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CANADA'S FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE



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Sources: 1. Here are the top 3 comfort foods ordered in B.C. during the pandemic, Vancouver News, May 2020. The Deep Dish: Food Trends in 2020 Door Dash, July 2020.
2. 2018 Culinary Trendscapes Report, Technomic, November 2017. 3. The NPD Group, June 2019. 4. The Left Side of the Menu: Soup & Salad Consumer Trend Report, Technomic, 2018.

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Restaurants Canada

The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

At this pivotal time for our industry, Restaurants Canada is here to lead and support foodservice and hospitality venues in their recovery. This is why the theme for the upcoming RC Show 2021 is *Feeding the Recovery: Rebuild, Reinvent, Reconnect*.

It's hard to imagine a timelier or more appropriate theme. As an industry, it's time to rebuild and reinvent ourselves to reconnect with one another, with the supply chain, and with customers as well as colleagues. We invite you to read more about the upcoming show and what to expect from this 2021 edition in our *RC Show Sneak Peek*. While the 2021 Show may look different than years' past, we're excited to leverage AR and virtual reality tech to bring the Show to life in a new and dynamic way.

In this issue, we also focus on how operators can navigate the current insurance landscape. Many restaurants are facing challenges with insurance policy cancellations and renewals, massive increases in premiums and having their business interruption insurance claims denied.

We also speak to Trevor Lui and his sister Stephanie Lui-Valentim on their mission to disrupt Canada's food and drink industry through the development of Quell, a new agency for underrepresented talent.

While our industry has been challenged more than ever this year, we remain focused on staying positive, bringing you content that both supports and inspires, and working diligently to bring about changes our industry needs to successfully move forward.

At the time of writing this letter, we are well into the second wave of COVID-19 and in many cities across Canada, our restaurants have been forced to close their doors again in one way or another.

It's another blow that our currently-struggling industry is having to face, but you are not facing it alone. Restaurants Canada is dedicated to continuing the fight against COVID and advocating on your behalf. To bring awareness to our fight, we have launched the consumer-targeted 'Picture life without restaurants' campaign.

Through our newly-launched SupportRestaurants.ca website, we are asking consumers to pledge their commitment to kickstarting our recovery through action - dining-in where allowable, ordering pick-up or delivery, or by purchasing a gift certificate. Customers are encouraged to share their stories through social media about what restaurants mean to them and to spread the word so that the nation can see just how vital our industry is.

We call on you to join us in this fight. Though the road ahead may not be smooth, the journey is not over yet. Operators can visit SupportRestaurants.ca to download a toolkit with resources to continue the conversation with customers and employees.

In this issue, you will find more information on the 'Picture life without restaurants' campaign, what other activities Restaurants Canada has in the works for the launch and more insights on how this campaign can help you and your business. Restaurants Canada is continuing the fight, and we hope that you'll join us.



Guy Laframboise
Chair of the Board





Todd Barclay
President & CEO



November/December 2020
Volume 5 Number 6

Restaurants Canada
The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

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

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MENU is published six times per year by Restaurants Canada

Managing Editor
Alexandra Cioppa

Contributors
Ivy Knight
Jacob Richler
Jessica Huras
Chris Elliott
Shannon Murphy
Jared Hochman

Creative Direction
Arable Brand Communications

Circulation Inquiries, Changes and Updates
members@restaurantscanada.org
1-800-387-5649

Advertising Sales
Laurie Dawe
1-800-387-5649, ext. 4233
menu@restaurantscanada.org

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Mailing Address
Restaurants Canada
1155 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M6J 1J4
T: 416-923-8416
Toll-free: 1-800-387-5649
F: 416-923-1450
info@restaurantscanada.org

Twitter
@RestaurantsCA
@MENUmagCA

Instagram:
MENUmagCA

HST Registration No. #
106866460 RT0001

Subscription price:
CANADIAN PRICE:
$75 per year; most single issues $18.95.

Publication Mail Agreement
No. 400009977
ISSN 2371-4883

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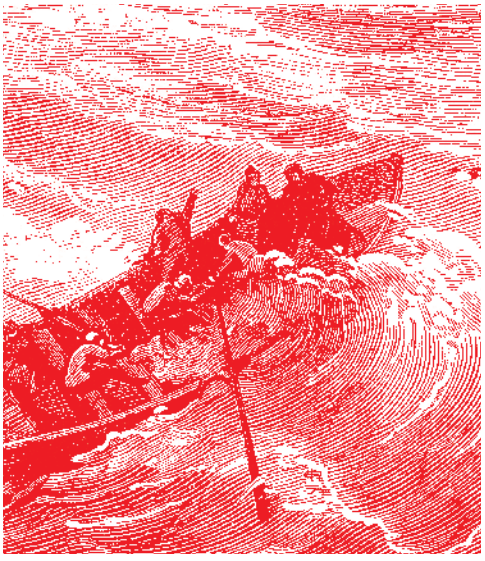
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The Health Canada COVID Alert app uses Bluetooth to exchange random codes with nearby phones. Every day, it checks a list of random codes from other users who tell the app they tested positive. If you've been near a user who tested positive within the last 14 days, through these random codes, you'll get a notification. You can use the COVID Alert app to report a COVID-19 diagnosis if you're in: **Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec or Saskatchewan**. The COVID Alert app is just one part of the public health effort to limit the spread
of COVID-19; follow all public health guidelines in your area. For more information, visit: **https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/covid-alert.html**



Created by GroundLevel Insights and available for free to Canadian restaurants, CANATRACE is a fast and secure digital solution that allows businesses to capture the vital customer data needed for contact tracing, while alleviating the workload of staff, and keeping patrons—and their contact information—safe. The digital tool simplifies data collection by allowing visitors to provide their contact information directly on their own smartphone using a QR code uniquely branded for that restaurant. By digitizing data collection, small businesses are able to minimize touchpoints for guests and ensure the confidentiality and accuracy of the information given. To learn more, visit: **www.canatrace.com**



Andie's GuestPass is a free contact tracing solution created for restaurants to safely and accurately collect information. Upon arrival, visitors simply scan a QR code to register their name and information to a secure cloud-based guest list. The personal data is used only to notify clients of a potential Covid-19 exposure, and it's automatically deleted after 30 days. If a guest later tests positive, they notify the restaurant. The restaurant can then use the guests contact information to search for others that need to be contacted. To learn more, visit: **www.business.andie.work/andie-guestpass.html**



Ruckify provides individuals and business owners with a safe and reliable platform that can be leveraged to create additional revenue streams. Ruckify's forward-thinking technology allows business owners to set up all of their rentals conveniently in one space. By uploading a photo and setting your price, surplus goods like kitchen equipment and industrial-grade kitchen appliances can be used to generate an income. Ruckify is a completely customizable experience you can tailor to your brand. Future proof your business with Ruckify's mobile app and start enjoying peer-to-peer rentals with optional curbside delivery service. To learn more, visit: **www.ruckify.com/en/small-business/**

AFFIRMING THAT BLACK LIVES DO MATTER IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

This summer, Restaurants Canada was invited to spearhead a new food industry coalition alongside **BLACK FOODIE** and **High Liner Foods**.

Called **The Re-Seasoning**, the coalition is focused on dismantling anti-Black racism within the Canadian food industry through race-based research and collaboration with key stakeholders to develop tangible policies and guidelines that will hold organizations accountable for the way they hire, retain, promote, build opportunities for, engage with, and tell stories about Black people.

By working with colleagues from every sector including market research, foodservice, education, and media, the coalition is dedicated to making a measurable impact over the next 10 years.

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BLACK FOODIE

HIGH LINER FOODS



#FREEZEITFORTHEM

149,000 jobs are supported by the beverage Canadians love: beer. In fact, 85 per cent of the beer consumed in Canada is made here, yet nearly 50 per cent of the price is government tax. To support Canada's economic recovery, to protect and create jobs and to keep dollars in the pockets of Canadians who need it now more than ever, we're asking governments across the country to freeze beer tax increases. Canadian consumers, small businesses and the thousands of people working in areas hit hardest by the pandemic—restaurants, hospitality, agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and transportation—need our support. Freezing beer tax increases is one small step in providing relief where it's needed most.

Learn why we're asking governments to **#FreezeItForThem** by visiting **freezeitforthem.ca** and signing our change.org petition at **www.change.org/freezeitforthem**

TORONTO FOOD FILM FEST HELD ITS SECOND ANNUAL FESTIVAL VIRTUALLY ON OCTOBER 16 – 25. Enthusiastic viewers enjoyed the festival's dazzling programming of international films about food, along with industry talks and workshops by exclusive speakers. Films were paired with local restaurants so participants could take part in the "Screen to Plate" experience.

For more information on next year's festival, visit www.torontofoodfilmfest.com.





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MINNA VAN, FOUNDER
Cá Phê Vietnamese Coffee House
(Vancouver, BC)

"Coffee in Vietnam is twice as dark and twice as caffeinated. Growing up as the eldest grandchild I spent a lot of time with my grandfather who introduced me to coffee for the first time. I could remember the smell and taste, and knew I had to find a way to bring it to my community."

AS THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO ADAPT TO THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE PANDEMIC, DoorDash introduces Kitchens Without Borders, a social impact initiative dedicated to supporting immigrant and refugee food business entrepreneurs across the country. With over 100 participating Canadian restaurants, Kitchens Without Borders aims to support and spotlight immigrant-owned businesses through DoorDash funded marketing programs, free small business coaching, and restaurant spotlights. Search **"KWB"** on the DoorDash app or website to findparticipating restaurants in your community.

Learn more about local restaurants and their stories, how they continue to honour cultural diversity though food and how they're adapting to the pandemic on **menumag.ca**.



La Tablée des Chefs

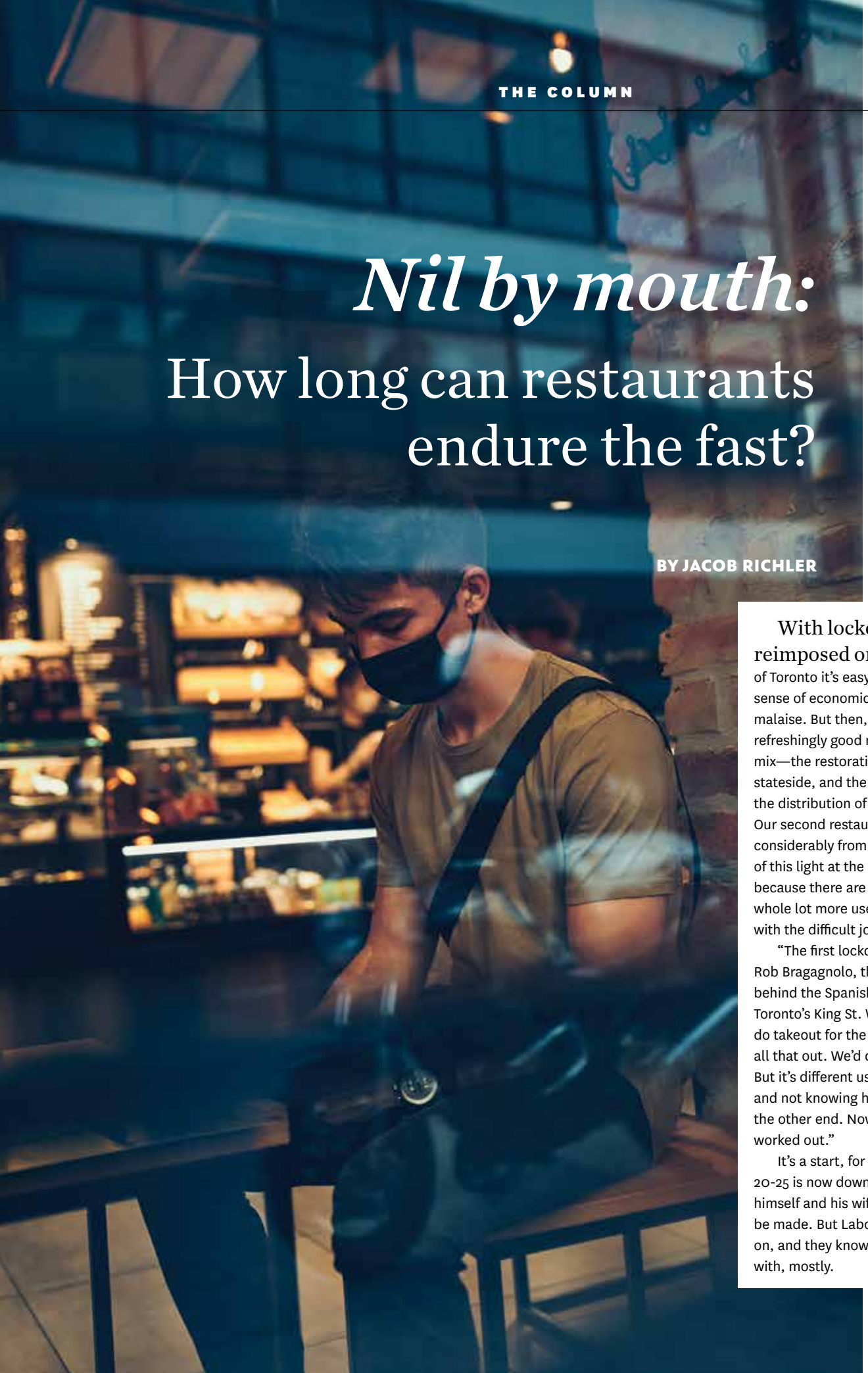
LA TABLÉE DES CHEFS IS A CHARITY WHOSE MISSION IS TO FEED PEOPLE IN NEED AND TO DEVELOP CULINARY EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. Since last April, La Tablée des Chefs has been leading the Solidarity Kitchens initiative, which, based on food recovery and in collaboration with food and culinary industries, made it possible to provide two million meals to the most disadvantaged through the network of food banks. In early November, the first virtual edition of La Tablée des Chefs' main fundraising event, La Grande Tablée, was held. The participants took part in the live event from the comfort of their homes while tasting dishes that had been delivered to them for this reinvented gastronomic evening.


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Nil by mouth:

How long can restaurants endure the fast?

BY JACOB RICHLER



With lockdown freshly reimposed on my hometown of Toronto it's easy to succumb to a swelling sense of economic gloom and general malaise. But then, there is so much refreshingly good news in the present mix—the restoration of political normalcy stateside, and the imminent prospect of the distribution of effective COVID vaccines. Our second restaurant lockdown differs considerably from the first not just because of this light at the end of the tunnel, but because there are fewer unknowns and a whole lot more useful experience to help with the difficult journey there.

"The first lockdown was so stressful," Rob Bragagnolo, the chef and restaurateur behind the Spanish restaurant Labora, on Toronto's King St. West, conceded. "Trying to do takeout for the first time, we had to figure all that out. We'd done sandwiches before. But it's different using your best ingredients and not knowing how it's going to turn out at the other end. Now, we have that all worked out."

It's a start, for sure. Yes, his staff of 20-25 is now down to two or three–including himself and his wife. There's no money to be made. But Labora is keeping the lights on, and they know what they're dealing with, mostly.

"Paella works quite well for takeout, it's our main thing," Bragagnolo continued. "If you've got takeout, and you've got demand, that's good. Things could be better. They could be worse."

On the positive side, they've come this far. And more important are those extremely encouraging results–from not one but three separate vaccines, all of which Canada has on pre-order. Between the first three and a clutch of others in phase 3 trial, an end to debilitating COVID restrictions suddenly seems more imminent than we could recently have dared to hope.

