



May 12, 2020

Wood Fruitticher Customers:

There has never been a more challenging time in the restaurant industry than what we are experiencing today with the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last few weeks, it has become apparent that things won't be getting back to normal so much as we are going to have a new normal. As you navigate this new normal, we at Wood Fruitticher want to help in every way we can.

We have compiled a list of best practices that we hope will be useful to you as your volume picks up in the days and months to come. This list was put together with input from restaurants and restaurant consultants from across the country. We hope that everyone will be able to find an idea or two in this document that will allow you to garner more business, improve the customer experience, operate more profitably, or provide a safer environment for your employees and customers.

Finally, I want to personally thank you for what you do for our company, your communities, and the entire U.S. economy. The courage and tenacity you are showing running your business in this difficult environment is an inspiration to us all. It gives me confidence that our nation will not only survive this tragedy but come out of it better and stronger than we were when we went in. On behalf of the 385 men and women on the Wood Fruitticher team, thank you for allowing us to service you. Be safe and take care.

Sincerely,

Ford Hamilton  
President  
Wood Fruitticher Foodservice

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# COVID-19 Operator Insights Guide

## Section 1 - Business 101

### Financial

- Request your PPP/SBA loans or seek other funding options. Another \$320B has been added!
- Leases- Ask landlord for rent deferral/renegotiations and review equipment leases
- Seek payment options or deferrals on utilities.
- Reach out or petition local/state regarding sales tax deferrals, etc.
- Insurance - File a business interruption claim and renegotiate insurance premiums and reduce worker's compensation premiums if reduced labor force. Check on employee coverage options.

### Marketing

- It is a NEW world and our industry is changing daily.
- Be seen. Reach out to your consumers.
- Use Social Media and all platforms to promote or update or share what precautions being taken.
- Use your voice to influence government to support the industry.
- Additional marketing resources can be found on our [COVID-19 Resources page](#).

### Operations

- Safety, safety, safety!
- Review all aspects of the operation including all noted in each section of these insights.
- What works for your specific operation or could be possible going forward?
- Turn your inventory/sell what you can... especially perishables.
- Keep your distributor in the loop (pre-orders, certain requirements, share overall needs, etc.)
- Staffing - Anticipate needs now and in the near future. How do you ramp it up and be ready?

### Other

- Utilize all available industry resources like your local Wood Fruitticher sales representative.
- National Restaurant Association - <https://restaurant.org/covid19>
- Utilize new Wood Fruitticher partnership with Uber Eats for online ordering and delivery.
- UniPro's "Great Menu's Start Here" site has a myriad of Menus, How To documents, and Industry Information for Operators. <https://www.GreatMenusStartHere.com>

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## **Section 2- Safety, Hygiene, and Sanitation**

Restaurants have always been a place for social gatherings. Over the last few weeks, Covid-19 has forced us to rethink everything. Curbside and takeaway have become the new norm. To get people back in our restaurants we need demonstrate to the guests we have a safe environment. By following these steps, you will show your guests you care about their safety. These may in fact even become the new “table stakes” for the industry.

### **Standards/Policy**

- It is critical to maintain a superior health score. Whether letter grades such as A, B, C or others that use a numeric system, your job is to score an “A” or 100%. Post it. Guests need to know your score. Market all your precautions and procedures being used.
- Follow all CDC and health department guidance on food safety and handling. CDC information can be [found here](#).
- If asked, remind guests there's currently no evidence COVID-19 is being transmitted through food. [Click here for CDC guidance](#).
- All staff should be retrained and held accountable for the “New Norm” and “new standards”
- Establish a new PTO sick employee policy. Make sure if an employee is sick, they stay home. Your guest will notice and will be hypersensitive. [Food Industry Recommended Protocols when Employee/Customer Tests Positive for COVID-19](#)
- Limit access to your kitchen to only approved staff and suppliers.
- Make sure all employees, management and ownership have taken and passed ServSafe classes. Promote it! <https://www.servsafe.com/>
- Ensure your teams are washing their hands all the time. Use hand sanitizers. Have training and even a timer for washing hands properly. Limit the use of employee cell phones usage at work.
- If you have menus clean and sanitize them after each use. Guests will notice or ask.
- Have the right tools available including gloves, sanitizers, wipes, masks, thermal temperature equipment, aprons, signage, etc. as well as ALL THE INSGHTS!

