence messaging, you can send nice little messages to your customers reminding them you're in the area and create more personalised offers.

141. Push Notifications

“If your restaurant offers a mobile app that has the capability to push offers and promotions, we have to be careful to determine the right frequency of messages so as not to irritate our customers. Leveraging email marketing with push notification marketing helps find the right balance and increases the efficiency of marketing campaigns.”

-Mano Behera

Founder

The Digital Restaurant

There's so much more to push notifications than simply location-based alerts. When you offer a mobile app to your customers, you're not just giving them an easy way to

check your menu and order food. You're also giving yourself an easy way to get their attention. If you're not convinced, consider these two statistics:

Push notifications have a 97% read rate

90% of them are read within three minutes of receipt

It's pretty hard to argue with those numbers. But before you start blasting push notifications all day to your customers, understand that people have their limits: too many and they'll shut you off. You're running a restaurant, which people probably won't be heading to multiple times a week. A personalised special offered once a week, along with a few time-sensitive discounts scattered throughout the month is plenty.

Push Notification Pro Tip: Your app users will have to opt-in to push notifications to receive them, but don't let the generic system message deliver that news. Design your app so that on first run they're given a reason to opt-in. Explain what enabling notifications gets them—access to exclusive deals—and tell them their first one will welcome them with a 10% discount. Once they confirm they've read that, then the system dialog asking to allow push notifications should be triggered.

142. Stay on top of your reviews

“When it comes to the food industry, the number one thing that you can do to get people in the door is encouraging and managing reviews online...Not only is it important to have positive reviews overall, but it is critical that someone from the business reach out to those who leave negative reviews and try to smooth over their experience.”

-Alexander Shockley

Vice President of Accounts

Shockley Marketing LLC

Unfortunately, it's too easy for people to jump on Yelp and whine when things don't go their way. And that means when you get one star from a guy who didn't even eat at your restaurant because he had to wait three whole minutes before somebody would acknowledge him (true story), his review counts against your average. In cases where someone has a legitimate gripe, you can at least use the forum to

apologize or make amends. But when the crazy people of the world go after you, there's not much you can do.

The best defense against them is a good offense. Meaning, make sure to let people know you're on Yelp and that you'd like them to review you. You can do this with signs in your restaurant, links within your app, open pleas on social media. Don't offer any incentive for it—that's shady and will never work. But letting people know that you'd appreciate any public feedback or review (hopefully positive!) is helpful to your business. You can monitor for any new reviews using the social listening tool Sprinklr or creating a Google Alert, ensuring you never miss what's said about you.

Remember, too, that people might not just be talking about you strictly on review sites. There a lot of people in the world with something to say, and a lot of them say it on social media platforms. Again, a social listening tool is ideal for monitoring what people are saying about you. Check something like Hootsuite or Agora Pulse monitoring any and all mentions on forums like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

143. Speaking of Instagram

“Instagram is not only one of the fastest growing social networks, but it also has super high engagement rates compared to other social networks. Get your restaurant on Instagram and start snapping photos of your food like crazy...Place signs in your store(s) that tell users to post a photo using a unique hashtag and to tag your restaurant. Once a month, go through and pick your favorite photo and give that fan a gift card for some free food.”

-Brandon Hassler

Founder and CEO

Market Campus

If you're not talented with a camera, find someone who is. And while you should “start snapping pictures of your food like crazy,” don't forget to include shots of your happy customers and staff. One of the things Instagram does well, with its three-across scrolling grid of photos, is to communicate a lot of ideas into the small space of your phone screen. An array of pictures, showcasing food, people, and your style, can create an instant affinity in the user.

Better still if you're not just posting pictures but staying engaged. Witty captions, playful banter in the comments, tagging people, hashtag contests: they all combine to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. If you've got a WordPress-based website, you can install the Instagram Feed plugin to have your posts automatically show up there, too.

144. Think socially, advertise locally.

“One of the most powerful features in Facebook/Instagram advertising is the ability to target users intelligently. Local restaurants should use this to their advantage by planning hyper-targeted campaigns (you can go as close as a 1 mile radius around your restaurant!).”

-Bob Clary

Director, Online Engagement
Intellibright

Though the ability to reach billions of people worldwide has always been its big draw, the way it can reach very small and targeted groups of people is just as impressive. And you don't have to spend a lot: Clary suggests “a few hundred dollars over a few weeks,” using social content you've already created, to get your ad in front of people to whom it's relevant.

The targeting doesn't stop at location, either. If you're a bar or restaurant hosting televised sporting events like the World Cup, you can target locals whose interests align with the event itself like football fans in general or supporters of specific teams. You can even target fans of your competitors. There's no shame in putting ads for your coffee shop in front of people who are fans of Starbucks. It makes sense to think they'd be interested in hearing about you.

145. Publicise your menu.

“I noticed many restaurants don't really market their menu often. Don't get me wrong, it sits on some of the companies websites. But I thought, why not promote it VIA a social outlet.”

-Chris Pontine

Owner

Creating a Website Today

Restaurants have become some of the most heavily researched businesses by consumers. In a survey conducted by OpenTable, with over 6,000 participants, they found that:

- 87% of respondents said they found restaurants via online searches
- 86% read the menu
- 60% consult with online reviews

You can see from these numbers that maintaining a solid online presence is essential, and that pretty much everyone wants to look at the menu first. Make sure an accurate version of your menu is posted at any of the big food review sites, like Google, Yelp, or Foursquare. You can also just post it to your social media, and use that forum to announce menu changes and updates.

Pontine suggests going even further, making a contest out of it. He'll post a menu, then ask followers to choose one thing on it to write in the comments and then sharing the content. By doing so, they get entered into a drawing for a free dinner for two.

146. "Limited Edition" menu items

"One of the best ways to create a buzz around your restaurant is to create limited edition dishes for special occasions or events. Not only can these help to drive even more people to your restaurant, but they can also create a bit of viral buzz about your business if they are really creative."

-Sam Williamson

Digital Marketing Executive

Tony Macaroni

This year on Burns' Night, during which Scotland celebrates poet Robert Burns, Tony Macaroni featured three dishes during the week leading into the official night. Two types of haggis pizza and a haggis lasagna may sound a little off the wall. But

that's just the point. There were surely brave Scots who took part in feasting on these culinary oddities. But there were also people who wouldn't touch haggis with a gloved finger if you paid them, but still heard about the promotion simply because of the buzz that was created.

147. Signs, signs, everywhere there's signs.

“Signage for restaurants should be a top priority when it comes to their marketing plan if they are in a city or high traffic area (cars and walking). The number of impressions you can get on daily basis can compare with ad buys and it's a no-brainer to capitalize on potential customers literally right outside your door.”

-Liz Mazzei

Freelance Marketing Director and Producer

LizMazzei.com

For the kind of restaurant that relies even in part on foot traffic, signs are still a great, low-tech way to reach people. Put your menu in the window, advertise lunch and dinner specials, use a sidewalk chalkboard to convey off beat sentiments. Hang up good reviews, or a great health code score. Anything you can do to communicate to passersby that yours is a place worth stopping is appropriate. Pedestrians might not stop right in—they could be on their way somewhere else—but you'll have reached them and planted a seed.

148. Get involved.

“Chances are your restaurant gets hit up by many local charities, event organizers, and others who want you to donate food, space, and/or time from your chefs...These could all be wonderful opportunities, but instead of saying “yes” to them all (or “no” to them all), pick a few every year that will fit your budget, and then create strategic alliances with those groups. Co-promote your work together on your blogs, social media, newsletters, and through the local media, including bloggers.”

-Sara Lancaster

Founder and Creative Director

The Condiment Marketing Co.

The Condiment Marketing Company is right: you should relish the opportunity to align yourself with a charity or local event. They're equally right in saying you need to set limits for your involvement. It's too easy to get caught up in different opportunities and risk spreading yourself too thin—and it's just downright hard saying no to a charity. But ultimately you have to do what's right for your business.

That said, spending money and resources—within your budget—to engage with the greater community is always a good idea. When working with charities, there's the obvious direct benefit of helping an organisation that's seeking positive change. But even just participating in a local event, whether as an underwriter or a vendor, can do great things for your relationship with the community.

149. Just do as this man says.

“Take customers’ feedback with details of email id (like any other regular restaurant does). Now digitize the data and send across a email id verification message with a discount coupon. Once the email is verified, a profile page is created for the customer wherein he or she can update various important dates – birthdays, anniversaries, etc. The customer can also look at upcoming festive dishes, claim discounts, and you can provide tips and information, on what was last consumed and what can next be consumed, given the customer’s past choices from the menu. All this while regularly engaging the customer on email, making sure the important dates are not lost, new menu introductions are promoted, feedback taken. And when a customer lands up for his first repeat, or on an important date, yes, the restaurant is ready to receive and delight the customer – in a way that a bond is created.”

-Pratik Shah

Director of Marketing

Grin

Pratik Shah’s highly specific advice leaves no room for us to elaborate or offer further suggestions. Really, it’s pretty well fleshed out by Shah. Instead, please enjoy this picture of a cat with epic stare-down game.

150. Front of house staff are part of your restaurant marketing.

“You should clearly understand that server knowledge is important in our business, yet we see young talent butcher the guest experience from approach to departure. Find a winning recipe for training, follow up with that execution and set the standard high.”

-George Barton

Founder

gBarton Innovations

Even though your front of house staff aren't being paid out of your marketing budget, it's a good idea to consider them part of that effort.

What is marketing, after all, but an attempt to put your best face forward and appeal to potential customers? And what is the job of the host, server, or manager, but to manage the customer experience such that your appeal is then solidified?

This is why training your staff is key. It isn't just showing them how to do their jobs correctly. Training shows them how to best represent you and your restaurant. Customers shouldn't just be shown to their seats, they should be welcomed to them. They don't look to their server just to bring their food; they also want to feel she is in control and they'll be taken care of. With any service oriented business, you never stop marketing.

151. Have a plan with social media.

“More often than not, businesses approach social media as a one way communication tool which lacks intentionality and strategy.

The social media strategy I present to my clients includes three primary themes.