On the negative front, there's the rent subsidy situation. The collaborative federal-provincial program, Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA), paid up to 75 per cent of rent for small businesses like Labora for six months. Without it, they would not have made it this far. But the program ended at the end of September. Its replacement program, the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS), has been announced and declared retroactive to September 27th and effective until June 30th, 2021–but so far program details have only been formalized to December 21, 2020. Confusion persists, and until that is resolved, the goodwill of landlords is crucial.

"Some landlords have been exceptional," Oliver & Bonacini's Corporate Executive Chef Anthony Walsh volunteered on the day Toronto's second lockdown was announced. "Some, the opposite. I understand. They need money too. But we've got to work together to get through this."

When it was last fully operational in February, O&B had 26 restaurants–from Montreal to Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, and across Ontario, where they are centred in Toronto. They've since laid off thousands. And each market's differing conditions and degrees of restriction and lockdown complicate the thinking behind next moves. Surviving this evolving battle requires experience.

"We've learned a few things," Walsh asserted. "The last time was a gong show. We were trying to muddle through with a grocery program that we had no experience with. This time, we know how to do it. I mean, last time on Mother's Day we did just 50 deliveries. Now we're doing 250 a day. We're also selling frozen meal kits through Sobeys. [COVID means that] you have to be more creative and more aggressive than ever before. Surviving is all about agility—the pivot, as everyone keeps calling it."

And obviously, the only pivot that matters is to takeout. Any restaurateur or chef who thinks it doesn't fit their brand or style of food needs to re-evaluate. As one leading Realis & Chateau chef pointed out to me ruefully, stateside, even Thomas Keller and Grant Achatz are doing it. And if those multi-Michelin star decorated culinary superstars can do takeout, so must everyone.

"DoorDash and UberEats are keeping places open," the executive chef at an enormously successful Vancouver-based national chain told me plainly. "Nobody likes their fees, but if you cut them out of your takeout program your sales are going to go down 30-40 per cent. I know because we tried it."

So, chalk that one up in the things-we-now-know column as we head into the second wave. And if you think that doesn't leave much room for profit, well, remember that survival—not profit—is now the point.

"There's no profit in any of this," chef Walsh summarized. "The more you do, the less you hemorrhage. But in the end, there is no profit. Nothing. Zero."

That's how bad things have been: even nothing is better than what came before. But financially speaking, treading water is a lot more palatable when you know for sure that something better is coming. 2021 will offer what 2020 couldn't: an end to all this. Let's just hope that restaurants get what they need to make it to that finish line.



2020 in Review
Part One: The Great Pivot 1/2

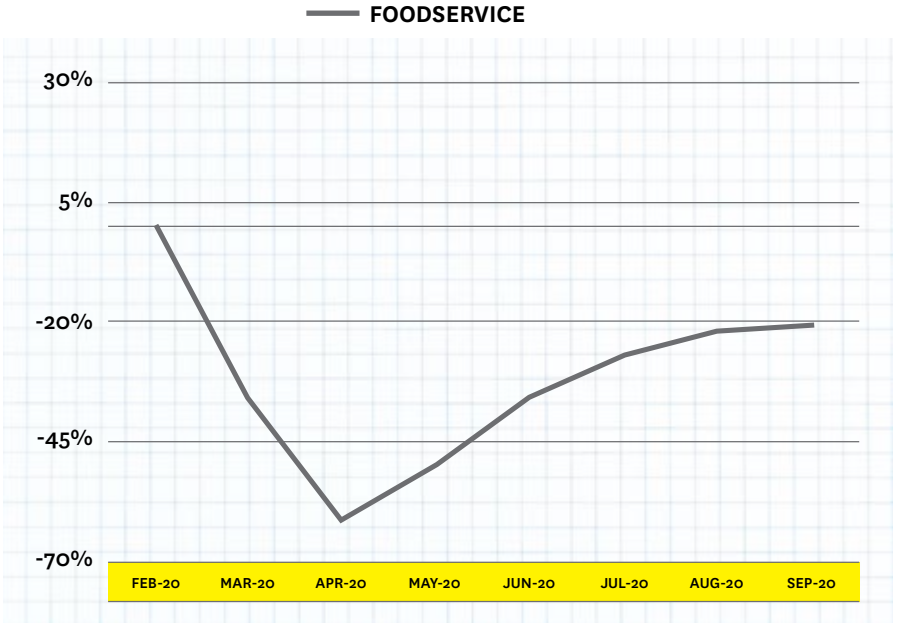
The following is part one of a two-part series about the state of Canada's foodservice industry. In this edition of MENU, we take a look back at the seismic transformation of the foodservice landscape in 2020 due to COVID-19 and what lessons were learned for the years ahead. In the next edition of MENU, part two will review our upcoming forecast for foodservice sales in 2021 and beyond.



BY CHRIS ELLIOTT

It seems almost impossible to summarize 2020 in a 700-word article. This was a year in which we experienced unprecedented sales declines and massive restaurant closures. Despite ongoing government intervention with the wage and rent subsidy programs, the industry has been pushed to the brink of collapse with many foodservice businesses operating at a loss.

Seasonally adjusted sales growth compared to February 2020
(foodservice and retail and grocery)



Looking back at the beginning of this crisis, foodservice sales tumbled by a staggering 61 per cent in March and April 2020 compared to February 2020. This marked the lowest monthly foodservice sales in over two decades.

Although there has been some improvement in foodservice sales, the dramatic decline in tourism and business spending combined with consumer reluctance to dine indoors, are restraining the recovery. In September, sales remained 21 per cent below February 2020 levels. Full-service restaurant and drinking place sales are down 26 per cent and 36 per cent respectively. Meanwhile, retail stores returned to pre-COVID levels in June and are currently 3 per cent above February 2020 levels. Recent lockdowns in the Toronto and Peel regions in Ontario combined with clampdowns in other regions across the country to prevent the spread of coronavirus have hit the foodservice industry harder than many others.

Even before COVID-19, 2020 was expected to be a challenging year. In last year's Restaurants Canada's 2019-2023 *Long Term Foodservice Forecast* report, Hugh Johnston from Strategic and Financial Architect provided key business insights for foodservice operators. His sage advice: simplify and diversify. He wrote: "There is nothing like being "meat 'n' potatoes" to make it through a recession, even if it seems boring. As they say, "people gotta eat." Expense account dining is a time bomb in a recession, and vacation spending is vulnerable, too. If these segments are at the core of your business model, get ready for a more challenging ride and plan accordingly."

This was written at a time when COVID-19 wasn't on anyone's radar. Back then, the economy was expected to slow down or even fall into a mild recession. Looking back, these words apply as much to today's foodservice landscape as ever.

Restaurant operators did simplify and diversify. Many simplified their menus to streamline their operation and reduce costs without reducing brand standards. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, restaurants focused on their core business strengths.

There was also radical diversification as many restaurants pivoted by adding groceries or meal kits. Grocery offerings evolved beyond carrying items like produce and bread, including pre-made fresh and frozen dishes. Meal kits were another innovation for guests to try easy-to-make-at-home meals. Some restaurants released signature dishes and sauces as another source of revenue and to ensure greater brand reach.

Diversification also changed how people interacted with guests. With people reluctant to eat on-premise, restaurants found new ways to shift that personal indoor dining experience onto an online platform. A number of operators and chefs had positive feedback when they used their YouTube and Instagram channels to share videos about how to cook and prepare food and the changes they were making to keep guests safe and healthy.

Prior to COVID-19, delivery was the fastest-growing area of the foodservice industry. Between 2016 and 2019, delivery soared by 85 per cent compared to a 3 per cent increase in on-premises dining according to Ipsos Foodservice Monitor. Of those who didn't offer delivery before the crisis, many quickly made the pivot when on-premises dining was shut down, and provincial governments allowed the delivery of alcohol with food for the first time. At its peak, delivery accounted for roughly one quarter of sales at restaurants. While this has moderated somewhat, delivery is here to stay.

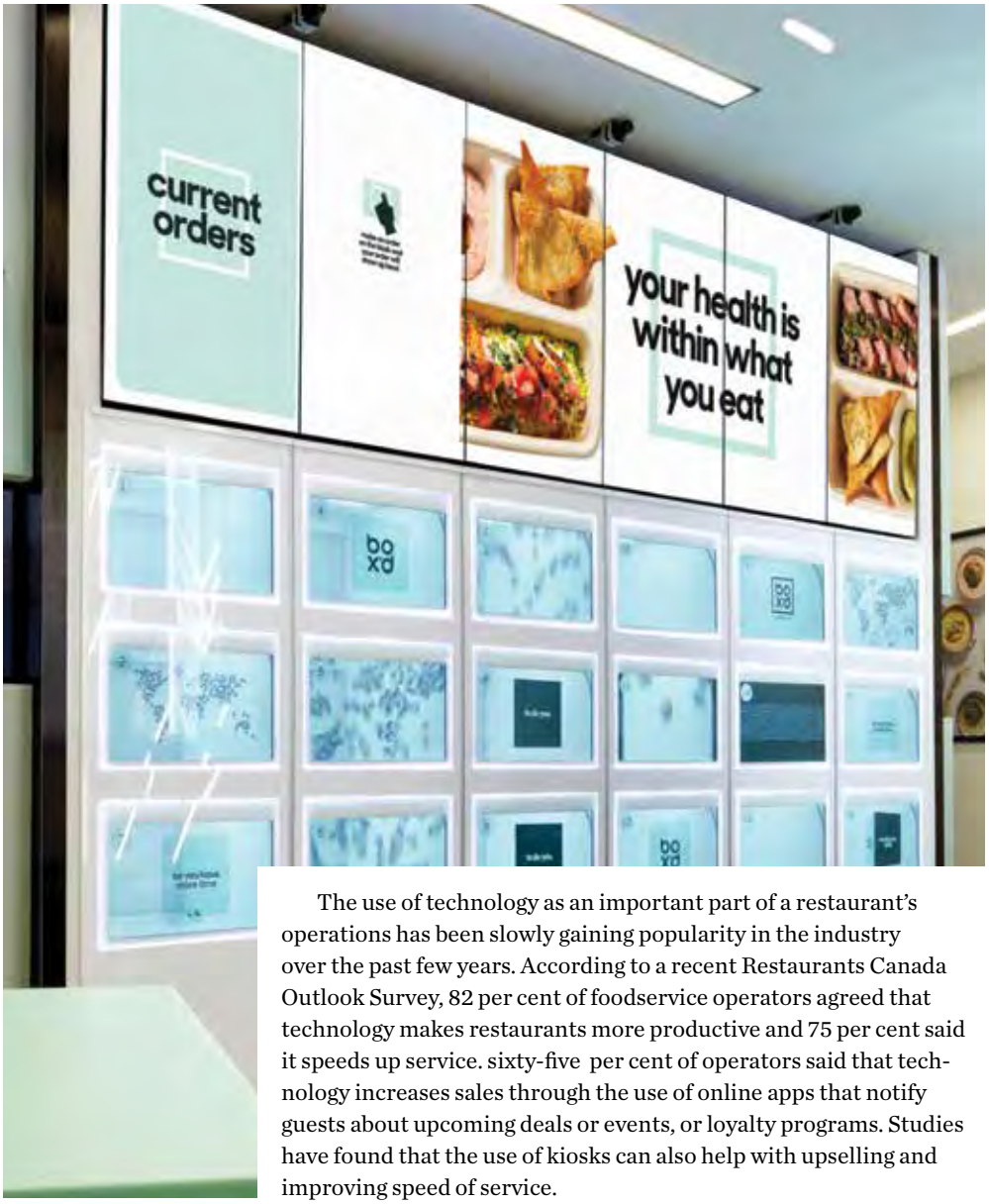
2020 will be remembered for the devastating impact COVID-19 had on the foodservice industry. Despite all the doom and gloom, 2020 should also be remembered for the amount of radical innovation that took place by foodservice operators. This is what saved many restaurants from shutting down permanently during the dark days of COVID-19. Foodservice operators ushered in new offerings, restaurants embraced delivery and takeout, and the ghost kitchen model accelerated. Without these changes, the industry would have seen even more closures. These changes will have a lasting impact on the industry in the years to come.



WHILE STATISTICS CANADA HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CAPTURE THESE CLOSURES AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING, PRELIMINARY ESTIMATES FROM THE INDUSTRY POINT TO THE PERMANENT CLOSURE OF NEARLY 10,000 RESTAURANTS, CATERERS AND DRINKING PLACES ACROSS THE COUNTRY DUE TO COVID-19. **THIS REPRESENTS ROUGHLY ONE IN 10 LOCATIONS.**

ENSURING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE WITH DIGITAL TOOLS

BY HILARY THOMSON



The use of technology as an important part of a restaurant's operations has been slowly gaining popularity in the industry over the past few years. According to a recent Restaurants Canada Outlook Survey, 82 per cent of foodservice operators agreed that technology makes restaurants more productive and 75 per cent said it speeds up service. sixty-five per cent of operators said that technology increases sales through the use of online apps that notify guests about upcoming deals or events, or loyalty programs. Studies have found that the use of kiosks can also help with upselling and improving speed of service.

In the same survey, one third of operators said that integrating new technology into their business was a priority for the next year, and some identified barriers for implementing technology at their establishments. One quarter felt that it would make restaurant visits and ordering more complicated for guests, however the biggest barrier for 70 per cent of respondents was the cost of implementation. Some restaurants pointed out that while they see the benefit of technology, it would take too long to see any ROI. Regardless, 60 per cent of quick service restaurants said that they would be looking into online or app ordering technologies in the next week, and one quarter were looking at devoting more resources to third-party delivery like DoorDash and UberEats. Some table service restaurants were also looking into implementing more technology in their establishments with one in six considering table management software/apps.

Although many food service establishments have been looking into leveraging technology for the past few years, there is no doubt that COVID-19 has fast tracked the need for technology in restaurants across the country. With restaurants unable to seat customers for months, many relied on takeout and delivery to help make ends meet, and for some, the use of technology was instrumental in this process. Technology has played a huge role over the past few months in instilling consumer confidence in brands that have been ready and willing to pivot their businesses to meet their needs. Many restaurant patrons are not as comfortable with face-to-face contact, and leveraging technology has allowed many restaurants to adapt their processes to continue to offer their high quality food in a way that is accessible and COVID-friendly, encouraging customers to continue to engage with them within their comfort zone.

Highly successful Toronto-based brand Paramount Fine Foods recently opened the city's first fully automated restaurant – Box'd. While the first Box'd location on King Street W opened during the pandemic, the idea for the business model came much earlier and was originally meant to ease the congestion of

Toronto's downtown lunch scene. Paramount's Executive Director of Corporate Affairs, Karalyn White, says pre-pandemic lineups in the city's financial district to get a great lunch were very long, forcing many people onto apps that skipped the line. "Eventually those lines got just as long as the guests waiting to order," White remembers. "The Box'd technology allows us to have 18 orders ready at the same time with 3-4 people picking up at any one time to lower the congestion and increase the speed and efficiency."

White says technology is key in Box'd business model. It allows them to put all their employees in the kitchen as meals are ordered via mobile phone or in-store at a kiosk. When ordering, the guest can select the time they would like to pick up their order and a display in the kitchen tells the chefs when to prepare the meal for optimal freshness. White is adamant that while Paramount has always been a people-first company that exemplifies the highest quality of fresh ingredients, technology has allowed them to add the "wow factor" to the Box'd stores and is a huge bonus, especially in today's climate. "Guest have loved the ease of use of the technology, the fresh food and really enjoy seeing their name pop up as their meal is 'Box'd'," she says.



