

MENU

CANADA'S FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE

SURVIVAL
EQUALS
HELPING ONE ANOTHER
ONE CRISIS AT A TIME

RESILIENCE

RESQ's Kuljeev Singh

on living through two Gulf Wars and COVID

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When the global pandemic hit, many of us believed it was going to be short lived, perhaps lasting a few months with little to no impact on our lives. Yet here we are almost seven months later still navigating a world that looks completely different and will remain forever changed. While uncertainty has always been something restaurants have faced, now more than ever, the greatest challenges our industry will face is the uncertainty that the crisis will have on restaurant businesses and how long the effects will last.

Which is why we, at Restaurants Canada, continue to focus on our Feeding the Recovery campaign. In this issue, we highlight many of the challenges and issues that are informing this campaign. We are pleased to welcome back Jacob Richler who writes about consumer confidence and safety when eating out and shares key insights from our consumer confidence campaign. Ivy Knight highlights some of our industry's most resilient community members, and we also shine a light on what's to come as we head into the cold, winter months. To find out more information on this campaign, along with shareable resources, please visit feedingtherecovery.ca.

Through these troubled times, we are pleased to welcome Todd Barclay as our new president and chief executive officer (CEO) to the Restaurants Canada family. Todd has over 20 years of senior leadership experience in food manufacturing, with national restaurant brands and he has also owned a small independent restaurant cafe. Our industry will continue to face many challenges and the road to recovery will be a long and mighty one, but we wouldn't be in this industry if the path were easy. Together we play a massive role in rebuilding the economy, reviving neighborhoods and we must firmly reinstate our place as the foundation of our local communities.



Guy Laframboise
Chair of the Board



As the new president and CEO of Restaurants Canada, I am excited and privileged to join an association which has been focused on helping the foodservice industry grow and prosper in Canada for over 75 years. I know that our industry, which employs over one million Canadians and is a critical part of the national economy, is currently facing significant challenges. As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, the team and I are actively setting our sights on what we can do today to support our members, and how we can help the industry recover and thrive in the short term and into the future.

This issue hits on many of the challenges as we head into the winter months, and takes a look at the far reaching economic effects of COVID-19. We take a dive into our yearly Foodservice Facts report, the most trusted annual foodservice industry research and insights guide, featuring the latest foodservice statistics, trends and forecasts. You can also read about the effects of COVID-19 on bars and entertainment venues, and how these effects have trickled down to other industries.

With this edition of MENU, we aim to share ways you can be part of the collective voice of the foodservice industry to ensure we are heard and how together we can call on all levels of government to guarantee that restaurants and foodservice businesses have what they need to feed the recovery. Let's use our passion and fervour, our ability to inspire and lead, our strong and expansive relationships and our deep love affair with food to do what we do best—feed the nation and help people heal.



Todd Barclay
President



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Do you have comments or a story for us? If so, please email menueditor@restaurantscanada.org.

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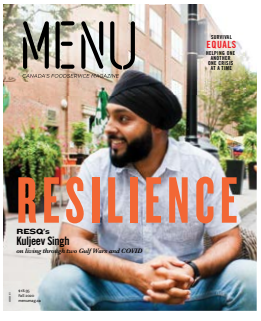
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ResQ's Kuljeev Singh "fell in love" with Canada, and he's passionate about restaurants. Photo by Ivy Knight.

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Lean on Me: **When a restaurant is your client...**

BY IVY KNIGHT

ResQ

In 2005, a sixteen year old boy from Kuwait came to Canada. He came alone in the last week of August. No friends or family met him at the airport.

Kuljeev Singh was just barely a teenager but he had already lived through two Gulf wars. The first when he was three, when he and his family were among the 170,000 people evacuated from Kuwait by the Indian Army using Air India aircraft—the largest evacuation by civilian airlines in history. “The entire region was very unstable,” Singh says over the phone. “I wanted to build my future in a place that was stable.”

Lucky for him he was really good at math.

He studied hard at the University of Waterloo on an international student visa and he fell hard. Not for a girl, or a particularly stunning mathematical equation, but for a country: “I fell in love with Canada and the people here. I’m very blessed with what this country has given me.”

He graduated and started his working life in private equity and venture capital. He could have stayed on that path, but he had this thing about food. “I was always passionate about restaurants.” So he got out of finance and bought not one but two Kanga Foods, which quickly grew into four. Kuljeev soon discovered an overlooked pain point, one of so many inherent in foodservice entrepreneurship. “Repair and maintenance is an overlooked part of operations. Not many operators are equipped to do their own repairs.”

He certainly wasn’t.

A math protégé from the world of finance, he found himself scrambling when equipment broke down. “We struggled finding contractors, we lost thousands in inventory.” He had a vision to empower restaurateurs to rise above busted toilets and exploding grease traps and to do it without going broke or having to learn HVAC in the process. So he created ResQ; a platform that helps owners manage all of their repair and maintenance operations through a streamlined app connecting them to vetted contractors *à la minute*.

Within two years he grew ResQ to over a thousand customers, including big-name clients like Tim Hortons, Pizza Hut, Cactus Club Cafe and Earls.

And then the goddamn pandemic hit.

↣ CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Mr. Sign



Ten years ago, Dave Arnold was working as a display artist at the Urban Outfitters flagship in downtown Montreal, "painting stuff on windows," when he realized that most companies don't have a budget for a visual consultant.

He had noticed that there wasn't much in the way of old-fashioned hand lettering on business signage, so he put together a flyer offering his services, and dropped it off to shops and restaurants in his neighbourhood. "I wasn't really reinventing the wheel. In New York it never died, but here in Montreal the craft had almost disappeared."

He called himself Mr. Sign and business soon took off. "Montreal is so tight knit, word spread quickly."

Especially among restaurants. He created custom work for Nora Gray, Le Vin Papillon, Mandy's, Lawrence and many others. His client list could ostensibly double as a dining guide to The City of A Hundred Steeples—as Mark Twain nicknamed it in the 1800's.

In mid-March business completely dried up. "Even contracts that were already cooking, people were calling to ask me to stop. They didn't know if they'd have a business in two months." Mr. Sign wasn't sure if he would either. "Everyone went into survival mode. Paper over windows. It was terrifying."

Winnipeg Supper Club

In November of 2013, a crowd of people lined up at an old United church in downtown Winnipeg. When the doors opened, Guns N' Roses blasted out, the stained glass windows lighting up from within as the crowd entered. The event was called "November Rain" and it was the first soirée created by Leane Funk's Winnipeg Supper Club.

A former marketing exec, Funk took the success of that first night and made pop-ups and secret dinners her new business. For five years she ran a Sunday Night Dinner series that showcased the cooking talents of Winnipeg's most overlooked culinary demographic: the sous chefs.

Winnipeg doesn't have the robust restaurant scene of New York or Toronto, and as such there isn't a lot of room for growth for "the second in command. A lot of them will sit at the sous chef level for years, and they get frustrated. I was noticing a pretty high burnout rate among younger cooks and I decided to give them a platform."

Since launching her business she has sold out every single event. Her last dinner before the pandemic was held on March 12. Through her business Funk not only provides unique dining experiences for the people of Winnipeg, but she's become a member of the city's food community. "We're in self-preservation mode right now. My primary focus is to create smaller events that keep local caterers and chefs generating some income."



Survival Mode

By the time summer rolled around in Montreal, calls had started coming in to Mr. Sign again. But these clients weren't looking for hand-painted signs so much anymore.

"A lot of the new imagery I'm creating now is to represent what change has occurred at the business. They're using that for t-shirts, tote bags, on windows, profile pics. It's become the temporary branding across all platforms—a new look for whatever the company is now."

Arnold streamlined his process. "In the old days I would have given three different logos to choose from; I'm knocking out options and revisions to give a break on pricing. I'm going lean, trying to trim as much of the fat as humanly possible."

That restaurants are still putting their limited resources into his services says a lot about the importance of what Mr. Sign offers. "Your sign is the first impression. I think that's why businesses are still allocating funds to commercial artwork—to get people in the door."

Even with his efforts he knows that 2020 will not be a profitable year. "Jesus Christ, if I can make enough to keep the lights on that's become the definition of success. At least for me."

But it's about more than profit at Mr. Sign, his clients have become like family. "Everyone has that same look of concern. We don't want to see anyone drop off, we're all working hard to boost each other up."

Last month Funk hosted Southern BBQ & Blues, "a mountain of meat and loads of sides," both in Winnipeg and in her hometown of Winkler on the North Dakota border. They served two pounds of food per person; three kinds of meat sided by mac and cheese, beans, slaw and cornbread all laid out on beer flats.

"Even though people were sitting far apart it felt like a normal evening. People were so grateful to have a night out."

Recent Winnipeg Supper Club happenings: "Art & Snacks," an event Funk holds every year as a fundraiser. This year the proceeds went to the chefs participating. "So many of us have experienced a loss of income, if this can replenish or help someone catch up—every little bit helps."

Her annual seafood boil also happened in September.

After a morning of dealing with liquor license applications for events, Funk is waiting in her car for a tow truck, her tire having just blown out on the highway. "I'm very aware that my role in Winnipeg Supper Club is the easiest one, it's more nerve-wracking for the chefs. There's a fear of the unknown day to day. The fact that things are selling at all this year, under these circumstances, makes me feel really positive about 2021. If we can get through these next six months...."

It is autumn now, and I meet Singh at ResQ headquarters on the Esplanade in Toronto; a few blocks of huge patios that would normally be packed with summer tourists, now abandoned and eerily quiet. The office is empty save for one employee and his young son. Most of the team work remotely, coming in for socially-distanced team meetings and brainstorming sessions.

"You can't brainstorm on Zoom," says Singh.

For ResQ to stay open, for this office to keep the lights on and the Wi-Fi running, he and his team have had to adapt fast. "We lowered our prices by 10-20% and we've changed our own revenue model to provide more flexibility. Where restaurants were paying by the service, now it's a subscription, so all services are covered. And we've built in features so clients can manage some tasks internally, like cleaning in-house rather than hiring outside."

Survival mode has helped ResQ, Mr. Sign and Winnipeg Supper Club to refine their businesses and narrow in on what is most important to them. Each understands that restaurants are the lifeblood of their enterprise; the familial feeling of restaurants has seeped into the mindset of each entrepreneur, and their companies are better for it. They've managed to survive, not by being hard-ass business people, but through empathy, flexibility and cooperation.

And for a boy who came to this country alone and followed his passion, leaving finance to work in restaurants to find himself in such a deeply unstable situation? Well, this isn't a war zone. This kind of crisis is one he can handle.

At ResQ, Singh's customers are coming back, and new clients are signing up. "So many restaurants are in a more comfortable spot now than they were in March. There's a lot of hope now." M





For Nunu Rampen, ‘Nothing Exposes People’s Most Basic Biases—and Loves—More Than Food’

BY ALEXANDRA CIOPPA

When a restaurant is touted to be a favourite of Jake Gyllenhaal and counts Idris Elba among its customers, I trust that the menu does not disappoint. Nunu Ethiopian Fusion restaurant is located on trendy Queen West in downtown Toronto. Owned and operated by Nunu Rampen, the restaurant is a family affair; her team consists of her husband Chris, sister, and daughters that jump in when needed.

Nunu’s passion for cooking began at a very early age. Her mother ran a 100-seat “Tej house’ serving Ethiopian honey wine and barbecue in the town of Nazareth, Ethiopia. When she was 16 she was sent to Kenya with her uncle, a UN diplomat, to escape the Mengistu regime then in power. In Kenya, she learned to formally cook from the UN Mission chef—a Cordon Bleu-trained chef named Roma. Beyond learning French, Italian, Indian, and Kenyan cuisines, she learned the formal discipline and logistics of cooking for large groups.

She came to Canada to help her sister Aster: a single mother who had bravely just opened Addis Ababa—one of the first Ethiopian restaurants in the city. Together they ran Addis with Nunu doing the cooking and Aster running the front. Addis had a long life—almost 27 years—and essentially came to an end when Aster returned to Ethiopia to start a construction company.

For her next venture, Nunu wanted to explore a more upscale Ethiopian dining experience, so when her previous landlord offered her a space on Queen West she jumped at the opportunity. The restaurant is a labour of love—it was designed by Nunu herself—as Nunu and her husband Chris gutted and built the establishment together. Featuring an open kitchen and a simple but elegant bar, the space is a beautiful but approachable dining experience.

Nunu’s mantra is to create fresh, light, and healthy Ethiopian fusion cuisine that is responsive to the seasonal variations of North America. Injera (Ethiopian sourdough bread) is made in-house every morning and Nunu leverages local ingredients as much as possible; during the summer much of the produce comes from the family garden in Oakville and the meat from nearby Mennonite farms.

The menu is divided into ‘herbivore’ and ‘carnivore’—which reflects the way Ethiopians eat. Ethiopian cuisine does not heavily feature desserts, so Nunu blends Western styles and ingredients with unique flavours for dishes like Moroccan Saffron Pears with homemade ricotta and a trifle with peaches from Two Century Farm in Grimsby. At Nunu’s bar, you’ll find Chris slinging New Orleans-style classic cocktails. “I think we are the only people doing a proper Sazerac in the neighbourhood,” Nunu points out.

In the 12 years since Nunu opened, the team has garnered rave reviews. “We would like to think that we are the first upscale Ethiopian/North East African restaurant in Toronto and maybe even Canada or North America,” says Nunu. However, this hasn’t resulted in the media spotlight they should deserve.

“Toronto Life has never done an article on us or our sister cafe, Bu’na. They did do an article when Addis closed though, which gives the impression they were waiting for its demise! In fact, they have never done an article on any Ethiopian restaurant—one of the oldest international cuisines. How is that possible?”

Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee, as Nunu points out, “just as France is the place for cheese culture.” However, it’s an introspective question that we need to ask ourselves—is the level of admiration or respect for Ethiopia the same as it is for France? “No one else on

the planet spends two hours every day of their adult life having a coffee," Nunu states.