- 1) Community
- 2) Brand awareness
- 3) Customer acquisition/retention.

These themes obviously overlap, but they do make for a fun Venn Diagram. ”

-Eric Clark

Lead Social Media Strategist

Serpcom

Choosing whether to market on social media should be an automatic yes. But you can't approach it entirely like you would a personal account, haphazardly posting anything that seems amusing to you at the time. Content should be planned out in advance, and posts should be scheduled with intention.

Don't overextend yourself, though. The goal is to create a cohesive brand image to promote your business. It can become more difficult to maintain that when you're posting across multiple social channels. Each interface is a little different, aesthetically, there are different rules on how much you can type, or whether and where you can embed links in your text. Don't be afraid to scale back and limit your focus to one channel. It's a lot easier to control your aesthetic when you're working with the bounds of a single platform.

Also, managing multiple accounts takes a lot of time, something many restaurant owners have in short supply. Hiring a social media manager takes a full time salary, also something restaurant owners have in short supply. You don't have to post everyday and everywhere. The important thing is you're focused on building your community, creating brand awareness, and encouraging people to join you in real life, at your restaurant.

152. Create Loyalty.

“Our data shows that the speed with which points and awards can be gained has the greatest impact on millennials' likelihood to participate in a restaurant's loyalty program (51 percent). Thus, a best practice might be to offer an initial reward for enrolling in the program and/or for the first visit as a loyalty member.

-Justin Guinn

Market Researcher

There are so many ways to integrate loyalty apps into your business that there's no reason not to find one that works for you. A modern, digital loyalty program is a highly effective way to encourage repeat business. When it comes to the types of programs that reward points, or adhere to a Buy X, Get 1 Free system, don't make it too hard for people to actually earn rewards. You can turn a customer off just easily with a loyalty program if that's the case. If you're going to reward your coffee drinkers, for example, they're not going to be thrilled if it takes 6 months to earn enough points for a free cup of tea.

153. Tap into local influencers.

“Philly PR Girl has found great success in hosting special media nights for our restaurant clients. There are plenty of excuses to invite local press, bloggers, and other media influencers out to your space – for example, perhaps your restaurant's birthday is coming up, a seasonal menu change is taking place, or you recently acquired a new head chef.”

-Jess Herbine

Editor

Philly PR Girl

Hosting an event or celebration can make a big splash and get your restaurant some great exposure. But if that kind of thing is out of your budget, consider working individually with food bloggers and photographers to create an influencer marketing campaign.

Influencer marketing is recognised as digital marketing's “next big thing” for the way brands can tap into the audiences of social media superstars. Especially in bigger cities, there are likely quite a few popular food bloggers that write about their local culinary scenes. You can invite them in individually, give them a tour of the place, and talk about the menu. Oh, and feed them well.

154. Vision Advertising

That's a compelling statistic, but it's worth noting we already cited a more powerful one earlier in this post. Remember, 87% of respondents to a survey (of over 6,000 people) said they find restaurants online using search tools. Knowing this, it

becomes critical to ensure that your website appears at the top of the search listings. A good SEO strategy isn't simply ensuring that your Italian restaurant in London shows up when someone types "Italian restaurant London" into Google. Well, it should, but that's not enough.

The more time you can spend toward researching locally relevant keywords to get on your site, the better. If you're a food truck setting up at a local festival, for example, you could write up a blog post announcing your participation. You'd then make sure the post contained the keywords of popular searches around the festival, drawing interested people to your site. Your main website copy should make mention of the town you're in, and maybe some specialty dishes that people search for (like "best chicken parmigiana at a restaurant").

Here's an excellent guide to finding good focus keywords to strategise around.

155. Speaking of your website: social media.

"Yes, your website is your 'home base' and social media does not replace that. Social media augments your site and by enabling fans to easily share information from your website, you empower fans to increase their social sharing and chatter about you!"

-Mike Gingerich

President

Digital Hill

If you're using WordPress, or an online WYSIWYG service like Squarespace, it's easy to add social sharing buttons to your website. Setting up that kind of connection adds to your credibility, but it also creates opportunity. If you've written a blog post that you want people to read, sharing it to your Facebook or Twitter feed is essential for getting the word out. Without those share buttons, you'd have to copy and paste the URL into a post—which is no big deal for you, but do you think your readers are going to do that? Having a "Share this on Facebook" button at the top and bottom of the post gives readers the ability to share in a couple of clicks.

Don't just quietly install the feature and keep it to yourself. Instead, turn

it into something fun. Announce to your followers you've got this feature on your website, and to celebrate you're giving away a free meal. To enter into the drawing,

they need to like one blog post from your website, then share it with the one person they want to have the free meal with. It's a great way to drive engagement at your website and your social presence at the same time.

156. Be Our Guest

On the face of it, this sounds like the kind of promotion that would only work for a higher-end, chef-centric establishment. You know, the kind of place where foodies go to see what new and exciting creations they'll taste. And it's a good idea for those kinds of restaurants.

Thing is, anyone can have fun with this, and it doesn't have to cost a dime. Local restaurant owners can institute a tongue-in-cheek chef-swap program. The guy owns and operates a gourmet sandwich shop can switch places with the woman who owns the fish and chips place across the street. They can cross promote on social media, invite people down to see what happens when someone new puts their own spin on the food. After it's all done, they can share out a short video documenting the day, and use it to try and get other local restaurants involved, as part of a shop and dine local campaign.

157. Print your most delicious dishes on T-shirts

Modern printing techniques, like direct to garment printing (DTG), recreate detailed and colourful images, which means your tempting desserts and sumptuous starters will make clients' mouths water even if it's just a picture printed on fabric.

158. Do the same with drinks

Seductive images of cocktails, steamy hot chocolate, champagne and the like can create a visual image of what's on offer and be a constant

reminder to the customer of what they could be ordering. Just one more G&T before we leave won't hurt*.

*Unless they're driving, of course. Here at Printsomwe we don't support driving under the influence of any substance.

159. Use social media

It's a sad fact that many people just can't leave their mobiles alone, even when they're sitting at a table in good company. So why not take advantage of this and print your web address or blog page on staff uniforms?

Better still, you could use a specific call to action, like "For 20% off your next dining experience at the Such-and-Such Restaurant write to us at discount(@)suchandsuch.com." This will capture email addresses for your marketing campaigns and alleviate the boredom of customers who clearly don't wish to speak to each other.

160. Does the restaurant do delivery?

Then tell everyone on a T-shirt!

161. Competitions

Create loyalty and interest. "Want to win dinner for two at the "such-and-such" Restaurant? Then visit suchandsuch.com. to find our more". This

is one more way to collect customer data while they are sitting at your tables.

You can even get social media involved on this one (like we were talking about above). Some restaurants give away a free dinner or a gift basket of products to a random fan on their Facebook page every month, for instance.

By the way, did you know that printing T-shirts is a great way to promote a restaurant? ? Print some's apparel-printing services are perfect for making souvenirs, merchandise and staff uniforms, among many other possibilities.

162. Print the whole menu on staff T-shirts

Use your signature dishes, the ones that are unlikely to change, so you don't have to print the entire staff's uniform every time you modify the menu.

163. Create regular special events

Taco Tuesday, Fish & Chip Friday, Oriental lunchtime, New York Saturday night, and Sunday 'swing' brunch, among many others. Use your imagination. The possibilities are endless! Let people know about your special event on your staff uniforms.

164. Keep it simple

Print simple images of fruit, vegetables, drinks, desserts, or just your logo to personalise work wear without going over the top. Usually, when it comes to uniforms, less is more. A simple well curated picture can say more than an assortment of images. Use your corporate restaurant colours for the basic T-shirt to reflect your brand identity.

165. Quick hit promotions

'Review us now and get a free drink ... link to review website page with star rating'. Of course you will probably only be able to afford one drink per person (maybe specify the drink) and customers would need to liaise with wait staff to show they are actually giving a review, but this could be easily managed.

Rapid-fire Ideas to Promote Your Restaurant

And now, we're stepping away from our one true love for a bit (T-shirts) to give you some rapid-fire ideas for how you can promote your restaurant in general. The idea is that these are all actual things you can do right now (or at least fairly quickly):

166. Run a contest

You could do something simple like a T-shirt giveaway, or get creative and let people create a new cocktail or dessert flavour combination.

167. Give people an incentive to follow you on social media

Offer 10% off if they subscribe to your newsletter, or give them free WiFi for liking your page on Facebook — there are lots of ways you can get people to engage online with your restaurant.

By the way, did you know that printing T-shirts is a great way to promote a restaurant? ? Printsome's apparel-printing services are perfect for making souvenirs, merchandise and staff uniforms, among many other possibilities.

168. Train your staff on etiquette and polite behaviour

It's surprising how many rude waiters there are out there. But it's easily fixable, as a lot of them probably don't realise how off-putting their behaviour can be. Do a quick training and give them pointers on proper etiquette.

169. Visually emphasis the things you want people to buy on your menu

Some of your dishes will have higher profit margins than others. The best-designed menus make sure that guests' eyes land right on that deliciously profitable meal.



170. Give away T-shirts for a special occasion

Free tees equals people walking around with your restaurant's logo or name on their backs...which equals free advertising! Need help finding the perfect tee? Get in touch with us.

171. Create a loyalty card

These can be as simple as your regular business card with a grid of 10 squares on the back. For every 9 meals a guest buys, they could get 1 free (or something along those lines).

172. Pimp your Instagram account

Instagram is such a great opportunity to get people's mouths watering for your food. If your photography isn't your strong point, team up with somebody who can show

off your dishes to their best extent. Don't forget to tag your photos with the location so everybody knows your restaurant is in X town or city.

173. Add all the details to restaurant review sites

Who hasn't looked up a restaurant on one of these sites to find out if they want to go? Add as much detail and information as you can, especially nice photos of your food. Hours, address, phone number, and any perks (like WiFi or free parking) are also good to list.

174. When somebody says sth good about you, share the news!

Did you get a mention in a local magazine (or even a national one)? Share the news online, and if you can, get a clipping to put on display in your restaurant.

