126 EXPERT IDEAS FOR YOUR

RESTAURANT BUSINESS PLAN

(+10 BONUS TIPS)

ALSCO

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The fact that everybody needs food and that this need occurs every day, makes running a food business fun, exciting, and so full of possibilities.

But just because food is a universal need doesn't necessarily mean every food business is bound for success.

With so much competition in the food business industry today, it'll all boil down to which restaurant serves the best food at the best price and at the best location possible.

Create Your Restaurant Business Plan

How do you do this? With creativity, resourcefulness, and being wise with every choice and decision you make in every aspect of your restaurant business.

That is why Alsco stress the importance of coming up with a solid restaurant business plan whether you are just about to go on a food business venture, or are already in it and looking to try new things to improve your business.

Alsco helps the restaurant and catering industry by providing clean and hygienic linen, food & glass wipes, catering workwear, various kinds of floor mats, continuous towel, first aid and washroom services.

But not just that! Here, we have put together a list of great ideas that will help you when starting up and managing a sustainable restaurant business. One that is not only going to create income for you, but also turn your restaurant into an important part of your local community.

GETTING THE PERFECT LOOK & FEEL

1. Choose the best location

Location is another key factor to keep in mind when opening a restaurant. Having the best location can be the decisive factor in the success of your project. An ideal establishment would be located in a very busy area, as well as being very accessible. Somewhere which offers facilities such as parking or which is located close to a metro stop will attract a higher number of clients to your restaurant.

Flickr Image by Alan Turkus

You should choose a location which meets specific physical characteristics that can be adapted to the requirements of the concept and budget of your restaurant.

2. Décor and design matters

Michael Shen, the restaurant reviewer and food photographer of ImStillHungry shares that customers also look at service and décor in your restaurant. While both are potentially ancillary next to food quality, it is these two aspects that can really seal the deal on making a memorable experience. This is how Michael Shen rates restaurants.

If you are going to need professional help with the design and decor of your restaurant, Alexandra Morris, a Sydney-based Commercial Interior Design, added that it's important to always appoint a great designer that has a portfolio of hospitality projects.

> Not only will they maximise the best use of your space they will guide you through the procedures involved with council regulations as well as making sure the overall design meets Australian Standards and food codes.

Taste Baguette's bakery and cafe designed by *Morris Selvatico*.

3. Plan before doing fitouts and buying equipment

Before you plan your kitchen and the equipment that you require to fit it out, make sure you have a design and cost analysis of your menu and style of food offering.
Peter Giannakis of www.thehospitalitycoach.net said:

> "I often see new business owners who were sold equipment they just didn't end up fully utilising. The style of food will also dictate the layout and workflow when designing your kitchen."

4. Space constraints shouldn't be a problem

If you think your space is not big enough, it's okay. Having an available seating under 10 is still a great way to cut costs not just on your fitout but also on the long-term costs of running your restaurant. Design your restaurant space to give it a stunning and welcoming atmosphere. Make up for the space constraints by offering a "takeaway" service. This will help you spend less on staff and reduce the need for table service and clean up.

5. Optimise your space

Observe and evaluate the areas of inefficiency in your space to identify where you need to make changes or renovations. Even small changes in your space can lead to reduction in the number of staff members you need per shift without affecting the service speed or food quality.

Julia Gouye of CafeIdeas.com.au recently wrote about a concept called the *"kitchen work triangle"*. It combines design, functionality and efficiency, making it easier for restaurant owners to determine their kitchen layout.

Consider making your kitchen an ergonomic work area to reduce the distance and effort required for your staff to work effectively.

6. Put up a service well

This works best if you have a long bar. Having a service well on both sides will help servers get drinks easily.

7. Re-organise the kitchen

Make sure it's laid out so that your staff can work faster and probably even multitask like working on the fish station and the fryer at the same time.

Here's a video on how to design your commercial kitchen.