The oversight and exclusion of Black-owned restaurants on behalf of mainstream media (MENU included), is just one example of how the foodservice industry needs changing and needs to evolve into a more inclusive and welcoming space.

On this, Nunu explains the much-needed shift in her own words: "I think the first step is to throw out the French model where the chef is a feudal overlord. This allows a lot of bad behaviour and it is not a helpful relationship. We are talking about creating a social fabric where we treat everyone with respect and love wherever we come from. This will take time and self-reflection by all of us. Lip service and faux concern isn't going to change anything."

It's not just the fact that we (as an industry or even as consumers) aren't supporting Black-owned foodservice operations, but it's that we aren't showing up in a beneficial or meaningful way.

Nunu provides insight into this: "Avoid stereotypes. [There's a tendency to lump] African cuisine as a single thing and speak of the Black experience as monolithic. Ethiopian food is a completely different cuisine than South African, Ghanaian, and Moroccan. We tend to lump 'Blackness' as a singular experience, but it is not. The world view of an Ethiopian is very different from a Jamaican."

This is why organizations like BLACK FOODIE are so essential to foodservice. BLACK FOODIE is a versatile media platform focused on sharing Black food traditions, amplifying Black voices in the food industry, and creating opportunities for Black food influencers. Nunu puts it succinctly when she says, "Nothing exposes people's most basic biases—and loves—more than food. The biases may not be racist in origin, but they are powerful and they inhibit real relationships. How can you really begin to know someone if you can't eat with them?"

To Nunu (and many others), BLACK FOODIE's work is so valuable to their business. In the past, Nunu has worked with BLACK FOODIE and founder Eden Hagos on their first live event—Injera & Chill—in 2017, and over the years, Eden has featured Nunu and the team in articles and through their various social channels.

"BLACK FOODIE is part of breaking down these barriers," furthers Nunu. "For many people, there is this peculiar hierarchy in the food world where French haute cuisine is at the pinnacle and everything is somewhere below. I think the work that they're doing is having an impact on this ideal slowly going away, and I'm hopeful that there will continue to be a growing appreciation for all cuisines, for street food, and honest artisanal things." ▪

To learn more about how your organization can benefit from their unique reach and authority within the foodie community, get in touch via bookings@blackfoodie.co.

We are talking about creating a social fabric where we treat everyone with respect and love wherever we come from. This will take time and self-reflection by all of us.





Back to Square One

HOW AND WHERE DO WE BEGIN TO ADDRESS RACISM IN INDUSTRY?

BY STACEY NEWMAN

The year 2020 has left many of us with the sense of living through ominously historical times—against the backdrop of a global pandemic, our societies' deepest scars have become open wounds. The pain from these injuries can no longer be ignored. Injuries that have manifested in grief and rage; grief for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), for Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and countless others. For BIPOC members of our society and industry, racism, discrimination and inequity are not new experiences. Systemic racism and its roots in our institutions are not new realizations. I'm a woman of European descent, a settler, therefore, I don't include my opinions in this article. I've spoken to two industry veterans willing to give me their viewpoints. It's important to note, however, though we should not be afraid to ask questions in order to build a better industry, our BIPOC colleagues are not only representatives of their respective cultures, but multifaceted human beings. We shouldn't forget this when approaching these issues as journalists. Education, research, acknowledgment, compassion, understanding, honesty and self-awareness: these are the overarching principles that we should employ in our collective approach to dismantling system racism. We all have a role to play.

Industry veterans Philman George and Michelle Caine, along with Black Foodie and Restaurants Canada are tackling systemic racism in the food industry. Through research they're identifying structures so deeply rooted that looking at the data alone does not paint the full picture. They're matching data with experiences, and identifying barriers in front of certain groups. The following are their thoughts, observations, anecdotes and points to consider...in their words:

DIG IN

This is only a starting point for this vital discussion. Please visit MENU online at menumag.ca or restaurantscanada.org for in-depth coverage of our work with Philman George, Michelle Caine and Black Foodie on this front.

PHILMAN GEORGE AKA 'THE RHYMING CHEF'

CORPORATE CHEF, HIGH LINER FOODS

"You look at this systemic problem and the first thing is just addressing it, right. Just, acknowledging that it exists is huge. I'm seeing more of that acknowledgment now. As we look at it from the food lens, tackling systemic racism means examining issues that go far beyond the confines of a restaurant.

"When it comes to food and we think about all of the touchpoint institutions like school education outward, how we're taught, the biases that exist, it stems into a lot of other areas. Think about people applying for loans to open up their restaurant and the bias that may be in the loan officer. So many of us have been educated through a flawed education system making this such a complex issue. Like, it's hard to narrow in on a branch when you really should be looking at the root. These systemic structures are buried deep in our foundations.

"If you look at Canada and how it was colonized, it was done from a place of 'superiority.' [How we treated First Peoples] their culture was devalued and a new one was imposed on them. This mindset of 'superiority' has laid the foundations for the systemic structures that exist across all of our institutions in Canada.

"And I can only speak from my experience. My schooling, it was very much from a European base. This world is structured where Europeans have a lot of dominance. We need to re-examine our culinary curriculum and also re-examine how it's implemented. If we, as chefs, we gotta learn the mother sauces and all types of culinary foundations that stem from European influences, is the teacher doing a good enough job to connect the dots, you know, connect the cultures, right? For example, we're using clarified butter. Well, there's a perfect time for the instructor to draw the connection between clarified butter and Ghee, which is used a lot in South Asian cuisine.

"BIPOC: we have been advocating for our rights for decades. And it feels like, like finally everybody's paying attention, but you should have been paying attention a long, long time ago. So, you can imagine the amount of overload. We are the victims of systemic racism yet we have to continue to educate and help break down a system that we didn't create. That's a heavy burden. This burden needs to be shared. Through Restaurants Canada we're going to be able to have these conversations on bigger platforms, bigger stages. We're going to make some changes; I'm thinking about the food industry landscape as a whole."



MICHELLE CAINE

CHAIR OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

"When I speak, it's from my experience and what I've learned over the years. I have a different experience than the millions of [other Black women]. And so when I hear 'Black Lives Matter,' when I hear 'social change,' we all have our own stories and experience. But, there's also the opportunity to be a collective voice.

[Where is the representation in upper management? On boards? As executives in the food industry?] "From my experience it comes down to education versus industry. I think that I have seen more [diverse female] leaders including management and executives in education than I have in industry. When I came into this role, I wasn't the first, I didn't break any barriers. My predecessor was a Black woman who had an esteemed career at hotels before she was an academic. I definitely saw more senior leaders in education than I did in industry. In industry, I see more diversity in entry-level and guest-facing positions. "As educators, the systemic part is on us, on colleges and university. We have a lot of work to do as everyone does. I know there has been some criticism, especially when it comes the colonial way of cooking or the European way of cooking. If that helps to teach the basics, teach the basics, it's on us to hire [diverse] chefs, to now take those basics and add flair to it and understand different cultures so you can speak to it.

"It's so complex. You talk about race... you talk about generations, [it's] very different in how we grew up with different race. I don't have any children, but raising a Black male in either Canada or the US is still a totally different thing. Like, yes, my cousins had the speech 'do not argue with the police,' 'just answer the question,' 'don't try to prove that you are right in the field. Wait till you're in a court of law.' All Black males and my cousins [heard that speech]. My uncle had the speech, you know, 'Respect them. Whether they disrespect you, you respect them because I want you to come home.'

"It can be very overwhelming...I was on LinkedIn, and, you know, there are still panels and interviews that have very white male leadership, but I'm optimistic about hospitality. I'm optimistic about our industry, about academics.

"And so what can we change in people's hearts? I don't know. I'm coming from a place, a place of faith myself. So I'm going to try to do what I can do to be good and to offer good and still be a human being and have emotions and get frustrated and all that sort of stuff, but also be somewhat accepting. One of the things that I also learned growing up is not all white people are racist and not only white people are racist.

[The reality is] "We've been hating each other as human beings from day one. And we've been loving each other as human beings since day one."



CHEF RUSSELL AUCKBARAULLEE ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CANADIAN-MAURITIAN

THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION AND INCLUSIVITY DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

BY STACEY NEWMAN

Mauritius is an island nation off the southeast coast of Africa. Its economy is dependent on tourism and fishing, and the island nation boasts populations of varied flora and fauna with many species endemic to the island.

On July 25, 2020, a Japanese ship—the bulk carrier MV Wakashio—ran aground on a coral reef off the coast of Mauritius, releasing tonnes of fuel oil before it broke in two, causing environmental, social and economic crises for the island nation. There was delay in the government response. But everyday Mauritian citizens and ex-pats weren't going to wait to act; they mounted a massive citizen effort to save their natural world.

Chef Russell Auckbaraullee was born in Toronto of Mauritian parents. He has dual citizenship in Canada and Mauritius and he has spent much of his life travelling to and from both countries. Auckbaraullee is one of those helping from abroad by fundraising and raising awareness of the disaster. Auckbaraullee is part of a small, tight-knit community of Mauritians in Canada. He's a big deal in Canada, but he's an even bigger deal in Mauritius. He cooks for dignitaries, including the prime minister of Mauritius as well as politicians and celebrities in Canada, owns and runs Penthouse Catering, teaches culinary courses, and he is a television personality on Star Foodies.

The news of the shipwreck and fuel oil spill—heartbreaking photos of the subsequent damage coming from his relatives at home—was an immediate call to action for Auckbaraullee. At the start of our interview—always the chef—Auckbaraullee gives me a literal taste of traditional street food that you might find hawked on the streets of Port Louis—gateaux piments (fried balls of yellow split pea flour, spice and chillies served with a piquant, sweet sauce).

Then it's onto the business at hand, he tells me about the clean-up efforts being carried out in Mauritius. Immediately following the accident, the people of Mauritius rapidly mobilized. Their beaches, reefs and surrounding waters already sullied by the black, sticky, noxious leaked fuel oil, regular people began organizing a grassroots clean-up effort that can only be described as an engineering and sociological marvel (Auckbaraullee tells me about vast quantities of human hair being donated and collected by Mauritians. Along with the fibrous pulp of sugar cane called "bagasse," the hair and bagasse are stuffed into green mesh tubes which are sewn closed by hand in an assembly line of volunteers to absorb the fuel oil before it can spread further, then removed and replaced with new tubes).

Since the first days following the accident, the beaches nearest the disaster have become muster points where the infrastructure of disaster management has been put in place. The fuel oil is highly toxic, breathing apparatuses are required as well as protective gear over the skin. Despite this, Mauritians are wading into the waters or using their boats to contribute to the efforts without hesitation.

How is it that Mauritians have managed to pull this off with so little outside support? Auckbaraullee again touts the unity at the heart of Mauritian society. He is matter-of-fact because this is how he too was raised the Mauritian way. Referring to the multicultural makeup of the country's population—Mauritians may be of Indian, Creole, French or Chinese descent—he states that Mauritians work together. Period. No matter which cultural heritage you might belong to, Auckbaraullee says this kind of inclusivity is a beloved facet of Mauritian life. It is respect, it is a sense of belonging no matter what. Inclusivity is taught in the Mauritian school system, it finds its ways into centres of worship and religious celebrations. Auckbaraullee says that when you go to a church in Mauritius, you're probably going to hear about friendship. Go to a Mandir and you're going to hear it in Hindi. A Buddhist temple, you'll hear it in Mandarin. A Masjid, you'll hear about friendship and unity from the Imam. Auckbaraullee thinks this ability to co-exist and respect fellow human beings is uniquely Mauritius. That Mauritians are demonstrating this cooperative spirit under the weight of such adversity is a lesson for the taking. The recovery efforts in Mauritius continue and likely will for many years to come.

Auckbaraullee was supposed to be in Mauritius when the ship ran aground. Due to COVID, he has been grounded in Canada like all of us. But he is doing all that he can to help until he can once again travel there himself. If you would like to contact Russell Auckbaraullee to offer help, or to learn more about his work, please visit him online at penthousecatering.ca. M



BEWARE... Your local could be shutting down

RESTAURANTS ACROSS CANADA ARE SAYING GOODBYE

BY SHANNON MURPHY

Twelve years ago, during what was, at the time, the biggest recession of our generation, Chef Robert Belcham and his partners built a regionally specific Italian restaurant in Vancouver called Campagnolo. Set up as a casual and approachable destination, the restaurant focused on locally-sourced food, supported by a full charcuterie and butchery program. When COVID-19 hit earlier this spring, Chef Belcham closed the doors for what he thought, like many other restaurant owners, was only going to be a temporary measure. Unfortunately, like many other restaurant owners, he has recently had to accept the sad news that Campagnolo will never be opening again—COVID-19 simply made it too tough to continue.

It's a story we are hearing far too often these days, as restaurants across Canada—from local institutions to new spots hustling to establish themselves—continue to close as COVID-19 ravages an industry already plagued by razor-thin margins. Owners face not only the emotional loss of their business, but also face large debt, little savings or contingency and an uncertain future.

A survey conducted by Restaurants Canada in April found that while one in 10 restaurants have already been forced to close permanently, another 18 per cent of restaurants may have to close their doors for good if conditions continue. Due to steep reopening costs on top of debt accumulated during the pandemic, a typical table service restaurant could be facing more than $90,000 in losses and between 17 to 35 months to return to positive cash flow.* It's a sad reality for some operators, that business won't ever recover, and they will have to close permanently.

Closing a restaurant isn't a decision that is taken lightly. Owners spend countless hours and large sums of money trying to invest their passion for food into a successful business. For owners, closing their second home is devastating. "It was absolutely awful," says Chef Belcham. "When we first closed down the first thought that came to my head was my staff and how to ensure they are safe and taken care of."