Box'd may be shaking up the lunch game in Toronto, but beverage giant Coca-Cola is also leveraging technology to instill consumer confidence by launching a new contactless solution for their Coca-Cola Freestyle machines. These machines have always allowed consumers to pour their own choice of Coca-Cola soft drinks all from one simple interface; but their new technology allows them to choose and pour a drink from their phone in seconds—without having to sign up for a membership or download an app. All the thirsty consumer has to do is hold their smartphone up to the display screen to auto scan a QR code, which immediately connects the Coca-Cola Freestyle user interface to their phone. "The technology is really impressive," said Crystal Drover, Freestyle lead in Canada.

Many restaurant patrons are not as comfortable with face-to-face contact and leveraging technology has allowed many restaurants to adapt their processes to continue to offer their high quality food in a way that is accessible and COVID-friendly, encouraging customers to continue to engage with them within their comfort zone.

The touch-free solution was developed in just over a week in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Coca-Cola, all beverage dispensers are safe with recommended care and cleaning, but the team knew that people may prefer a touchless fountain experience. Research from Civic Science in the U.S. has shown that 60 per cent of restaurant guests prefer to pour their own fountain drinks and 40 per cent strongly agree that they feel safer when in control of their drinks, further proving this move is responding to a consumer want and need. "It has been inspiring to see our Coca-Cola team innovate and adapt to meet the changing needs of our consumers and partners during these unprecedented times," said Darlene Nicosia, President of Coca-Cola Ltd. "We're excited to be bringing the new Coca-Cola Freestyle Mobile Pour technology to Canadians everywhere."

Mary Brown's is another example of a fast-food chain that is leveraging technology to expand their business. They recently launched a new app which offers a contactless way to order their famous chicken, while also rewarding brand loyalty. Vice President of Marketing, Jeff Barlow, says the development of the app was driven by wanting to heighten guest hospitality, convenience and loyalty, while also giving them important data on guest behaviour and preferences. "Hospitality in the current climate has de-emphasized human contact and some other traditional forms of hospitality like table touches, time spent by guests around staff, etc." Barlow says. "Further, the data gathered by the app will guide us in many ways."

The launch of the app went better than expected with well over 100,000 downloads in the first six weeks. "We knew our loyal fans would welcome an app that rewards frequency; but the pandemic also drove many downloads from a safety and comfort perspective," Barlow notes. "The app is all about another choice for guests to get their favourite chicken in whatever way suits their convenience and comfort level."

Ottawa-based company Mad Radish is no stranger to the app game and is combining it with putting their own spin on the concept of ghost kitchens by centralizing three distinct brands in one convenient location. Mad Radish has recently expanded their offerings from their original high-quality salad concept to include Luisa's Burritos & Bowls and Revival Pizza. "We've reimagined Mad Radish by combining the best elements of a typical ghost kitchen with the functionality for a customer facing restaurant, that means housing three brands with three distinct menus under one roof, while still allowing diners to visit a physical location to place their order," says founder David Segel.

According to Segel, the pandemic drove them to look at their business a bit differently, which inspired the expansion into the two new brands that are now available at all

Mad Radish locations. He says this shift has enabled them to move from a primarily physical experience to being able to offer great-tasting food to people where and how they want it. "We still need to offer a great in-restaurant experience—because people will come back to restaurants—but we know we need to provide an equally great at-home experience," he says.



Segel notes that Mad Radish has always been digital first, offering contactless order and pay-ahead options since they opened their first store in 2017. He says that while there is no doubt the pandemic has accelerated the need for technology in the restaurant industry, it is also important to look at how quickly consumers have become accustomed to getting what they want, when, where, and how they want it. "To put it another way, we're much less tolerant of inconvenience," he says. "Technology is enabling us to eliminate inconvenience for our customers."

Segel is adamant that operating Mad Radish as a multi-brand restaurant would not be possible without the use of the technology that is powering their business. In a time when many restaurants are struggling to make ends meet, Mad Radish is opening their seventh location in January and Segel says they are not slowing down. "It's difficult to predict what the future will hold for the foodservice industry," he says. "But I'm optimistic that we'll come out of this smarter, stronger and more successful than we ever have been."

Although the cost to implement technology may still be a barrier for many restaurants, the COVID-19 pandemic has solidified the benefits of investing in technology to streamline operations and respond to consumer demand. The Restaurants Canada's 2017 Outlook Survey projected that with rising labour costs and shortage of workers, restaurants would be investing more in technology in following years. Although no one could have predicted the significant challenges that have come with the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no doubt that technology will play an increasing role in the foodservice industry, by helping to decrease face-to-face contact and improve service delivery, instilling consumer confidence across the board.

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EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF VIRTUAL

COVID-19 has hyper-charged the race to harness and optimize technologies that help the hospitality industry continue to deliver personalized, sensory experiences.

Since the first wave of the pandemic in Canada, foodservice and many other industries across the country have undertaken a tremendous range of experimental actions based on equal amounts of ingenuity and desperation to manage their businesses through what was originally seen as a catastrophic—though temporary—event. Now, as we find ourselves ensconced in the second wave, it is less certain that "normal" is within survivable reach for many.

COVID-19 dramatically escalated the pace of innovation and the move to trial new digital and virtual platforms, with varying degrees of success and a buffet-worthy helping of stress. Many have questioned the viability of technology within industries governed and grown through vivid sensual connections.

Now, trendsetters are looking beyond essential virtual solutions like takeout and delivery menus, chef-led cooking classes, and meal kits to a total rethink of the relationship between culinary brands and consumers. At the heart of this early revolution is personalization, driven by next-generation services and big ideas like augmented and virtual reality technologies.



TORONTO FOOD FILM FESTIVAL:
DELIVERING FOOD EXPERIENCES
THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

When it became clear that an in-theatre delivery of the Toronto Food Film Fest (TFFF) would not be possible this year, rather than defer to next year, the Festival team moved their 29 screenings to Cinesend's Virtual Festival platform. TFFF co-founder Joanna Maracle says, "Pivoting to virtual was the safest and best bet. We're both in post-production in film, so we deal with a lot of technology and troubleshooting on a daily basis. My partner, Jacqueline Tam, is probably the most technologically advanced, so she led the way." While the move widened their audience to include patrons from other Ontario cities and allowed the organizers to offer exclusive content like talks with independent filmmakers from Canada and around the world, they were challenged to maintain the sensory integration of food experiences within the Festival event.

"A big part of the Festival is eating," Maracle acknowledges, "so we needed to figure out how to continue to provide that tactile experience." To maintain that sensory connection, TFFF launched their "screen to plate" experience as part of the VIP pass offered through the platform. Pass-holders could pick up a specialized kit with local wine from Southbrook Vineyards and cheese from Monforte Dairy along with other locally-sourced edibles from Longslice Brewery's brewpub, The Aviary, allowing the organizers to showcase and organically cross promote local Ontario providers.

The Festival also developed a series of restaurant recommendations based on themes derived from their film list. *My Farmland*, a film that explores how Chinese agricultural investors and farmers are changing Canada's traditional agriculture sector, was paired with a recommendation for DaiLo, a Cantonese restaurant in Toronto. Similarly, Phancy's Bodega worked with TFFF to prepare custom food kits to promote the short film selection. Festival patrons enthusiastically embraced the concept, increasing revenues at all recommended restaurants throughout the nine-day Festival period.

> "A big part of the Festival is eating, so we needed to figure out how to continue to provide that tactile experience"



EVNT MGMT:
CURATING EXCLUSIVE VIRTUAL EXPERIENCES
TO STAY CONNECTED.

Jasmine Baker and partner Paula Perri of Toronto-based EVNT MGMT were one of the first event and hospitality teams to fully commit to the new, virtual normal. The secret to their success can be attributed to an early, intuitive pivot and to their entrepreneurial agility and creativity.

Having recently embarked on a virtual partnership with Toronto's Chef Carl Heinrich and his beloved neighbourhood local food restaurant Richmond Station, Baker and Perri are confident in their approach and the results they're already seeing. "We offer bespoke and personalized meal kits that can range from charcuterie and wine to four-course, elaborate dinners delivered to individual homes. We also curate and produce a virtual companion to these meals—from a chef demonstration on how to put the meal together, to a cocktail or butchery class or even booking a live DJ or band for a performance. It's off to a great and busy start and, with corporations trying to find new ways to celebrate with their staff for the holidays, we've been able to send meals across Canada. We have the technology and the delivery down to a science, and it's been a blast."

Like many, the EVNT MGMT team experienced their share of trial and error wading through the plethora of potential online platforms to find the right mix. "I think the folks at Zoom will all be enjoying their holiday bonus this year!" Perri says lightly. "All joking aside, Zoom has been a key player in delivering at least some portion of all of our online events. With their break-out rooms, spotlighting, chat and polls, this platform has been able to check a lot of boxes for us. The digital platform should be viewed as the "venue" in my opinion—you need to find the best fit and possibly add on back-end support from systems like OBS in order to have your online event reach its full potential. There are a lot of great platforms like Cisco Webex and Eventify that really help bridge the content delivery gap."

Perri predicts there's no putting digital engagement back in the box. "I believe it will take time to build back total consumer confidence in large gatherings, and that the hybrid-model (live/virtual) will live beyond COVID."



NEXTECH:
UNLOCKING EPISODIC CONTENT FOR BRANDS.

When NexTech AR started up about three years ago, it was with the vision that augmented reality would become the next new form of mass communication. President Paul Duffy believes the expected timeline for experiential brands and businesses to integrate AR into their promotional offering has dramatically shortened. "Had COVID not happened," says Duffy, "we'd be on a 10-year arc. It's shaved five years off of that."

Nextech AR offers a suite of business-enabling technologies from e-commerce solutions that allow consumers to view and engage with products and services in a multi-dimensional context to the robust, AR-enabled virtual event platform that will act as the venue for RC Show 2021 - Virtual Live. Enhanced experiences and product visualization technologies introduce new personalization and experimentation opportunities into the competitive equation. NexTech AR's event platform not only acts as the venue for virtual gatherings, but delivers an immersive, user-guided experience with layered content and brand delivery options. The company's new "Genie in a Bottle" is a pop-up hologram activated by a single click. Technologies like these will be integrated into the RC Show 2021 program, allowing attendees to trial products and experience interactive virtual content.

Duffy is certain that virtual will become a crucial companion to live, sensory experiences. "When the world starts up again, being able to selectively place the right content into the right community ecosystems will be the game changer. Any brand not offering a hybrid experience will be at a disadvantage."

> "When the world starts up again, being able to selectively place the right content into the right community ecosystems will be the game changer. Any brand not offering a hybrid experience will be at a disadvantage."



TASTE CANADA AWARDS:
MIXING LIVE AND PRE-TAPED CONTENT FOR A RICHER EXPERIENCE.

Taste Canada's annual national cookbook awards have long been a hot ticket. Faced with the choice this year to simply announce the winners or explore virtual options for the October event, the non-profit opted to try out a virtual broadcast format using Facebook Live. The awards ceremony component of the event had been streamed in previous years on the platform, so there was a measure of audience expectation and continuity already in place. "We wanted to have a platform where people could tune in at any time during the ceremony." says Steven Hellmann of The Foodies Group, Taste Canada's PR partner. "With the chat feature and our moderators, we were able to engage with our audience throughout the event (pre-party, award ceremony and after-party). In addition to the virtual awards ceremony, we were able to leverage digital mediums to create a new *Behind the Apron* series, which brought together shortlisted cookbook authors and farmers, connecting them with our public following, in behind-the-scenes chats."

Says Hellmann, "It's important not to worry about perfection as you transition to digital and don't stay out of the game for too long as you will fall behind. Don't be afraid to experiment with this medium. Now is your time to see what works, see how you can use digital to grow your audience, and grow your brand."



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QUELL

[kwell]: verb /
to put an end to, put a stop to, to subdue or silence

TAKES A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Quell, a culinary talent agency unlike any other, is laser focused on elevating Canadian BIPOC culinary talent and creating new, co-beneficial foodservice partnerships.

Trevor Lui, multi-tasking, high-energy event producer, restauranteur, and cookbook author, has created a life and career in hospitality. He sees an industry that's welcoming, yet punishing, and full of camaraderie and life. But as a 20-year veteran, he's also seen inequity, missed opportunities and ways to improve the system without breaking it. Now, he's taking his energy and focusing on making changes from the boardroom to the dining room to make space now and in the future for BIPOC culinary leaders.

In September, together with his sister Stephanie Lui-Valentim, Lui launched Quell, an alternative boutique agency and consultancy focused on increasing diversity across the food and drink industry. It's an idea that he's has had for the last couple of years. "I approached Stephanie to work with me because I know she's driven, focused and a good balance to my creative side...I also know that the respect between us is mutual, and if there was anyone who could bring this to life with me, it was her."

"We are representing exceptional leaders in the F&D industry who all have a higher purpose and drive to educate and advocate for important societal issues like race, female empowerment, food security, climate and much more. We are inspired by each of them every day and feel fortunate to have created a community where we can amplify their voices, expertise, and experiences." says Lui-Valentim.

The easy thing to say about Quell is that it's a BIPOC culinary talent agency linking brands with its impressive talent roster. From beverage specialists like Evelyn Chick and Christina Veira, chefs like Tawfik Shehata, La-toya Fagon and most recently acclaimed Chef Joseph Shawana, Quell approaches opportunities from the talent's point-of-view, ensuring equal opportunity with brands based on merit and ability.

But Quell's value also lies in using the experience that the Quell team brings to the table and in marrying the not-so-obvious brands with the surprising and the unexpected to bring something valuable, thoughtful, and successful to life.

The more complex part of Quell's offering is helping those in the hospitality industry dive deeper into the systemic issues that have created inequities and barriers to opportunities. Research shows that companies with more diverse workforces perform better financially, yet the hospitality industry seems to lag behind the insight.

> "the potential of what you're building **exceeds what you'll lose.**"
>
> **– Trevor Lui**

"There are challenges restaurants and brands face regarding equity because they are embedded in the foundation of the system. You need to have reflective moments to ask hard questions about yourself and your business. It's tough. We help you have those difficult conversations and make sure your business is set-up as a safe and successful environment for everyone," says Lui. That's not just on the floor or in the kitchen, but where business decisions are made in the boardroom. "We're not saying give up a seat, we're asking you to add one. To help make real change. Our goal at Quell is to transform the face of hospitality in every aspect, to be more reflective of what our community and population looks like. The old system doesn't work anymore."

It's this system that Lui is helping to change by investing in a new generation of culinary leaders with Quell's bursary and mentorship program. This year, in partnership with Thistletown Collegiate Institute's culinary arts program, Quell offers interested and talented students a path to post-secondary education in hospitality by providing one-on-one mentoring time with talent on Quell's roster, opportunities for additional training, and financial support. "The path in our industry isn't often clear, so by providing a way for youth to ask questions and to see a future in culinary may inspire some to post-secondary education, creating a pipeline of future leaders," says Lui.

> "You need to have reflective moments to **ask hard questions about yourself and your business**. It's tough."
>
> **– Trevor Lui**

While the timing of Quell seems providential, it's also one that's in concert with what's happening in North America. Businesses are looking at how they represent their brand to a new and inspired generation of consumers. An Adobe survey found that 62 per cent of respondents said that a brand's diversity—or lack of it—affects the perception of their products of services.

In June 2020, Restaurants Canada stated their commitment to voicing the importance of an inclusive and diverse workplace in kitchens and the foodservice businesses. Why aren't businesses readily adapting to a new diverse and equitable framework? According to Lui, it's about risk. "A lot of people are scared, especially now, of the risk associated with potentially losing part of our established core business by building a new framework. What we help them understand is that the potential of what you're building exceeds what you'll lose." While the work is daunting, it doesn't phase Lui. "With Quell we're making a commitment to our talent and to the industry and to help leave a legacy of change."