8. Consider an open kitchen

Open kitchens have become a trend these days because customers love it when the cooks or chef are involved in their dining experience. They appreciate being able to see how their meals are prepared. Aside from assuring your customers of your kitchen's hygiene, this setting also fosters loyalty and further adds value to your restaurant.

Phoeniks Kitchen Project

A friendly reminder from Alexandra Morris of morrisselvatico.com though, don't put in an open kitchen if you don't have any interesting theatrically cooking to showcase. They might be in fashion at the moment, but there is nothing worse than seeing into an unclean and uninteresting kitchen.

9. Get Instagram-worthy tableware and table linens

Customers these days love sharing their food on their social media profiles. The more picture-perfect the presentation of your dishes are, the more likely it will get posted on Instagram or Facebook.

Nice table setting with *clean table linen* from *Alsco*

Remember the importance of exposure? All you have to do is serve dishes that will excite your customers they'd want to share it to everyone on their social networks.

This is why you need to take choosing tableware seriously. Aside from influencing the food tastes, nice tableware and table setting will also encourage customers to talk about you.

Here are useful tips for buying restaurant tableware.

10. Improve your lighting

According to Alexandra Morris of Morris Selvatico, lighting is often overlooked by restaurant business owners especially if they are on a budget.

Make sure you don't make this mistake as it is one of the most important elements when designing a restaurant/café as it can make or break a space.

> Lighting sets the overall mood and atmosphere so don't leave it to the last minute. Remember that less is more and this is certainly true when it comes to lighting – remember to always put lights on dimmers so that you have control over lighting levels through the day and night. – Alexandra Morris of Morris Selvatico

11. Get stylish but functional chairs and tables

Mary Todd of Ke-zu Furniture shares her insights on the best chairs to use in a restaurant.

- Apart from the aesthetics, make sure the chairs are functionally suitable by considering the dimensions, materials, and finishes carefully.
- When considering chairs be mindful of the design from the back. That is what you actually see in the space.
- On a practical level chairs with a gap between seats and back allow for easier cleaning.
- Tables with central bases, as opposed to leg,s provide greater versatility in table arrangement and allow people to get in and out of chairs with greater ease.

Custom built *Aqua Bar project* by *KE-ZU*

12. The colour psychology

Niccolo Borgonovo of Protech Hospitality also shares a great business plan tip on using colours in a restaurant.

> *Colours* play an important role in *generating a hospitable environment in cafés or restaurants*. The colour that is rarely seen in cafes is blue and the reason behind that lies in its ability to distract one's mind away from food. On the other hand, colours like orange, red and green stimulate the appetite and increase cravings. This is why the right colour combination will not only help you maximise hospitability but will also generate customer satisfaction.

Interior design tips for every business by *Kreativ*

KEEPING AN EYE ON YOUR SUPPLIES

13. Order Wisely

This is the best way to control food costs. Keep an inventory that will tell you what you need and how much. Assessing your buys to manage food costs is one key strategy to boost your bottom line. You can also order in bulk for certain items that are used in large quantity.

14. Count and weigh delivered supplies

Always count and weigh food when they are delivered to make sure that you are getting what you paid for.

15. Do a make-or-buy analysis

You may also want to reconsider your kitchen workload by coming up with a thorough make-or-buy analysis. Make a list of which items you can make from scratch and which ones you can just purchase prepared. Aside from cutting costs, this move can also ensure the quality of the food you serve your customers.

16. Talk to your suppliers

Communicating with your suppliers will help you get the best deals for your business. Don't be shy to discuss with your suppliers about reducing your costs. It's also okay to let them know that you are getting quotes from competitors.

17. Develop relationships with local farms

Restaurant business plan tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

Products from local farmers are a lot fresher and oftentimes cheaper as you wouldn't be dealing with a middleman anymore.