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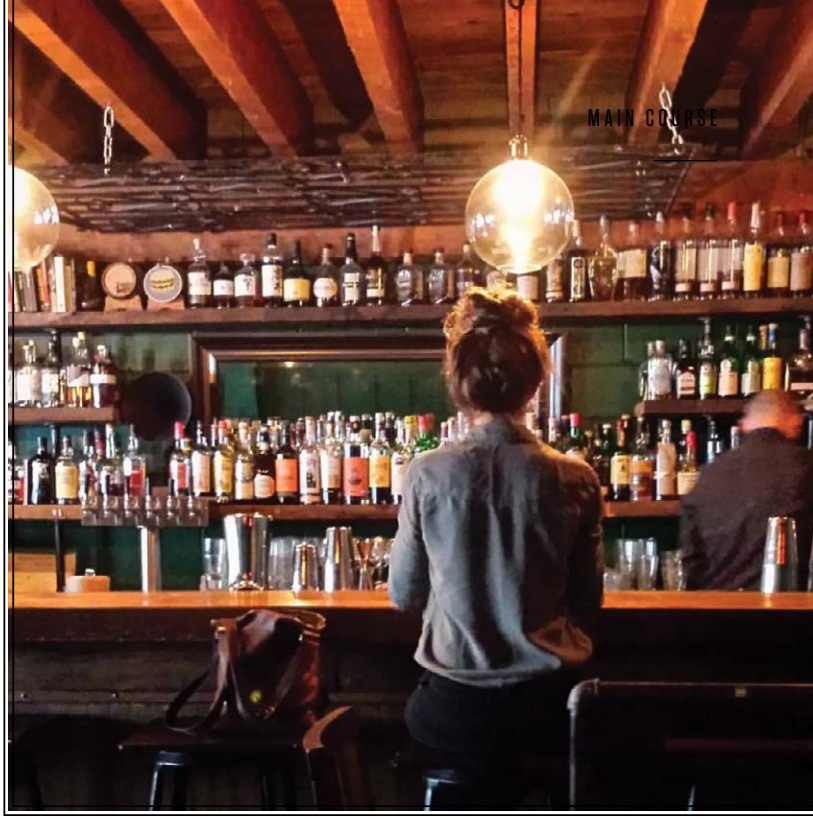


For Brian Flowers, owner of Table Top Café, a board game café he describes as a special blend of coffee shop, board game library and retail store, the hardest part was admitting defeat. With two locations in Edmonton, Alberta, Flowers was forced to permanently shut his downtown location in April. “In order for this downtown store to function, it has to be full. So, it needs social distancing to not be a thing, or there’s just no way to make enough money,” he says.

Apart from the emotional toll of closing a restaurant, the logistics of shutting a restaurant can also be overwhelming: laying off staff who have become part of the family, disposing of inventory and selling off assets. Flowers laid off all 19 of his employees, so they could begin the process of applying for employment insurance right away and leveraged social media to sell assets with loyal customers buying the chairs or tables they played at. When he first shut the doors of Campagnolo, Chef Belcham and his team did everything they could to preserve food, transforming fresh herbs to pesto, vegetables to pickles and freezing everything that could be frozen. “Then we had to figure out a way to liquidate almost everything, from kitchen equipment to furniture to $40,000 worth of wine. It involved a lot of difficult decisions. It’s not fun and it’s not easy. There’s a strong emotional attachment to everything in that space and it’s hard to sell your heirlooms,” he says.

Flowers and Chef Belcham were both lucky when it came to rent negotiations. Flowers had an excellent relationship with his landlord who was able to buy him out and Chef Belcham owned the building where the restaurants lived. “That allowed us a bit of flexibility, we still have a mortgage, but we didn’t have to worry about talking to a landlord.”

While the CECRA program has been a controversial topic, Chef Belcham feels the government has done some good things, like implementing CERB, and appreciates how local governments quickly pivoted to ensure patios licenses and extensions were put in place. However, he feels that more can be done to help restaurant owners, such as “easing up on payroll taxes, easing up on GST and HST remittances and giving bailouts to smaller businesses versus larger corporations to help those who really need the help.”



It's also important for restaurateurs to recognize that while driven by a fervent love for food, ultimately restaurants are businesses that cannot be run on passion alone. Says Chef Belcham: "So many people go bust because their passion outweighs the logical side of their brain. There's always room for passion, but what is the point if you can't pay your staff. Restaurant owners are not shy of hard work, but they must understand it's not their fault they are struggling, it's not because they are not working hard enough. It's not on them. Do what is logical and smart and do what is best for your business and not for your ego.

Unfortunately, time has run out for Chef Belcham and Flowers and their businesses. But for Chef Belcham it was the right decision: "Closing down was the right decision in the beginning and closing down completely was the best decision for my business. My partners and I reviewed over 12 years of data to see how much we could possibly make and decided maybe it's time to go out on top and be masters in control of our destiny. I didn't want to be the one completely stressed out every day trying to figure out how to make this work." Flowers agrees: "I did a survey with my customers asking what they would need to come back and 20% said they wouldn't come back without a vaccine. I wasn't ok loosing 20% of my business. You need to be realistic and honest with yourself—look in the mirror and make the difficult decision."

So, what does the future hold for Flowers and Chef Belcham? Lots of hope. Flowers has pivoted his business model, participating in farmers markets and looking for new virtual revenue opportunities. Chef Belcham continues to keep his other two restaurants running and optimistically plans to open another restaurant in the spring—a quick service burger concept.

He also sees this period as an opportunity for the restaurant industry to fix what he calls a broken system: "The restaurant business has been broken for so long and COVID-19 exposed it for what it is. There is no better time in our industry than right now to figure out a way to fix the ongoing issues. Most restaurants are only thinking about their survival, but they should also be thinking of a way to make it better for everyone."

*Model is based on a licensed, 80-seat, full-service restaurant, with annual sales of $1.8 million, which was shut down from March 18 – May 31, 2020, except for takeout and delivery. (Source: The Fifteen Group)



Chef Belcham

"In order for this downtown store to function, it has to be full. So, it needs social distancing to not be a thing, or there's just no way to make enough money



WINTER IS COMING:

LOOKING AT THE LAST SIX MONTHS TO PREPARE FOR MONTHS AHEAD

By Jared Hochman

"WINTER IS COMING…AND WE KNOW WHAT COMES WITH IT" IS ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN PHRASES IN MODERN POPULAR CULTURE. AND FOR THE CURRENT STATE OF CANADA'S RESTAURANT INDUSTRY, TRUER WORDS HAVE NEVER BEEN SPOKEN.

Well, almost true.

While we do know that the fall/winter months equal slower traffic and leaner revenue, that's the only thing that's for certain. Will restaurants continue to receive the desperately-needed government support they've had during the lockdown? Will the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions continue to relax…or could a second wave arise and send us into another lockdown.

Restaurants have been pivoting, adapting and displaying remarkable agility through the last six months to tread water, but with the most profitable months of the year behind us, the goal is not to thrive right now—it's to survive.

"Nobody truly does know what the future is going to look like, and if anybody says they do…RUN," says Jo-Ann McArthur, president and chief strategist at Nourish Food Marketing. "We're at a time when consumers are feeling more comfortable than they were at the start of the pandemic, but that could quickly change if we get a second wave."

McArthur, like the rest of the foodservice industry, has been riding the financial and emotional roller coaster that has been the past few months. It's a time when restaurants have been making the best with what they have, but they're playing against a stacked deck.

First, there was the COVID-19 lockdown, where restaurants were limited to just takeout and delivery, but consumers were overwhelmingly scared to venture out. Then restaurants were allowed to offer limited patio space, and eventually our current climate of indoor dining at a reduced (50 per cent) capacity.

Even though the restrictions have gradually eased, and customer confidence slowly grew, there's still a lot of the market unavailable: McArthur explained that IMI research for Canada showed that one-quarter of Canadians will not have an indoor restaurant dining experience until a vaccine has been developed.

Why is there still such a hesitancy from consumers to support the restaurant industry? For Larry Isaacs, president of the Firkin Group of Pubs, it starts with the messaging from the top.

"The government is still telling people to stay home, to stay indoors," says Isaacs. "That means there's still nobody going to work in their offices, so lunchtime business rushes, cocktail hours and after-work parties are all no longer a thing for restaurants."

Isaacs explained that restaurants typically operate at razor-thin three-to-four percent margins at standard full capacity. The patios and warm weather have been a help, but once those are taken down restaurants will only be left with the 50 per cent capacity dine-in seating, which truly



isn't even that much: when factoring in the physical distancing guidelines and precautions, Isaacs estimates that most restaurants will run at about a 25-30 per cent capacity.

"That, along with takeout and delivery, is simply not a sustainable business model," says Isaacs.

GETTING IN THE BEST POSITION TO SURVIVE

While the industry as a whole suffered massive losses throughout the pandemic, some restaurants were able to do better than others, because of a few key adaptations.

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For David Hopkins, president of The Fifteen Group, two major things stood out. The first was planning: restaurants that exceeded expectations sat down and thought about how to get through this 'new normal,' even if it was just the short term.

"Restaurants that just opened their doors, with the same menu, same price point—same everything—they haven't been as successful," says Hopkins. "They were in for a surprise as what worked for them six months ago probably didn't work in this environment."

That planning could have ranged from simply adjusting hours to completely overhauling their restaurant offerings and business concept, all to suit customer needs.

Service Inspired Restaurants (SIR Corp.), which owns 60 different restaurants under a number of different themes and banners (predominantly in Ontario), realized this need to pivot quickly and adjust to this new reality.

"We started as a very busy place for social dining occasions, and had to pivot into a glorified takeout business," says Anesie Johnson-Smith, vice president of marketing for Service Inspired Restaurants. "We started offering items in a way that we became a grocery store, then we offered a liquor store; it was almost a weekly change that we started to implement based on adapting and adjusting to what we saw happening in the marketplace."

Johnson-Smith added that they severely cut down their menus at all their various locations, while constantly doing temporary additions (and deletions) based on what services they could offer.

For SIR Corp's Scaddabush locations, one of their key products is fresh mozzarella, which "did not travel well, no matter how many different types of packaging they tried." That led them to remove it from their offerings, but it was returned as soon as some form of dine-in service was restored.

Other restaurants, such as The Birds & The Beets in Vancouver, decided to essentially reinvent themselves.

Owner Matthew Senecal-Junkeer says that they operated two different locations, choosing to temporarily close one down at the beginning of the pandemic and converting the other one from a cafe/bakery to a grocery-style takeout service.

"We're a bakery, so we sold baked breads and made jams, yogurts, that sort of stuff," says Senecal-Junkeer. "Normally we're making consumed-on-site sandwiches and such, so we shifted our focus pretty dramatically, while also reducing our hours and staffing quite dramatically as well."

While going from a full lockdown to relaxed restrictions didn't make everything better, Senecal-Junkeer noted that they are currently down 30 per cent year-over-year, but they started down 70 per cent in May (heading into June).

"Every month has been 20-25 per cent busier than the month before it, so we're definitely seeing a positive trend," says Senecal-Junkeer. "We were a takeout sandwich restaurant, but now we're a bakery/grocery that also serves sandwiches too."

"RESTAURANTS THAT JUST OPENED THEIR DOORS, WITH THE SAME MENU, SAME PRICE POINT—SAME EVERYTHING—THEY HAVEN'T BEEN AS SUCCESSFUL," SAYS HOPKINS.

SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT

The other major standout for Hopkins was that restaurants that took a more professional and disciplined approach to health and safety have fared best.

"We always say that the most important pillars of restaurant success are quality, service and atmosphere," says Hopkins. "But now there are four pillars: quality, service, atmosphere and cleanliness/sanitization."

Hopkins noted that it starts from the very beginning: what's the messaging on your social media? Your website? How do you answer when people ask about your protocols?

He stressed that from the get-go, you need to convey a real level of professionalism, which the majority of restaurants took to heart.

"One of the biggest things we had to focus on was communication and transparency with our guests and our people," says Johnson-Smith. "We had mandatory PPEs for our team members. Mandatory health screening checks every day for all our staff—before they even entered the building."

SIR Corp also introduced strict hand-washing and sanitizing protocols: any touchpoint or guest surface was constantly sanitized and they had to remove tables and change the configuration of both their dine-in space and patios to adhere to physical distancing.

"The one thing we learned the most was that safety became the cost of entry… in any kind of visit," says Johnson-Smith. "We had to pivot from being foodservice experts into becoming safety experts."

It was a lofty, and costly, undertaking that all restaurants had to take, but it was essential in being transparent with customers that they put their safety above all else.

While a new-found emphasis on advanced cleaning sounds like more work for everyone, McArthur notes that it presents a new opportunity to leverage technology to provide the customer with a new—but still seamless—experience.

"Make sure that you're preparing guests for your experience before they even come to your restaurant," says McArthur. "Ensure that they know what your safety protocols are. Let them look at the menu before they arrive, perhaps even allow them to order in advance.

"That's already existing consumer behaviour: most customers check out a menu online before they actually go to a restaurant. So leverage that behaviour and have people actually decide what they want to eat beforehand. It makes it easier to prepare for the back-of-house, easier for food inputs and promotes less food wastage."

It also provides much-needed transparency. McArthur recommends restaurants "show people you're cleaning—make it a hygiene theatre."

With the ease of how a negative story can spread, it's also critical that restaurants handle their health and safety protocols in an authentic way.

"We just did a really good job of following the rules in good faith, and not trying to find little loopholes to beat the system," says Senecal-Junkeer. "Consumers sense when places are cheating or trying to bend the rules, so we're all better served by everybody universally following those guidelines in good faith—and it seems to be working."

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Despite coming so far, there is still so much uncertainty ahead that restaurants need to remain nimble and ready for anything, and more cost-saving measures may need to be put in place.

"Restaurants have already narrowed menu selection, but they realistically will have to look at increasing prices," says McArthur. "The cost of doing business has gone up: labour is your No. 1 input, food costs are going up across the board, along with the additional safety protocols and only running at half capacity: don't try to hide the fact that it costs more to do business."