-For more information visit quellnow.com

quell.

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Quell leans on exceptional talent and expertise from across all industries to help guide decisions and strategy.

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Impress your guests this holiday season with a delicious Italian twist on traditional flavours.

The holidays are a time to celebrate traditions, spend time with family and friends, and enjoy great food!

And, while the traditional turkey dinner will always have a place at the holiday table, authentic, full-flavoured Italian ingredients, like Prosciutto di Parma, Prosciutto di San Daniele and Grana Padano cheese, can elevate your recipes and offer your guests an enhanced dining experience with an international flair.

Check out these specially created holiday recipe ideas to help you design your very own signature dishes. Your guests will enjoy a true taste of Italy this holiday season.

Buon Appetito!



Prosciutto di Parma Wrapped Turkey Roulade with Pomegranate-Port Reduction

Traditional turkey gets a delightful twist with this prosciutto wrapped turkey roulade recipe. Drizzled with a pomegranate-port reduction and filled with a pistachio cranberry stuffing, this guest-impressing meal is a delicious way to get every ounce of holiday flavour in one bite. The perfectly balanced sweet and salty Prosciutto di Parma and tart pomegranate make for a delicious duo. Be prepared to be asked to make this version of holiday turkey every year!



Wild Berry Salad with Basil, Mosto Cotto, Sichuan Pepper & Grana Padano Crisps

For many, dessert could be the appetizer, the main course, and the final touch of a great meal. Crispy Grana Padano cheese paired with berries tossed in sweet and tangy mosto cotto syrup make for a refreshing way to end (or start) any holiday meal. And don't forget the vanilla ice cream or your favourite flavour of gelato.



Panettone with Prosciutto di San Daniele

Italians look forward to welcoming Panettone to their holiday table every year. This traditional sweet bread is a staple at Italian holiday tables all over the world, this recipe reimagines the traditional into a savory appetizer that pairs Panettone with Prosciutto di San Daniele ham and soft creamy gorgonzola. Be sure to make enough because this blend of sweet, savoury, and tart creaminess will go fast!

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Pairing Ontario's F&B Rock Stars





The LCBO's *Pair it Forward* campaign is a bold marketing move that's winning hearts and helping support local business.

The campaign is new, but the mission behind it is familiar. A perfect example of actionable, personalized storytelling, the campaign illuminates artful and hyperlocal 'chain pairings', beginning with a locally-crafted wine, beer or spirit that is then paired with complementary ingredients from regional farmers, apiaries, cheesemakers or butchers and finalizes with the addition of a local restaurant to tie the concept together. Each campaign pairing is organically derived, with partners participating directly in the pairing curation process for their communities.

Pair it Forward is right-sized, scalable and perfectly timed to respond to growing consumer interest in supporting local. Taken en masse, the pairing stories serve as a taste-of-place guide to Ontario, celebrating familiar regional products and makers and surfacing new culinary gems for broader audiences. "*Pair it Forward* was created and launched in early September to support and celebrate Ontario's food and industry by showcasing local makers and products and demonstrating how they go together with other local makers and products," says Vanda Provato, Vice President, Marketing & Customer Intelligence, LCBO. "With stores in over 300 communities across the province and our popular website (LCBO.com), the LCBO is uniquely positioned to start a chain reaction of local support across the province."

Toronto Region



Barchef Project



Nugateau



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Pairing it forward in Prince Edward County, ON:

A cold glass of award-winning **Rosehill Run Winery's Chardonnay Liberated VQA** pairs perfectly with…

- **Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Co.**'s **Morning Moon Cheese** from the **Agrarian Market** in Picton, which pairs well with…
- **Lavender Honey** from the family-owned lavender and honey farm and craft meadery, **Millefleurs**, which is a delicious part of…
- Sustainability-minded **Flame + Smith** restaurant's **Ember Roasted Beets with Goat Cheese, Honey & Citrus Vinaigrette salad**.

Perhaps what is most unique is LCBO's generosity with its campaign and willingness to allow it to grow and expand organically via connections between like-minded Ontario businesses. *Pair it Forward* began traditionally, with localized support in LCBO stores, online platforms and print, but has been amplified by influencers who used the campaign narrative to create their own content, earning 27 million impressions and 770,000 consumer engagement on social by mid-November. Customers have embraced the campaign, and local business partners are using their own social media channels—with encouragement from the LCBO—to further amplify the message and engage their communities.

"The importance of supporting local farmers, growers, makers, and bars and restaurants throughout the province is our responsibility and a commitment we will continue to honour," says Provato. "Anyone can help build the momentum, especially leading into the holiday season, by creating stories on social media that pair their business with a product from a local business. We just ask they tag @LCBO and use #PairItForward."



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As the cold weather hits and many of the cities across Canada continue to work within ever-changing COVID-19 guidelines, restaurants are depending now—more than ever—on delivery and takeout. And ensuring that your operations are stacked with interesting, innovative, and interesting bar and beverage products for delivery (or dine-in where allowed) is an excellent way to draw in traffic and attention.

Goose Island Bourbon County Stout

The 2020 Batch

- Aged for a year in a mix of bourbon barrels from exceptional distilleries like Wild Turkey, Heaven Hill and Buffalo Trace.
- Tasting notes of cocoa, fudge, vanilla, caramel, and almond, plus leather and tobacco.
- 14.6 % ABV
- Suggest serving in a tulip glass, which supports a healthy head while holding onto the beer's delicious aromas.



LIQUID LEGACY:
The Bourbon County Stout tradition started with the desire to make a great beer. It was 1992, and the brewers at Goose Island Chicago wanted to do something special to commemorate their 1000th batch. So, for the first time ever, they brewed a beer to age in whisky barrels. Their experiment paid off, and they discovered they'd tapped into what would become their most iconic beer ever. Year after year, the brewers at Goose Island Chicago have used their unrivaled skills and imaginations to consistently outdo themselves. Bourbon County Stout has been commercially brewed since 1995 and, in that time, it's earned critical acclaim and a special place in the hearts of beer fans everywhere. For five years, Canada has been fortunate enough to receive bottles Bourbon County Stout. This year, we're thrilled to announce that more provinces will be added to the list. In addition to British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta, New Brunswick, Manitoba and Québec will receive shipments of their own.

AVAILABILITY:
Available exclusively online at gooseisland.ca.



Jameson Cold Brew

Did you know that coffee is the most popular beverage among adults in Canada (even more than water!) and that Canadians drink on average 2.8 cups of coffee daily?

Whiskey and coffee have always belonged together, so it was about time someone united them in a modern way. Jameson Irish Whiskey is offering a fresh take on the two distinctive tastes with the new, limited-edition Jameson Cold Brew, an Irish whiskey infused with natural cold brew coffee flavour.

This new innovation from the Jameson family blends the smooth taste of triple-distilled Jameson with 100 per cent Arabia coffee from Brazil and Columbia, with notes of toasted oak and dark chocolate.

AVAILABILITY: Jameson Cold Brew will be available in select stores across Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta

PRICING: Each bottle is 30% ABV, and is priced in line with a regular bottle of Jameson Irish Whiskey

For more information, visit **www.corby.ca**



RumChata

RumChata's wonderfully balanced recipe is achieved by its proprietary blend of the highest quality aged Caribbean rum, real dairy cream, cinnamon and vanilla. The end result is a deliciously smooth and light cream liqueur that has layers of familiar flavours wrapped within a truly exotic and unique taste. Exceptional and versatile, it can be added to coffee, is delicious on its own, yet can also be mixed with other spirits such as vodka, American whiskey, tequila or any favourite liqueur.

AVAILABILITY: across Canada, except PEI

PRICE: varies by province

La Presserie

La Presserie is a Toronto-based cold-pressed juice company bringing a fresh new perspective to freshly-frozen juices. The brand is the first to offer frozen, cold-pressed juice options that retain superior flavour and the integrity of their nutrients for up to a year frozen or 14 days refrigerated once thawed. The longevity of La Presserie's unpasteurized, preservative-free juices is achieved through a proprietary flash-freezing process that harnesses nature's fundamental pause button to ensure each sip is as fresh as the day it was pressed. For the little ones, La Presserie offers a line of kid-tested and parent-approved juices and smoothies with options like Apple Cucumber, Pink Lemonade (with beets), and Blue Fruit Punch (with Jicama and Spirulina).

AVAILABILITY: Ontario (online and in-store), Quebec (online only)

PRICING: $4.99/bottle in stores, $30 for a 6-pack online, and $60 for a 12-pack online. Free delivery is available across the the Toronto area.

For more information, visit: **www.lapresserie.ca**





Aviation

American made, Canadian owned. Aviation Gin is a Western-style craft gin distilled in small batches in Portland, Oregon. Founded in 2005, Aviation Gin is the result of a bartender and a distiller looking to make a gin perfect for both martinis and cocktails. Instead of being overpowered by juniper—the flavour of which many perceive to be "harsh" or "medicinal"— Aviation Gin is a balanced blend of seven botanicals: juniper, cardamom, French lavender, sarsaparilla, coriander, anise seed and dried orange peel. Aviation Gin is rated 97 points by Wine Enthusiast—the highest gin rating ever.

AVAILABILITY: Canada-wide (except for PEI)

PRICING: CAD$39.99 (SRP)

For more information, contact Jason Prendergast, Canadian Brand Manager at: **jasonp@davosbrands.com**



Beefeater Blood Orange

Bursting onto the gin scene this past spring, Beefeater Blood Orange is the latest bold and refreshing flavour from the world's most awarded gin brand. Built on a tradition of experimentation—Beefeater founder James Burrough began distilling orange gin way back in 1876—Beefeater Blood Orange is a zesty new drink for the cocktail and spritz drinker. Its versatile flavours and aromas make it the perfect base for a broad range of cocktails, but it is ideal with a tonic, ginger ale or, for a low-calorie option, soda water with ice and a fresh orange slice.

AVAILABILITY: Alberta, BC, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, PEI

PRICING: $25-$32

For more information, visit: beefeatergin.com

Lotus Plant Energy

Lotus Plant Energy, distributed by SPECIALTY BEVERAGE SOLUTIONS ("SBS") in Canada, are plant-based concentrates, naturally crafted from nature's elite botanicals, superfruits, amino acids, and B vitamins. Lotus harnesses the nutritional power of coffee fruit (cascara) through a patented extraction process that preserves the health benefits of the coffee cherry, delivering maximized levels of natural, never-roasted coffee polyphenols that produce the powerful growth hormone BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor).

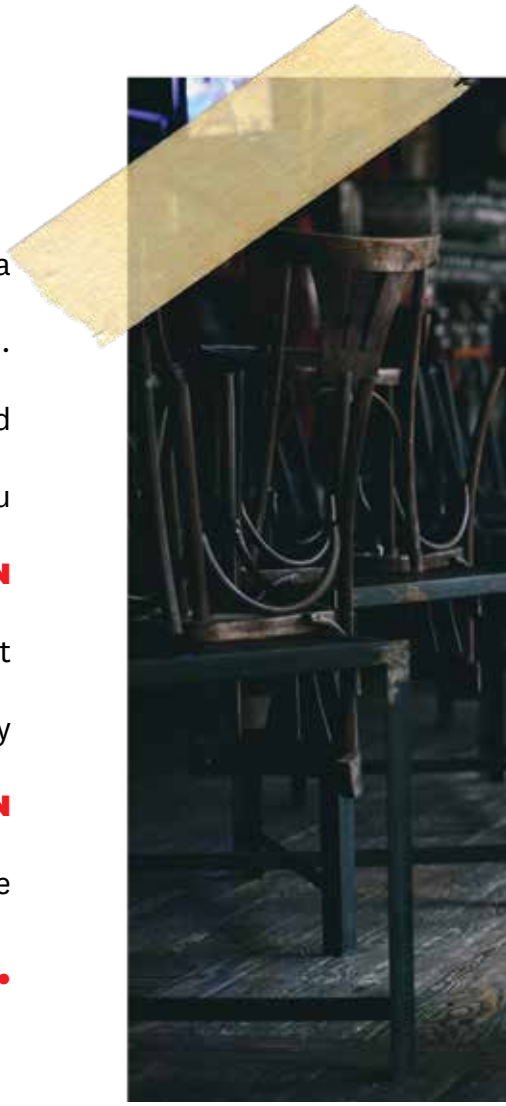
AVAILABILITY: Available December 2020

PRICING: $26.50 - $53.30 per bottle, wholesale price varies by variety (from $0.10 to $0.18 for a finished 16oz drink, depending on the recipe)

For more information, contact Alma Castro at:
e: **alma@sbsolutions.ca** t: **1-888-805-5528 x 102**



SPREADING THE MESSAGE: ‘PICTURE LIFE WITHOUT RESTAURANTS’



We don’t need to tell you that over **10,000 RESTAURANTS** across Canada have already **PERMANENTLY CLOSED** due to the impacts of COVID-19. We don’t need to tell you that at the height of the pandemic an estimated **800,000 JOBS WERE LOST** due to COVID-19. We don’t need to tell you that restaurants across Canada have **INVESTED OVER $750 MILLION IN PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**, and we don’t need to tell you that in a recent survey by Restaurants Canada, **72 PER CENT** of those still losing money said they **EXPECT TO TAKE AT LEAST A YEAR TO RETURN TO PROFITABILITY**. We don’t need to tell you any of this, because

YOU ARE ALL LIVING IT.

> “The vast majority of Canadian consumers are concerned that restaurants in their community may not survive and **feel that restaurants are an important part of their community**,”
>
> **– Todd Barclay, President and CEO, Restaurants Canada**



While not every province, city, or region, is at the same stage of reopening, the Canadian foodservice industry has all felt the overwhelming effects of the pandemic, and as the ‘voice of the foodservice industry’, Restaurants Canada is dedicated to bringing these issues to light, not just on a government level, but on a consumer level as well.

Restaurants Canada has recently launched a multi-channel campaign targeting consumers across Canada. The ‘*Picture life without restaurants’* campaign objective is to inform the public that without their support, restaurants will continue to close. We aim to illustrate that this will leave gaping holes in the economy, communities, and the lives of Canadians.

Everyone has a story close to their heart that is attached to a foodservice venue. It could be where they got married, met a spouse or had an incredible birthday. Communities are built around restaurants, cafes, and bakeries. However, only 55 per cent of consumers are aware that a restaurant in their community has permanently closed.



The mission is clear: to ensure and bolster consumer support of the foodservice industry and to compel the public to become the defenders of their local restaurants. This movement is encapsulated in the campaign hashtag: #RestaurantsAreFamily.

"The vast majority of Canadian consumers are concerned that restaurants in their community may not survive and feel that restaurants are an important part of their community," said Todd Barclay, President and CEO of Restaurants Canada. "We are asking consumers to take a stand and show their support for their local restaurants by dining in (where applicable), getting take out, or purchasing gift cards."

A pivotal piece of this campaign is the public service announcement set to be released for the holiday season. While the PSA continues to emphasize the narrative that restaurants are crucial to our neighbourhoods, it also looks to make an emotional connection between consumers and the place foodservice has in their lives. By linking special moments that consumers have had in restaurants, we can make them see that a life without restaurants is an empty one.

Adding to the PSA, out-of-home ads across major Canadian media publications ask consumers to, "Picture life without restaurants." The ads are designed to remind consumers how important restaurants are in their lives and think about what life might be like if they were gone. Supporting the ads, Restaurants Canada is building complementary social media assets and speaking directly to the media through press releases.