175. Have an online menu available

Lots of people like to check out the offerings before they decide to visit your restaurant. Maybe they're choosing between yours and another restaurant, and the deciding factor is how delicious your shrimp special sounds on your online menu, while the other place doesn't say what they have. Websites like OpenMenu can help you post your menu online and have it look good.

176. Be Present

A study conducted by SinglePlatform at Constant Contact found that 90% diners visit a restaurant's website before heading out to eat. With 81% of mobile users researching restaurants on their phone and 84% checking multiple sites before making a decision, it is imperative that a restaurant have a strong web presence to drive traffic and sales.

177. Overshadow the Competition

You can't start a digital dialogue with guests if no one knows you exist. You might have a website, but it's buried on page 8 of search results where no one will find it.

Learning the basics of search engine optimization can give you a huge bump in leads and conversions. We've created a great resource to master the fundamentals of SEO on our site.

178. Embrace Emerging Technologies

Quick response codes—those blocks of square dots—are a great way to get guests to engage with your brand by offering them insider info, incentives, or a fun way to pay. For example, The Melt, a chain of gourmet grilled-cheese restaurants, gives guests a QR code when orders are paid for online. With this code, they can skip the line and receive their meal. 5-10% of all transactions at The Melt are made online.

179. Oh, the Google Places You Will Go

Google's free marketing tool, Google Places, lends your business visibility to the growing trend of guests researching restaurants before their visits while simultaneously providing you important analytics, such as what sort of food your guests were searching for prior to choosing your restaurant or where your guests are coming from if you are considering opening another location. Make sure you're not missing any valuable visibility.

180. Get Trendy

Local food is taking the industry by storm. 72% of adults say they are more likely to visit a restaurant that has locally-sourced ingredients. Pioneering this trend is what allowed the Purple Carrot Truck, a food truck offering meals made with locally grown ingredients, to become Red Haven, a full farm to table restaurant.

181. Keep Mouths Busy

Word of Mouth is the most sure-fire way to get customers through your doors. Unfortunately, you can't buy this kind of advertising. Loyal guests are bound to come back – and bring their friends, so focus on creating an outstanding customer experience as well as making your restaurant something people want to buy into. For example, In-N-Out Burger in California boasts fresh fast food and a fun secret menu.

Guests feel “in the know” when they order Animal Fries or something “off” the menu.

182. Have a Cause, Not Just a Promotion

In a recent Edelman consumer study, 83 percent of those surveyed said they would change their buying habits to a cause-related brand. As such, Jersey Mike’s makes a point to give back to the community every year. In their most successful campaign, Jersey Mike’s raised \$1.1 million for the Susan. G. Komen for the Cure organization. This campaign of charity has garnered them free national media coverage and a loyal following.

183. Define Yourself

Find your signature, whether it’s the Bloomin’ Onion from Outback Steakhouse or Chipotle’s principle of “Food with Integrity”, then carry it through your food to your receipts, take-away packaging, napkins, etc. Treiber Bakery is founded in the idea of sustainability, which they carry through to their eco-friendly packaging.

184. Start Your Own Media Party

Press parties aren’t just a great way to generate some viral buzz when opening a restaurant. Established restaurants that could use a publicity boost have many excuses to host influential media and foodie bloggers from their community. These events are great ways to promote new entrées, wine selections and drinks. Here’s a free blueprint on how to put together your own restaurant press party.

185. Get Coverage You Can Count On

While anyone with a checkbook can buy an ad, not just anyone can get media exposure – and customers trust what they see in the media. A well-placed interview or guest post on a prominent news site can blow-up your social media followings and even help with website SEO, if orchestrated properly. This is why fundamentally sound restaurant PR should still play a pivotal role in your marketing mix, even though we’re well into the social age.

186. Socialize

Social Media is a powerful tool for any restaurant. Between Twitter and Facebook, you can announce food truck locations and daily specials while interacting with current and potential guests. Foursquare is a creative platform to announce promotions and increase foot traffic, while Instagram allows you and your guests to showcase your tastiest dishes. All of these are free to use and reach millions of users every day.

187. Say the Magic Word

Guests love the word “free”. Whether it’s samples of your restaurants best dishes or a meal for the birthday boy or girl, customers flock to free. According to the National Restaurant Association, 70% of people celebrate their birthday with a dinner out, usually with a group of people. That’s a small price to pay for an increase in revenue and the possibility of attracting new guests.

188. Make Their Day

Pick a slow food day and flip for the check. Loser pays. Of course, you win no matter what, as your loyal guest shares the joy, creates more business, and buys more food since there’s a 50 percent chance the meal is free.

189. Let Them Have It Their Way

Make it easy for your customers to enjoy your food, even if they don’t want to come inside to enjoy it. The average Outback Steakhouse sells \$655,000 from their curbside program, or about 19% of total sales. Want to watch revenues rise? Curb their appetites.

190. Look Busy

Nobody wants to go to a restaurant that looks empty. As long as you have a staff, nobody needs to see an empty parking lot. Ask your employees to park in front until your tables fill, then have them move to less desirable locations as you reach capacity.

191. Welcome the New Neighbors

People who move into your neighborhood are five times more likely than the average Joe to become your loyal regulars, so don't miss out. Use services like Moving Targets to say you're glad they've come. Welcome letters and gift certificates get higher engagement rates than most collateral, so make the most of those new neighbors.

192. Celebrate the Slow Days with a Theme

Forget Meatloaf Monday and Taco Tuesday. High-end restaurants are getting into the theme night game. Sausalito's restaurant, Poggio, started a "Porchetta Night" on Mondays where the chef debones a whole pig, stuffs it with pork sausage, and cooks the whole thing over a spit. Sales have been 30-40% higher, year-over-year.

193. Don't Forget Your Canine Clientele

There are 70 million dog owners in the US alone. It's no surprise restaurants are not only allowing dogs, but, in some cases, are catering to them. The Dining Dog Café in Edmonds, Washington "has a full service menu including doggie cocktails, appetizers, entrees and desserts".

194. Respond to that Pesky Yelp Review

Surprised to see this first on our list of restaurant marketing ideas? Addressing every negative review on Yelp (and on social media sites) isn't just good customer service, you can boost sales, too.

Use our 5A approach to responding to negative reviews which involves inviting the customer back in with a special offer – do that now.

According to Social Media Today, 95% of customers will return if you quickly and efficiently address their complaint. Plus, studies show that most will delete their negative review if you resolve their issue. Now, see why this is #1 on our list of restaurant marketing ideas?

Just Listen. You Could Hear the Sounds of 40% Higher Drink Sales. Seriously.

One of the least underutilized restaurant marketing ideas involves background music. Did you know adjusting your playlist (and its volume) could result in up to a 40% boost in drink and dessert sales?

195. Download Snapchat Now.

Want to see more millennials at your business? Download Snapchat. 60% of Americans under 34 use this photo-sharing app. Plus, it's one of the easiest social media platforms to master.

196. Boost a Facebook Post Using the “Proven Performer” Tactic

If you already boost Facebook posts, are you doing it right? Most will create a post – and then immediately boost it. But you don't know if it will perform well.

Here's one of the best insider restaurant Facebook marketing ideas...

Use the “publishing tools” on your Facebook page to identify your top 5 posts – ones that have been liked, shared, or commented on. Pick the most recent one, and boost it. People are more likely to engage with posts that are popular.

197. Contact Local Media Outlets

Great restaurant marketing ideas should always include public relations, too. You're an expert in the restaurant industry. Do media outlets know they can call you for a quote or insight when a food-related news story hits? The ROI could be free media exposure for your business – that's major.

Act on these media-related restaurant marketing ideas now:

- Call your local TV, radio, and online newspaper.
- Ask to be connected to both the “features” and “news” departments
- Or, visit the websites for each media outlet – most reporters include their email with stories they cover

Let the reporters know you’re always available to provide commentary on stories related to food and restaurants.

198. Sign Up for HARO

We’ve got more restaurant marketing ideas to get you free media coverage...sign up for HARO (Help a Reporter Out). For free, your contact info is added to a nationwide database. Reporters and bloggers can reach out when they need a quick quote or even a full-length article.

199. Be Charitable

Want to boost staff morale, increase guest loyalty, attract new customers, and support a good cause? Try one of these charitable restaurant marketing ideas:

- Invite a charity to send a guest bartender in one night a month, donate the tips and 10% of the proceeds. The charity will promote their event to their customer base, maximizing your restaurant marketing ideas and actions
- Sign up for a charity event like a walk-a-thon as a team building activity and a way to gain visibility for your restaurant
- Host a charity’s monthly meeting Have a private dining room? Is it

booked up on weeknights? If not, invite local charities in to host their monthly meeting with you.

200. Create a Facebook Event

Restaurant marketing ideas don't get better than this. What event do you have coming up? A live band? Live trivia night? Use Facebook Events to set up a free event.

Facebook will automatically send free reminders about your event to anyone who RSVPs. Sweet! Plus, Facebook also alerts friends of those who have RSVPed about your event. Need quick, low-cost ideas for an event? See these 11 easy theme night ideas.

201. Schedule a Demo

Next on our list of restaurant marketing ideas is to schedule a demo with a product you've been thinking about for your restaurant. You can read all you want, but experiencing the product is the best way to see if it's right for you.

Maybe it's upgrading your POS system or trying an email marketing tool. Or, it's bringing in trivia and games for guests...shown to increase the average table check by 21%. You can get a free, fast, no-pressure demo – just schedule it now.

202. Visit 3 Nearby Businesses

Get personal with your restaurant marketing ideas. Armed with your menu, head over to the businesses closest to you.

Don't send a staff member. Go yourself for the best ROI. If you have coupons on hand, that's great but not necessary. Even just grabbing 3 menus from the host stand would work.

The point is, you're personally inviting that business to your venue. Personalized restaurant marketing ideas are often the most effective. While you're at your neighboring business, ask for their brochures to place in your waiting area.

203. Regular Restaurant Marketing Ideas

Sometimes, the best restaurant marketing ideas are the simplest. Look around. See any regulars? Find their server and tell them to surprise the table with a few desserts.