While a price increase may be immediately off-putting, Hopkins notes that it's not actually as bad as you think: For perspective, roughly a 30 per cent sales reduction, due to lack of volume, can be offset by about a 12 per cent price increase.

"Restaurants are really going to have to look at their pricing and profitability model and really figure out what they need to do to make it through the winter," says Hopkins.

At SIR Corp, while all avenues are being explored, they're finding that the best approach is to simply give the customer what they want…and more.

They noticed that consumers started to change their ordering habits, and their menu mix changed pretty severely from pre-COVID to post-COVID as people gravitated towards classic favorites.

"At Jack Astor's, chicken fingers were always our No. 1, but it grew to about 30 per cent of our menu mix," says Johnson-Smith. "People were craving those familiar, comfort foods that they trusted, so we started innovating around chicken fingers again, and we added around eight new flavours of chicken fingers this summer.

"We decided that hey, if guests really wanted something, we were going to give them the best possible experience in that product."

For The Birds & The Beets, they're back to about 60 per cent of their full menu right now (and both locations are open again). But as they make most of their products in-house and from scratch, with a reduced seating capacity, Senecal-Junkeer realized that committing to the whole menu was not in their best interest if he wanted to maintain giving a high-caliber guest experience.

What he has done, innovation-wise, is add new capacities, such as a pizza oven, to create food that is conducive to take

↣ CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



out. He's hedging his bets on a second wave hitting, in a sense, by having offerings that should work really well if that event does occur—or even if it doesn't.

CAN'T DO IT ALONE/NEED HELP

While restaurants have displayed remarkable dexterity in navigating through this dark and uncertain period, it's becoming increasingly obvious that they won't be able to manage through the coming months alone.

The government has provided both rent and wage subsidies to the majority of restaurants (with 70-85 per cent of staff wages subsidized for qualifying restaurants), but those subsidies are set to expire in December—even after being extended.

Isaacs has been one of the champions and faces of lobbying for an even further extension, and possibly increasing, the amount of government support, because it still simply isn't enough.

"The restaurant industry holds 1.2-million employees, in which 800,000 of them are without work right now," says Isaacs. "The assistance from the government, in both wage subsidy and rent relief, is necessary for all restaurants to survive."

He maintains that the combination of the subsidies expiring, when restaurants are hitting their leanest fiscal stretch and the continued cautiousness being pushed by the government is a one-two punch that will KO a lot of restaurants.

"Our business is a social industry, and to be able to allow only a few people to come in—and be separated—it hurts our restaurants," says Isaacs. "The ambiance is critical to our product, and if this messaging continues, then Christmas parties and holiday parties, normally big draws for all restaurants, will not be a part of our revenue this winter."

"THE AMBIANCE IS CRITICAL TO OUR PRODUCT"

Johnson-Smith noted that the restaurant industry is made up of incredibly hard-working, resilient and talented people, who are willing and ready to fight to stay alive, but there's a somber reality.

"Without government support, this will not be possible," says Johnson-Smith. "As a cornerstone of our country's economy and social fabric, we need to protect our restaurant industry so that we can continue to safely employ and serve millions of Canadians."

MORE OPTIONS TO ENSURE SURVIVAL

While Jo-Ann McArthur, president and chief strategist at Nourish Food Marketing, understands that nobody has the playbook for how to best stay afloat heading into the coming months, she does have some ideas for restaurants to explore adoption to help their bottom lines.

1.

Utilizing QR Codes: OpenTable and some of those reservation services are starting to add pre-dining features and expanded technology, but the good-old QR code is still relevant. Every phone now has a built-in QR reader—use them.

2.

Dedicated reservations: These may need to make a comeback. With limited capacity, restaurants need to make every table profitable, so it may be a situation where customers have to pay for not showing up on a reservation. But it's something that will be tough to manage in this climate, because say, for instance, someone cancels a reservation because they are feeling sick?

3.

Dynamic pricing: Airline and sporting events have been doing it for decades, but that's potentially an opportunity for restaurants as well. It's a chance to smooth out those traffic spikes and stay busier throughout the day. Perhaps we need to look at the concept of an early-bird special or happy hour put throughout the day. It not only helps the front-of-house, but it helps keep the kitchen from getting slammed and it could go a long way to promote staff and customer safety as well.

4.

Meal kits/mobile food: It's not a good time to be in the restaurant industry, but it could be a good time to get into the industry. Christmas and the holidays are not going to look the same—is there an opportunity for that elevated meal kit idea, that's chef-curated with alcohol pairings, and bring that to consumers? Or even open a food truck to cater to various non-mobile groups and families?

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Fall 2020 Beverage Showcase



BOREAL BOTANICAL BREWING

Product Pricing: Projected wholesale pricing is $2,80 per 350ml can, subject to final negotiations.

Name: Relaxed Reishi White

Product Description: We brew botanical tonics using medicinal mushrooms, with no alcohol and no sugar. The Relaxed Reishi White creates amazing relaxed cocktails, especially for guests not drinking alcohol.

For more information, direct inquiries to feelgreat@borealbrewing.ca, or visit us at borealbrewing.ca





Eastdell Wines 200ml Minis

Product Pricing: $4.09 on license, $4.95 retail for each 200mL

Name: Eastdell Wines 200ml Minis Everyday Extraordinary

Product Description: Unbreakable, Industry-First PET plastic, with convenient Stelvin Screw Caps are ideal for single-serve portions with 6.5oz in each bottle. Eco-Friendly, with a 12-Month Shelf Life. The 750ml retail equivalent is priced at $14.95. Two varieties available: Pinot Grigio, Black Cab

WESTLAND AMERICAN OAK AMERICAN SINGLE MALT WHISKEY



Product Pricing: $93.70 (LCBO pricing)

Name: Westland American Oak American Single Malt Whiskey

Product Description:Crafted from five different malted barleys and aged in new American oak casks. Exhibits forward aromas of custard, lemon curd and crème brûlée with notes of milk chocolate, berry and jasmine tea. A rich and rounded palate, with flavours of chocolate, banana, cream and notes of dark fruit.

Sagamore Spirit Signature 83 American Rye Whiskey

Product Pricing: $79.90

Name: Sagamore Spirit Signature 83 American Rye Whiskey

Product Description: Naturally filtered spring water, fed from a limestone aquifer; it sharpens the rich spice of our rye, creating a spirit as rich as revolutionary as America's risk-takers and history makers

Fall 2020 Beverage Showcase



CAMPARI

Product Pricing: $29.95 (LCBO pricing)

Name: Campari

Product Description: Signature bright red colour; herbal aroma with a touch of citrus. Its secret recipe has remained unchanged since 1860. Campari is the red heart and irreplaceable ingredient in the classic Negroni.



James E. Pepper 1776 Straight Rye Whiskey

Product Pricing: $53.05

Name: James E. Pepper 1776 Straight Rye Whiskey

Product Description: This 1776 rye is based on Colonel J. E. Pepper's US revolutionary-era whiskey recipe. Shows aromas of rye bread, caramel and spice with notes of chocolate, fruit and leather. Rich and honeyed on the palate with herb, clove, pepper and ginger flavours leading to smoky, oak-vanilla tones on the finish.



Red Bull Winter Edition Frosted Berry

Product Pricing: Prices vary depending on location ($4.50-5.00)

Name: Red Bull Winter Edition Frosted Berry

Product Description: Delivering a refreshing take on the classic Red Bull Energy Drink, Red Bull Winter Edition Frosted Berry will begin hitting shelves just in time for the cooler days ahead. Red Bull Winter Edition Frosted Berry provides the perfect blend of fruity raspberry notes, with a unique take on the taste of the classic Red Bull Energy Drink. The perfect holiday edition served alone over ice or in your favourite mocktail with a seasonal garnish.

Available in signature size 250ml, 250ml 4-pack and 355ml cans. The product will be available at select locations across Canada while quantities last starting October 1st, 2020.

For more information visit: https://www.redbull.com/ca-en/energydrink

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Name: New Belgium Voodoo Ranger

Product description: Brought to and brewed in Canada by Steam Whistle Brewing, New Belgium's Voodoo Ranger is bursting with tropical aromas and juicy fruit flavours from Mosaic and Amarillo hops, making this golden IPA perfectly bitter with a refreshing, sublime finish. For any questions please email Michael@steamwhistle.ca

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Tired of turkey?

These fall-themed appetizers will shake up your menu and bring an Italian flair to Canadian Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate traditions, enjoy great food with family and friends and give thanks for all that we have. And, while the traditional turkey dinner will always have a place at the Thanksgiving table, appetizers offer a fantastic way for chefs (both budding and professional) to flex their culinary muscles and offer guests an elevated and creative dining experience.

Inspired by Italy's Festival of Thanks, these fall recipes celebrate genuine Italian products and highlight the rich history and flavours of the region of origins. Choosing authentic, full-flavoured ingredients, like Prosciutto di Parma, Prosciutto di San Daniele and Grana Padano cheese, not only elevate your Italian-themed recipes, but also support these certified PDO products (Protected Designation of Origin) so, this holiday, your guests can enjoy a true taste of Italy.

Buon Appetito!



Prosciutto di Parma Cranberry Crostini

Traditional turkey and cranberry sauce take a back seat to this holiday prosciutto appetizer. The tart cranberries paired with sweet Prosciutto di Parma will have you and your loved ones eating these crostinis all night long. Bursting with flavours perfect for Thanksgiving, and creating a new take on a traditional classic, this Prosciutto di Parma appetizer is sure to be loved by adults and kids alike – just be sure to make enough for everyone to enjoy.



Baked Vegetable, Potato & Grana Padano Skewers

These festive skewers will have your guests thinking you slaved over a hot oven all day! Minimal effort, but maximum impact, you'll love the combination of the mellow flavours of Grana Padano cheese balanced with the sweetness of tomatoes, carrots and squash. Serve hot with basil leaves and a sprinkle of Grana Padano.



Sautéed Brussel Sprouts with Prosciutto di San Daniele

This delicious appetizer is both easy to prepare, original and holiday-elegant! Guests will enjoy the savoury taste of Prosciutto di San Daniele mixed with flavourful and soft brussel sprouts; incorporate onions, walnuts, oil and butter to complete. A fresh and bright appetizer to start your Thanksgiving meal.

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What Lies Ahead for Foodservice Sales

BY CHRIS ELLIOTT



Even before the first day of fall, there was a growing chill in the air for foodservice operators. Warm weather and patios gave a much needed shot in the arm to many foodservice establishments during the summer, yet, business owners are already asking themselves: what's next?

Will consumers transition to indoor dining once patios close? Will there be another spike in COVID-19 cases in the fall? What government programs will be in place to help the foodservice industry? Can my business survive?

Restaurants Canada's survey of its members conducted in mid-August echoed many of these issues as we head into the fall season.

More than 90% of restaurant operators surveyed expect their total sales volume to be lower between September and November compared to September and November 2019. In contrast, just under 2% expect their sales will be higher.

More worrisome: of those that expect lower sales, **63% believe the drop in sales in the fall will be worse than the declines they experienced in the summer months. In fact, 41% feel it will be "a lot worse."** While many attribute this to the closure of their patios, they also point to the dramatic drop-off in business dining. A number of respondents are located in downtown markets across the country, and many companies are not bringing their employees back until 2021. Border closures and restricted travel means operators will depend solely on their local market to keep their business open.

foodservice sales forecast for the remainder of 2020

While Statistics Canada has not yet released the sales data, **Restaurants Canada is projecting a 12.8% decline in quick-service restaurant sales** in the third quarter on a year-over-year basis. This compares to a 26.6% drop in the second quarter. In the fourth quarter, quick-service restaurant sales are forecast to fall by 7.2%.

It will be a significantly longer and uneven recovery for full-service restaurant sales compared to quick-service restaurants. **Following a staggering 65.8% decline in the second quarter, full-service restaurant sales are projected to fall by 38.9%.** While this still represents a steep drop in sales, patio season and warm summer weather helped bring guests out to restaurants. Rather than a continued improvement, however, patio closures and cooler temperatures will restrain consumer spending in the fourth quarter, with full-service restaurant sales forecast to drop by 47.2%.

On an annual basis, **foodservice sales at quick-service restaurants in 2020 are forecast to be $4.4 billion lower than in 2019.** This represents a 13.3% year-over-year drop. In contrast, annual full-service restaurant sales are forecast to plummet by 42.5% in 2020, an astonishing $14 billion lower than in 2019.

beyond 2020: sales forecast for 2021 and 2022

Looking ahead, the road to recovery will continue throughout 2021 and 2022. **Quick-service restaurants will fully recover to pre-COVID-19 levels in 2021,** finishing 1% above 2019 annual sales levels.

In contrast, full-service restaurants will take longer, as tourism and business dining are not expected to return to pre-COVID-19 levels until 2022 (or later).

As a result, annual sales at full-service restaurants in 2021 are forecast to be 14.9% below 2019 levels. **In 2022, annual full-service restaurant sales will just barely return to pre-COVID-19 levels.**

forecast assumptions

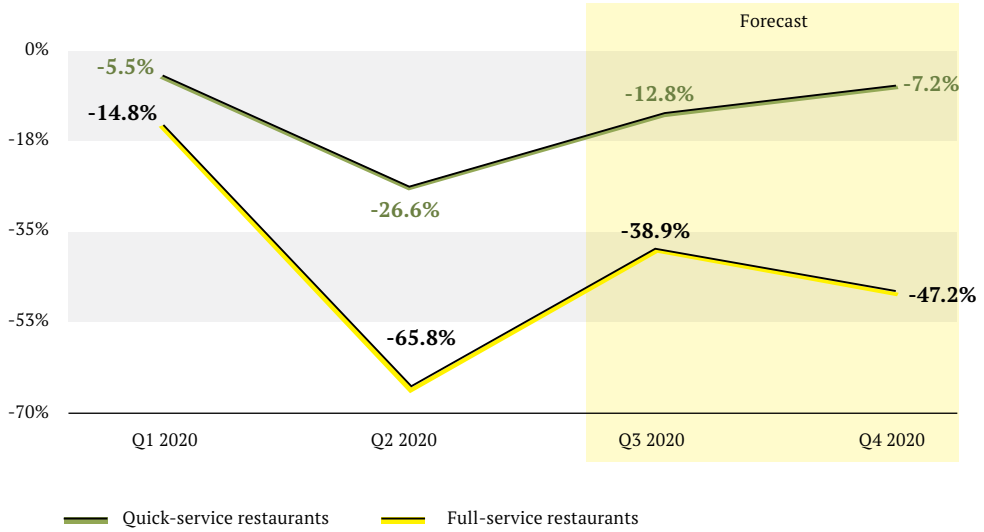
The above forecasts depend on several critical assumptions. It is assumed that coronavirus vaccinations will begin in early 2021. Once an effective vaccine is found, pent-up demand will boost domestic spending and international travel. Office workers and businesses in the downtown core will return to some form of "new normal." However, a delay in finding an effective vaccine would significantly lengthen the recovery time for the foodservice industry.