These pieces come together in the recently launched website SupportRestaurants.ca., the destination where consumers can pledge their support for their local restaurant. By prompting consumers to share their pledge on their own social media channels, Restaurants Canada is looking to increase consumer confidence and drum up support for local restaurants by leveraging peer-to-peer influence.

Through SupportRestaurants.ca, industry members can also download the '*Picture life without restaurants*' toolkit. The toolkit outlines various ways to get involved, and, most importantly, it's a call to arms for every member of the foodservice industry to participate in this action. Community participation in this campaign is pivotal to keeping restaurants in the picture.

> "The ability to **mobilize our voice in local communities** provides us with a great advantage and opportunity to **get our collective message out**."
>
> **– Todd Barclay, President and CEO, Restaurants Canada**

With downloadable and shareable creative pieces, restaurateurs can use these assets to start a conversation with employees and get them involved. Operators can also leverage creativity to show their support on social media; spreading the word with their customers and the local community.

"The ability to mobilize our voice in local communities provides us with a great advantage and opportunity to get our collective message out," says Barclay. "I'm asking all of you to reach out to your staff and customers and help spread the word that, together, we can keep restaurants in the picture."

In addition to targeting consumers through the campaign, Restaurants Canada continues to advocate on behalf of the foodservice industry at every level of government.

According to a recent survey by Restaurants Canada, 87 per cent of Canadians are in agreement that restaurants are doing a good job of keeping customers safe. 92 per cent of Canadians agree that restaurants are an important part of their community. The data supports the idea that the majority of consumers believe that restaurants are safe spaces to enjoy time with their household and chosen bubble; however, as further rolling government restrictions pummel the industry, the decimation continues.

As part of this campaign, Restaurants Canada is demanding clearer transmission data to better understand why and how these guidelines have been put in place.

"Since the start of the pandemic, foodservice operators have made major investments in new procedures, training, personal protective equipment, and other means to ensure the highest levels of safety for their staff and patrons," said Barclay. "When jurisdictions experience rising cases, restaurant operators deserve to know why, and government should be doing everything possible to help them avoid the devastating consequences of indoor dining closures so restaurants can continue contributing to the economic and social fabric of their communities."

In communities across Canada, restaurants play an essential role. They drive our economy by creating jobs for all skill levels and supporting our farmers and a vast network of suppliers and producers. Restaurant operators and their teams represent the diverse makeup of Canada, not only in the meals they create, but also in the people who serve them. Just as importantly, restaurants bring character to neighbourhoods by providing a warm place for people to gather, fulfilling a human need for connection.

We need that, now more than ever.

Visit SupportRestaurants.ca for more information and to download the 'Picture life without restaurants' toolkit.



RC Show
Restaurants Canada
The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires
• THE HOSPITALITY EVENT OF THE YEAR •

RC SHOW 2021 ONLINE LIVE
FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 3, 2021

IT'S BEEN A YEAR... A BUMPY ONE. IT'S TIME TO WRITE THE SCRIPT FOR THE YEAR AHEAD.

The RC Show has always been a highlight in the Canadian foodservice industry calendar. It's where progressive restaurateurs, chefs, suppliers, and other foodies gather to discover new products, make new connections, and learn from local and global experts. It's a conference. It's a trade show. It's an experience.

Like so many other events in a world transformed by the pandemic, Canada's leading foodservice and hospitality event will have a new format in 2021. RC Show 2021 will be ONLINE LIVE, delivering all the connection opportunities, shopping and sourcing, professional insights, thought-leadership and excitement the industry has come to expect through augmented reality and a virtual technology platform.

CHALLENGING TIMES

Pre-COVID, the Canadian foodservice sector was a $93 billion industry, employing over a million people, and feeding more than 22 million customers from coast-to-coast each day. At the height of the pandemic, the foodservice and hospitality sector lost more than 800,000 jobs. An estimated 10 per cent of foodservice establishments have already permanently closed. Restrictions continue and there are more trials to come. However, our industry is creative, resilient, and hopeful, and Restaurants Canada has been here to lead the industry in its recovery. That's why the theme for RC Show 2021 is **Feeding The Recovery: Rebuild, Reinvent, Reconnect**.

It's hard to imagine a more timely or appropriate theme. As an industry, it's time to rebuild and reinvent ourselves. To reconnect with one another, with the supply chain, and with customers as well as colleagues. To spark new interest from and link to a wider community as a whole. The RC Show 2021, which will take place **February 28-March 3 2021**, is a chance to reunite and inspire one of the hardest hit industries, while providing the tools, solutions and knowledge operators need to face the challenges ahead.

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

RC Show 2021 will be ONLINE LIVE, but it won't be a collection of talking-head webinars, or just another video conference. Powered by NexTech AR Solutions, the Show will offer custom augmented reality, 3D and holographic experiences. All the speakers, panels and programming will be delivered with broadcast quality sound and visuals. In addition, attendees can watch programming they might have missed— on demand— at a later date.

This platform aims to bridge the gap between an in-person and virtual experience and deliver a dynamic B2B trade show experience. As Paul Duffy, President of NexTech AR Solutions says, "It's where the universe of opportunity collides with the physical world." Exhibitors can create customized augmented reality experiences for their online booths. Imagine engaging holographic versions of products that attendees can manipulate in 3D on their own devices. Or lively holograms of brand ambassadors who can make presentations to buyers. Plus live chat, one-on-one meetings, networking rooms and advanced analytics. This revolutionary technology opens the door to a wider audience as buyers and operators from across Canada and around the globe can easily participate from virtually anywhere.

WHAT'S NEW AT RC SHOW 2021!

ONLINE LIVE format

Immersive technology platform

Augmented reality, 3D and holographic experiences

Broadcast-quality programming

RC Leadership Conference content integrated into RC Show programming

Four action-packed days

International Buyers' Program bringing global experts and buyers to the RC Show

Book your booth or register for the RC Show at:
RCShow.com





WORLD-CLASS CONTENT

The RC Show always presents cutting-edge products and services, inspirational speakers and innovative ideas. RC Show 2021 will be no different. Moderated panels and interactive speaker sessions will unfold across three stages: Speaker, Bar & Beverage, and Culinary, to provide solutions and insights relevant to professionals across all aspects of the industry. Sunday will be dedicated to independent restaurants, to emphasize the interests and solutions needed by the small businesses that have borne so much.

The programming schedule will cover topics of wide-ranging interest. Uncover new profit models and delivery solutions to determine which version is right for you. Learn the best ways to represent yourself on social media. Learn more about the rules and regulations when it comes to cannabis, and hear from experts on what's working for them right now. Devise strategies to aid staff with mental health issues. Explore the best way to pandemic-proof your bar. Learn how to riff on classic cocktails while adding your own signature. Attendees can even participate in online activations with top-of-the-line brands. RC Show 2021 will deliver the content you need right now as well as best practices to help you succeed well into the future.

LEADERSHIP

To help with Feeding The Recovery, RC Leadership content will be available to all attendees and exhibitors as part of the Show programming. You'll learn about the latest trends, find out where the industry is headed, and hear from keynote speakers during all four days. Meet the industry's most energetic and revitalizing up-and-comers, trailblazers, and the ones to watch. Hear from government relations specialists about what measures and programs are available to help businesses. Breakfast With Champions will be back with a new line-up of pioneers, research-driven facts and insights.

Each year, RC Show's CEO Panel is one of the hottest, highly-attended, most sought-after sessions of the whole Show. Restaurants Canada is pleased to offer you more of what you're looking for. RC Show 2021 will present multiple CEO panels split out by sector. Hear from the leaders of quick- and full-service restaurants as well as key leaders from across the bar and beverage industry. Each panel will be smaller and more tightly focused than in previous years. This more intimate set up will allow the opportunity for deeper dives into success strategies, and give more attendees the chance to gain from the collected wisdom of CEOs of all stripes.

REBUILD, REINVENT, RECONNECT

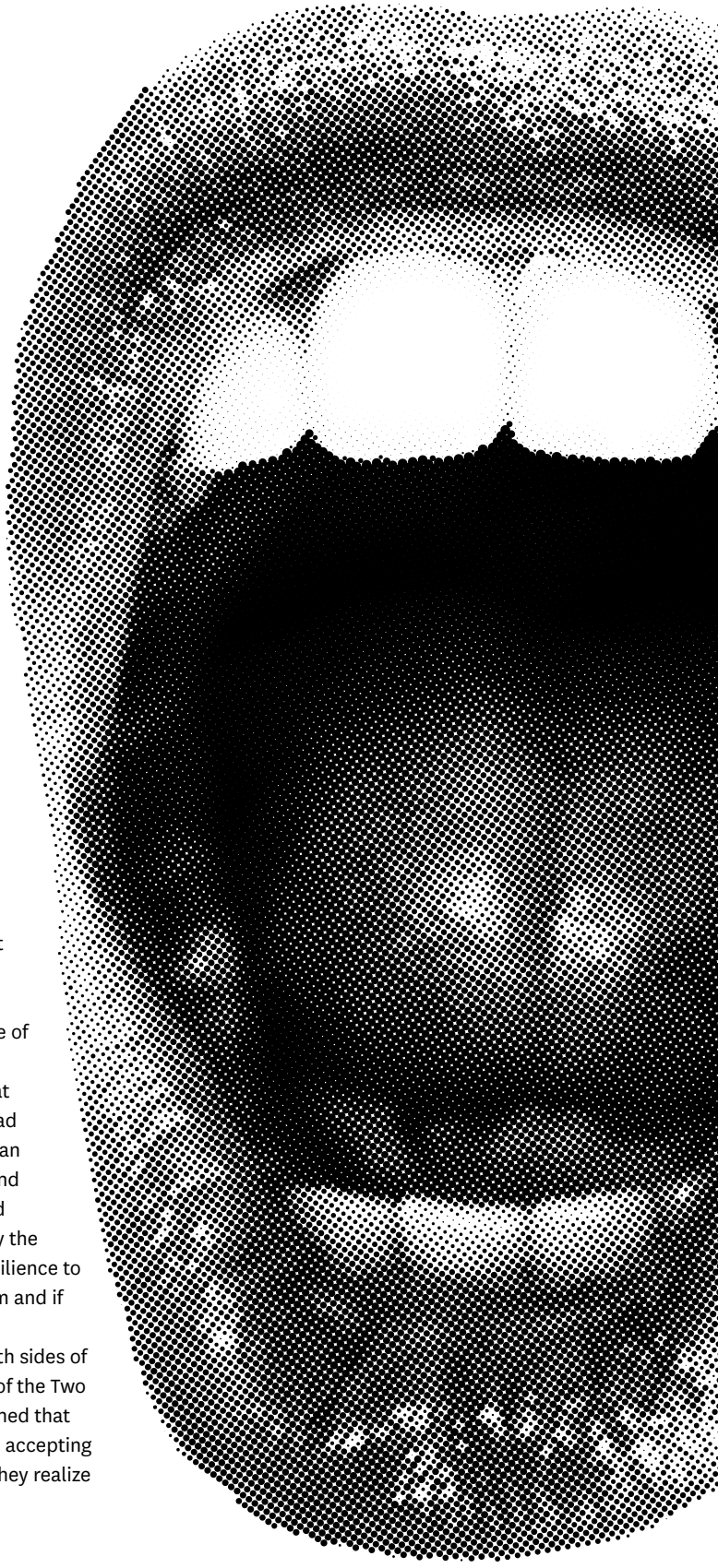
RC Show 2021 ONLINE LIVE might feel a little different, but so does the whole world. The need to innovate is stronger than ever, and RC Show 2021 is where to make that happen. You'll find show offers, top brands, and the most innovative products at the virtual trade show. You'll be informed and inspired by the expert speakers. Don't miss the hospitality event of the year.

Come to RC Show 2021 ONLINE LIVE to reconnect, reinvent and rebuild better than ever. Be a part of feeding the recovery; not only your own, but the entire industry's. All proceeds generated from the show go back into supporting the strength of the industry through government advocacy, education, events, and connection. Because fueling the community—no matter how large or small—is the core driver of the foodservice sector.

Communications in a Crisis:

Putting out the **right words** in a **tough time**

BY JARED HOCHMAN



Restaurants across Canada (and, let's be honest, across the world) are still in the throes of a pandemic, enduring rolling mandatory shutdowns in some areas, and reopening with unprecedented health guidelines and seating limits in others.

The agility and on-the-fly thinking collectively displayed by the foodservice and hospitality industry is nothing short of remarkable, yet—despite for all our efforts—we are still in crisis. The recent rise of a second wave—perhaps even worse than the initial appearance of COVID-19—has restaurants seeing restrictions tightening back up.

Entering what is generally the leaner months, restaurants will again be forced to scale back operations, or even shutter their doors. The difference between keeping (or growing) customer trust or fading into irrelevance will be pinpoint communication.

But what exactly should you say? How should you say it? What have we learned from the first wave that we can put to use now? We've spoken with some crisis communication experts to provide guidance on how to get your messages out there and heard.

Learning from recent history

Looking back at how the foodservice and hospitality industry as a whole communicated during the first wave of the pandemic, one thing was abundantly clear: the vast majority of restaurants were not prepared to handle a crisis of this magnitude.

"I would guess that most restaurants in Canada wouldn't have a crisis management strategy in place. My guess is less than half, maybe even 25 per cent had a crisis communications plan in place," says Stephen Murdoch, Vice President of Public Relations for Enterprise Canada. "That being said, even if you did have a crisis strategy in place, certainly a pandemic wasn't part of it, so this was a great lesson for restaurants from coast-to-coast to have a crisis strategy in place."

In the first wave of COVID, restaurants earned insight into what resonates best with customers in times of crisis, and you might be surprised at how tolerant people are of the truth.

"It's a bit of a misconception that people will panic if you give them bad news," explains John Larsen, Edelman Canada's Executive Vice President and National Practice Lead for Crisis and Reputation Risk. "That's not actually the case. People have a high level of resilience to bad news—if it makes sense to them and if it's contextualized."

Larsen, who saw things from both sides of the coin as he is also the co-owner of the Two House Brewhouse in Calgary, explained that people are more understanding and accepting of the restrictions we've had when they realize it's for their safety.

He also noted that between the first and second wave, people were more attracted, more supportive, and more trusting of restaurants and organizations that actually embraced those safety measures and acted quickly to implement them.

Saying it the right way

While the first wave required a lot of reactionary maneuvers to manage the chaotic and unknown, restaurants still had to deal with the internal stress of managing staff, suppliers, and the day-to-day business. Keeping that stress from trickling out into communications was another pivotal learning for restaurants and communications agencies alike, including Toronto-based Butter PR.

"It was of the utmost importance then—and still is now—to remain as calm and honest as possible in your communications," says Butter Founder and Principal Shawn Rusich.

Avoid divulging details on the state of your business or financial situation, Rusich counsels, and instead focus on communicating any new offerings or unique products and services that help you stand out amongst the competition.

Beyond calmness and honesty, everyone agreed that communicating during a time of crisis is about reaching people on a human level.

Josh Cobden, Executive Vice President and Toronto General Manager for Proof Strategies Inc., explains that providing regular facts and updates, showing empathy, and connecting on shared values are crucial to ensuring consumer confidence during a crisis.

"People respond better to language that is less about business and more about people and their stories," says Cobden. "A crisis is not a time for humour, bravado, promotion or speculation."

For larger restaurants or chains, having localized and regional staff is a huge advantage. Murdoch urges the engagement and empowerment of local staff, as they know their market and their audience best. And, when possible, put your leaders in the spotlight: show the public leaders who care.

It's also important to maintain a somewhat neutral stance, especially during times of heightened tension, anxiety, and unease for so many. Rusich notes that when leaders use social or other media to communicate negative personal sentiments (such as disapproval or anger) towards organizations or people involved in pandemic decision making, it can make a business "…look bitter and tarnish customer perception."