Find a local farmer close to you via the *localharvest.org.au*:

18. Be kitchen intelligent – understand how money is spent

Kristy and Matthew Krueger of iChef share a few restaurant business plan tips on 'kitchen intelligence':

1. Come up with regular reviews of menu costs to makes sure you are not selling your menu short.
2. Conduct weekly stocktakes to determine food cost percentage so you know what changes you need to make.
3. Set stock holding levels for particular days of the week. This will help prevent stock loss due to over-ordering.
4. Setting preparation par levels over kitchen preparation is as important, this will ensure freshness of food products.

PUT YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER

19. Track your inventory and food cost

It may be best to track food costs on a daily basis so you know where they are each day. So if you start noticing that food costs are 5% too high, that's when you know you've had a soft month, that you've been selling too much of this or probably not enough of that.

It also helps to look at what menu items are not selling so you know if you will need to make adjustments on ordering, dishes, and the menu to compensate for food costs.

Here's a helpful video about how to calculate food cost percetage.

20. Menu item sales report

This report is what will tell you what your customers like and will be very useful for your chefs and kitchen managers as it allows them to plan better daily specials and prepare the best-selling dishes or the customers' favorites.

This is also the best way to find out what you need to place on your menu to increase sales, directly influencing what customers want to order and how much they are going to spend.

Here's a sample of a Restaurant Weekly Sales and Labor Report from Restaurant Resource Group.

21. Hourly staff labor report

Having an hourly labor report will improve your work scheduling. Keep track of the total hours a staff worked, the category of his/her task, and part of the day. Since labor is one of the biggest costs in running a restaurant, having an hourly labor report will give you an idea when you will go over the budget of hours and if a staff member will have to go over his scheduled hours and work overtime hours.

22. Go easy on the discounts

Giving up on discounting will have an immediate effect on your bottom line. If you always offer discounts, what's the point of having a regular retail price?

Discounting costs you money and it gives people the impression that your normal prices are a rip off. Discounts will devalue your product.

Special discounts for *special occasions*. Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

Think about those rug retailers that are always advertising massive discount sales on TV. How often do they say up to 80% discount on all floor stock – final clearance sale – new stock has just arrived, so old stock has to go. Trouble is people become oblivious to all these sales after a while. They cease having an impact. They are no longer believable.

It's better not to discount at all but to simply offer more add-on value instead. You could consider something like "buy a coffee get a slice for free", "Spend over $10 and get a free coffee". The idea is to add perceived value.

"Selling is not about price. It's all about value"

MAKING THEM GO 'OOH!' WITH YOUR MENU

23. Always mention the major ingredients

Explain what the major ingredients are in a particular dish. If they fit, use ethnic names as they add an authentic flairto the menu description.

24. Put a lot of thought in your menu design

Your menu is a reflection of your restaurant so its layout, fonts, and colours should match your restaurant's concept, location, or theme.

Think Culinary posted about *menu tips on Instagram*.

iChef's Kristy and Matthew Krueger also shares the following ideas when designing a menu:

- Create something that will excite your guests, involve your regulars, it gives them some ownership.
- Use the specials board as your menu design drawing board

Another great tip for your restaurant business plan from Murray Wright of MurrayWright.com is to make sure yourmenus can be read and understood.

> With in-house printing, we can squeeze a lot on a A4 paper – but in the evening with lights low, and the more mature customer having forgotten their reading glasses, (or not wanting to show they need them) things get hard. Make sure the typeface is big enough. With descriptions, be careful of technical terms – if people don't understand, they won't ask and just order the steak or schnitzel. Ask yourself why the term is needed – is it to genuinely inform the customer or make myself feel good?

25. Positioning items on a menu

Be smart when positioning items on your menu.

Murray Wright and Associates shares that people tend to remember the first and last items more easily when they read a list. So make sure to put the dishes you want to sell the most (highest $ margin) first and last on the lists.

Here are tips and tricks for making the most of your restaurant menu by BuzztimeBusiness.