The forecast also assumes that there is no further national lockdown like the one in April 2020. Another major lockdown would have a devastating impact on foodservice sales and many operators are not likely to survive a second lockdown.

For a detailed foodservice sales forecast by segment by quarter, log in to Restaurants Canada's member portal and download the Q3 Quarterly Forecast report, free to Restaurants Canada members.

To learn from leading industry experts on what the "next normal" will look like for Canada's foodservice industry, the 2020 Foodservice Facts is now available free to Restaurants Canada members on the member portal.

Year-over-Year Change in Foodservice Sales



Commercial Foodservice Sales Forecast

(sales in millions of dollars)

					Relative to 2019	
	2019	**2020f**	**2021f**	**2022f**	**2021**	**2022**
Quick-service restaurants	$33,074.8 3.4%	$28,674.3 -13.3%	$33,420.4 16.6%	$34,469.2 3.1%	**1.0%**	**4.2%**
Full-service restaurants	$33,003.5 3.7%	$18,991.0 -42.5%	$28,072.3 47.8%	$33,011.5 17.6%	**-14.9%**	**0.0%**

Source: Restaurants Canada and Statistics Canada

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ENTERTAINING THE FUTURE:

THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

By Jessica Huras



From crowded dance floors and mingling with friends to singing along with a favourite song played by a live band, most of the experiences we associate with nightlife are no longer considered safe in the COVID era. Bars, nightclubs, and other entertainment venues across Canada are slowly reopening, but without the singing, dancing, and socializing that once defined a good night out.

Instead, bands are shielded by plexiglass, music volumes are low, and capacities are slashed. Can bars and nightclubs survive with these new health and safety measures in place? And are consumers ready to embrace the new face of nightlife amid the pandemic?

A recent study conducted by Abacus Data for Music Canada showed that 69 percent of Canadians say it will take more than six months before they'll feel comfortable going to a bar or pub for a live music event.

"What we learned from the consumer is that you go to live music because of the experience that it gives you: that sense of community, the ability to dance, or hang around with friends. If you're all distanced around the venue, it's not going to be the same thing," says David Coletto, CEO of Abacus Data.

Live music was a key part of the revenue model at Toronto's Relish Bar and Grill, which was hosting up to 13 shows per week prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. With Toronto now in stage three of reopening, owner Joanne Clayton has begun to resume Relish's live music program.

The bar has 3,500-square-feet of interior space, which Clayton hopes allows for enough physical distancing that customers will feel comfortable coming inside. "We've rigged up our mic stands with plexiglass," she says. "I have an advantage because I have a large space, so the guests can easily be spaced away from the stage and still enjoy the music."

Relish is among 45 live music venues in Toronto that will receive a combined property tax relief of $1.7 million under a new bylaw announced by the city in August. While Clayton says the relief will help with Relish's bottom line, she's also disappointed that the government isn't taking bigger steps to support live music venues at the federal and provincial levels.





"WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO HANG ON LONG ENOUGH FOR THAT [PROPERTY TAX RELIEF] TO ACTUALLY GO THROUGH, WHICH THEY'RE SAYING WILL BE SOMETIME IN NOVEMBER," SAYS CLAYTON.

"All of the people, including myself, that work here are volunteering our time for the cause because the business can't support a payroll."

The summer patio season has been essential for many bar operators, creating extra space for them to safely maximize their available seating. Mike Condy, who runs Halifax's Lower Deck Waterfront, has been hosting live music on the bar's outdoor patio, which has been reduced from a capacity of 500 down to 120 thanks to physical distancing measures and the requirement that customers be seated. "We've been forced to hire solo or duo acts instead of our regular full-band performances," says Condy.

Condy worries about maintaining cash flow over the winter, which he says has always been a slow season for business, even before COVID. He's purchasing plexiglass to prepare for a safe shift to indoor performances, but he doesn't feel optimistic about the transition. "We can't fill the room based on the capacity and social distancing restrictions," he says. "With patio season coming to a close very soon and the winter sales season upon us, it's going to be extremely hard to make ends meet."

Patio seating has also been a lifeline for nightclub operators like INK Entertainment, according to CEO Charles Khabouth. In June, INK revamped Toronto nightclub Rebel's large patio as Cabana Waterfront Patio, a 50,000-square-foot outdoor bar and lounge that can accommodate over 400 physically-distanced customers.

As the weather cools, however, Khabouth won't be able to move his customers inside. Some provinces, such as B.C. and Alberta, have placed no indoor capacity limits on bars (if a 6-foot distance between tables is maintained). Ontario, however, has set a cap of 100 people, regardless of the venue size. "Now that the summer is over, it's going to go back to being a struggle," says Khabouth.

Khabouth's team has been upgrading ventilation systems and rearranging table layouts at venues like Rebel, which had a licensed capacity of over 2,500 before the pandemic, in the hopes of demonstrating they can safely serve more than 100 people indoors.

INK is also brainstorming ways to extend patio season for its customers. "We're trying to create some outdoor events where people are going to come in their sweaters and ski suits," says Khabouth.

The road to reopening has been even bumpier for bar and nightclub operators without outdoor space to leverage, such as Blueprint which owns popular Vancouver nightclubs like Fortune Sound Club and Celebrities.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



Blueprint was among the few B.C. operators to attempt to reopen their nightclubs in July, but director of business development Nate Sabine says the experiment was short-lived.

"WE DIDN'T HAVE THE INTERNATIONAL ACTS THAT WE WOULD NORMALLY BOOK, WE DIDN'T HAVE THE MUSIC AS LOUD, AND YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO DANCE," HE SAYS. "WE HAD A COUPLE OF GOOD NIGHTS, BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF ALL OF THESE OTHER THINGS, THE EXPERIENCE REALLY SUFFERED AND WE FELT THAT IT WASN'T WORTH IT TO KEEP OUR VENUES OPEN."

B.C.'s nightlife scene was dealt another blow in early September when, in response to a growing number of COVID cases, provincial health authorities ordered all nightclubs and standalone banquet halls to close, plus imposed a 10 p.m. limit on liquor sales at bars, pubs, and restaurants.

The 10 p.m. cut-off adds another hurdle to Blueprint's efforts to pivot their nightclub spaces and comes as a hard hit to the brand's Colony series of bars, which had been rebounding more successfully than their nightclubs, according to Sabine. "We're going to meet with the government and try to make our case because there's got to be a happy medium here," he says.

Many bar operators are concerned that a spike in COVID cases in the fall and winter months could soon lead to similar shutdowns and curfews in other provinces. The possibility of more mandated closures and restrictions, combined with limited seating capacities, and consumer hesitancy about returning to bars and nightclubs, all leaves operators with no clear way to move forward.

"Until there's a vaccine or a treatment or an environment in which consumers feel safe and that perception of risk is reduced, I don't think there's much you can do," says Coletto. It's a sentiment echoed by a recent report from Restaurants Canada, which suggests that the majority of foodservice businesses across the country are still operating at a loss, with 36 per cent of respondents estimating it will take between a year and 18 months for their businesses to return to profitability.

The uncertain future of bars and restaurants has far-reaching economic consequences that stretch beyond the foodservice industry. Research from Restaurants Canada suggests that 95 per cent of a typical restaurant's revenue goes back into the economy, employing farmers, food distributors, tradespeople, designers, and—in the case of the bar and entertainment sector—musicians and DJs. "The music industry contributes an estimated 3 billion to the GDP and creates around 72,000 jobs," says Erin Benjamin, president and CEO of the Canadian Live Music Association.

Erica Meekes, director of PR for Music Canada, says that bars and entertainment venues that host music performances provide an essential platform for emerging artists. "For independent and unsigned artists, live music is their bread and butter. It's how they go out and meet people, it's how they sell merchandise, it's how they raise their profile," says Meekes.

"WE'VE SEEN NUMBERS AS HIGH AS ALMOST 90 PER CENT OF ALL LIVE MUSIC VENUES MAY GO OUT OF BUSINESS BEFORE THE END OF THE PANDEMIC WITHIN TORONTO."

Meekes adds that it's common for independent artists to hold jobs in the foodservice industry as a secondary source of income to support their music careers. Many have now lost these foodservice jobs, in addition to their music gigs, as a result of the challenges bars and restaurants have faced amid the pandemic. "In many cases, they've been doubly impacted," she says.

Assistance with labour costs, rent relief and commercial tenant protections, and interest-free loans to help with cash flow and rising debt levels are some of the ways Restaurants Canada is recommending the government intervene to support the foodservice industry, including the struggling bar and entertainment sector.

"The public policy reaction has to recognize that for these operators, these musicians, these venues, there's no way out of it and you need support for them. I think that message needs to continue to be communicated to the government," says Coletto. M

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Always vote on the complete picture

BY JACOB RICHLER

In the pre-COVID world, I used to ask my restaurant judges for Canada's 100 Best to vote on restaurant quality based on four considerations: the quality of the cooking, wine list, décor and ambience. Always vote on the complete picture, I pleaded.

But that's not the complete picture anymore; it's not even a partial one. These one-time pillars of the restaurant quality equation have been temporarily shelved.

"Now hospitality is all about making people feel safe," Massimo Piedimonte, the former chef at Montreal's revered Le Mousso, who in April 2021 will be opening his first restaurant, Cabaret l'Enfer, on St-Denis Street.

When safety means waiters in visors or facemasks, Plexiglas dividers between widely spaced tables, roped off bar seating and rooms filled to what used to be half-capacity, ambience and décor cease to be major considerations. The abbreviated menus and wine lists on offer in these difficult times cannot be fairly assessed in comparison to what used to be, but rather against what's on offer now—if anything at all—at the restaurant next door.



Nonetheless, today's sadly diminished offer is enough to fill a few seats and—crucially—get the touchless pay pad pinging. I've tried to book patio tables at several Toronto restaurants these last few months at places from Terroni to Alobar Yorkville, only to find them full at my requested time. Even new places that were forced to open during the pandemic and earn what they could without the benefit of a pre-existing client base seem to be doing fairly well under the circumstances.

For example, take Pompette, a modern bistro that was poised to open on Toronto's bustling College Street strip in springtime, well-equipped for the season with a great patio and an exceptional cocktail program. But instead, had to launch the business on the strength of takeout pâté en croûte and the like. Two months later—as Ontario's Stage Two permitted it—they segued to patio service, and then as the province entered Stage Three on July 31st, added indoor dining, too. I dropped by on a chilly weeknight early in September to find a dozen tables had settled in before me; the patio was all but full, with two more groups indoors.

"There were a few positives to opening during COVID," conceded Pompette manager Jonathan Bauer-Monneret, a former wine director at Daniel Rose's wonderful (but since shuttered) Paris restaurant, Spring, who in 2014 was voted Meilleur Sommelier de France. "I mean, from the point of view of getting suppliers, it's been very good. There's easier access to great products because so many restaurants are closed. And then, people haven't been out for dinner in six months. To be able to offer them something new is a great [starting] point."

But then there are all the negatives. Chief among them, obviously, is the problematic math of socially distant seating. Pompette can currently seat 45 outside. In the original, pre-COVID business plan that would have been 60-65. Inside they have 20 seats when they had planned 45. And where many restaurants are hoping to at least have a go at continuing their takeout programs to help mend that gap, Pompette abandoned theirs—at least temporarily—with a view to focussing on getting their opening right.

And here is where things get particularly interesting. Takeout being where they started, it is also the part of the business that generated their first regulars—customers that popped in at least once a week for a meal to go. Those good customers did not translate into dine-in regulars; most proved "just not ready to eat at the restaurant." Not even on the patio. And so they haven't been seen since.

According to national Angus Reid polling conducted in late August, only 27% of Canadians were completely comfortable with the idea of dining out. 37% would do so with manageable misgivings. And 34% were firmly opposed.

And that was when new COVID-19 infection rates were at their lowest. Since then the incidence of new infections rates has been spiralling upwards. And the worsening weather is quickly eliminating patios from the category of desirable destinations, so that dine-in will soon be the only option. All that will swell the ranks of those opposed to dining out, and thin the numbers of those happy to do so.

Except for the intangibles. Most people are sociable by nature, inadequate cooks and sick to death of eating at home and doing dishes. While the anecdotal evidence show that Canadians are diligent mask wearers and hand-washers, they are also far less frightened of COVID than they were at its outset. A fulfilling life can accommodate a little risk. I don't any longer know anyone who puts on rubber gloves to collect the morning post from their mailbox. But I do know many who have tentatively taken up flying again, when the seat-sale is right. And they'd mostly take a chance on a restaurant given the same sort of nudge.

Take for example the UK's "eat out to help out" program. This August-long initiative provided a 50% discount on all meals consumed in restaurants, pubs or cafés up to £10 per person on the previously slow days of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Monday, August 3rd, the first day of its implementation, restaurant sales rose 100% compared to the previous Monday. The first three days saw 10 million meals and cost the government £105 million.

