



COVID STRATEGY EBOOK: **F&B**

REVIEWING YOUR FOOD AND
BEVERAGE APPROACH IN LIGHT
OF COVID-19

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The road to Covid recovery is an uncertain one for the hospitality industry. Fortunately, there are plenty of things you can do at your property to emerge from these tough times more equipped to meet your guests' needs than ever before.

You may have already opened your food and beverage outlets, but are you letting new regulations reduce your productivity and overly affect the guest experience?

We've interviewed seasoned hospitality experts to find out clever ways of getting your F&B department in perfect shape to reopen and run a tighter ship than ever before. Get the most out of your hotel's food and beverage services to create as much of an escape from pandemic drudgery as possible.

This F&B reopening guide will explain:

- How to prepare your outlets to reopen if you haven't already
- Which financial aspects you need to consider
- How to revamp your F&B offering for these times

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CHAPTER ONE

REVIEWING YOUR FOOD AND BEVERAGE APPROACH IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

IMPLEMENT LOCAL GUIDELINES AND SET NEW
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES WHILE
MAXIMISING SERVICE QUALITY

Featuring advice from:

Nathalie Mulder of [Kimpton De Witt Hotel](#)

Angelo Vassallo of [Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I Hotel](#)

Whether your restaurants and bars were closed for an extended period or not, the following tips will help you determine to what degree your outlets are providing a safe and comfortable environment for your guests.

1.1 RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENT LOCAL GUIDELINES

First things first – if you haven't already, find out which new rules and regulations you must comply with to run your F&B venues. Check your local authority's website to get a list of things you need to do to make your operations compliant. This can include:

- new cleaning procedures
- capacity limits
- rules about using PPE and hand sanitiser.

1.2 SET NEW STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPS) AND CONDUCT STAFF TRAINING

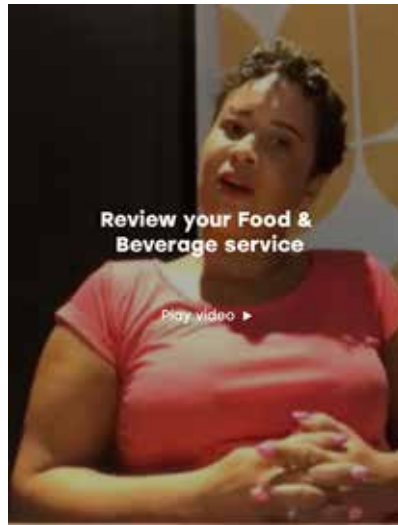
Most of what you do at your restaurant involves close contact with guests e.g. welcoming and seating them, taking orders and serving food and drinks. New government requirements and the need for reduced contact will make it necessary to update your SOPs and find alternative ways of providing the same level of service while keeping guests and staff safe.

Here are some ideas for new SOPs:

- Instead of providing a self-service buffet, let staff serve food at each station
- Outline standards around the proper use of PPE at work
- Implement new/updated cleaning and sanitising schedules for surfaces, equipment, etc.
- Set up a process for staff to follow if they feel sick or test positive for Covid-19

Whatever new SOPs you implement, train your staff sufficiently to ensure new procedures are being applied both in the front and back of house.

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1.3 KEEP YOUR SERVICE GUEST-CENTRIC

Interactions with guests are going to be different for the foreseeable future, there's no doubt about it. This means restaurants and bars will have to find new ways to delight their guests.

In some cases, you may offer the same services but be less proactive about it to give people space and minimise direct or indirect contact (e.g. with cloakroom service or valet parking). Whatever you plan to provide, keep the guest's comfort and wellbeing in mind. They will appreciate that you are taking their concerns seriously while welcoming them in a warm and friendly way.