Don't take your regulars for granted! Restaurant marketing ideas that involve surprise rewards for regulars will build loyalty using the reciprocity principle (basically, the guest feels compelled to continue rewarding YOU with their business). Studies show that reducing customer churn by just 5% can boost profitability by at least 25% and as much as 125%.

204. Set Up a Google AdWords Campaign

Restaurants are the most-searched industry by guests online: 81% search on their smartphones, 92% search on their desktop. When guests decide where to dine, these restaurant marketing ideas help your business show up. How? Set up a Google AdWords campaign.

EXAMPLE: If you're a sports bar in Milwaukee, set up an AdWords campaign so when guests search "sports bar Milwaukee" – they see your business name and a link to your website. To maximize these restaurant marketing ideas, invest more than \$30.

205. Start Stalking Yourself

To maximize your restaurant marketing ideas, you need to know what's being said about your biz. Take 30 minutes to sign up for these free or low-cost services: www.rankur.com, www.socialmention.com and www.google.com/alerts.

Humble brag! If you get an alert that you've earned positive press, share the link on Facebook and in your emails.

If you're alerted of a negative review – now you can respond faster.

Plus, you can also (anonymously) monitor your competitors to see what they're up to.

206. Mark Up Your Menu

Grab a red pen and channel your high school English teacher for these menu-based restaurant marketing ideas.

For example, here's a top tip proven by a study at Cornell University. Look for any dollar signs – remove them! In the study, guests spent “significantly more” when menu items didn't show dollar signs – just a numerical value.

While menu tips are one of our restaurant marketing ideas that won't provide instant ROI – once you make the changes, you'll like start seeing higher check averages.

207. Visit a Local Brewery

Who knew enjoying a beer would make it on our list of restaurant marketing ideas? Here's why: Craft brews continue to trend upwards. Chances are, there's a local craft brewery in your area. Head over to enjoy a brew or two.

Chat with the brewer to explore carrying their craft brew – or ask to bring in a keg for a one-time event.

208. Film a 60 -second video that teaches people...

Specifically, that teaches people how to make a “poor man's” version of one of your specialities at home and post it to YouTube. I know, crazy, is what you're initially thinking — until you realize the power in having fun over-emphasizing in the video that this is a “poor man's” version of the special and how the real, authentic version is just a 5-minute drive away.

Discover the power in leveraging the third-largest search engine in the world — YouTube –with casual and fun videos, not your typical commercials.

In fact, you can add a step here and get a bigger bang: Turn those steps into a Pinterest post. .

Give your biggest, baddest menu item its own Twitter account.

On that Twitter account, let that menu item speaks for itself throughout the day. Give it a personality, a voice — you might even let it be fun and act like it's a rogue account that's trying to stay off the radar.

209. Post a “This Week in...” video to Instagram every Monday.

You’ve only got 15 seconds here, so highlight just one featured menu item. Add a splash of background music and you’ve got some brand personality. Use each Instagram post’s comments section to add the necessary details and disclaimers to the week’s offers.

210. Go guerrilla and publish a low-key podcast (audio or video).

Interview an employee at one of your stores on, “How We Make Your Food...” Emphasize how you buy your food if it’s local.

If you go audio-only, just make sure to get some ambient sound of your food cooking, you know, get that sizzle of the grill going. If you swing for the fences and go video, get some crazy close-ups of that food cooking so our mouths water. It’s a great way to engage local employees, too. Give the podcast, “The Sporkful” a listen for inspiration and direction on this.

211. Jump. On. Memes.

Enjoy the art of newsjacking for restaurants. Funny (but not morally vacant) celebrity news grabbing the headlines this today?

Newsjacking is the art of publishing content that capitalizes on the latest memes or news — you build YOUR story off of those current events.

Here’s how newsjacking works, as a chart:



That chart is courtesy of David Meerman Scott, author of Newsjacking.

Here's a thought: temporarily nickname a menu item after a celebrity who's found their way into the headlines and tweet it heavily. Steer clear of tragedy, of course, but is no shortage of news any given week that you can piggyback.

212. Equip 20 of your restaurants with their own iPod Touch.

Here's why you're doing this, specifically: They're to be used solely for capturing authentic photos and videos. Have those locations send their photos and videos to you to fuel your social media — augmenting your professionally-snapped photos. "Food so good, we don't need Photoshop."

213. Share recipes and pairings that work great with your food.

Seriously. People grab food to go all the time — is there some side item that would go great with your food, that wouldn't detract from sales? Sriracha? Your menu item followed up with Twinkies as a dessert? Write periodic blog posts about it. "We hear

from customers who order takeout that they're pairing our _____ with _____ and LOVING IT."

If you're not getting that kind of feedback from customers, jumpstart the campaign by asking your employees for what they pair their favorite menu items with when they grab dinner on the way out the door.

214. On a dedicated Tumblr, feature local Average Joes (and Janes)

Position us as though we're celebrities endorsing your menu item. If your brand can get away with it, keep it simple with a humorous, Onion-style photo + caption:

"87-year-old Pearl Hairston says our carnitas 'make her toes curl.' A little fun, 15-minutes of fame for local fans of your brand.

215. Tell a legendary version of your restaurant's backstory.

What is the number one feature of your restaurant that people notice or talk about, BESIDES the food? Write a whole backstory about how that feature came to be at your restaurant on your blog. Heck, the story doesn't even need to be true — create your own legend (but at least state it's a legend).

If your brand has been around 20 or more years, uh, this is a no-brainer and I can't believe you haven't already quit reading this to start writing that backstory.

216. Go all BuzzFeed and Upworthy with your blog posts.

Cause some laughs by poking fun at the trend towards over-hyped headlines with variations like this on your blog or Twitter:

"This Dad Ate Our Porterhouse and I Can't Believe What Happened Next!"

or,

"3 Women in a Row Ordered Horchata. What Our Server did for the 4th is So Touching OMG!"

And add a photo that goes along with the over-the-top headline. Again, if you've got a casual or even an offbeat brand, the stories don't even need to be real. They're all aimed at building that brand voice and having some fun.

217. Comfortable Ambience

This is one of the most important aspects of the restaurant business. According to your target demographic, you must provide a satisfying inside atmosphere. Great food, great service, good prices, nice atmosphere, good music with clean toilette are some of the mandatory things.

218. Print Leaflets

Generally, leaflets play very crucial role in the restaurant business. Additionally, leaflets are the cheapest way of restaurant marketing. You must try to create the leaflets attractive and full of information.

219. Happy Hour Selling

This is a proven concept. You must offer your customers happy hour discounts. This offer works best to boost your sale during the slow hours in a day. Generally, the afternoons of Monday to Thursday. Create a happy hour menu with half-price wine lists, cheap cocktails, and side dishes and you guests will happily pay and eat much more.

220. Craft a Functional Menu

Crafting the right menu is highly important. However, it depends hugely on the taste of your target demographics. Create an easy-to-read menu list with the price tag. Never include a menu that is not available at your restaurant.

221. Offer Delivery Service

Offer delivery services. It will definitely help you to increase sale. Just make your food available at your customer's doorstep. You can also offer the both online

payment and 'cash on delivery'. This idea is also cost effective. Because you are charging the same from a customer who is not occupying your retail space.

222. Off On Delivery

This is an another great restaurant marketing ideas. You can offer at least 10% off on the bill when a customer orders the food for delivery. To make it more attractive, offer the discount for a limited period of time.

223. Offer Coupons

Coupons are the most lucrative offers nowadays from a customer point of view. You can send coupons and menu details to your customer email. However, for this, you must have a customer database with you. Make the offer attractive as much as possible.

224. Reach the Neighboring Customers

You must reach your neighboring clients. Identify the offices, business organization and commercial places nearby your restaurant. Meet them with your leaflets and menu card. You must aware them about the food and services you are offering.

225. Local Directory Listing

This is a must. There are several popular local directories that allow you the free listing. Additionally, there are some directories that only allow paid listing. Identify the most popular directory in your area and make your restaurant available there. Study shows, 90% of the customers check the nearby restaurant and price online.

226. Advertisement On Food Magazine

Food magazines are the great place to advertise your restaurant. By these ads, you can directly reach the foodie people. Additionally, it helps tremendously in building

the brand. You can also consider publishing the advertisement in the local newspaper.

227. Develop Brand Identity

Developing brand identity is the must for any small business. Some people believes that developing a brand is hugely cash intensive. However, there are several low-cost ways also. And you must have a budget for building the brand.

228. Online Table Booking Facility

Offer your customers online table booking facility. Generally, it makes easier your customer's life. You can use your company website to offer this service. However, you have to make the entire process easy for your customers. So that they can book a table for a specific day and time.

229. Host Theme Party

A theme party is a great idea for enhancing the customer attraction. You can host a theme lunch party or the dinner party for your customers. Change the inside atmosphere according to your theme. Additionally, craft the menu as per your theme. Your customers will definitely love it.

230. Reply Tweets

Your Tweeter handle can play a big role in enhancing the orders. And timing your tweets can have a big influence on hungry stomachs. You can schedule the Tweeter messages targeting the time for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Additionally, be specific in answering the Tweets.

231. Use Pinterest

Pinterest is a visual social media platform. You can post a large number of images on Pinterest and pin them. Go to [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com), and sign up for an account using either your Facebook account, a Twitter account, or an email address. However, it is better to open the account with the email address.

232. SMS Marketing

SMS marketing or text message marketing is another great option for restaurant marketing. And there are several types of software you can use for this. Just promote your deals and discount offers through the SMS. Additionally, you can send coupons out there. This helps you to build a loyal customer base.

233. Franchise Your Business

Franchising helps a business in numerous ways. Apart from marketing, it helps to build the brand and enhance the profitability. Any successful restaurant business can go for franchising with strategic planning and goal. However, this is not an easy task. You must consult with the experts to get everything in the right place.

234. Have A Vip Night For Local Influencers

Inviting local bloggers, press, and other media influencers can bring some high-profile attention to your restaurant and give your staff a chance to put on a show, delivering the best impression of your dining experience. This is a great way to tap into the local scene and score some cheap marketing (a few free meals), while accessing new niche audiences that may be otherwise hard to reach.