As long as our health departments deem it safe for our restaurants to be open, I would prefer we followed that lead and incentivized customers to visit them and spur the economy, than pay people to stay home, as we did. Likely we'll need both to help ensure that there are still a few good restaurants around when we get back to eating out with carefree impunity, and taking stock of food and ambience instead visors and dividers. That day can't come soon enough. M

Stakeholders throughout the entire food supply chain must collaborate to overcome challenges

BY BRIGID SAVAGE, STORYTELLER AT FARMWORKTOFEEDCANADA.CA

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Canada in March, restaurant owners and farmers alike had to quickly adjust to meet the changing needs of Canadian consumers. Many restaurants had to close or pivot strictly to takeout. This transition greatly affected the amount of produce, meat, and dairy products that Canadian farmers could sell. Now that restaurants are open for dine-in meals, what can the hospitality industry expect from Canadian food supply chains through the fall and winter?

Recently, Farmwork to Feed Canada spoke with Canadian farmers and agricultural organizations to determine what restaurant operators and chefs can expect in the coming months and what they can do to support producers during the COVID-19 crisis.





LABOUR SHORTAGES

Each agricultural sector is facing unique challenges as a result of the global pandemic. In the produce sector, the biggest effect of COVID-19 has been a labour shortage. Farmers have struggled to obtain the valuable help they need to tend to crops. Says Marlene Huntley, the executive director at Horticulture Nova Scotia: Temporary foreign workers are a skilled workforce. The labour shortage this year may result in a slightly weaker supply chain than normal, Huntley predicts.

Joseph Sbrocchi, the general manager for Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, agrees. Produce from Ontario greenhouses is not in short supply, but labour shortages may cause higher food prices in the future, he says.

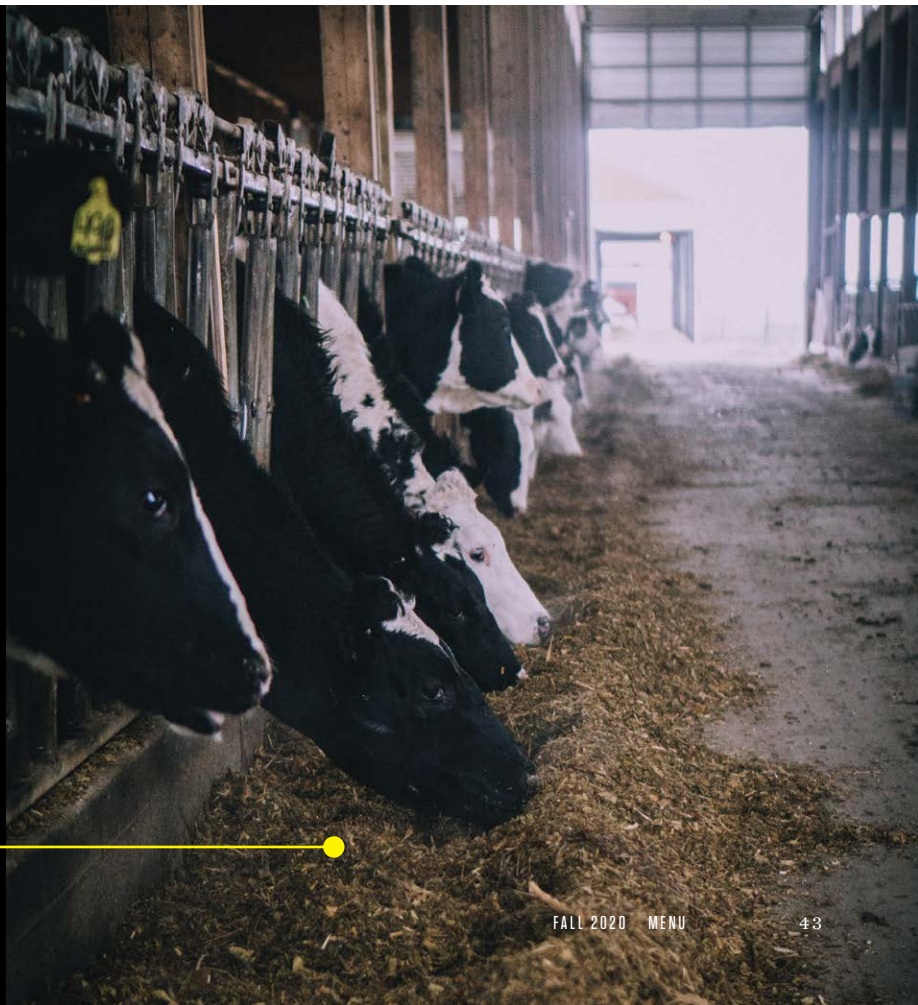
Recently, *The Grower* reported that traditionally, between 1,500 and 2,000 young Quebeckers journey to British Columbia's fruit country each year, but only about half that number came in 2020. Worse yet, only 6,400 temporary foreign workers from Mexico and the Caribbean arrived in B.C. this year compared to about 10,000 workers a year ago.

COVID OUTBREAKS

While fruit and vegetable farmers grapple with smaller workforces this year, the livestock and poultry sectors face supply and demand challenges. In addition to a reduced demand for beef from restaurants, COVID-19 outbreaks in livestock processing facilities delayed scheduled harvests of Canadian beef, says Duane Ellard, director of channel marketing at Canada Beef.

In light of processing interruptions, beef farmers had to shoulder the cost of feeding their herds longer than expected. The reduced demand coupled with processing delays and unforeseen costs have significantly affected the profitability of Canadian beef operations, says Ellard.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



FLUCTUATING CONSUMER DEMAND

The dairy industry has also faced challenges during the pandemic. As a result of restaurant closures, producers saw a shift in demand for milk and other dairy products, says Luc Chabot. He is the director of business stakeholder relations for Dairy Farmers of Canada.

Dairy cows need to be milked daily. So, to reduce the domestic milk supply to meet the lowered needs of consumers, farmers and other agricultural stakeholders needed to respond quickly.

"A cow can't be turned off like a tap," says Chabot. "They need to be milked regularly for their own comfort and health and since milk is highly perishable, it needs to be (processed) right away."

To manage the surplus, processing plant staff transformed fluid milk into less perishable products such as cheese and butter. Dairy Farmers of Canada advocated for the federal government to allow increased reserves as a solution to absorb milk surplus.

Poultry farmers have also faced a decreased demand for their products. The food service sector represents 40 per cent of all Canadian-raised chickens, says Lisa Bishop-Spencer, the director of brand and communications at Chicken Farmers of Canada.

In response to restaurant closures, Canadian chicken farmers had to work together to adjust their flock sizes, she adds.



So, what can restaurant business owners and chefs do to help support Canadian farmers following the disruptions caused by COVID-19?

Restaurants should continue to showcase Canadian ingredients in their menus, says Bishop-Spencer. Indeed, the majority of consumers trust food grown in Canada more than they trust food produced elsewhere in the world, says a 2019 Canadian Centre for Food Integrity public trust report.

Farmers would like restaurateurs to capitalize on this sentiment by helping consumers understand how food travels from farmgate to dinner plate.

Restaurants can help with this task by including producer organization logos on their menus. For example, Chicken Farmers of Canada has its "Raised by a Canadian Farmer" label and Canadian dairy products are marked with the blue cow logo.

"These logos assure (consumers) that they are supporting Canadian farmers" and that their food is of high quality, says Chabot.

Perhaps the most important step restaurant operators and chefs can do to support Canadian farmers is to establish direct partnerships. Restaurant owners "can buy directly from farmers and they can tailor their menus to what's in season," says Huntley.

"If (chefs) have special requests, they can communicate with farmers (who) may be able to grow what the restaurant needs."

Indeed, farmers can provide fresh products to restauranteurs who want to feature local cuisine. "While buying local (food) might be more challenging (in the winter months), tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers are available ... virtually year-round (because of) Ontario's greenhouses," says Sbrocchi. "Restaurant owners could partner with greenhouse farmers to include these items in their menus."

Sandi Brock would also like to see more collaboration between restaurant operators and farmers. “Restaurant (owners) and farmers are the ultimate partners,” Brock says. “We are both so passionate about food; it is literally our lifeline.”

Brock, alongside her husband Mark and their two kids, Jack and Jessica, manages a 1,500-acre farm north of London, Ont. The family grows wheat, soybeans, white beans, black beans, and winter canola and they raise a flock of about 400 sheep.

She empathizes with restaurant operators and chefs. “My heart goes out to restaurant owners right now, because (they), in a lot of ways, are very similar to farmers,” she says. “We have to work with what is given to us.”

Lesley Kelly would like to see restaurants highlight Canadian farmers’ capacities to produce diverse crops across the country. “Canada has such a wide range of products” available throughout the year, she says. “From the canola that we grow on our farm, to beef from Alberta, to potatoes from P.E.I.”

Kelly is a farmer, marketer and mental health advocate who lives in central Saskatchewan. Her family grows wheat, canola, barley, lentils, and canary seed. She would also like to see business owners share accurate agricultural information with their customers. In Canada, “98 per cent of farms… are family-run. Some (farms) are big and some are small, but most of them” involve family members, Kelly notes.

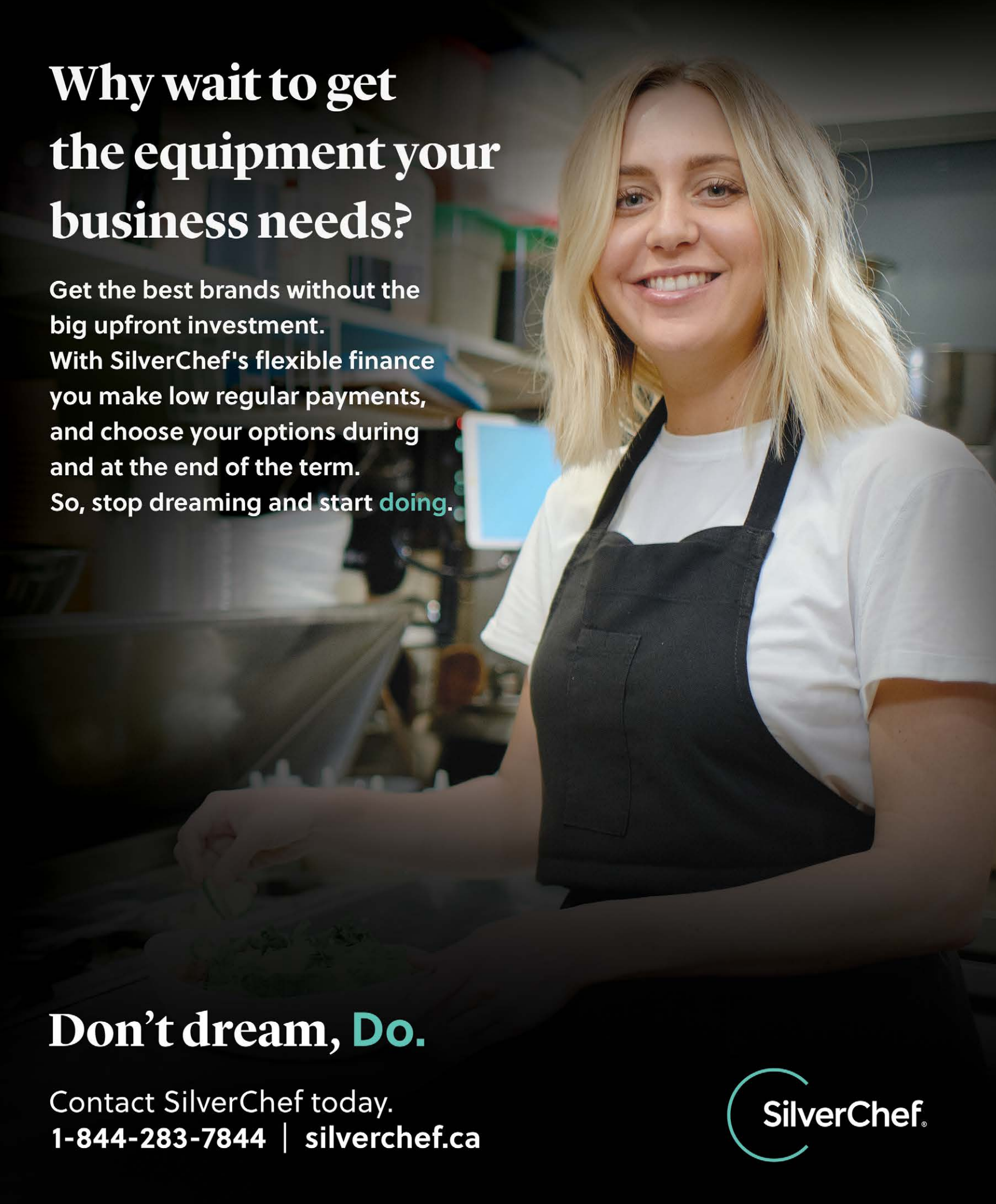
> ***About Farmwork to Feed Canada***
> *Farmwork to Feed Canada (F2FC) is a volunteer effort by Canadian communications, public relations and marketing professionals, and recent graduates in communications and public relations who strive to collaborate with farmers and the agri-business sector to address COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges to Canada’s food supply.*










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INVEST IN YOUR STAFF AND YOUR FUTURE

BY 7SHIFTS FOUNDER AND CEO JORDAN BOESCH

Restaurant owners and operators have faced unprecedented challenges this year, with more still to come. 7shifts founder and CEO Jordan Boesch is here to provide data-driven insights into where the foodservice industry is currently at, where it's headed, and how restaurant operators can get back to 'business as usual' amid financial and labour constraints.

As patio season draws to a close and COVID-19 restrictions begin to change to meet the local market conditions across Canada, restaurants are facing a new set of challenges aside from simply staying open or covering rent. This includes how to start (safely) expanding indoor dining, and making up for the expected loss of outdoor dining spaces as winter approaches.