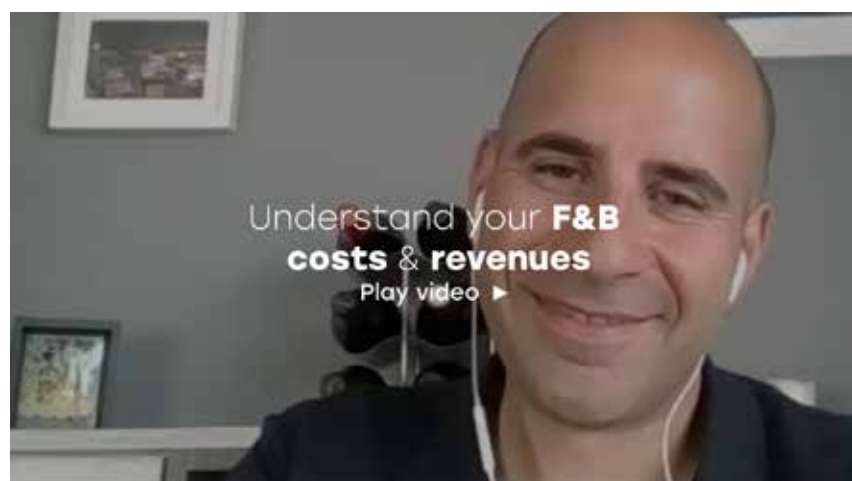
1.4 UNDERSTAND YOUR COSTS AND REVENUES

When you plan to reopen your F&B venues, answer the following questions to make a financially sound decision.

- **What is the overall mood in your city, town, or region?** Look at how restaurants around you are doing and how many guests they attract. If they are busy, it's probably time to draw up a reopening plan as well.
- **What costs are associated with reopening one, some, or all of your F&B outlets?** Opening a restaurant or bar can bring significant costs with it, including manning, food and beverage stock and possibly fees for renovations needed to make your outlet compliant to new regulations. Consider these costs when you run the numbers while planning your reopening.
- **Which new costs will you incur when reopening your venues?** Stricter hygiene regulations leading to longer cleaning times and more product use as well as the need for PPE for staff and guests are just a few new cost factors you need to budget for.

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- **Who is your main target market now?** With travel being so heavily restricted, you may have a different target market now than before the pandemic. This is important to know since local guests can be more price-sensitive. You may face lower spend per guest in the coming weeks and months from regular channels, so it's important to make it clear that [less run-of-the-mill desires are also something that your team would be happy to accommodate.](#)
- **How many guests do you need to serve to break even?** Given the point above, it's best to make conservative calculations about how many covers you need per day to break even. F&B cost control relies on accurately estimating your occupancy and adjusting your provisions accordingly. Consider if this figure is realistic and how long it may take you to build up to this number of guests. Any additional revenue you generate incrementally via upselling for instance, can then act as a buffer for the inevitable unexpected occurrence.
- **How can you maximise service quality while minimising costs?** Having a good overview of your costs and being able to eliminate all the unnecessary ones has never been so important. Removing high-cost and low-profit items from the menu for the time being is a good place to start. Make your operations as efficient as possible to save money on manning. Use tech tools to better [schedule your staff, streamline workflows and avoid wasting valuable resources.](#)



CHAPTER TWO

HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR REDESIGNED F&B SERVICE

LEVERAGE YOUR ORIGINAL F&B SELLING POINTS IN COMBINATION WITH HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES TO ATTRACT PATRONS AND MAKE YOUR MARK IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY.

Featuring advice from:

Nathalie Mulder of [Kimpton De Witt Hotel](#)

Angelo Vassallo of [Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I Hotel](#)

As you gear up to reopen, getting the word out about it is key to attracting those first visitors. As you might expect, competition will be fiercer than ever as venues around you fight to make up for revenue lost during the lockdown.

Follow the steps below to let your loyal patrons and new customers know you're open for business.

2.1 LOCALISE SEO AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In the first weeks and months after lockdowns ease, you'll be primarily attracting guests from your area and drive-to markets. Help them find you by localising your SEO and social media presence.

- **Set up or optimise your Google My Business page:** Include revised opening hours, feature your menu and highlight your new options such as pick-up or contactless delivery. Google allows you to give detailed information about your venue, so take advantage of this to answer all your potential guests' questions. Don't forget to add some [beautiful and convincing imagery!](#)
- **Leverage online business listings:** Get your venues featured on sites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, or Foursquare (or your local equivalent) to get eyes on your business, drive traffic to your website and engage with people who leave reviews. If this is covered for your hotel, think about your F&B departments specifically to attract people searching for brunch or dinner options, for example. Highlight your restaurant and bar USPs across all listings!

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- **Update your menu:** Keep your menu updated on your website, social media, Google listing and other third-party sites. This shows guests what they can expect, and your target audience will know they've come to the right place. It's also helpful for guests with dietary restrictions or preferences because they can check your options ahead of their visit.
- **Target local guests via social media:** If you're not doing this already, use your local language on social media to better connect with people around you. Create promotions around upcoming holidays or events and make your content relevant to your area. Also consider working with local bloggers, influencers and media to expand your reach and promote your venue.