To find these influencers, try searching through related posts using geo-filters (i.e. Santa Monica) to narrow in on the top influencers to reach out to based on your location. Invite them to participate with you and even make it into a joint-promotional event for their base of followers, which may even help bring in new customers from the get-go.

235. Lean into the colder weather

It may be tempting to try and distract diners from the fact that it's chilly outside, but sometimes the best strategy is to plan promotions that actually incorporate the outside temps. At the acclaimed, market-driven spot in Brooklyn, Olmsted, the garden is one of the restaurant's key features, but garden seating can be a tough prospect in the winter. To combat this, the team creates a cozy winter wonderland in the garden, complete with warm blankets and make-your-own s'mores. Suddenly, sitting outside in the winter just got a lot more appealing.

236. Warm up your drinks

The early months can be tough for alcohol sales, not only because of #DryJanuary (a popular challenge to swear off alcohol during the first month of the year), but also because most cocktails are served cold — not ideal on a chillier day. Give your cocktails winter appeal by turning up the temperature. It doesn't have to stop at Hot Toddies; mulled wine, warm punch, cider, and spiked hot chocolate are just a few of the many options for hot drinks. You can even add a selection of non-alcoholic hot beverages for those committing to a dry month. Take a cue from Alden & Harlow in Boston, which serves up a playful array of wintery drinks like the Hearthstone, which involves homemade butterscotch and Montenegro whipped cream.

237. Go Local Or Even Grow Food Yourself

Another way to support your local community is to use ingredients grown by local suppliers in your meals. The people in your area will really appreciate this, which may cause them to choose your restaurant over those of your competitors.

If you really want to impress, however, you could grow the food yourself, as some restaurants are now doing. This could be at a site away from your restaurant, or in the restaurant itself. With millennials being a very health-conscious generation, you are bound to attract customers by joining the ranks of the restaurants growing ingredients on-site.

238. Make Your Health-Conscious And Environmental Choices Known

As mentioned in the previous point, millennials are a health-conscious group. So, if you are making health-conscious choices for your restaurant (like this restaurant abandoning cow's milk), there's no sense in keeping quiet about it. You need to appeal to anyone who would appreciate your choices, doing so in-store and online,

so that they know to come to your restaurant for healthy, organic, or morally-sourced food.

239. Offer Food Outside Of Your Restaurant

Of course, you could ensure that your target market is looking at you because you are directly in front of them. Instead of trying to get diners to come to you, you could go to them.

Do you specialise in health and protein shakes? If so, set up a stand outside a gym or a sports field and attract people fresh off the back of a workout or a game of football. Alternatively, if you offer good on-the-go food, you could buy a van and offer your food in built-up areas around lunch time.

240. Match Your Marketing Medium To Your Target Market

If you are catering to pensioners who like to visit your coffee shop mid-morning, you may well find that more of them read the newspaper than log onto social media each day. So, if you wanted to offer a special – perhaps a free scone with a pot of tea – then putting the voucher in the newspaper might be better. Think of where your target market is going to be looking and then focus your marketing efforts there.

241. Post A Poll On Social Media

It takes only seconds to make, and can be a great way to engage your customers while creating an opportunity to align your offering with their desires. Open-ended questions like “What discontinued items would you like to see reintroduced on the menu?” or “What is your favorite seasonal item?” give customers a chance to contribute their views, while giving you relevant feedback to design a better experience for them. It also shows that you are always looking to evolve and learn, which will earn loyalty and respect, which is critical to earning an increase in sales.

242. Share Stories

Everyone loves a good story, and in the food service industry, funny and insightful stories are abound. Sharing funny happenings, near misses, and even challenges can be a fantastic way to connect with a customer and make them feel a more intimate sense of what goes on in the restaurant. When people know the personalities behind the business, they are almost always more likely to come back, and feel a stronger bond with the restaurant. These stories can range from the inspirations that went

into the opening of the restaurant, to staff hobbies, to the everyday things that come up in the life of the restaurant.

243. Offer Complimentary Wi-Fi

The longer customers are sitting at your tables, the more money they spend. Offering free wireless access to the Internet for those customers with a Wi-Fi-enabled laptop or smartphone will add even more sales to the bottom line and make customers more loyal to your brand. Word spreads, too, like restaurant marketing magic. There may be no such thing as a free lunch...but free Wi-Fi will get the people talking. This is something that reaches across the demographics, from college students to millennials to business people who need someplace where they can eat and do a little business.

244. New Year Promotion

What I do every year is end out a e-mail to my customers wishing them a happy New Year and then I tell them what I did on New Years Eve and what my New Year's resolution is.

New Year

Why? Because if you want to maintain a massive group of loyal regulars, you need to communicate with them on a personal level. Your goal with your marketing isn't "here's my special, here's my price, come spend your money!"

Your goal with your marketing is to build trust and credibility first. Get them to feel like they know you on a personal level, EVEN if they've never met you before.

After I tell them my New Year's resolution, I then ask them what theirs is. Show you care about them. Show you're interested in them. This is "Relationship" based marketing at it's best!

245. Frequency Cards

You most likely have to spend money on advertising or promotions to get a customer to visit your restaurant the first time. When they come back based on their experience, there is zero cost to get them in the door. Improve your repeat business with a frequency card that rewards diners with a free meal after they have purchased a set number. Use a unique card punch or other means of preventing fraud.

246. Secretaries

Secretaries are the "town criers" at many business and interact with almost all employees in an office. If they recommend your restaurant or suggest the group go to your place for lunch, their opinion carries weight. Introduce your restaurant to secretaries in your area with a Secretary's Day promotion or buy-one-get-one-free promotion for secretaries.

247. Get Feedback

Creating a desire in the marketplace for unique cuisine is much riskier than satisfying a demonstrated need. Survey your customers and potential customers to learn what they want in a dining experience. Award prizes for a drawing consumers enter when they fill out a short survey in person or online. Ask questions about price, desired length of visit, favorite restaurants and other questions germane to your market.

248. Opening times

As per your location, opening times are a basic piece of information that are too often committed from websites. If you can, go a step further by updating these around holiday periods, such as Christmas or public holidays and include the dates, the way retail stores do, to maximise custom.

249. Business people

Another core customer base for restaurants and cafes are local business people having meetings or working remotely from the office. In a cafe, you can offer a WiFi password system where people have to sign-up with their email address to use it, simultaneously allowing them to automatically connect every time they return (encouraging repeat custom). For restaurants, it's a great idea to hold a monthly "business card raffle" where you choose a winning free meal or free drinks from the bowl as people submit their contact details at the checkout. Business email addresses tend to receive less marketing material than personal email addresses so this improves your chances of being noticed in the inbox, too!

250. Topicality

Another great tactic online is to be topical – to engage in conversations that are already happening. You could chat about restaurant dress code during the red-carpet coverage of The Oscars, or debate modern table etiquette as people watch a

new period drama TV show or movie at the cinema. Annual seasonal topics, from Summer cocktail recipes to Christmas turkey tips are all great content, too.

251. Signage

While online marketing is very important, on-street marketing remains crucial for restaurants and cafes. Clear signage is first on your to-do list, ensuring people can easily find you. Also ensure your contact details are visible on your signage (such as website and/or phone number) for anyone who walks by, or drives by, and wants to research more about you. Pavement boards like A frames are another useful on-street marketing tool for passing footfall (but check the local council regulations first!)

252. Samples

People love a freebie, but more than that, samples are a good cost-effective way to introduce people to your cuisine without them having to take the risk of paying for a full meal. Handing out samples on disposable cups or spoons is fun, as are bite-size chunks on tooth picks, and you can include your social media profiles or a hashtag so you can follow what people say about it on their own channels.

253. Windows

Restaurants may not want to showcase their wares in a shop-front window the way a retailer might do, but that doesn't mean windows should be wasted! If you face on to the street, use your windows to display open times, special deals, or a decal logo, catching the eye of passersby.

254. Tourism

As you're networking with local businesses in the tourism industry, don't forget to link up with the actual tourism board covering your area. Get to know the staff in the local information office, as well as meeting with more strategic managers who may be responsible for planning larger events such as food and drink fares or restaurant weeks.

255. PR stunts

Depending on the restaurant, publicity stunts can work well for gaining coverage in local traditional and online media outlets. It doesn't have to be a Coca-Cola level stunt, as your budget probably won't stretch that far. It can be as simple as offering a free meal to anyone who can eat your biggest belly-busting option (ensuring they

likely can't, of course!) For more refined eateries, you might offer a themed menu in praise of a local sporting hero or you could have a “bring your dog for brunch” afternoon in support of a local animal charity.

256. Live music

Providing some atmosphere and entertainment for diners on a special night, such as weekends, is a good way to set yourself apart from competitors. This could be linked to a theme (such as Indian or Italian) or it could simply be a way to give a platform to local aspiring musicians and, again, benefit from the community goodwill around that.

257. Toilet advertising

Posters on the backs of toilet cubicle doors or above standing basins are a great way to advertise special offers and events because, well, your audience is stuck there with nothing to do for a little while! These are also good advertising spaces to sell to other local businesses and turn the unused space into a small profit generator for your restaurant/cafe.

258. Ask staff

Staff are not just the key to selling your offerings and giving customers a great experience. They are often the best people to provide feedback on how you could improve the running of your restaurant operationally. They will know the little things that regularly cause problems, whether its seating layout, difficulty opening bottles, a broken coffee machine. Tap into this knowledge and ask for their feedback. It will also boost staff morale if they feel involved and appreciated.

259. Skilled staff

Your serving team of waiters and waitresses are the next key marketing tool for your business, once you've got people in the door and looking at your menu. They should know the meals well; what's in them, what size they are, if they would be too spicy. They should also be confident in advising on which side options or drinks would complement each meal. Customers will often ask waiting staff for advice and will trust their recommendations. Give your staff the skills and words to really sell each option in an enticing and enthusiastic way.