> *"That being said, even if you did have a crisis strategy in place, certainly a pandemic wasn't part of it, so this was a great lesson for restaurants from coast-to-coast to have a crisis strategy in place."*
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>
> *"It was of the utmost importance then, and still is now, to remain as calm and honest as possible in your communications,"*
>
> **– Shawn Rusich**

He does stress; however, that maintaining your brand voice is imperative throughout your communications.

"A brand voice is something that is worked on for years and it's finely-tuned," says Rusich. "It's developed to a point where you can be presented with situations that are a lot more difficult to deal with and still be empathetic and acknowledge those—without going off the deep end and changing who you are."

But to reiterate: This is NOT the time to engage in blatant self-promotion. "This is a time to connect with customers, to say you're there for them – and you're there for them responsibly – and that's what customers will applaud you for," says Larsen. "But if you try to make it about how great you are? They'll see it as too opportunistic in a time when everyone is stressed and they will reject that."

Communicating the worst type of news

Think about your employees first. Regardless of how well some restaurants have managed thus far, the reality is that a closure—temporary or permanent —will be the necessary course of action for many venues coast-to-coast.

It's a situation that can be tackled many ways, but you must communicate from the inside out: start with your employees and do what you can to help them manage this transition, then move on to your customers, supply chain, and other partners.

"Your employees should be your most important ambassadors, but you also have a duty of care," says Cobden. "This means that there are both business and moral reasons to take care of them first."

Murdoch points out that if you're a restaurateur today, chances are you will be a restaurateur again, so you don't want to have a reputation for mistreating employees hanging over your head.

You also want to ensure your brand has clear and concise messaging during a closure, which also starts with your employees. In the age of social media, news (real and fake) can spread quite quickly, as can misapprehension. Rusich notes that staff tend not to use scripts so, if you don't arm them immediately with a clear, fleshed-out plan, misinformation can spread—and get out of control—very fast.

After your staff have been informed of changes to the business and accommodated, you can move on to updating your customers, suppliers, affiliated organizations (such as Restaurants Canada), and even local government, all of which may help with your transition.

Stay connected

Just because you're closing down shop for a few months doesn't mean you should fall off your customers' radars. There are still a number of great ways to stay connected. Share house recipes with your followers on social media, provide cooking advice or reveal fun facts about your restaurant or cool menu ingredients — this is a chance to educate and connect with customers in a way you couldn't before.



> *"They can accept restrictions being imposed on you, but they can't accept you not trying to connect with them for the foreseeable future."*
>
> **– John Larsen**

> *"Your employees should be your most important ambassadors, but you also have a duty of care... this means that there are both business and moral reasons to take care of them first."*
>
> **– Josh Cobden**

If you're using a closure to renovate or make other changes, share your story to build intrigue and interest for your reopening.

It's also important to show customers that you are not giving up.

"People don't want to see you give up on your business, or give up on that customer relationship," says Larsen. "They can accept restrictions being imposed on you, but they can't accept you not trying to connect with them for the foreseeable future."

During what has been an extended period of duress for many, people are looking for a little bit of hope and some feeling of normalcy. Don't hesitate to provide communications that give your audience something to look forward to.

"Right now there's a lack of aspirational messaging, and things to look forward to in general, so somewhat of a nostalgic tone can help," says Rusich. "Maybe say 'We're excited for when we can get back to this!' and post a photo of the restaurant being busy. Or a 'Did you know this is how we started?' look back at your place that has grown with its customers over the last so many years."

Go beyond social media

Social media mainstays such as Twitter and Instagram have become communication go-tos; however, Cobden noted that the first wave saw a rise in short-form video messaging through apps such as YouTube and TikTok.

And, many businesses are finding ways to connect with new partners and engage with different businesses and people within their community. For example, Larsen's pub (and many other establishments) pivoted to create much-needed sanitization products, which earned them recognition from third-party agencies and with that the potential for new customers.

"Those were people that would not have otherwise spoken about us," says Larsen. "So think about advocacy beyond traditional circles."

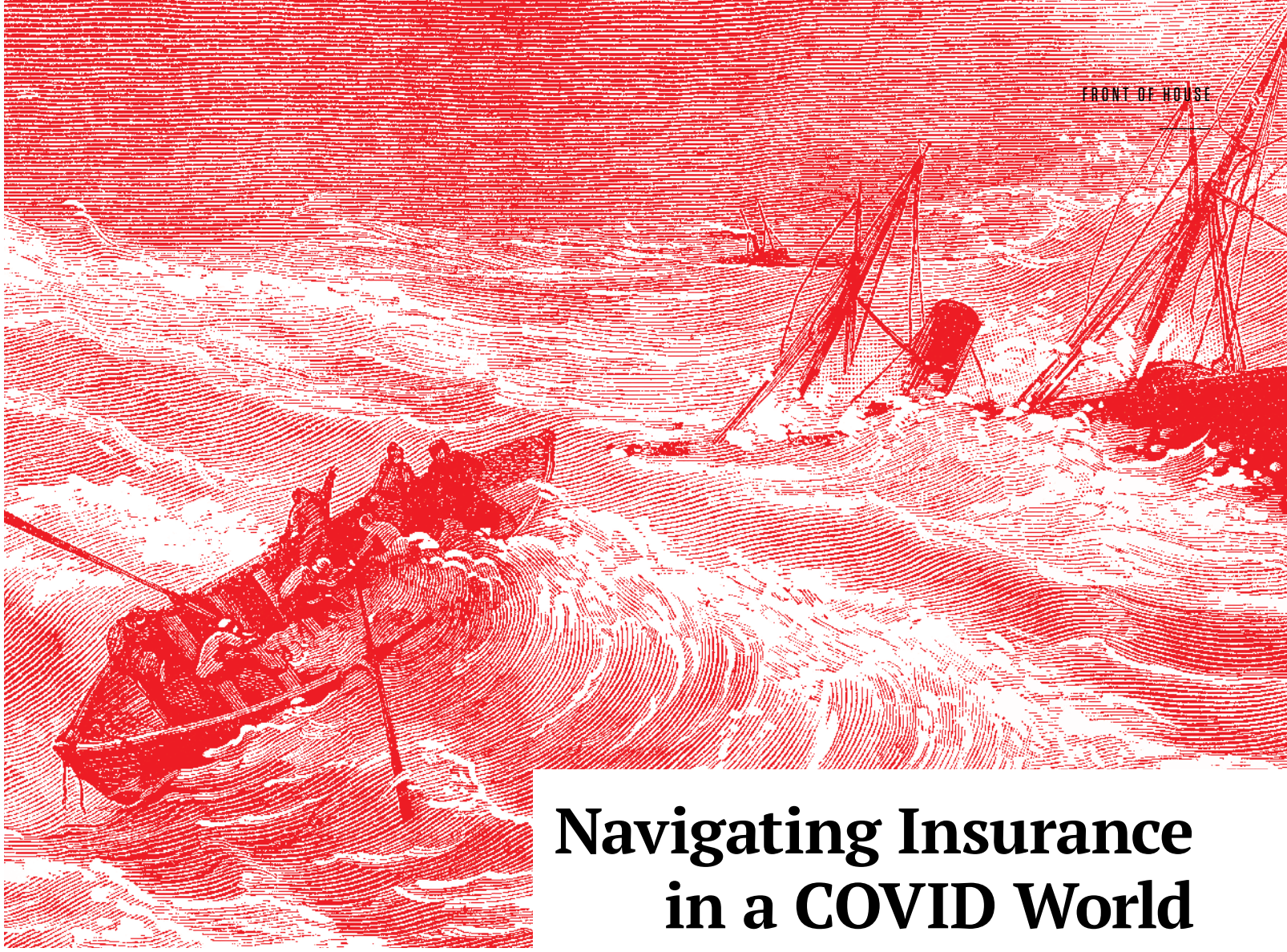
Larsen also recommends working with like-minded business groups and industry coalitions, like Restaurants Canada, or reaching out to your local Chamber of Commerce to get your name out there through channels you previously may not have used much—or at all.

Rusich adds that simple, 'old-school', cost-efficient communication methods like e-mail marketing and sidewalk sandwich boards allow you to connect with consumers on a much more human level, while Murdoch suggests leveraging consumer and trade media.

"You often see members of the media, especially on social media, looking to speak with restaurants and restaurateurs about XYZ, so get your name out there," says Murdoch. "And if you're not comfortable speaking to the media, get some media training! You can get media training online, or agencies like ours can offer media training too to help you put yourself out there."

Dig in

For more valuable insights and advice, download Restaurants Canada's "Crisis Preparedness and Business Continuity Guide" designed to help foodservice operators mitigate the business impacts of crises: www.restaurantscanada.org/industry-news/covid-19-business-resources/



Navigating Insurance in a COVID World

BY SHANNON MURPHY

In June 2020, when Ben Swirsky, co-owner of Toronto's Alchemy Food & Drink, went to renew his restaurant insurance policy, he quickly came to the dark realization that his existing provider was not interested in renewing. Moreover, to even consider a renewal, they were looking to increase his premiums by more than double. Thinking his premiums had increased due to a past claim for a flood situation, he tried working with his broker to look elsewhere, but was met with the same surge in pricing. Desperate, he tried working with another broker and received the same feedback: that a 200 per cent markup was now industry standard. "I had no choice but to basically accept the increased rate or choose to not open" says Swirsky.

Sara Paterson faced the same challenges when trying to find restaurant insurance coverage to take over the lease of the Miner's Tavern in Cobalt, Ontario. She called at least four different insurance companies with only one bothering to return her call. "The law says I need to have insurance, yet no one's able to provide it or at a reasonable rate, she says. "I may have to give up my dream of 25 years."

Rising premiums, losing coverage or getting none at all are stories far too familiar to an industry already battered by indoor dining restrictions, high fees for delivery services and shifting consumer habits as a result of COVID-19. Restaurant insurance typically covers adverse events such as property damage or injury that may be a result of accidents. It also helps cover product liabilities, which protects owners from claims stemming from food-borne illnesses, as well as various employee-related issues such as benefit errors, discrimination or harassment.

While COVID may appear to be the driving factor in rising insurance costs, astronomical increases in restaurant insurance has been happening long before COVID hit the industry, mainly in part to liquor law liability and slip and fall related insurance claims. As the amount of liquor liability and accident claims increased over the last few years, the impact to the insurance companies transferred directly onto the current marketplace. Gradually, insurance companies and underwriters began to retract from the marketplace which has led to less companies willing to insure restaurants and therefore exorbitant increases.

This is the same story Swirsky heard once digging deeper with his brokers. "I was informed that it's tough for restaurants, specifically bars," says Swirsky. "Insurance companies were becoming quite nervous about insuring establishments where the revenue split is majority alcohol and, while Alchemy Food and Bar is more a 60-40 split in terms of alcohol to food, even our split was problematic. That's when I realized this is not a me problem— this is an industry problem."

> Underwriters like to see things in writing so make sure you have written operational procedures and provide a checklist that you can prove you do on a regular basis. It's easier for them to consider the risk as long as it's well-managed."
>
> **– Robert Jones, CEO, JBD Group**

"It's unfortunate for restaurateurs," says Robert Jones, CEO of the JBD Group, an organization that specializes in designing strategically-sound benefit and retirement insurance solutions for many of Canada's hospitality organizations. "They have no choice but to buy the insurance at the increased rates because their landlord requires it and the banks require it, yet they don't have the revenue to offset the costs."

But this year operators have been hit with a double whammy. "Rising insurance rates and plan cancellations have been experienced across the country by restaurants that are already in a dire situation due to the pandemic" says James Rilett, Vice-President of Restaurants Canada, "Their claims for business interruption insurance have been denied by the same insurance companies that are now asking for huge increases."

So why are insurance companies denying these claims? According to Jones, the general business interruption insurance policy in North America requires there to be direct physical damage to the property, such as a fire or a flood, which has resulted in the business operations to be interrupted. As a pandemic like COVID suggests that there's not any physical damage to the restaurants, most of the claims are denied. "Some policies may have a little bit of coverage related specifically to a disease, but the most coverage a restauranteur will probably get is two to four weeks." He goes on to state that if most of the denied business interruptions claims related to COVID were overturned, there would be a severe worldwide impact to the insurance industry.

For Swirsky and Paterson, the most frustrating part is the insurance companies' apparent unwillingness to work with restaurant owners. "I tried talking to my current insurance company, says Swirsky, "To try and get a rebate on the insurance paid on a restaurant that was closed down for a few months, but they were not willing to cover that. It's just another hit." Paterson tried working with the insurance company that already covered another area of the building she was trying to lease, but to no avail.



So how is this issue resolved? What can be done?

Restaurants Canada is talking to the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) and insurance industry executives in an effort to find solutions to the issue that could force many restaurants out of business. The IBC has launched the National Commercial Task Force to examine how the commercial insurance challenges are impacting Canadian companies and consumers. Bringing together insurers, insurance brokers, local chambers of commerce, small businesses, trucking stakeholders, and risk experts, the task force goal is to examine the impacts of the hardening global market, develop recommendations to help keep insurance affordable and available across the country, and examine ways to help consumers mitigate risk and manage costs.

Restaurants Canada is expecting positive changes to come through this taskforce. If not, the industry may need government involvement. "The government may need to step in to apply guidelines and constraints on insurers to protect the restaurant space," explains Todd Barclay, President and CEO of Restaurants Canada. "This could include cap lawsuits, and clarifying business interruption / pandemic limitations to ensure insurance companies are not using the pandemic to simply gouge the sector."

Mitigating and managing risk should be a



key consideration for restaurant owners says Jones. "Insurance companies and underwriters are always looking for certain things under the scope of risk management that will make your business easier to insure." For restaurants, this could mean following and documenting certain protocols, making sure the hood and kitchen is clean, and keeping your establishment safe from slip and fall situations. "Underwriters like to see things in writing so make sure you have written operational procedures and provide a checklist that you can prove you do on a regular basis. It's easier for them to consider the risk as long as it's well-managed."

Paterson experienced this first hand. "The one insurance company that called me back said they could potentially help me if I changed the hours of my establishment. Which I did, but then I was denied insurance again because there was an apartment for rent above the establishment I was hoping to lease." Swirsky suggests bar and restaurant owners, "know the true estimation of what your alcohol versus food sales are as this percentage may put you into a different category." He continues, "I want to work within their framework, but I feel like they don't tell us what their framework is."

That seemingly ever-changing framework has led many to consider another option: the restaurant industry creating their own insurance company. Essentially all restaurants would have to band together and pool their resources under the provision that every single member of the association would participate in the insurance company to be in a position to provide the necessary coverage for liquor liability and accidents. "It's going to take some very bold and coordinated moves by the restaurant industry to solve and it's not an easy thing to do," says Jones. "It's a challenge because each restaurant, specifically the larger chains, are with their own provider, and you need the big guys to come in and provide the opportunity for the smaller guys."

The JBD Group has managed to do this on the benefit side by creating a scenario for restaurants across the country to create a benefit pool, where independent restaurant owners can come in and take advantage of pricing similar to pricing that is received by larger corporations. "However," says Jones, "that's an easier issue to solve then the liquor liability challenges faced by restaurants."

Swirsky feels that for independent restaurant owners, starting a community-based insurance program or organization is the only option. "It will take a lot of will and infrastructure and the right people in the right places, but we cannot exist under this existing framework. I'm not sure how this could happen, but it should happen and it needs to happen."