2.2 ENCOURAGE STAFF TO LEVERAGE THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS

While you staff should be motivated and encouraged to be [brand ambassadors](#) in regular times, this period would especially benefit from public support from staff.

- **Invite your team to share your story on their social channels:** Encourage your staff to show behind the scenes shots of how you're getting ready to reopen or how you're operating now. Tag your team members in photos and invite them to comment, like and reshare your posts. Before you start: let your employees know they are not obligated to do this, but tactfully emphasise the difference it would make.

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- **Host social media training for staff:** When sharing business-related content, there are legal aspects to be aware of (e.g. privacy protection). Communicate this with your staff so everyone is on the safe side. Highlight branding guidelines as well to ensure your team's posts reflect your venue's style.



2.3 DRIVE REVIEWS AND CUSTOMER- GENERATED CONTENT

When people research a new bar or restaurant to go to, review sites can have a huge impact on their decision. Plenty of good and recent reviews, will make potential customers much more likely to stop by. Use this to your advantage!

- **Encourage guests to leave reviews:** Do this as guests pay or when you say goodbye. Tell them how much it would help your business if they shared their experience. Many will be happy to support you in this way.
- **Reward guests who 'check in':** Facebook allows users to check in and publicly share their experience at a restaurant, store, hotel, or city. Their connections can observe their experience at your outlet, which is a great form of organic publicity. Since not everybody checks in automatically, you can consider offering an incentive like a free starter or a drink if they do.
- **Promote user-generated content:** If your food or drinks are beautiful or your design is quirky, chances are guests will take some pictures for their social media. Like the check-in feature, you can encourage them to post photos of your venue and tag you. This not only gives you extra exposure on social media and lets you engage with your guests by resharing their posts or stories on your channels.

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2.4 SHARE YOUR HYGIENE AND SAFETY MEASURES



You've probably seen many hotels share their new hygiene and safety measures on their website and social media. If you haven't already you should do the same. After all, you've gone to great lengths to implement all the new regulations, so why not tell people about it?

This doesn't mean you can't break the mould by communicating your measures in a more fun and engaging way. Try recording social media stories or short videos of staff following the new procedures. You can show that you're taking the situation seriously but are still focusing on providing a fun experience for your guests.

Remember though, if you promise something you'll need to deliver. Once a guest arrives, they need to see these measures in action. Encourage patrons to ask questions and ensure your staff is ready to explain the how and why behind your new procedures.

2.5 CREATIVE IDEAS TO INCREASE YOUR F&B SALES

Of course, getting guests to come to you is only half the job. Now it's time to drive sales in your venue. Try these tips to avoid your offering becoming stale while your attention is devoted to health and safety.

- **Regularly update your menu:** Your customer base will be smaller with fewer out-of-town guests. You'll probably have more repeat business from locals and this is a good thing, especially in these trying times. Keep things interesting for your repeat customers by having a small menu that you change regularly with regional or seasonal specials.
- **Revise opening times and seating options:** Capacity restrictions mean you can welcome fewer guests in your regular opening hours. Consider whether it would make sense to extend your opening hours or expand outdoor seating options during summer to serve more guests.

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- **Consider pick-up and delivery:** Many restaurants have had great success with this approach during the lockdown. Would this fit your restaurant and appeal to your guests? If normal delivery isn't an option, are there other creative ways you can implement this? Think: a box with ingredients for a lavish meal and a video tutorial by your chef or ingredients and a guide to making cocktails.
- **Offer new dining settings** If your outlet is in a hotel, can you [offer packages](#) where you serve a meal in an unusual location? This could include the Presidential Suite, the terrace, spa, beach, or garden.
- **Train staff to upsell:** Every penny counts, so encourage your team to upsell guests whenever possible. Host training to teach them the right techniques and ensure guests don't feel harassed by it. You can start with something simple like proposing an aperitif to every table or pushing your high-profit low-cost dishes. Create incentives for your team to make this more fun. For example, the one who sells the most aperitifs wins a bottle of Champagne.
- **Collaborate with other departments in the spirit of total revenue management:** Check with front office or the spa if you can create packages for hotel guests. This could include a spa day with a healthy meal or an upgrade to a suite which comes with a set menu at your restaurant. You can get creative here – the sky is the limit.

Hopefully these ideas and pointers will get your creativity flowing and help you create and implement a strategy to bring back your F&B venue with a bang.

As you navigate these challenging months, keep in mind that even with new rules and a more difficult situation overall, you can find a way to delight your guests and keep giving them the fantastic experiences you're known for.