260. Upsell

Use carefully crafted promotions on your menu to encourage people to spend more at their meal. This can include side dish offers or drinks offers, such as adding a side dish or a larger drink for an extra £2.

261. Psychology of money

Psychology like this also comes into play in how you present your prices. We all know that £15.99 sounds better than £16.00 for example. Research also suggests that excluding the £ or \$ symbols helps people to worry less about what they are spending, so stick to the numbers only beside your meals on menus

262. Be expensive

An expensive option works particularly well in among other options as people can choose the middle of the range and think they are getting both good quality and value for money. So offer three options, instead of two, and people are more likely to choose the medium cost than when there are only two options and they will opt for the cheapest one.

263. Top down choices

The way people read through marketing materials (like menus) means that we start at the top and begin to skip and skim read the further down we go. That's why it's important to put your best dishes and (for profitability) your most expensive options at the top of your menu list. Another method is to attract attention to your expensive, exclusive meals by highlighting them in some way, like in a box with a border around it.

264. Design

Get an expert designer to help you craft a professional look and strong sales content for your target audience. They will use bold colours and key messages, perhaps graphic design, photography, or a mix of both. They may experiment with formats (such as a trifold leaflet) or unusual shapes like a pizza-style circle for an Italian restaurant. They can then match the finish to your business branding, meaning a cafe may opt for a glossy finish, whereas a fine dining restaurant may choose a matt or silk finish.

265. Distribution

If you plan to deliver your leaflets yourself door-to-door, think strategically about the best time to do this. If you're a takeaway restaurant, then Monday or Friday before 5pm is a great time, as are Sundays, when people are thinking of alternative/easy dinner options. Also think about timing – people usually get their post delivered in the morning and then clear it away, so delivering in the evening lands your leaflet pride of place on the door mat by itself.

266. Take away

If you can do it, think about offering a take-out service from your menu, so that regular customers who can't come can still buy your food. It's also a great way for potential new customers to try your offering without spending what may be a rare night out for them on a risky new place. Even the most high-end restaurants can offer take away without cheapening their menu!

267. Bouncebacks

You can encourage customers to return by offering them discounts valid for a short period of time, given with their bill receipt for example. This can also be used through your email marketing, to target customers who haven't visited in a long time, encouraging them back with a special offer just for them.

268. Gift certificates

People are always looking for voucher and certificate ideas when they can't think of a physical gift to buy a loved one. Restaurant vouchers are particularly good because it provides a whole experience and the recipient can share it with a loved one or the whole family.

269. Weddings

Restaurant wedding receptions are growing in popularity as people shy away from big hotel events to save money for houses, travel or having children. Looking at ways you could decorate and menu design for such an event is another profit opportunity. Make sure to promote it well on social media and at local wedding fairs.

270. Theme nights

Set menu nights can work well, from curry nights on a Thursday to a Sunday carvery for an easy roast dinner for families. Think about what could work well for your usual clientele as well as what might fill empty evenings depending on your locality

(for example if students live nearby then they may eat out at a specially-priced themed night on a Monday or Tuesday).

271. Team up with local farms.

More and more, diners are extremely conscious of where their food comes from. Juice Union, a juice and smoothie shop in Somerville, Mass. only uses the freshest ingredients from local farms to create delicious smoothies. Creamline in New York, N.Y. has a "from farm to tray" model that combines ingredients from local farms and purveyors.

272. Open a chef incubator.

Make your chefs the main attraction of your restaurant. Smallman Galley in Pittsburgh, Pa. lets emerging chefs experiment with their own concept and menu, giving guests a different experience every time they visit.

273. Try a pop-up restaurant.

Not ready to take your new concept to a brick-and-mortar yet, but want to test your menu on a new audience? Try opening a pop-up restaurant. Eventide Oyster Co., a Portland- based oyster bar with James Beard Award-nominated chefs, is popping up at Haley. Henry to test out the Boston, Mass. market before opening in Fenway.

274. Feature rotating chefs.

Every month, invite another chef to take over your concept and showcase their talents. City Grit in New York City, N.Y. has hosted over 200 guest chef dinners, featuring 18 James Beard Award Winners and 29 Finalists, helping introduce these up and coming chefs to the NYC dining community. The Chefs' Club, also in New York City, N.Y., also serves signature dishes from top U.S. and global chefs.

275. Partner with other restaurants.

Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer... Or, stop thinking of other restaurants as enemies. Partner with other restaurants in your area to bring a more diversified crowd. For example, A4cade in Cambridge, Mass. combines Area Four and Roxy's Grilled Cheese into an awesome retro bar arcade experience.

276. Invite guests into your home.

Some chefs do away with the concept of a restaurant entirely, and simply host small parties at their home. A very exclusive experience, guests will enjoy a home-cooked meal from a professional chef.

277. Moonlight as another concept.

Some concepts are only making money at certain times of day. Brunch places are busy in the morning, bars are busy at night; could these places be making more if they combined concepts? For example, Fifth Frame Brewing Co., opening in Rochester, N.Y., will be an all-in-one coffeeshop, brewery, and breakfast/lunch spot.

278. Add animals to the ambiance.

There are of course perks to having a pet-friendly restaurant. But what about a restaurant focused on cats and dogs? Cat cafes and dog cafes are going nowhere.

279. Partner with local breweries.

Even if you don't have a bar in your concept, you can still serve beer. Partner with local breweries if you're finding that many of your guests visit in the evening. For example, Oath Craft Pizza partnered with Night Shift Brewing in Everett, Mass., and Journeyman partnered with Aeronaut Brewing Co. in Somerville, Mass. to cook meals specifically for beer pairings.

280. Serve draft coffee.

We're used to draft beer. (Personally, I prefer it.) But draft lattes?! La Colombe Coffee Roasters in Boston, Mass. combines milk and coffee, delivering the frothy texture you expect from a latte, in a can, so guests can take it on the go.

281. Flip the speakeasy on its head.

Speakeasies are cool on their own restaurants with hidden bars in the back make guests feel like they're stumbling across something extremely exclusive. But what about bars with hidden restaurants in the back? Dinnertable in New York City, N.Y. does just that. To get in, just go to the Garret East, look behind the curtain, and ring the doorbell that reads PRESS FOR FOOD.

282. Offer a tasting room.

Dining out should always be an experience. But make it even more eventful with a whiskey & scotch tasting room, especially if you're a bar. Host exclusive events to try the newest liquor in your bar. The Olde Mouldy, for example, is a pop-up whiskey bar in The Closet at Backbar in Somerville, Mass.

283. Offer self-serve beer.

With hundreds of beer on tap, Tapster in Chicago, Ill., will take your credit card when you get to the restaurant and give you a "gift card" back. The gift card is placed on the tap machine, where it tracks how many ounces of beer you pour and out of which tap. When you're done, you give the gift card back and pay the total amount accordingly. Ingenious - especially if you're picky about how beer is poured.

284. Take beloved pop culture restaurants and make them real.

Bring pop culture restaurants to life! Saved By the Max in Chicago, Ill. is modeled after the old diner from "Saved By The Bell," and has literally everything that you could possibly imagine from Saved by the Bell in this restaurant: Bayside Tiger's logos, lockers with names on them, plus the exact layout from the show!

285. Open a tribute bar or restaurant.

In that same vein, perhaps your bar or restaurant could be a tribute to a person. A new Will Ferrell- themed bar called Stay Classy will be opening in Boston, Mass. for example. Or, you could take it way back and theme your restaurant on a literary figure; Poe's Pub in Richmond, Va. is a great tribute to Edgar Allan Poe.

286. Turn off the lights.

Teach your guests to experience food in a new way. The Seattle Blind Cafe in Seattle, Wash. creates a sensory experience that forces guests to connect with those around them, despite the darkness, in an emotionally powerful way. The cafe is pitch dark, facilitated by legally blind staff, and designed to change the way you "see" the world.

287. Take your guests to another world.

Ninja New York in New York City, N.Y. sends guests to a subterranean labyrinth, where their servers are ninjas who not only serve food but also perform magic tricks and regularly tumble around. It's an experience like no other.

288. Give your guests a mission.

Safe House in Milwaukee, Wis. is a restaurant that turns guests into secret agents, forcing them to use a password to get in and find clues to complete a mission.

289. Create food that reflects the area.

Don't just source your ingredients from local farms. Go the extra step - create menu items that reflect your experience in your area. No Joke Smoke BBQ, for example, creates a brand of seasonal sauces and flavorful slow smoked meats to reflect the spirit of New England.

290. Use the view to your advantage.

Oasis Restaurant in Austin, Texas is a 3-story restaurant next to a dam on Lake Travis that started as an idea from Beau Theriot for a "restaurant on a hill." It's transformed into a giant, literal oasis for diners.

291. Let guests pour their own Guinness.

There's a very specific way to pour Guinness, and not every bartender gets it right. At Murphy's Law in Pawtucket, R.I., guests can try their hand at pouring their own Guinness - for better or for worse.

292. Take your restaurant on the road.

Food trucks have gotten a lot of press, but I still think they are a great restaurant idea. Take the food to the people! Here are some of our favorite food trucks across the U.S.:

293. Allow guests to build their own meal.

Fire + Ice is a very well-known concept that gives guests the power to build their own meal, and see it being cooked by expert chefs. Since Chipotle's success, many pizza concepts are also adopting this idea, such as Pieology and Blaze Pizza.

294. Open multiple concepts in one location.

If your restaurant has multiple floors, you can have a different concept on each, so guests have more choices. Sienna Mercato in Pittsburgh, Pa. for example has three stories. The first floor is Emporium, a meatball emporium; the second floor is Mezzo, which serves charcuterie and wood-fired pizzas; the third floor, Il Tetto, is a rooftop bar with a sliding glass ceiling.

295. Make the history of your building work for you.

Turn a historic spot into a dining destination. Chinese Tuxedo in New York, N.Y. is a 3-story space built in 1893 that was originally the first Chinese opera house in New York City, and also secretly housed the headquarters of the Tong mafia gang. MBAR in Mystic, Conn. is a historic gas station turned gastropub cocktail bar.