### **Operations**

- Employees will evaluate you and decide to work in your restaurant if you are providing a safe place to work.
- Create “How to” or “Turnkey” programs for best of class Curbside or To-Go programs.
- Ensure all staff wears gloves and masks. Get creative with graphics on the masks.
- Have hand sanitizer stations or bottles throughout the restaurant. Especially in self-service areas such as beverage or condiments stations. Use gloves at self-serve beverages stations.
- Consider switching from the old “red bucket” or towel sanitizer to sanitizing table wipes. This will ensure your tables are cleaned with the proper sanitizing solution and impress guests.
- Consider after bussing/cleaning the table place a small sign signifying sanitation was completed.
- Be sure to also clean seats.
- Ensure proper glove use. Suggest or mandate a certain color glove such as blue or purple. Guests can easily see them in use. Especially consider for open kitchen/window concepts.
- Follow best practices for cleaning and sanitizing incoming cases. Remember the virus can be transmitted on corrugated cartons, etc. Use gloves.

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- Assign a person to make sure restrooms are always clean. Post a cleaning schedule check sheet. Make sure soap, sanitizer, and paper towels dispensers are always full. Empty the trash often. Have a sanitizer station outside after the guest exits the restroom.

### Pre-Planning

- Do not use old product. Be prepared to share with your guests that your food is fresh. In the coming weeks, there will be a rush of restaurants trying to reopen.
- Plan a menu that you can execute flawlessly. Work with your Wood Fruitticher DSR to ensure your required items are in stock. Do not get lost in the shuffle if there is a rush of reopening.
- Create an opening order in advance for your distributor to ensure stock and availability.
- Review all “touch points.” Consider a “touch free” environment for your guests.
- Sanitize/wipe your credit card machine after every use or go touch free.
- Time to get it all together- Clean carpets, floors, windows, front and back of the house thoroughly. Let your guest know you care and have provided a clean and safe restaurant
- Consider continuing 6’ social distancing rule.
- Give guests a chance to get comfortable being out. Consider distancing your tables or even use floor markings for proper social distancing.

### New Norms?

- Limit or prohibit bare-hand contact with food or customers.
- Explore revenue considerations beyond dine in.
- Think about adding additional dayparts to your operation to increase revenue.
- Labor shortages will now be a labor surplus, but you will now be competing with other operators for the best staff.
- If you have limited seating, consider a call ahead program for a wait list with estimated seating times.
- Sharables may not be popular. Individual desserts or appetizers may prevail for the time being.
- Consider handing a guest their cup, lid, and straw for self-service beverage dispensing. Better – discontinue self-serve dispensing all together.
- Serve all drinks in a to-go container with lids, even when consumed on premise.
- At full-service restaurants, condiments should NOT be left on the table.
- Always deliver cleaned condiments such as salt and pepper shakers or use ramekins for any condiment previously that would be out on table, but now served with the meal.
- Self-service condiments - Consider holding behind counter and asking if any are needed with an order rather than having them in an open and shared location.
- Use pre-packaged condiments for to-go and if extras are requested.
- Napkin dispensers may not be on the tables going forward.
- Any self-serve areas like beverages, salad, and condiment bars might be reconsidered/removed.
- Silverware - Bring out with the meal while wearing gloves or after the guests are seated instead of leaving on the table. Consider wrapping or putting them into a sleeve for hygiene.
- Use tamper evident or tamper proof packaging for to-go.
- Some restaurants may want to consider scanning guest’s or employee temperatures before entering.
- Consider using a plastic shield at your cashier or in areas where the public is in close proximity to food.
- Sampling or self-serve may be a thing of the past.
- Expand your waiting area or consider moving it outside if possible.