Data from a recent Restaurants Canada survey shows that Canadian foodservice sales in April fell by 63% overall, and was down 38% in June. 7shifts collected data from over 15,000 restaurants shows that average restaurant sales in North America have recovered from a low of -79% up to -20%, compared to pre-COVID sales. This data in aggregate shows that the industry is recovering, but there is still a long way to go.

However, a more pressing issue—and one that's not just impacting the foodservice industry in Canada, but around the world—is the anticipated labour shortage from staff choosing not to return to work. While foodservice employment has recovered from the historic lows of March and April, data from Restaurants Canada revealed that the industry is still down more than 300,000 jobs (around 50%) short of where it was in February.

This labour shortage presents a dual threat for restaurant operators. As governments extend economic relief packages such as CERB for the unemployed—which provide a disincentive to return to work—and employees have (well-founded) fears of return due to health and safety, how can a restaurant operator convince or excite their staff to return to work?

Based on conversations with hundreds of restaurateurs across the country, we have identified a few commonalities that high-performers are doing in order to ensure their staff return when needed.

Create an open and honest dialogue with your team

Communication—or over-communication—with your staff is key to ensuring a successful return to work. Before bringing staff back, it's critical to ask them what their needs and concerns are, and what you can do to support and address them. Ideally this should take the form of a survey sent to staff where they can relay what is on their minds.

You can create a simple survey using Google Forms or Typeform for free to gauge everyone's feelings, fears, availability, and ideas. Restaurants Canada's Foodservice Facts 2020 reports that 50% of employees are concerned about their own health and safety while working with the public, and 27% are fearful of taking public transport. So determining your staff's primary concerns gives you an opportunity to address them. This data can then help you plan next steps, address specific concerns, or craft schedules or shifts that make everyone feel comfortable with returning.

Keep this open and honest dialogue going after employees have returned with regular check-ins to see how they're all doing; this will help send a message of empathy and build a stronger team spirit.

To understand how open communication works in the context of real operations, here are tips from Mattenga's Pizzeria owner Hengam Stanfield: "Issues of communication, or lack thereof, is very common in the restaurant. If somebody works two hours on a Wednesday and an issue comes up, how are you going to communicate with everybody all the time? That always is an issue. Whenever we give good reviews, [we give] kudos with that, because we always put that in for the whole team to see... Encourage everybody who does well a lot of times. The more communication there is, then there is less doubt and confusion and there's more clarity."

↣ CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

50% of employees are concerned about their own health and safety while working with the public, and 27% are fearful of taking public transport.


Jordan Boesch, 7Shifts

Go above expectations to ensure their safety

Your initial communication with staff should also outline your new safety procedures, not just what they need to know about serving customers but how you're committed to keeping staff safe too so they are comfortable to return. This should include specific instructions regarding the use of PPE and personal safety.

Just like the COVID-19 symptoms screening questions you may have to ask your own guests, you should also be asking them to your staff. 7shifts created Employee Health Check, a tool designed to screen staff for illness before they clock in for their shift. If an employee fails their health check, their manager will receive a notification where they can take appropriate action.

This focus on safety should extend outwards to your community as well. We have seen countless restaurants use the previous months as an opportunity to educate their guests on the steps they have taken to keep them safe. For example, Cilantro & Chive from Lacombe, Alta, created a video which shows every safety measure they are taking to ensure staff and guests are protected.

Improve employee workplace happiness

In 2019, our team at 7shifts conducted a study of over 1,900 Canadian restaurant workers to determine what specific things led to increased happiness in the workplace. In an effort to understand the notoriously high staff turnover rate in the foodservice industry, we wanted to learn what makes people quit, what motivates people to work hard, and what ultimately leads to costly turnover.

We found that the most 'at risk' employees (those wanting to leave within a year) are affected by their wage; but also by their management—specifically a lack of training, support, and decreased or declining engagement with their role.

As Leanna Rennie, manager of guest service at Taste Restaurant Group in Saskatoon, Sask., puts it: "We…identify and reward highly engaged members of our team while providing the proactive coaching others need to excel at their job. We believe our restaurants are only as good as our people, and Engage is helping us make this possible."

With these findings in mind—and with many staff not yet back in the workplace—now is a great time to reboot your hiring, training, and promotion strategies in order to entice your staff to return. Restaurant operators should give serious thought to implementing new policies or procedures that previously fell to the bottom of your list. Things such as formalized performance reviews, mechanism for staff feedback, or a structured training regime. When staff see the changes that you are making, they will know your business is invested in them as valued members of the team.

This is even more true for your younger staff. Gen Z workers want to work for businesses that have a mission or vision they believe in, so making sure that your restaurants' mission and vision are crystal clear will increase the chances that these workers will return.

Restructure your team to spur career progression

Financial uncertainty is top of everyone's mind right now, not least your staff who rely heavily on tips and often live paycheck to paycheck. While existing pay was not one of the main reasons employees leave a restaurant job in our 2019 survey, a pay rise was strongly correlated with an increased tenure.

From a restaurant owner and operator's perspective, offering a pay rise to returning staff is a delicate situation as you may have your own financial worries. But with the foodservice labour shortage, you can instead offer extra shifts to those who want them. This is especially useful if not everyone is comfortable returning yet. While it's not necessarily a pay raise, the extra hours—and extra tips split amongst fewer staff—will make a considerable difference to their paycheck.

With fewer staff to call upon, restaurants are in a unique position where they can optimize their workforce. This is a great opportunity to create a smaller team of all-stars. Extra training and more responsibility mean that staff you return are in a better position to accelerate their restaurant careers than those who wait and sit it out. It's crucial that you communicate this to staff in order to drive home that this is a learning opportunity not to be missed.

A challenge and an opportunity

2020 has thrown up unimaginable challenges for Canadian restaurateurs, and it's changed the way we work forever. But, it's given restaurateurs and restaurant workers an opportunity to reassess how they operate as an industry and individually—it is possible for your restaurant and your staff to come out of this more streamlined, with a smaller, dedicated team that will improve your business in the long run.

If you invest in your team, clearly communicate with them, address their concerns, you will be pleasantly surprised how many of your staff return to active duty, even with uncertainty in the market. M

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APP SHOWCASE

2metre is a mobile app that helps food and beverage businesses meet customer contact logging and reporting requirements mandated by public authorities, plus addresses the challenges of physical distancing and maintaining safety for customers.

Recording customer information on paper and storing locally in your restaurant is not safe—and difficult to comply with provincial privacy regulations. 2metre provides a professional, safe and secure approach to customer logging vs. paper—and it's faster, saving staff time.

When you get busy, 2metre can reduce customer lineups by up to 85%, promoting physical distancing outside your business for increased customer safety, which also cuts down the number of customers abandoning your lineup.

Get your business up and running with 2metre in minutes with minimal staff training required. It runs on Apple and Android phones and tablets.

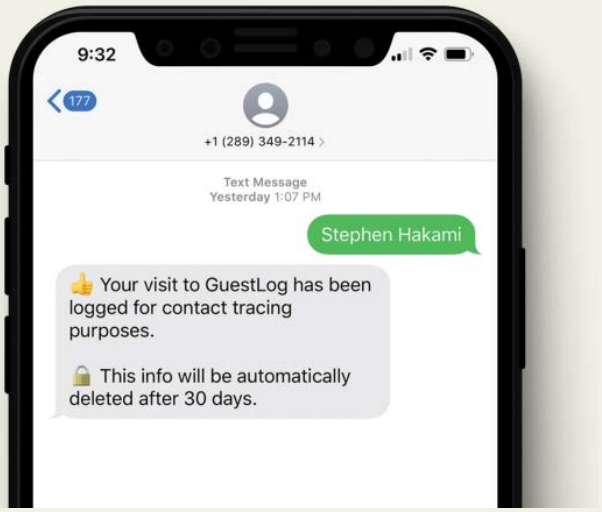
2metre is Canadian-made, ready now—subscribe online for $29/mth without any long-term commitment. Find out more at www.2metre.com.



In October, Barventory will be launching its patented draught Keg Scale, Bar Top Scale and the Barventory app, converting legacy inventory management systems into a digital experience.

Say goodbye to slow inventory systems, infrequent inventory counts, written counts, and analog scales. The Barventory suite of products are designed to simplify restaurant operations while helping to reduce waste, improve yield, manage inventory, streamline staffing and providing analytic reporting to help grow your business.

Our Barventory Keg Scale is the world's first 'live' keg scale, our revolutionary software continuously monitors in real time how much draught is left in your keg, accurate down to the ounce and tracked through your smartphone. The patent-pending bar top scale has a built-in scanner that syncs to a digital app with thousands of liquor product barcodes in its database. The Barventory software is enterprise grade and cloud based, allowing managers to effectively protect, manage and review all of their stock and inventory at anytime, from anywhere.



GUESTLOG

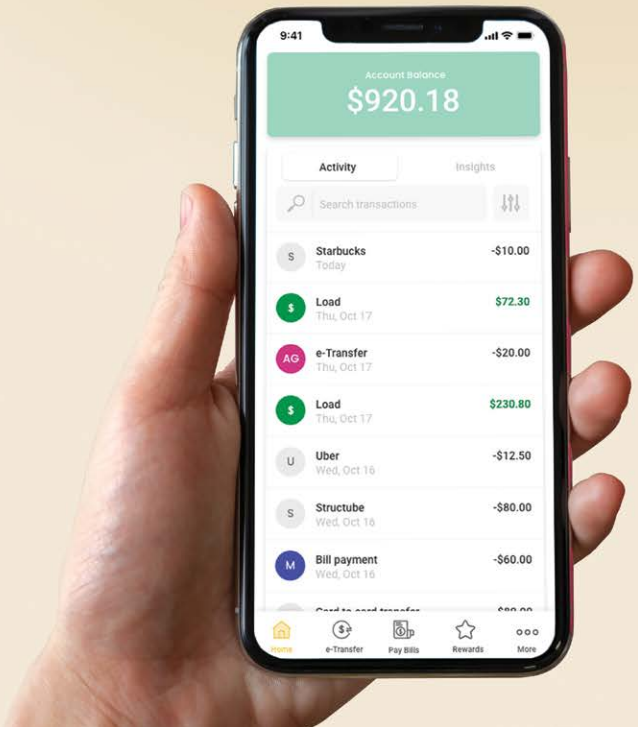
Simple contact tracing for your business. GuestLog automates the process of collecting customer information for contact tracing through a simple, secure, and contactless experience for your guests.

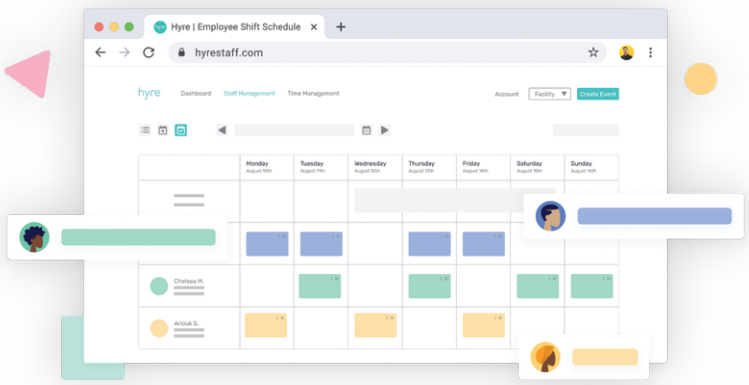
Restaurants simply sign up, then receive a PDF file to print with instructions for guests to check themselves in/out. GuestLog will encrypt and store this information for 30 days, then automatically get rid of it.

Learn more at guestlog.co.

Businesses are looking for ways to cut costs, save time and reduce the health risks of handling cash. Tipstoday is a free-to-use, three-part digital solution for cashless tips. The app, the card, and the portal. With the simple online portal, managers can pay their whole team in minutes. It just takes a single file upload, and staff will all get their gratuities in unison! Bing. Staff's gratuities get loaded to their prepaid card, paired with a secure app-based mobile wallet. They get a text message that they received the funds. Their app updates with the new balance. No more trips to the bank. No more stuffing envelopes. Just click send and get back to business.

Learn more at tipstoday.com, or contact the team directly via email at sales@mytodaycard.com or by phone at 416-260-1641.





SAVE TIME AND MONEY MANAGING YOUR STAFF WITH HYRE

As the hospitality industry goes through tumultuous times, Hyre would like to extend a helping hand. Hyre helps managers save time and money on scheduling and staffing through its easy-to-use platform.

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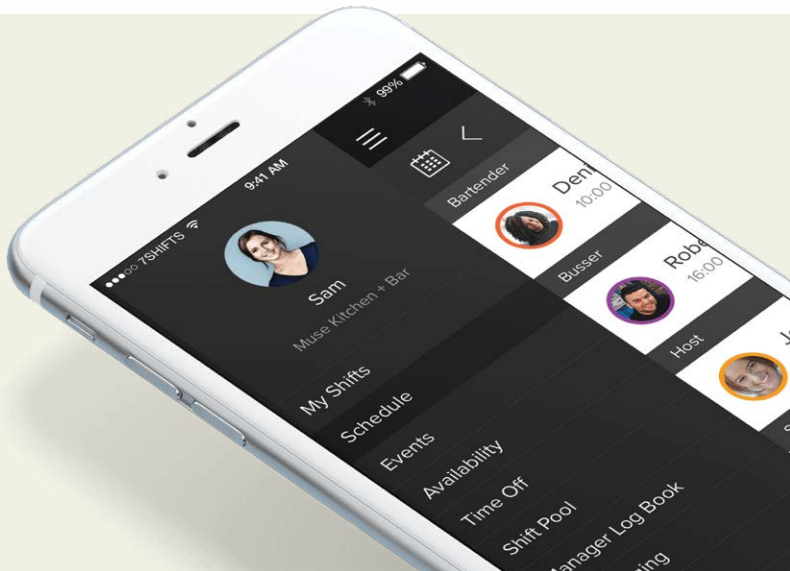
Hyre allows you to save time on scheduling and staffing by providing you with streamlined scheduling tools and access to a 20,000+ temp hospitality talent pool.