26. Rate your dishes on how well they sold

Another great idea from iChef, is to rate each of your dishes and keep a tally and this will give you the pros and cons to their suitability for the menu.

27. Have a specialty menu on special occasions or holidays

You can put together a special menu available only on holidays or local festivals.
This will allow you to still have control over your costs and inventory while expanding your meal selection.

Special menu for Christmas at *Bistro One46*

28. Offer healthy options

Offer healthy options on your menu. These days, more people are looking at healthy food choices when deciding where to eat so make sure you have something healthy to offer that goes beyond meat.

Offering meals with whole grains, vegetables, and fresh seafood on your menu is also one way to show that you have great culinary skills.

Finding restaurants and eateries with healthy foods made easier through *Gluten Free Eating Directory*.

You don't necessarily have to remove some items off your appetiser menu. But you may want to consider adding low-fat, low-carb, low-calorie options such as lean meats, poultry, fish, as well as smaller meal portions at smaller prices as well.

Vanessa Cullen of Forward Thinking Design has some great insights to share on healthy food offerings:

> "Wholefoods plant-based clean eating is in and here to stay, even with non-vegan or non-vegetarian consumers who are just seeking lighter, healthier and/or more sophisticated meals. Leading futurists forecast this as the top trend in the immediate and foreseeable future of food and it is being embraced by both the best chefs globally and small start-up 'fast' food companies popping up ahead of the curve."

Vanessa also shared a few examples of healthy dishes:

- A vegan veggie burger or falafel wrap with option for gluten free bread
- Bringing in a vegan cheese option which allows you to easily convert many pizza and Mexican style mains
- A tofu or lentil veg stir fry, hot pot, casserole or curry, etc.
- Raw vegan desserts and non-dairy based ice creams can easily be bought in from a growing range of suppliers

Having more options like these will add variety to your menu and appeal to a wider array of customers.

29. Trim down your menu

Track the sales of every item in your menu and remove those that aren't selling as much as the others. You can also use one item for different dishes to cross-utilise them to avoid and reduce food spoilage while keeping food cost under control.

30. Keep a balanced menu

Analyze each item on your menu to be able to figure out your major food costs and how you can make small cuts back. Make sure it has a balance of both low and high cost items. Make adjustments to meet food cost targets. As much as possible, avoid high food cost items on slow months.

Here's some tips from HowCast on how to design a menu.

31. Control portion size

Small things that may not seem like a big deal at first can actually make a huge difference in meeting targeted food costs. Portion size is one of these small things.

Make sure that you are portioning everything in your meals at the proper weight. This does not only help you meet food targets, it can also ensure that you are ordering the right quantities, reducing the need to raise prices and potentially turn your business into a really profitable one.

IMPROVING YOUR MARKETING GAME

32. Make the most of the Internet

Gone are the days when people would flip through yellow pages to look for nice places to dine in. Today, people turn to the Internet for nearly everything, including looking for good restaurants.

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

So now's the right time to make the most of all that the Internet has to offer. Put up your own website or try online advertising. Or perhaps, go for inexpensive e-newsletters that you can send to your customers on a regular basis.

33. Use Wi-Fi marketing platforms

Cody Hicks of Turnstyle shares how Wi-Fi marketing platforms can be surprisingly effective at making it fast and easy for restaurants to build their email lists.

You can get contact information from guests that sign-in to your Wi-Fi in exchange for the free wireless connection you provide. This way, you can send out updates, messages, and coupons to them, giving them more reasons to keep coming back.

34. Spread the word

"Word of Mouth" can be a very influential element that can drive purchase decisions. Consumers recommend a restaurant to their friends and family if they've had a great dining experience.

So if you have loyal customers, with loyalty cards/membership, are 70% more likely to spread the word about your business.

Here are 5 Principles of Word of Mouth Marketing.

35. Use SEO to grow your audience

Carlos Swinton-Lee of Bar & Restaurant Consultants shared that using SEO and digital marketing are still the most effective ways of growing your audience.