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- Consider plate covers for meals coming out to the tables. Remove them at the table to ensure temperature and hygiene.
- More information can be found [here on the CDC website](#).

### **Section 3 - Hospitality and Celebration**

Restaurants are a place to celebrate, create memories, make deals, enjoy great food, gather and enjoy. Service your guests and they will come back. Restaurants that are open AND offering a good experience will come out of this stronger than those deciding to shut down and wait it out.

#### **Hospitality**

- Remember the 5C's
  - CARE- Care about your guests
  - CUSTOMIZE- Everyone is different and will engage in their own way
  - COURTESY- Use your manners and smile
  - CLEANLINESS- Enough said!
  - COMMUNICATION - Greet, engage, introduce, and say goodbye. Always be polite.

#### **Exceeding expectations or How to differentiate**

- Bring back staff members that you know and trust vs. having to train new people.
- Expand your benefits and perks for employees. You will be competing for the best talent in this employment market.
- Upgrade your recruiting methods to bring in the best talent.
- Always have a clean, well-organized restaurant.
- Always greet your guests as they arrive, if a regular greet by name!
- Your Host should explain the “new normal” and stress key points you want guests to know
- All your staff must be well-trained and happy to be there. You can't fake excitement!
- Have a menu that your team can execute perfectly. Pare it down if necessary.
- Deliver an experience and the right experience for each guest since everyone's expectations may be different.
- A Thank You note from the owner or manager with even a personal invite to come back is always a winner.
- Make follow-up phone calls to ensure customer satisfaction. Call, and do not survey. Remember, this is hospitality.

Remember the words of Walt Disney  
“people can feel perfection”

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## **Section 4- Promoting**

Now more than ever it is time to promote your restaurant. Here are a few simple tips:

### **Media/Resources**

- Promotions and Social Media interaction are critical now and should not be scaled back. Spend more time.
- Consider bundling, meal deals, family meal choices, and the correct price points for today.
- Promote your restaurant on all forms of social media including those with algorithm data. Be sure all things are posted correctly. Use Video and clips where possible.
- Monitor your social media for ways to improve and to keep tabs on what is being said.
- Use Yelp and other online review outlets. Post lots of picture of your food online.
- Set up your restaurant's Google My Business account to provide details when your business is searched.
- Geo targeted ads help when people are looking for good restaurant close to home. Invest where it makes most sense.
- Call your local Chamber of Commerce for a great way to stay connected and promote your business locally.
- Use local media, TV, etc. Send food to stations and offices. Provide your 'local' story. Sponsor a remote telecast, etc.
- Leverage local food writers and bloggers.

### **Systems**

- Make sure you have a good website that is up to date. Have current menu, hours, and all contact information easily accessible from your home page. Show off your refreshed, clean, safe restaurant and cheerful staff.
- Implement an online ordering platform. Some will prefer to order this way.
- Review your phone system. Make sure you have enough lines, hold music, and thank you advertising.

### **How to/Suggestive Selling**

- If you have been closed or only providing limited service, consider a small re-opening event. This will help give the kitchen some needed refreshers and also promote your business to locals.
- Collect as many emails as possible and TALK TO YOUR GUESTS! Utilize online orders or even the old fishbowl business card drop in FREE lunch promo to help collect email addresses.
- Use discounts if needed such as BOGO, a free dessert, or free appetizer.
- If you do not have a rewards program it might be the time to establish one. These programs create customer loyalty.
- When guests order something, include a featured side or app that is cost effective. Give them a little note or explain you wanted to share something you really like with them as a Thank You.
- Capitalize on the "family" connection by offering kids free meal or a free dessert.
- Consider cross merchandising with other local businesses that compliment your restaurant. I.e., bring movie ticket or hairdresser receipt to get a drink, etc.
- Review your social responsibility/community give back programs. Maybe sponsor first responders, health care, etc. with donations or meals.
- "Chalk the Walk" campaigns draw folks in by using color chalk/graphics/humor.
- Create daily specials, package deals, bundles, or kits. Consider selling key staples to add on to your orders like eggs, milk, bread, etc. to increase your overall ring.
- Offer DIY cooking kits, recipe tips and how to or even a chef cooking class.
- UniPro's "Great Menu's Start Here" site has promotions for the operators

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### **Section 5 - "Right" for the Times**

There has never been a better time to look at your menu. Evaluate what sells and what doesn't. Consider what may require extensive prep or lots of special ingredients. You don't have to give up what you make that is unique or special. However, with these uncertain times it may be wise to "skinny things down" for a bit. What will customers appreciate and even demand?