Jones feels that the amplified insurance costs, "will find a place in time as new standards will ensure restaurants and establishments are safe for people to go to. The premiums may be a little higher at first, but then, as insurance companies see their loss ratio improve, the marketplace will find its equilibrium."

Still, for restaurant owners, what's missing from the framework and calculations set out by insurance companies is understanding and appreciating what restaurants do for the community. "They don't see the ripple effect our businesses have," says Swirsky, "and that sooner or later there may not be any businesses left for insurance companies to insure." Paterson agrees, "not only are insurance companies stopping small businesses from existing, they are preventing small businesses from helping each other."

In an effort to help mitigate concerns associated with the foodservice and hospitality sector, IBC has released a hospitality discussion paper seeking feedback on insurance challenges. For a list of questions please visit: **https://www.restaurantscanada.org/industry-news/have-your-say-insurance-task-force-consultation/**

IBC has also developed resources to assist business owners facing challenges associated with commercial insurance. This information can be found at: **businessinsurancehelp.ca**

Questions and concerns may also be directed to IBC's Business Insurance Helpline at: **1-844-2ask-IBC**



FARM GROUPS STEP UP TO THE PLATE

BY KATE AYERS



Commodity groups across Canada work collaboratively with food service businesses through partnerships and consumer engagement

As the pandemic's second wave grips regions across Canada, partnerships across the food value chain continue to strengthen in support of farmers, consumers and food service industry members.

While consumers are encouraged to shop locally and support small businesses in their communities, agricultural industry stakeholders have been hard at work in the background to help business owners through these uncertain times.

"Takeout Day"

Many provincial and national commodity groups showed support for the culinary community and foodservice sector through *Canada Takeout Day*.

"This spring, we joined the Canada Takeout campaign to support local restaurants across the country," said Christine Anawati, Director of Corporate and Public Affairs for Egg Farmers of Canada. "The movement encouraged Canadians to order from their favourite local restaurants that offer takeout or delivery and helped spread the word about the importance of supporting local restaurants by sharing positive reviews of their take-out experience on social media."

Many agricultural (ag) groups teamed up to amplify their collective messages and encourage Canadians to safely support local food businesses during the COVID-19 crisis, said Lisa Bishop-Spencer, Chicken Farmers of Canada's (CFC's) Director of Brand and Communications.

"To amplify the *Canada Takeout Day* message throughout the campaign, CFC and other commodity groups posted Takeout Day content across social media channels, and we created a video featuring our farmers encouraging all Canadians to patronize their local restaurants.

"Our social media influencers, including chef-influencers, highlighted the importance of farmer-restaurant relationships," she said.

Canada Beef also supported the initiative through its social media platforms. The group created resources to support foodservice operators, distributors and vendors with videos and an online learning centre.

Collaborative efforts

In response to disruptions caused by COVID-19, multiple ag and commodity groups joined efforts to support the food service industry and stabilize the food value chain. For example, Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) works with its dairy processor partners across the province to "bring awareness to local dairy and the benefits of supporting local," said Alan Grebinski, DFO's Director of Business Development.

In addition, DFO staff are strategizing with "Groupex to consider promotional elements that could be executed during the pandemic to drive consumption of dairy and benefits for restaurant operators," he said.

Groupex is the largest foodservice account in Canada. The organization negotiates savings on essential restaurant supplies and services. Its programs cover the most essential foodservice products and services.

Many agricultural and commodity group members reached out to food business owners to find out how they could help and best provide support.

"DFO initiated many conversations directly with foodservice operators to see how we could collaborate during this time," Grebinski said.

"We facilitated an 'at home' experience with a large foodservice operator to allow consumers to take advantage of a similar dining experience while staying home and utilizing products sold at retail."



In one example, the group partnered with Metro, "to provide some 'comfort' to kids' meals" by creating a step-by-step instructional video on how to make a signature s'mores milkshake, he added.

Ag groups also provide resources to consumers and chefs so that they can get the most from their purchased retail products and to help with meal preparation.

Through educational sessions, the beef sector "ensures operators of all sizes have the ability to create multiple signature meal options from a single beef cut," said Duane Ellard, Director of Channel Marketing for Canada Beef.

Specifically, chefs and consumers alike can use beef brisket for traditional roast beef dinners, sandwiches and soups. The cut can also be smoked, braised, or pulled with endless flavour profiles, he added.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, industry members have partnered in adapting to the unpredictable challenges and continue to provide nutritious food for Canadians.

"Our industry experienced a drastic collapse in demand for eggs from restaurants and the foodservice sector and, at the same time, an increase in demand at retail stores," Anawati said. "We have been able to balance these shifts in demand by redirecting eggs destined for foodservice to stores and food banks, ensuring Canadians can continue to access the eggs they want and enjoy."

On-farm challenges

Commodity groups also continue their work on the ground to support farmers throughout the pandemic.

"Farmers have certainly been impacted by the pandemic with initially very erratic patterns of supply and demand for fluid milk. This inconsistency ultimately caused stress on the supply chain from one end to the other," Grebinksi said. "The decline in volumes and sales in foodservice have not been replaced by the increase in sales volumes at grocery stores. Overall, demand has shifted downward for dairy in Ontario and therefore, the financial impacts have negatively affected producers."

"The second wave is upon us as we speak and perhaps it's a little early to tell how we will be affected. Hopefully, the industry has learned from the supply chain challenges at the start of the pandemic and we can overcome the dramatic swings to provide more consistent supply for consumers," he said.

Farm groups are also helping farmers navigate fluctuations in product demand and identify solutions to emerging challenges.

"Given the unpredictability brought on by the pandemic, Egg Farmers of Canada continues to explore measures to help egg farmers adapt and maintain the resiliency of our supply chain," Anawati added.

The poultry industry has also seen a drop in demand for chicken products because of lower restaurant capacities and closures.

"Throughout the pandemic, as always, our major responsibility is to ensure that there is enough chicken on the market to meet the needs of Canadian consumers. Since the foodservice industry represents about 40 per cent of our production, the pandemic hit us quite heavily. Certainly, there was an uptick in retail as a result of people eating at home, but it wasn't enough to make up that gap," Bishop-Spencer said.

"As a sector, we worked to reduce our production during the most challenging times of the pandemic to ensure that enough chicken was available and so that we could avoid pitfalls."

In addition, beef farmers faced challenges due to COVID-19 outbreaks in processing plants and local abattoirs quickly booked up.

"The Canadian beef industry managed through a time of decreased harvest capacity, which resulted in a longer period of time to maintain beef herds," Ellard said. This situation was "combined with global market interruptions" and farming families had to adjust.

Fortunately, "beef farmers have a long-standing history of overcoming challenges to ensure the public has confidence in a safe and nutritious food supply," he added.

"We're all in this together"

The food value chain is closely interconnected, and one broken link can cause a domino effect that has implications for producers, consumers, and every stakeholder between farm gates and dinner plates.

As a result, all members along the chain must support each other through the pandemic and lend a (sanitized) hand to those in need whenever possible.

"Through these unusual times, CFC continues to support our industry through innovative content designed to illustrate the sustainability of chicken and educate our audience in a real-time context via our website and social media channels," Bishop-Spencer said.





"Moreover, we are committed to ensuring that our consumers know that their local restaurants need their support."

Grebinski agreed.

"We can't do it alone and partners in the industry can bring their expertise and consumer and media reach to support the ag and food service sectors," he said.

Through numerous virtual projects and events, commodity groups are showing their support for chefs and the overall foodservice sector.

"We aim to inspire hope and offer support to leaders in this dynamic sector," Anawati said. "These initiatives are rooted in our deep appreciation and respect for the greater culinary and foodservice industries."

These commodity groups and more will come together at RC Show 2021 to continue to support the industry and 'Feed the Recovery.'

About the author: Kate Ayers grew up on a beef and cash crop farm in central Ontario. Inspired by her passion for agriculture, she completed a degree in agricultural science at the University of Guelph in 2017. Kate always had a love for writing, but it was not until her last year of undergrad that she realized the potential to pursue a career in ag communications. And what a revelation it was for her! She also runs track competitively in Victoria, B.C. and is training for the Tokyo 2021 Olympics.

About Farmwork to Feed Canada: Farmwork to Feed Canada (F2FC) is a national volunteer not-for-profit initiative by Canadian communication professionals, students and recent graduates in communications. F2FC collaborates with farmers, and agri-businesses amid COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges to Canada's food supply and food security, to engage Canadians, pro bono, with compelling stories about their food system and build support for Canada's farmers, food producers and their essential skilled workers.

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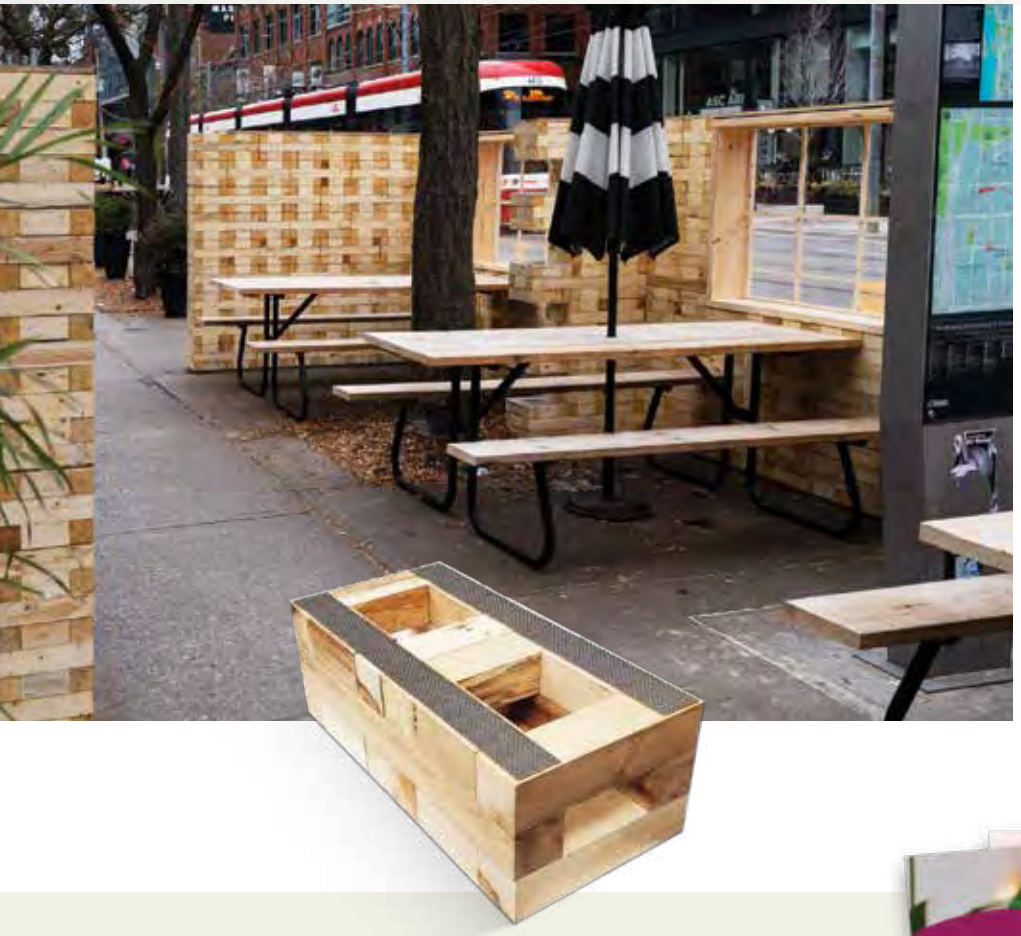
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The checklist is just the beginning of how OpenTable can help. With our Open Door pricing program, you get access to our vast network and our powerful restaurant platform with no subscription or cover fees through March 2021. Learn more at **restaurant.opentable.ca**.



Coca-Cola is rolling out its latest technology innovation— contactless pouring from smartphones. The new, contactless solution is now available on all Coca-Cola Freestyle machines across Canada. It allows consumers to choose and pour a drink from their phone in just seconds without having to sign up for a membership or download an app. The team developed the touch-free offering in just over a week as coronavirus lockdowns took effect, building off the Coca-Cola Freestyle Operating System (FOS) introduced in 2019. Additionally, the Coca-Cola team in Canada launched a resource website to help support the foodservice industry and restaurant partners who have been highly impacted as a result of the pandemic: **www.cokerapidresponseresourcecanada.com**. For more information on Coca-Cola Freestyle, please visit **www.coca-colafreestyle.com**.





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The Next Chapter for Restaurants



Colder weather is here, and restaurant owners are thinking about how they're going to navigate the next six months and beyond.

The pandemic continues to impact restaurant operations and the restaurant industry needs to evaluate their situation so they can adapt to the next phase.

Restaurant owners need to review their overall operations including organizing financial data, acquiring additional financing if needed, operating at a lower capacity, and preparing for potential shutdowns or restrictions. Our restaurant guide is here to help restaurant owners facing adversity in this ever-changing environment.

Revenue generation

Revenue generation continues to be the number one concern for restaurants in the current environment. Financial data is crucial for improving profitability and managing revenue. Good financial data allows for comparisons with projections, previous periods, and the best-run locations in your franchise system or other stores if you are a multi-location operator.

TOP FIVE CHALLENGES FOR RESTAURANT OWNERS

Revenue Generation: 64.3%

New Regulations: 42.8%
(social distancing, food safety, local ordinances, etc.)

Labour Costs: 40.8%

Rent: 29.1%

Food Costs: 25.3%

RCINTEL

Managing cash on hand continues to be essential as well. Running regular cash flow forecasts is crucial for restaurant operators.

Accurate financial data will help with accessing certain government programs, such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS). Most restaurants are surviving due to this government support; however, some restaurants might have to consider loans in addition to the help they're receiving from government programs.

Winter operations

In the past, restaurants would wrap up patio season in early fall. Now, many are planning for an extended patio season and hoping to entice customers to continue dining outdoors during winter months.

Restaurant operators need to consider how customers can enjoy the patio during different times of the day and through weather fluctuations. If you haven't already, you may want to invest in rain coverings, lights, heaters and outdoor fireplaces. Demand is high for these items, so proactively securing these items before they are needed is key.

Operators are also considering ways to entice customers to continue purchasing from their restaurants with exclusive "outdoor tent" dining, investing in Instagram-worthy décor, providing options for patrons to donate food to healthcare workers, and making online ordering easy and contactless.

At the same time, you need to prepare for potential capacity restrictions—rolling or complete shutdowns as COVID-19's second wave impacts Canadians. Develop a plan for shifting your operations back to delivery and take away only, such as plans for turning 'on' and 'off' third-party delivery apps. Assess how potential operational changes could affect finances and staffing levels by analyzing the financial impact from the spring lockdown and preparing projections for a winter lockdown under various scenarios using cash flow projections.

The uncertain future

The foodservice industry produced over $93 billion in 2019 sales and was set to exceed $100 billion in sales in 2021. However, the restaurant industry now faces losses between $21.7 billion and $44.8 billion in annual sales this year, according to Restaurants Canada.

As the traditional patio season is over, customers will continue to be hesitant to eat indoors. Moreover, restaurants may be forced to reduce hours or completely shut down in-person dining in certain regions with rising cases, and the restaurant industry will further feel the squeeze. Restaurant owners need to prepare and adapt again to make it through the winter.

