**FOOD OPERATIONS – SURVIVAL GUIDE TIPS**

**By Andrew Briese from Cooking the Books**



**CTB AND CO. 2020 SURVIVAL GUIDE**

There is no doubt everyone has concerns in one way or another about the unknown outcomes of this virus which is only increasing with the intense news and media coverage. Given I can’t change either of these, I’ve put some strategies together for you to consider over the coming weeks to ensure that you keep your costs in check with an acute focus on keeping you, your operation and business afloat!

Cooking the Books by CTB AND CO. have always been committed to supporting you and your businesses to monitor food costs, but now more than ever, we are here to ensure that together our industry survives whatever the ramifications of COVID-19 are.

Chefs, managers and hospitality staff are no doubt a very resilient bunch, but this is going to be a huge ask for all of us and we all need to stick together.

So, let’s start at the beginning.

Review your menus

• If you can reduce your menu, I would highly recommend doing this now.

• Consider removing “hardest to prepare” or “most time consuming” items from the menu.

• I would also recommend removing items of “no value” from your menu e.g. items that are deemed “dead wood”.

• Consider replacing any items on your menu that have a volatile food cost.

• Prepare for takeaway services as an additional source of income - this will accommodate guests who are not keen to sit in restaurants and risk exposure.

• Make your menu easy to change or redo – what I mean by that, is use your ingredients wisely and if you have to change your menu and print the physical menu on a daily basis, then DO IT!

• Look at using more seasonal produce as these items will reduce your food costs.

• Continue to fully cost your menus to keep your expenses in check – ensure that all staff refer to Recipe Cards and Costings.

Check your stock and product prices

• Double check you are getting what you’re paying for – this will help you control your food costs.

• Check your staff are fully trained to properly receive goods.

• Talk to your suppliers about product for purpose – the suppliers will help you as much as you need to ascertain the correct product for the correct purpose.

• Are you checking product prices each time you place an order? Remember if there is alternative and more cost-effective options, consider this for the time being.

• Are your stock sheets being updated with new items or produce so you can effectively monitor your stock on hand and stock value?

• Remember that the bushfires and COVID-19 will only continue to push pricing up so be prepared for this and monitor the changes daily.

• I would highly recommend considering whether you MAKE OR BUY stock – you may have to buy something in for the time being to limit your labour costs.

Front of House

• Make sure front of house staff understand how they can help, including making customers feel more comfortable and providing explanations on behalf of the kitchen.

• Make sure you go through menus – particularly if they are changing frequently. Well-trained front of house staff will be able to help the kitchen sell the most profitable menu items.

Staff and Rosters

• Review whether your staff can take holidays, including full and part-time staff.

• Consider implementing a flexible roster which allows you to change shifts as the COVID-19 landscape changes.

• Distribute shifts to your casuals so you can look after all of them as much as possible.

• Reward and respect your staff. They are vital to the survival of your business and when everything returns to normal, you will need them.

• Ask and value your staff's opinion.

• Say thank you.

Remember to be transparent with your staff – there is nothing wrong with sitting them down and telling them you don’t have all the answers, but you will do whatever it takes to be fair and reasonable.

Sometimes hard decisions must be made. This is unavoidable in the current climate, but life will go back to normal and good staff are always valuable to have on side.

Production

• Monitor the weekly spend on food and ensure it aligns with demand.

• Make a budget and stick to it!

• Check your digital scales to ensure that portion control is being adhered to and that your recipe costs are accurate.

• Record and review your wastage. Consider what to do with leftovers or freeze items if possible.

• Brief the kitchen team daily so they understand what the business is trying to achieve.

• Are you keeping the right skill set in your kitchen?

Customers

• You need to look after then more than ever and do everything you can to keep them – they are your bread and butter.

• If you develop a take-away service, advertise it! Consider communicating this via staff, flyers, social media or any method of distribution available to you.

• If you can locate the “golden ticket”, pop hand sanitiser at the entrance of your establishment.

• If you are in a café or restaurant operation, make sure you abide by the 1.5m distancing rule with your restaurant tables so that customers feel comfortable and are assured that you have already put safety protocols in place.

**Food and Staff Safety**

• This probably goes without saying but make sure your product is as safe as possible and your cleaning is update to date - go that extra little bit!

• Get training on chemicals that you are using. Are they correct or is there something better?

• Start monitoring the usage of chemicals.

• Make sure staff know not to come in if they are at all unsure about the virus or beginning to feel unwell.

At Cooking the Books by CTB AND CO. we are here to help you through this volatile time. Please keep in touch – we’re not fussed whether it’s an email or phone call at any time of the day.

I’ll keep updating you all as information unfolds for our industry, but if you want to let us know how you’re going and if anything differs from our recommendations at your end, we’re also here to listen.

Feel free to contact me directly at andrew@cookingthebooks.com.au or call me on 1300 911 282.

Regards,

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