#### **Safety, labor saving, packaging, etc.**

- Customers might make choices to spend when a restaurant is contributing to a good cause.
- Simplify your menu, reduce slow moving high labor items from your menu.
- Consider using speed scratch instead of full scratch.
- Consider pre-portioned items instead of cutting in house on items such as steaks and seafood.
- Consider pre-washed and processed produce.
- In some cases, look for high quality pre-made items instead of back of the house prepared. Remember, you can always garnish to make it your own.
- Consider what ingredients can be used in multiple meals/dishes.
- Use products with safety seals or wrappers (i.e., straws, cutlery, cups, etc.)
- Product integrity - What holds up or travels well for to-go or delivery?
- Can you offer individually wrapped/packed/sealed items to customers?
- Sell grocery, refrigerated, produce or COP boxes of product To-Go.
- Consider selling beer or wine.
- Who else is doing what? Use great ideas from competitors. Keep up with competition on social media and web posts.

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## **Section 6 - How To**

In the “NEW” norm, accuracy, getting repeat business, menu refinement, staffing, delivery and other factors are important. Even before Covid-19 curbside, takeaway and delivery have been growing in popularity. It is critical to get it right as well as to ensure that your takeaway business does not overpower the dine in business. Remember, this is hospitality, even for to-go business. A bad experience can cause lost business and bad press. Make it special. Create a celebration. Exceed your guest’s expectations ...and they will come back.

### **Curbside/To-Go**

- Efficient drive through and curbside are here to stay.
- Understand how much take away you can handle, too much you end up hurting the dine in guest and their service expectations
- If possible, have a separate area from dine in where to-go orders as assembled.
- Consider convenient in and out parking, processes and entrances. Have proper signage.
- Have the proper take out packaging. If you are causal to fine dining, is a foam box the best impression you can make? Think about liquids. If a guest is ordering soup, ensure it arrives without spilling. Put it in the correct sealed container and then place it in a zip lock bag for added protection. Your guest will appreciate all this.
- Be accessible to your guests, what options do they have to place orders. Curbside call ahead on-line delivery. Make ordering easy. One click!
- When using a third party and for even in-house delivery, make the packaging tamper proof.
- Have appropriate to-go cutlery. Use your Wood Fruitticher DSR to help identify the proper items to build a to-go packaging platform.
- High quality to-go packaging is important. Perhaps, compostable may be required or preferred by guest.
- Re-heating instructions are a nice touch.

### **Get it right**

- Remember serve HOT FOOD HOT, COLD FOOD COLD!
- Make sure the food is correct/Get the order right.
- Remember appreciation and “Thank You” from ALL staff.
- This is your opportunity to brand your business. Quality to-go bags with good design become walking advertising as guests often repurpose them for use in public.
- Write a personal note on a takeout box thanking the guest and include snippet of information or story about the item they chose to build a connection.
- Before orders are placed, capture information about any dietary restrictions or preferences.
- When orders are placed, ask if they are celebrating anything. Include a free dessert.
- Use wine pairings to help create the special occasion.
- If legal in your area, ask for a cocktail order.
- Send a Thank You note from owner/manager and invite guest back.
- Use to-go as springboard to dine-in at a later date. Use ‘bounce back’ cards, free items, or even discount the next visit.
- Consider partnering with LOCAL other business for other discounts or promotions.
- If you use a third party such as Uber Eats, Grub Hub, etc., be sure to test them. Have a friend or family member order a meal and check the experience. Don’t let a third party hurt your business.

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