A Foodservice Facts Report provided the following trends:

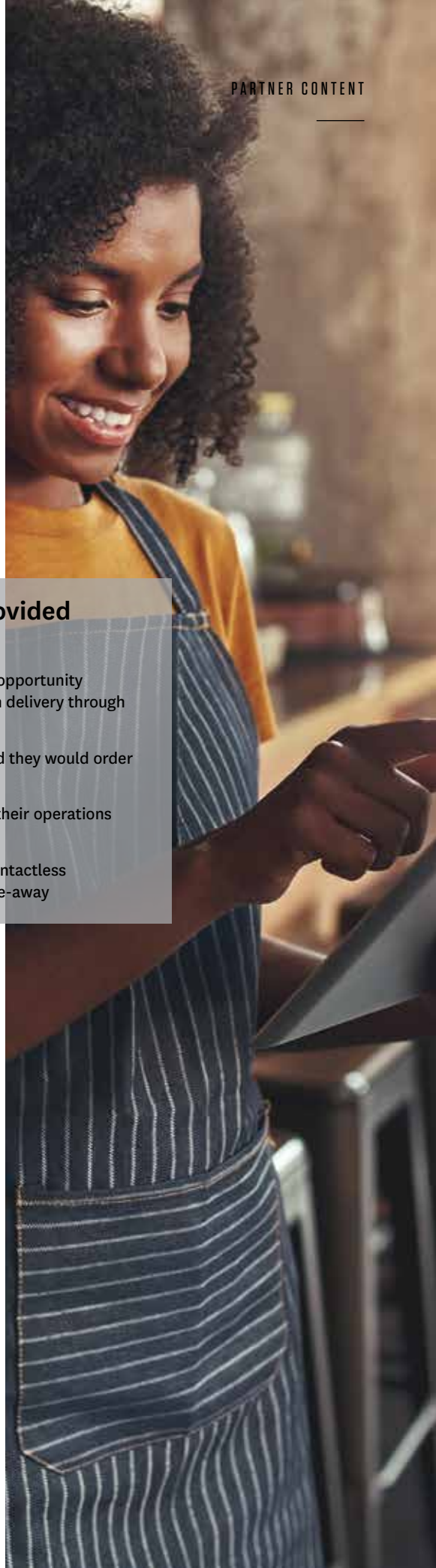
- Ghost kitchens provide restaurants with an opportunity to operate without a storefront and focus on delivery through mobile and online platforms
- 60 per cent of customers surveyed indicated they would order from a ghost kitchen
- Almost one in five restaurants have altered their operations and will continue to sell meal kits
- More than half of restaurants are offering contactless payment options along with contactless take-away

COVID-19 continues to create an adverse environment for the restaurant industry. It's important to diversify your operations so you can pivot as needed.

Reach out to BDO

The restaurant industry is facing an extremely stressful and challenging time as they continue to deal with the COVID-19 fallout. Restaurant owners and operators will have to make many difficult decisions over the next year, or longer. BDO is here to provide you with support and guidance. Read our latest guide to learn how we can help.

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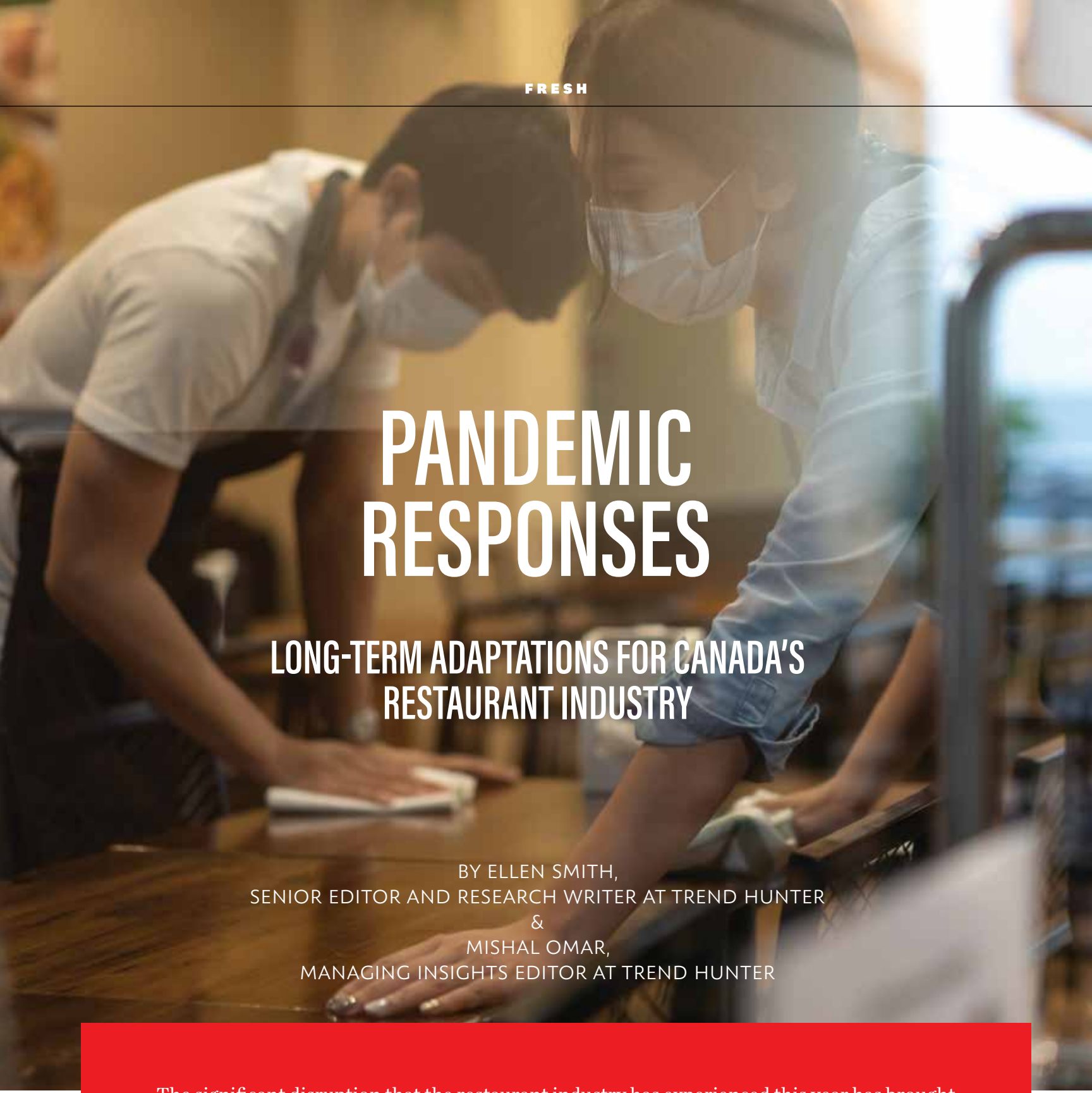


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PANDEMIC RESPONSES

LONG-TERM ADAPTATIONS FOR CANADA'S RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

BY ELLEN SMITH,
SENIOR EDITOR AND RESEARCH WRITER AT TREND HUNTER
&
MISHAL OMAR,
MANAGING INSIGHTS EDITOR AT TREND HUNTER

The significant disruption that the restaurant industry has experienced this year has brought on rapid changes that were once thought to be short-term, but are now being adopted for the foreseeable future. Additional safety precautions, retail changes, and business model pivots are all ways that the industry is trying to adapt for the pandemic's enduring term.



INNOVATIVE SAFETY

When it comes to in-person dining, additional safety measures aren't just preferred, in many places, they're now required. Everything from plexiglass dividers to temperature checks have become the norm in restaurants, and businesses are becoming increasingly innovative not just to keep customers safe, but to do so in ways that create distinctive dining experiences. Patio domes are one way this is being done, with businesses using these domes as both a draw and a protective measure for customers. These shifts showcase the innovation the time demands—not simply for the protection of customers and employees, but as opportunities that elevate customer experiences and keep them coming back.

Vancouver's Dinner with a View pop-up successfully set itself apart by offering diners an immersive gastronomy experience. Inspired by nature and reminiscent of large-scale terrariums, the 20 domes that were erected on a beach boasted design themes that included tundra, tropical and grasslands. With the cozy atmosphere set, guests could relax and indulge in a three-course blind menu, while enjoying the view of their natural surroundings. Due to the event's success, Dinner with a View is set to offer dates throughout Canada and the United States into 2021, solidifying what was once a novelty dining experience as an essential approach for pandemic restaurant survival.

Similarly, one Toronto restaurant is using its location to its advantage, offering the city's only dome dining experience by the lake. Against the Grain is known for its lakeside views and eclectic cuisine, but is now gaining notoriety around Toronto for its 'bubble dining' patio that allows patrons to enjoy a meal outside, even through the winter months. To enhance the experience, the restaurant created a new menu to coincide with the atmosphere of the domes. Each enclosure is fitted with heated fireplaces, string lights, and blankets, eliciting a quaint cottage aesthetic that provides a temporary escape for the guests.

POP-UP PIVOT

Restaurant pop-ups were once the norm, and amidst the original pandemic lockdown, brands that dealt in this space had to recalibrate how they'd move forward with their interactive marketing campaigns and experiences. Pop-up experiences have now returned with changes that allow them to operate in a way that's safe, and that provides customers with the sense of normalcy that comes with the simple shopping and dining excursions they've missed from their pre-pandemic lives. Ventilated trucks, drive-thru pop-up stands, and outdoor pop-up concepts all prioritize customer experience and brand interactions, without compromising health and safety.

'Ghost kitchens' —delivery-only facilities that lack a brick-and-mortar, dine-in space—are growing in popularity as chains look to pursue versatile alternatives to traditional dining experiences. Taking note of this, Wendy's revealed its own ghost kitchen in an empty Toronto lot, providing a service that's part food truck, part delivery kitchen, and part experimental pop-up. Serving as an extension of Wendy's non-traditional growth strategy, this kitchen is set to stand as a hub for all of one's fast food needs, while offering the chain the convenience to transform underutilized city space into a casual dining opportunity.

Meanwhile, pop-ups are being leveraged in Calgary to merge food and art in an immersive experience that spotlights local businesses and emerging artists. The 'Pop-Up Series' is an exciting initiative that's providing Calgarians with a COVID-safe environment, while highlighting local talent and eateries that are struggling to stay afloat. Every few weeks, the Pop-Up Series takes over a new venue, and spotlights a new restaurant. At each location, a design team creates a unique environment that's reflective of the restaurant's aesthetic, often boasting pieces made by local artists. One location hired a street artist to graffiti the walls, while another featured an immersive, forest-like environment created by an architectural designer. Alongside the rotating location and design is a constantly changing menu, providing restaurants the opportunity to think outside the box to connect with their customers in an entirely new way.

PRIVATE LABEL EXPANSION

Despite adapting to public health and safety mandates, the restaurant industry is still struggling with the reduction in sales that's come with seating restrictions and safety conscious consumers' concern over leaving their homes for non-essential trips. To combat this, some businesses have started offering private label products and collections to keep brand interest alive, and to make up for their reduced sales. Everything from groceries to alcoholic beverages are now being released by brands as a direct response to the challenges the pandemic has brought on. These collections offer a way for businesses to maintain connections with their customers.

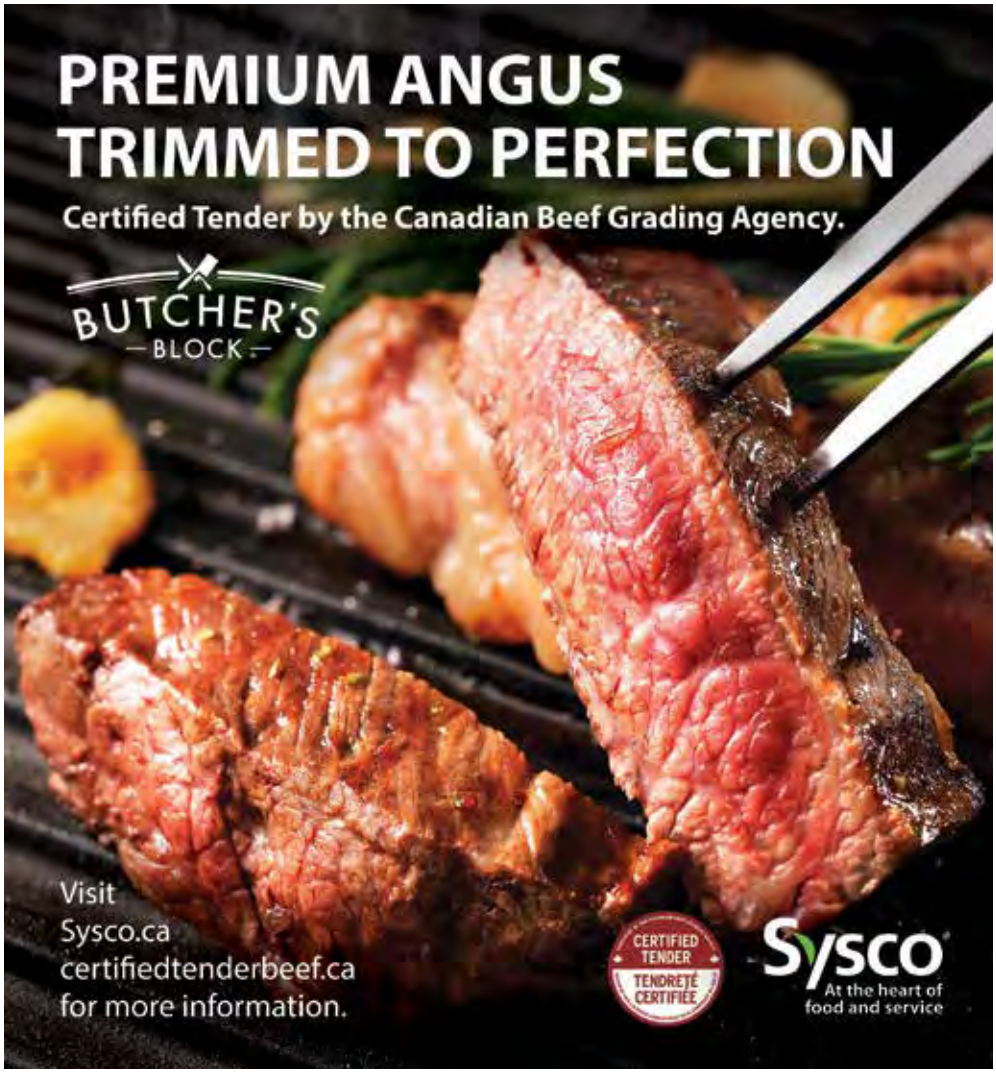
At the height of the pandemic, crowd-favourite noodle bar Momofuku introduced a consumer product line to help people elevate their at-home cooking. The culinary products include seasoned salts, soy sauce and tamari packs, and chili oil—all of which help consumers

'Ghost kitchens' - delivery-only facilities that lack a brick-and-mortar dine-in space - are growing in popularity, as chains look to pursue versatile alternatives to traditional dining experiences. Taking note of this, Wendy's revealed its own ghost kitchen in an empty Toronto lot, providing a service that's part food truck, part delivery kitchen, and part experimental pop-up.



upgrade their dishes in a signature Momofuku-approved style. The products arrive as a result of 10 years of research at the restaurant's own Culinary Lab, which develops the restaurant's menu items.

While some restaurants are using this time to expand their brand, others are retailing what they have, transforming their spaces into pick-up-only bodegas that offer some of the city's finest and freshest ingredients. Toronto's Bar Buca is a perfect example, as the Italian-inspired bar and cafe started retailing to-go pasta kits that include in-house noodles alongside the restaurant's famed sauces. The food items are labelled in a simplistic manner, adding a homemade touch while highlighting the local and authentic approach the establishment is known for. This strategy acknowledges that in lieu of indoor dining, many consumers are looking to perfect recipes from their favourite restaurants at home, and Bar Buca's storefront serves as the perfect middleground.





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