Claiming your Google places page early and keeping updated with relevant, fresh pictures and moving images will always help as well as encouraging (and responding to) reviews from Zomato, Trip Advisor and the other 3rd-party platforms. Likewise, using SEO tools on your web site to target local searches will help you gain exposure on Google.

> "Converting your audience to paying customers is a little more tricky and cannot be done with marketing alone, *reputation* will always spread far and wide so concentrating on a *quality experience* with great service and a fantastic product is paramount." – Carlos Swinton-Lee

36. Make the most of Facebook

Mr. Wong Restaurant's Facebook page gains a lot of visitors, page likes, tags and activities.

According to Carlos, Facebook is still the most targeted sales drive you can perform and it helps you to define your offer with tools to select age groups, areas, behaviours and times that people are online, the great thing about Facebook is that you can segment your marketing and open areas of your business up to other customers without damaging your core business.

The founder of Marketing4Restaurants.com, James Eling reminds us that:

> "Remember, Facebook marketing for restaurants is not about how many Likes you have, it is about *having the right objectives*, and that is usually *finding more new customers* and turning them into *repeat customers*."

37. Organise blogger events

Get to know bloggers in your local city or community and invite them over to your restaurant for a special event. Bloggers can help you create a buzz around your business. Perhaps when you have a new menu, you can set a menu launch and have food and lifestyle bloggers over for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Aside from coming and experiencing your new menu, these bloggers would write about the whole experience on their blogs, share photos of the place and food on their Instagrams, or even tweet about your restaurant and your new menu.

FCBA Food Critics & Bloggers Australia Facebook Page of food critics and bloggers in Australia.

38. Put up a food/recipe blog

Blogging about your restaurant can be a great way to spread the word around and attract more customers.

You can share a few recipes and stories such as the things that happen in your restaurant or cafe behind the scenes, how the business started, and even your staff's success stories.

You can mix it up any way you want to. Give your blog an authentic voice and it'll do wonders in marketing your restaurant/cafe.

39. Start a birthday club

When a customer comes to celebrate his/her birthday on your restaurant, reward the birthday celebrant with a free meal. This is a huge opportunity to get other people to celebrate their birthday party with friends and family at your restaurant.

You can also send monthly emails inviting everyone who will be celebrating their birthdays on that particular month to throw their party at your restaurant.

40. Set-up an email sales machine

The goal is to stay on top of your customers' mind. Come up with creative ways to get customers to give their email addresses (like having a birthday club or setting up a blog).

You can use this email list to update customers on your latest menu additions, promos, blog posts, upcoming events, holiday specials, and a whole lot more.

Growing Digits tweets about the Email Marketing for Ecommerce.

41. Reward loyal customers

Give your customers a good reason to keep coming back to your restaurant: rewards. Come up with loyalty program installed to your Point of Sales (POS) System that will record what customers purchase so they can collect points and rewards.

If your customers know that they will get something in return for always eating at your place, then they will not only keep coming back, they might invite their friends to visit your place too.

An article written by *Miles Hobson* about *Customer Loyalty: Don't Use Gimmicks, Provide A Real Reason To Return [Infographic]*

In winning loyal customers, Nicole Kelly of the Restaurant & Catering Industry Association, says we can **make guests feel special** by remembering their birthdays (you can search it on Facebook) or their favourite dish or wine style – this will **drive loyalty and repeat visitation**.

Winning Loyal Customers – make them feel special (Flickr Image)

A recent survey was made on 2000 businesses having different loyalty programs that constitutes 14 million store visits from more than 1 million customers. According to the study, loyal customers who visited at least 10 times may only be accounted for about 20% of the total customers but that that 20% is actually what drives 80% of the total revenue and 72% of total visits.