296. Capture millennials with arcades.

Maybe the idea of a “sit down” restaurant doesn’t appeal to the demographic in your area. Instead, try opening an arcade! Beercade HQ in Nashville, Tenn. and Chicago, Ill. Let’s guests... well, drink beer and play arcade games!

297. Do one thing... really well.

People remember eateries with a purpose. Center your restaurant or cafe around an item you are constantly improving. District Donuts in New Orleans, La. for example, serves all kinds of crazy donuts, some stuffed with ice cream or snowballs. They also have coffee and beer on tap. Beer + donuts = success.

298. Reduce overhead by offering your restaurant as a coworking space over the day.

Make money when your restaurant isn’t even open by allowing companies to work there during the day. Spacious is a startup in New York City, N.Y. that uses beautiful, dinner-only restaurant dining rooms as coworking spaces by day.

299. Make food waste profitable.

Food waste is a big problem in the U.S., especially at restaurants. Several companies are working to fight this problem: Misfit Juicery and Rubies in the Rubble take produce that is blemished or misshapen that would otherwise have gone to waste. Food For All and BuffetGo allows people to buy cheap leftovers when restaurants close - food those restaurants would have otherwise thrown out.

300. Combine food and beauty.

The Beauty Bar in New York City, N.Y. serves martinis and manicures, combining two comforts in a delightful way.

301. Give your restaurant a theme.

Some themes can be gimmicky. But other themes can make the restaurant experience extremely fun. Beetle House, a Tim Burton-themed bar, and Jekyll & Hyde, a supposedly haunted bar, do just that.

302. Let guests float on water as they eat.

OK, this one's a little out there. BBQ Donut allows guests to board a boat, and dine on tasty BBQ ribs, beans, slaw, and beverages. The Frying Pan in New York City, N.Y. allows guests to board a lightship and dine on the floating lighthouse. Do you think floating on the water changes the taste of the food?

303. Give your guests a show.

"Dinner and a show" is still a concept enjoyed by many diners. Lumos in New York City, N.Y. is dedicated to baijiu and burlesque shows. Supperclub in Amsterdam presents a rotating list of live performances, artists, and more, while guests lie down on beds.

304. Make eating at your restaurant a holy experience.

Convert a church into a restaurant. The White Rabbit Restaurant in Indonesia is a remodeled historic building that used to house a church, keeping true to the church's design with beautifully stained window panes and arches.

305. Remember: food and drink can be medicinal.

Many restaurants market their food as "healthy," but Apotheke in New York City, N.Y. really mean it: modeled after European apothecaries and Parisian absinthe dens, the cocktail bar is less of a bar, and more of a stage, or chemistry lab, for bartenders to strut their stuff.

306. Allow guests to pay what they want.

It doesn't sound sustainable, but some restaurants, such as EAT Cafe in Philadelphia, Pa. are non-profits that "nourish, educate, and unite the community in a welcoming environment." Their goal? To create a hunger-free community.

307. Use the decor to delight your guests.

There are so many ways to make your decor speak for your brand, but Brandy Library in New York City, N.Y. is an exceptional example. It is a refined bar & lounge, where sommeliers climb ladders up vertical bookcases to fetch bottles.

308. Give your guests taste tests.

Blindfold guests, and make them guess what they're eating. Dining in the Dark in New York and California blindfolds guests so their senses take over, and it's truly a unique experience. Camaje in New York, N.Y. hosts blindfolded-dining events in its cozy bistro.

309. Make your restaurant or bar exclusive... extremely exclusive.

Speakeasies and hidden bars and restaurants make customers feel like they're stumbling upon something secret, and just for them. Here are a few of our favorites:

310. Make your favorite movie into a restaurant.

Dear Irving in New York City, N.Y. is a cocktail parlour with time-traveling theme, inspired by Woody Allen's "Midnight in Paris." Waltz through different rooms to go to different decades: the JFK Room (1960s), Gatsby Room (1920s), the Abraham Lincoln Room (1850s), and more.

311. Invite guests to climb a tree to get to your food.

The Yellow Treehouse Restaurant in Auckland, New Zealand was built by Pacific Environments Architects on a 40m Redwood Tree. Guests climb up, have a great meal suspended in the trees, and then climb down.

312. Use history as inspiration.

Many restaurants take advantage of the history surrounding them. But what about theming your restaurant after a period of history? Le Boudoir is a cellar-speakeasy modeled after Marie Antoinette's private chambers. The Burgary that references the embezzling exploits of 1920s bankers Max Garfunkel and Marcus Tauster, whose former office building is the exact location of the restaurant and bar.

313. Turn guests into patients.

Hospitalis Restaurant in Riga, Latvia has unfortunately closed, but that doesn't make it any less of a great restaurant idea. Here, it's a horror show meets dining experience, where bartenders wear lab coats and waitresses wear nurse uniforms, strap you into a straight jacket, and spoon feed you. Definitely something guests won't forget!

314. Give your servers the opportunity to lift their voices.

Dinner and a show, except your servers are the show. Ellen's Stardust Diner in New York City, N.Y. is a multi-level 50's themed diner with singing servers. Because it's located near Broadway, many servers have gone on to star on the stage and on the screen.

315. Do away with waiters completely.

Some restaurants are taking automation to a whole new level. Eatsa in San Francisco, Calif. and Roller Coaster Restaurant in Nuremberg are two that come to mind for quick service and full-service restaurants, respectively.

316. Combine food and movies.

The one thing I love more than seeing movies? Seeing movies with food. iPic Theaters is a cinema with restaurant-quality food from James Beard-Awarded chefs, and Nitehawk Cinema tailors the menu to the movie selection.

317. Make it all about the kids.

Family dining can be a harrowing experience. Why not make it all about the kids? The American Girl Doll Dining, for example, lets your daughters dine with their dolls.

318. Take it underground.

La Caverna in New York City, N.Y. invites guests underground to a cavelike basement dance club with hookahs at the bar. Stalactites hang from the ceiling, and guests feel like they're inside a lair.

319. Make your restaurant open source - literally.

The Instructables Restaurant, which launched in Amsterdam, gives guests creatively-cooked food and instructions for preparing everything they see - including the furniture. Guests go home knowing how to make the food as well as the furniture.

320. Get creative with the seating.

Chairs and tables are boring. What about beds? Duvet has since closed, but when it was open, it provided seating on beds. Dinner was served on TV trays and giant-screen TVs broadcasted a "psychedelic swirl of soft colors."

321. Find creative ways to make guests put away their cell phones.

Cell phones are the bane of existence for many restaurateurs. Encourage guests to put their phones away and actually talk to the person beside them. Chick-fil-A for example has a cell phone "coop" for people to hide their cell phones in on the table.

322. Go to infinity... and beyond.

Space Aliens Grill & Bar in Minnesota and North Dakota is an alien-themed restaurant based on space travel and supposedly founded by space aliens. A fun destination for kids, it's an interesting theme for a restaurant.

323. Invite guests to dine on a train... or a bus.

Guests might be bored of brick-and-mortar restaurants. Why not serve them on a train - like Le Train Bleu in New York City, N.Y. did before it closed (but it's reopening in Bloomingdale's in 2018!) - or on a bus - like La Fiesta Mexicana Taco Bus does in Dillon, Mont.

324. Give your restaurant a fantasy theme.

Let guests eat in their favorite storyworld, whether it's Alice in Wonderland at Alice's Tea Cup or Doctor Who at The Way Station, both in New York City, N.Y..

325. Appreciate your staff.

It's so important to show your staff you care, and create an open culture of appreciation. At Flour Bakery + Cafe in Boston, Mass., none of the manager offices have doors, and all have anonymous suggestion boxes to get feedback from staff.

326. Have a service guarantee.

Diners have come to expect prompt service and excellent experiences. Come up with a tagline, or mission statement, for your restaurant and stick to it. Satisfaction Guaranteed Eateries, for example, operates on this mantra: Your Enjoyment Guaranteed. Always.

327. Make your restaurant an art installation.

Sometimes, it's not just the food that sets your restaurant apart; it's the decor. In Situ in San Francisco, Calif. knows this; their restaurant is in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and is a sleek ground-floor restaurant. Everything from the decor to the food is art.

328. Take a well-known ingredient, and do something totally different with it.

Most recipes call for butter, garlic, olive oil, etc. What if your restaurant made their own staples? Buttercraft in Portland, Ore. sells handcrafted butter, wine, meat and cheese, and , like butter, and The Granary Cue & Brew in San Antonio, Texas sells barbecue and beer made from scratch.

329. Work with local artists to amplify your brand.

Want to get people talking about your restaurant? Ask local artists to share their interpretations of your menu items. Even Stevens Sandwiches in Utah, for example, offers local artists' interpretations as free prints, creating a "sticky" guest experience. Plus, who doesn't love free prints?

330. Keep your guests on their toes with a happy hour that sells all "needs to go" items.

Instead of throwing out food at the end of the day, offer a 2-for1 happy hour to get rid of fresh-baked goods, where the time to buy changes daily to keep customers on their feet, like Glazed and Infused in Chicago, Ill. does.

331. Post bar training videos and chef videos online.

With more and more people watching videos on their phone - ever heard of Tasty? - your restaurant or bar has a lot of opportunity to showcase your chefs' or bartenders' talents. Old Chicago posts their training videos online.

332. Partner with big businesses.

There could be a creative way to partner with big businesses to amplify your brand. Lyft and Starbucks partnered, so that whenever a customer takes a Lyft ride, they earn points in Starbucks' loyalty program.

333. Add function to your design.

If your kitchen can get loud, you might want to soundproof the dining room. The Painted Burro in Somerville, Mass. covers soundproofing panels in burlap to add quiet to the dining room, Convival in Washington, D.C. wraps the wall in red felt, and State of Grace in Houston, Texas frames sound panels and nails deer antlers to them.

334. Test your more shareable menu items.

Create more shareable menu items as a way to sample the menu. A platter at Ampersand Wine Bar in Chicago, Ill. for example. includes cookies, truffles, candies, chocolates, and other sweets.