Hyre provides your staff with a daily COVID questionnaire and updates you if any exhibit symptoms, allowing you to proactively rearrange your schedule—keeping your staff and guests safe.

With Hyre doing all the grunt work (scheduling, staffing, timeclock, payroll, etc.) you can focus on what matters most—service and growth. Enjoy Hyre for FREE, learn more at: www.hyrestaff.com/restaurants-canada.

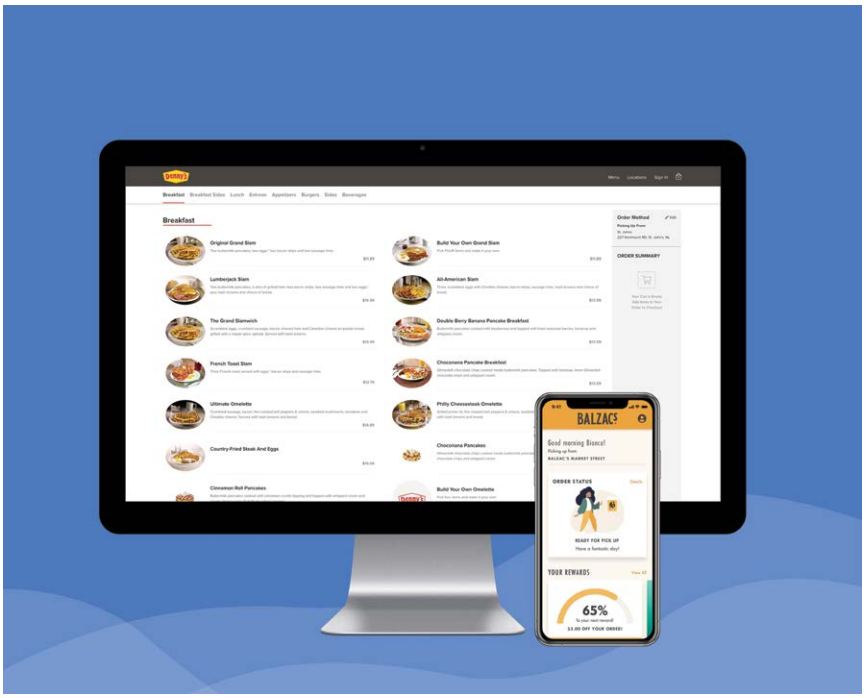
Managing and reducing your costs is now more important than ever. 7shifts saves you time and money through easy, labour-optimized scheduling and streamlined communications. With your labour costs in check, staff engaged and schedule managed, you can focus on serving your guests and growing your business and bottom line.

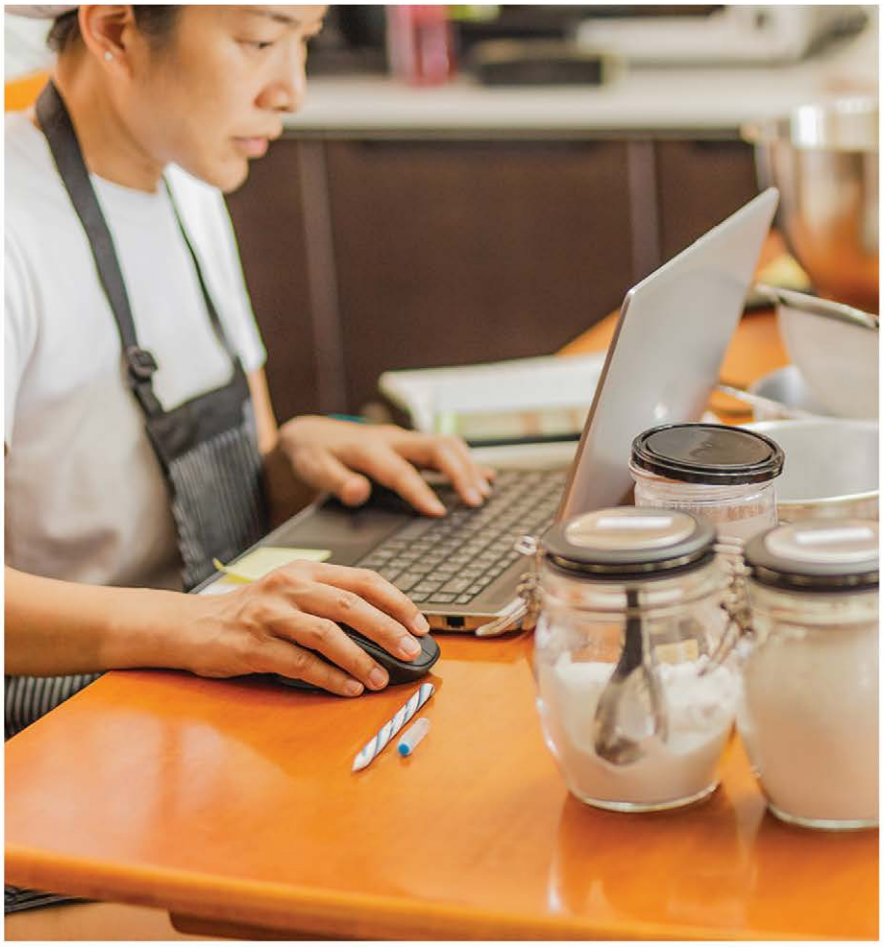
Founded in Saskatoon in 2014, 7shifts is simplifying labour management, one shift at a time. This restaurant employee scheduling solution is trusted by over 350,000 restaurant pros across North America, including Canadian brands such as Smoke's Poutinerie, JOEY Restaurants, The Burger's Priest, The Chopped Leaf, and many others. To learn more, or to sign up for free, visit www.7shifts.com.



Smooth Commerce delivers a complete digital commerce and engagement platform for restaurant operators. The platform powers white-label mobile apps and web ordering that facilitates contactless payment for takeout and delivery in a cost-effective way. The all-in-one solution provides operators with powerful business tools that highlight valuable customer insights, improve engagement and operational efficiencies, and increase sales and profitability. Robust in its offering, the platform includes dynamic loyalty program options, the ability to customize offers and promotions, and more.

Smooth Commerce has the ability to roll out a digital ordering platform in as little as five days. This agility proved critical when the pandemic limited restaurant operations. They are a valuable technology partner for restaurants to leverage on the road to recovery. For more information visit smooth.tech.





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Savour Ontario:

supporting local farmers, restaurants and businesses

BY HILARY THOMSON FOR DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO



It's an understatement to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for the foodservice industry. Restaurants closed for months this spring, and many are now operating at a reduced capacity. Restaurants Canada estimated at the end of August that the restaurant industry could lose between $21.7 billion and $44.8 billion in annual sales this year due to the pandemic.

To support the local culinary community, over the past few months, Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) has placed an emphasis on creating enduring, co-beneficial partnerships between local chefs and tastemakers and the agriculture industry. "Local is at the heart of everything we do and with the pandemic came an opportunity to come together as a culinary community and encourage Ontarians to support their local farmers, restaurants and businesses," says Kimberly Romany, Culinary Marketing Manager for DFO.

As part of this initiative, DFO launched their Savour Ontario at Home campaign in April, partnering with over 40 local chefs and restaurateurs to bring delicious recipes to people sheltering at home. This digital recipe collection was available to download for free to all Savour Ontario followers and included engaging chef profiles and 62 different recipes. All of the recipes featured dairy products like fresh ricotta cheese, Ontario-crafted burrata, yogurt and new products like locally-made asiago-style cheese. From main courses like veal and ricotta meatballs by Rob Rossi and gnudi by Alida Solomon, to baked goods and desserts like milk bread with honey butter by Lynn Crawford and Ontario yogurt, rhubarb and pistachio cake by Cory Vitiello, the collection showcases the best that Ontario dairy and local chefs have to offer. Almost 25,000 Ontarians engaged with Savour Ontario and the recipe collection was a huge success, with nearly 8,000 downloads to date.

The goal of the Savour Ontario at Home campaign was to bring people together through the joy of preparing meals at home. Through the campaign, DFO showcased a variety of top chefs from across Ontario. "Ontario is enriched by diversity, and we believe that diversity is central to elevating local food and culinary experiences," Romany says.



DFO's hope for the recipe collection was to bring the culinary community together through the love of food. Romany says chefs and famers are deeply connected, and the culinary community's response to the project was enthusiastic and engaged. "We were thrilled to see so much passion for local food and dairy, and we were blown away by the thoughtfulness inherent in the recipes and personal stories we received," she says. According to Romany it was—and continues to be—a very unique time in the foodservice industry and sharing the chef's personal stories with each recipe allowed home cooks to connect with the culinary community while inspiring them to try new recipes with ingredients they already had at home. "The Savour Ontario at Home campaign was our way of reaching out during a challenging time to reconnect with our chefs, farmers and community," she says.

DFO recognizes restaurants and foodservice customers as valuable partners and they are focused on actively ensuring supply chain resilience through the pandemic. DFO's Director of Business Development, Alan Grebinski, says overall the industry has fared well, except for erratic patterns of demand affecting supply in the early weeks of the pandemic. Even though things are more balanced now, foodservice demands are still quite low despite a higher than usual demand in retail. Grebinski says their team is focused on supporting supply chain resilience by balancing supply and demand for raw milk as closely as possible. "As we move through the various stages of recovery from COVID-19, we look to support and encourage continued dairy consumption to sustain the industry," he says. ■

As restaurants work to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more important to leverage local food to create unique and interesting offerings that will draw patrons into establishments; and keep them coming back. Using Ontario dairy is a great way to source a local quality product that is versatile and sure to add value to any menu. Here are a few great ideas about how to diversify your menu to include innovative offerings, using dairy and other local products.

USE NON-TRADITIONAL BOARDS to jazz up your menu and simplify preparation, while taking advantage of seasonality to grow margins. This can include anything from breakfast/brunch, dessert or deconstructed meals like build-your-own pasta, sandwiches or salads. Lay everything out and let the quality local ingredients speak for themselves!

ENGAGE DIRECTLY with dairies, cheesemakers, or other local food suppliers to offer in-menu product promotion in return for preferred pricing on ingredients. This will allow you to showcase new and interesting local products in your restaurant while also looking after your bottom line.

OFFER HOUSE-MADE PRODUCTS or merchandise for purchase that encourages menu/recipe loyalty. Add a charcuterie board with locally-made cheese to your menu featuring house-made sauces and dips that customers can take home. Or feature your own cheese fondue with an original recipe and ingredient kit that they can purchase and make themselves.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SIMPLICITY AND SEASONALITY with a signature cheese course that features a variety of local cheeses and accompaniments like local honey, jams and fresh fruit.

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The Way Consumers Pay is Changing Dramatically. Is Your Point of Sale Ready?

FAST, EASY AND SAFE, THE TIME FOR CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS HAS ARRIVED.

From swiping to inserting and now tapping, the way we use credit and debit cards to initiate in-store payments continues to get faster, easier and safer with the introduction of contactless cards. A global study conducted by Mastercard revealed that 79 percent of respondents worldwide say they are now using contactless payments, citing safety and cleanliness as key drivers.

When it comes to contactless payments, here are five things merchants should be considering:

1 ARE YOU KEEPING PACE WITH CONSUMERS?

There's no question that hygiene has promoted awareness of contactless payments, but the long term value proposition is faster checkouts and fewer points of friction for the in-person shopping experience. According to Visa, doing away with card swiping, insertion or the need for signatures or PINS, means contactless card transactions can be authorized in as little as one second.

2 IS MY POS DIGITAL WALLET READY?

Digital wallets are another contactless payment method slowly being adopted, particularly among younger consumers. Digital wallets transform a smartphone or smartwatch into a convenient and secure card-based payment method for in-store and e-commerce transactions.

Digital wallets provide valuable opportunities for all kinds of merchants to connect, interact and transact with consumers. That's where you come in as a restaurant owner. Without a device that receives mobile wallet information, you won't be able to take advantage of this increasingly popular payment mechanism.

3 DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PIN-LESS DEBIT STRATEGY?

According to Payments Canada, debit cards accounted for 29% of all transactions in 2018.3 Contactless debit cards share the speed and hygiene benefits of contactless credit cards. As an added benefit, they also enable merchants to deploy debit-routing strategies that can help them dynamically monitor and manage the cost of debit card acceptance.

As Covid-19 promotes consumer awareness of PIN-less debit's hygiene benefits, it is important that merchants explore and understand PIN-less debit solutions that both optimize transaction costs and enable the best customer experience.

4 WILL YOU NEED FEWER CASHIERS?

Cashierless payments have been around for up to two decades in the form of automated fuel dispensers and self-checkout lanes at grocery and big box retail stores. At a growing number of convenience-oriented stores in the U.S., sophisticated digital sensing and communication technology now enables consumers to enter a store, select merchandise and then take it with them as their digital wallet seamlessly authenticates their identity and authorizes the correct payment.

In 2020, Forbes Insights and J.P. Morgan published *Payments' Potential*, a survey of 300 global executives that identifies the way technology and consumer preference influences their payment strategies. The survey revealed that nearly 63% of respondents currently use, or plan to use, unattended checkout at the point of sale.

5 HOW CAN YOUR PAYMENT PROVIDER HELP PREPARE YOUR POS?

The consumer-driven payment innovations that provide your customers with greater speed, convenience and security at the point of sale can present you with complex new financial, operational and competitive challenges. In the case of contactless payments, some digital wallet transactions at the point of sale qualify for lower-cost card-present interchange fees, while others do not. As transaction volumes increase, it's important to work with a payment processor that will help you understand your true cost of payment acceptance across all payment types.

BE READY FOR CONTACTLESS WITH CHASE

The rise of contactless payments is an opportunity for merchants to make the checkout process faster, safer and more convenient. At the same time, however, it creates new learning curves for customers and employees. Chase is uniquely positioned to bring consumer insight, digital payments technology and expertise to ensure our clients can accept their customers' preferred payment methods with greater speed, convenience and security.

To learn more about contactless payment acceptance, contact your Chase representative. M

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