42. Be on social media

Restaurant businesses simply can't afford not to be on social media these days. And if you decide to give it a go, make sure that as you engage with your customers online, even your own staff should also be engaged. You can share your staff's photos at work, your special dishes, or any important event happening in your restaurant.

immineodigital posted on Instagram about the importance of *social media presence* in every businesses.

> Use social media to drive visitation – photos of dishes should be posted daily – photos of staff having fun, mixing cocktails, receiving new or interesting stock, visiting the markets. – *Nicole Kelly of Restaurant & Catering Association*

There are a lot of social media agencies that can take care of engaging with your customers in social media on your behalf but never let your customers don't know about this at all.

You'll lose your authenticity when customers find out they've been talking to strangers all along, and not those who really own and run the business.

Here are a few helpful things to consider when joining social media:

- After creating a profile for your restaurant on the most popular social networks, don't leave them dormant, you need to stay active.

- If you're only starting up, you can interact with your future customers even before opening your restaurant.
- Keep people up-to-date on the latest in your restaurant.
- Get your customers engaged by having them vote on things like menu items, specialty dishes, as well as cocktails.
- You can also throw in contests and reward those who will share about your restaurant on their social network.

43. Work with influencers

Work with "Influencers" such as bloggers, instagrammers, and youtubers with huge followings on social media as they can serve as a great channel to reach your target customers. Come up with creative ways to get these "digital celebrities" to talk about you or publish content on their blogs or YouTube channel about your business.

Lorraine Elliott gets up to $9000 for a sponsored post. Photo: Instagram/@notquitenigella

Kochie's Business Builders tips to keep in mind when working with influencers to get customers.

- Focus on building relationships and ambassadors
- Don't just look for celebrities
- Involve your influencer's followers
- Trust the influencer

44. Create an email marketing campaign

This is one of the most power tools you can use to retain customers and attract new ones. Make the most of it too as opportunities are going to increase over time with interactivity and technology resources growing each year.

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

Here are the basic things you need to run an ideal email marketing campaign for your restaurant:

- Build and manage your contact list
- Think of a creative mailing strategy
- Come up with a perfect email for your campaign.
- Create effective content and think of attention-grabbing calls to action
- Measure and analyze the results

45. Update your free and paid directory listings

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

Aside from joining and being active on social media, don't forget to update your listing on free and paid directories regularly. Directory listings like Zomato, (UrbanSpoon), TripAdvisor, Yelp, AGFG, TrueLocal, FourSquare, TimeOut, PartyStar, Venuetohire, VenueMob, and TheHappiestHour also help people when searching for a restaurant or café so you definitely want to be there, too.

46. Spruce up your mobile image

Millennials are an influential customer demographic and therefore should be important for your restaurant to attract. This group of people are never without their phones. Even when deciding where to eat can sometimes greatly depend on what information they find interesting on their phones. That's where you want to be – be it Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Just be there and make sure to get your message across while they are making that decision.

A portion of the article about *Social Media Strategy & Management for Restaurants, Cafes, and Bars* by The Social Savior.

47. Create a website for your restaurant

Put yourself in your customer's shoes and think of ways you would find a good restaurant. People search online for good restaurants so if you don't have a website, you are obviously missing out on A LOT.

Set up a website for your restaurant as this will help convince customers to visit.

Clueless on how or where to start in building your restaurant's website? Here's a simple guide on learning what important things your customers need to see on your website.

Key points to remember when creating a restaurant website by *Online Store Guys*.

There are a many free website templates available on the Internet that are tailored for restaurants. You can also pay a webmaster who will create a customised website for you.

48. Accept online orders and offer online bookings

Customers who are too busy to go out prefer ordering online.

> "The *Free Restaurant Online Ordering* system is completely free for restaurants to use. We have taken thousands of orders and most importantly saved Restaurants thousands of dollars in commission." – James Eling, founder of *marketing4restaurants.com*

You might also want to add a booking button to your website so that visitors can easily make reservations in just a few clicks. Unless you are open 24/7 and are always standing by the phone, then it's best that you have an online booking system.