335. Go cashless.

Tired of dealing with cash? If the legalities make sense, try going cashless. Sweetgreen is testing out going cashless in many of their locations, and plans to go fully cashless in 2017. If you don't own a fast casual restaurant, you could still test going cashless with the use of mobile POS tablets.

336. Partner with charity organizations.

Many restaurants donate a certain amount of the check to charity organizations. Mission Chinese Food in San Francisco, Calif. donates \$0.75 to the SF-Marin Food Bank; Inspiration Kitchens in Chicago, Ill. offers a foodservice training program to support in-need community members and train for careers in hospitality; Oregon Public House in Portland, Ore. gives customers a list of charities to choose from, and 100% of the proceeds go to that charity.

337. Do away with the brick and mortar, and focus solely on delivery.

Food delivery is becoming more convenient for diners everywhere. Some restaurants are doing away with rent costs and focusing solely on delivery; some examples are Maple and Ando in New York City, N.Y. Sprig and Munchery in San Francisco, Calif.

338. Turn the kitchen into a stage.

If you think about it, your chefs are really the stars of your restaurant. Put them front and center, so guests can see how they work. Great examples are Alinea and Roister in Chicago, Ill.

339. Go all in with prix fixe.

Make seasonal prix fixe, so your menu doesn't get too complicated. Prix fixe literally means "fixed price" and are often great ways to feed large crowds while still offering menu selections within a certain price range. Lenoir Restaurant in Austin, Texas is a great example of a restaurant that uses three-course prix fixe menus smartly.

340. Really simplify your pricing.

Many restaurants overthink their menu pricing; and consequently, so do their guests. Try simplifying your pricing; don't just get rid of the dollar signs, get rid of the numbers altogether. TBD Restaurant in San Francisco, Calif. (which has since rebranded to Fenix Restaurant) had a menu with squares and triangles as prices; guests have to use a "key" to see the menu prices based on the shapes they see.

341. Create interactive menu items.

In some cases, you want your customers to put away their cell phones and enjoy the experience. In other cases, the cell phone can improve the experience. Chefs at Taranta in Boston, Mass. draw QR codes onto certain dishes with squid ink; customers can "scan" the meal and land on a webpage about that dish's ingredients, step-by-step details on how it's made, and videos that educate on the background of the meal.

342. Wax poetic with your menu item names.

Common menu advice is to "write enticing descriptions." But what if your menu names and descriptions were not only enticing, but poetic? Atelier Crenn in San Francisco, Calif. has menu items called "the half moon, silky, and smoky" and "nature rejoice, chasing childhood memories." The menu reads like a poem, and guests are pleasantly surprised by their choices.

343. Or, scrap your menu completely and instead totally personalize the experience.

Do away with the menu, and instead get to know your guests. Restaurants and bars like Restaurant Jezebel in Lockhart, Texas, Drink in Boston, Mass., and The Fat Duck in the U.K. customize the menu based on your life, and what they think you'll like.

344. Get guests out of their comfort zones with communal seating.

We're used to communal seating at hibachi restaurants, but most other restaurants segment their guests into separate tables. Gunshow, Kevin Gillespie's brainchild in Atlanta, Ga., offers a bold take on traditional dining, with dim-sum-style roving carts doling out bites to communal tables.

345. Let guests try your specials "live."

Servers at Sarma in Somerville, Mass. walk around the dining room with featured items in hand. Guests can see specials - some of which aren't even on the menu - before ordering them, while each plate that is chosen is marked down on a card. Guests never know what they're going to get, and this element of surprise makes the experience that much more exciting.

346. Charity Guest Bartenders

This is one of the easiest weeknight bar and restaurant promotion ideas. Invite a charity to send a guest bartender or two - with all tips and 10% of sales going to that charity.

347. Business Networking

Invite tip clubs and business networking groups to hold midweek mixers and speed-networking events at your venue.

348. Tap Takeover

Craft beer gurus love trying new beers, so build your bar and restaurant promotion ideas around the arrival of new brews.

349. Live Trivia Night

Guests want to beat the midweek blues - and you'd like a boost in weeknight business. So, host a live trivia event! It's insanely easy with Buzztime. Get everything

you need to host live trivia yourself: from trivia questions to tablets for automatic scoring.

350. Bar Olympics

Cornhole. Beer pong. Flip cup. These backyard beer-drinking classic games make ideal bar and restaurant promotion ideas. When it's cold outside, just bring the games indoors.

351. Poker Tournament

Guests go all in for poker tournaments, but they can be a hassle to organize. That is, unless it's Buzztime Texas Hold 'Em Poker! Just like live trivia, Buzztime makes it simple to run a poker tourney as tablets turn into digital card decks, and your TVs turn into poker tables.

352. Be a PR Magnet

Maximize the impact of these epic bar and restaurant promotion ideas by alerting local media: TV, radio, and online or print news.

353. Celebrate a Milestone

Located in the Northeast? Celebrate the first 70 degree day with 70 cent burgers or something PR-worthy.

354. Break a Record

Got an idea for a crazy record to break? Apply to the Guinness Book of World Records as one of your bar or restaurant promotion ideas. Even if you don't succeed, you'll get crowds – and media coverage – for the attempt.

355. Bring in a Celeb

Yes, you may have to pay them but yes, it's worth it! Think of all the midweek bar and restaurant promotions you could build around a local celebrity at your place.

356. Battle of the Bartenders

Every month, challenge two bartenders to a mix off. Offer bar and restaurant promotions around the drinks they whip up. Let guests vote on their favorite.

357. Be the “Home” Of

What are you known for? Seriously spicy chicken wings? A different homemade dessert every day? Start promoting yourself as the “home” of something newsworthy.

358. Big Eats

Offer a massive portion of one of your menu items like 20 chicken tenders. Reward anyone who eats it all within a set time period with a free t-shirt.

359. 90s Rap Night

What do Tupac, LL Cool J, and the Beastie Boys have in common? They get everyone dancing. Throwback rap is popular with trendy millennials and Generation Xers.

360. 80s Fever Night

Invite guests to wear their 1980s apparel and enjoy drink and food specials based on 1980s prices.

361. 70s Night

Appeal to older patrons and cool hipsters with a 1970s night complete with Led Zeppelin and Beatles tunes.

362. Sponsor a Sports Team

Sponsoring an adult kickball or softball team in a league is one of the simplest bar or restaurant promotion ideas. Invite the team to your place after games for special league-only offers.

363. Dart League

Get millennials into the game by hosting complimentary dart lessons once a month.

364. Trivia League

Trivia leagues are popular at bars across the country. Get in on the trend. Just give guests access to nationally scheduled trivia games – held 7 nights a week on the Buzztime network. There are 10 million registered Buzztime players, and many form weekly leagues at their favorite bar.

365. Just Dance

Bring in a dance instructor to teach your guests some moves: from ballroom to salsa, square dancing to hip-hop.

366. Plant and Pour

Host a Plant Nite – a hot trend that’s sprouting up. Guests receive supplies and instruction to create potted plants and terrariums. There are thousands of instructors across North America ready to host Plant Nite at your place.

367. Arts and Crafts

Serve cool craft brews and bring in a local craft or paint instructor to lead a workshop.

368. Believe in Magic

Hire a magician to teach guests cool card tricks.

369. Pre-Game Pep Rally

You’re probably busy on gameday but what about the evening before? Invite fans to get hype with a pep rally. Got extra space outdoors? Fire up the grill to create a tailgate vibe.

370. Fantasy League Headquarters

Cater to fantasy football players with clever bar and restaurant promotion ideas that pitch your place as their “headquarters.” If you’ve got Buzztime, you’ll have Football Trivia that tackles the week’s hottest plays and stats.

371. Open Mic Night: DJs

Everyone wants to be a DJ, so let them! Invite local DJs – both professional and amateur – to spin a half hour set. You’ll turn the tables on slow nights.

372. Open Mic: Comedy

Comedy clubs wish they could be like your bar or restaurant. You’ve already got the great food and drinks, you just need the mic and the comedians. Designate one night a week as Open Mic Comedy Night.

373. Open Mic: Upgraded

Basic open mic night is boring. As one of your go-to bar and restaurant promotion ideas, “gamify” Open Mic night by letting the audience vote on the best performer who is rewarded with a \$25 gift certificate.

374. Band Together

Nothing turns up the volume on business better than a live band. Just be sure to schedule the band for after your dinner rush – no one likes yelling over dinner.

375. Be Dramatic

While live music is one of the most common restaurant promotion ideas, go beyond the mic and invite in the local theater. Pitch it to the theater as a promotional event: a few of their actors can perform one scene from an upcoming play. Let them sell tickets on site, too.

376. Radio Remote

Invite the local radio station in to broadcast remotely from your bar. Most stations require payment, but you can always offer trade instead. The on-air personalities could even host an open mic night.

377. Art Gallery

Spice up your décor by featuring a local artist’s work on your walls every quarter. As one of your bar and restaurant promotion ideas, host a VIP “gallery opening” on your slowest night.

378. Singles

Launch restaurant promotion ideas designed to bring singles together. Host a stoplight party. Guests wear green if they’re single, yellow if it’s complicated, and red if they’re taken. You’ll be seeing lots of green...

379. Couples

Host a perfect pairing night for couples. Ask your liquor distributor if they can send a wine rep to do a tasting. You’ll likely see lots of double dates – and extra sales.

380. Nearby Office Employees

Ask a local company if you can drop off coupons for complimentary appetizers Monday through Thursday.

381. Families

One of the easiest restaurant promotion ideas for parents is to offer entertainment for their kids – like the Buzztime digital arcade.

382. Busy Moms

Mom's spa night out is one of the best restaurant promotion ideas to bring in weeknight crowds. Hire a masseuse to give chair massages.

383. Millennials

Show that you're in the know with Buzztime's Trendalicious Trivia every Thursday night!

384. Specific Professions

Think nurses, law enforcement, teachers...honor their hard work with midweek bar and restaurant promotion ideas like drink specials and complimentary apps.

385. Seniors

Baby boomers don't like to admit they're "seniors" but the right restaurant promotion ideas can entice them to fess up anyways. Try offering 7⁰% off 7 days a week from 5 to 7pm.