Image of a man facing his tablet from *OBEE – an online booking system for restaurants and cafes*.

Having an online booking system will make everything easy, practical, and fast for your customers. Give them that kind of convenience and they are surely going to remember you.

49. Get listed on popular food guides

It'll make it easier for your customers to find you, especially those who haven't heard of you before. Reference guides such as TheFork or TripAdvisor are just some of the websites customers run to when they need to find a good restaurant.

Here, they can search by location, price range, type of food, and the service offered. The key here is exposure.

50. Manage your customer reviews

Customers also look at reviews on your restaurant online. If your restaurant has a lot of good reviews, then you have a lot of chance attracting new customers – customers who may not have even heard about you before.

So make sure you stay active on these listing websites and keep building a good online reputation. Aside from managing your restaurant's online image, you also get to respond to your customers' reviews. And show them that their feedback and experience matter to you.

GIMMICKS

51. Wine tasting and wine specials

On quiet periods, you can approach local wineries about your restaurant event and if they would be interested to be part of it.

"Wine gimmicks" are unique strategies that are useful for restaurant business for any restaurants, a Pixabay Image.

Another great idea from Nicole Kelly of Restaurant & Catering Association would be to use bin-ends as a special 'wine-by-the-glass' to move stock no longer listed. That way you will get a return on unused stock and offer diversity for your guests.

52. Theme breakfast, lunch or dinner

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

Show people that your business is anything but boring. Throw theme parties whether it's breakfast, lunch or dinner. Make sure to rave about it, tell people about it on and off social media. Make sure that there is always something going on in your business. Stay active and creative.

53. Offer an Instagram #FOTT (Food Of The Day)

Moo Mouth Coffee Instagram account

You can also do this on your quiet days. Offer your customers a specific meal served on a specific day and promote it with a creative name or hashtag that will stick to your customers.

This is a good way to keep them coming back because they'll want to know what you will be serving on on the next day!

54. Set up or join food markets

Join food markets or food bazaars. This is a great way to get yourself out there for people to discover. If there are no food bazaars happening anytime soon in your area, you can set it up yourself at your place.

Invite small homemade food businesses to join and sell their homemade food.

Alice's stall and her creations in a food market/bazaar. Photo from Summer Tomato.

55. In-house promotions

Why not slip a promo flyer in with the bill? Or maybe have a table talker on the tables? How about a poster in front of your restaurant.

Make the most of the time a customer is already inside your cafe or restaurant. Make sure they by the time they come out, they already know all the great deals and delicious meals you offer.

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

56. Send it to the media

Never let that great new deal go unnoticed. Write a press release and send it to the media, local publications, food and beverage as well as local food and lifestyle bloggers.

57. Master the art of upselling

Remind your staff that you are all a part of a sales business. So an extra dessert or appetiser can make a difference. It'll show at the end of the night when you add up all your sales for that day.

Upselling technique from the *Collective Digital Marketing Mastermind*

Observe and identify your top-performing staff and have them mentor the others to improve your sales further.

Another great idea, shared by Nicole Kelly of Restaurant & Catering Association would be to have a staff competition on upselling. You can offer a bottle of wine (that you have received as bonus stock) as an incentive for the staff that sells the most high yield dish.

Pixabay Image

We are competitive by nature so this will keep things fun and drive additional sales.

58. Communicate and engage with your employees

It's important that your employees feel that they are an integral part of your business too.

Make sure you have an open communication with your staff and that you let them know about your plans for the business, how the sales are doing, or how the bottom line is looking at the moment. You can do these short meetings before each shift.

"To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace" – those are the words of Doug Conant, CEO of Campbell's Soup.

10 Ingredients for a Winning Workplace by ORC International.

59. Get those first-time customers to come back

Train your staff to look out for first-time customers and ask these people how they found out about you. Make sure that these first-timers get the perfect service from you crew as it could be your first and only chance to make a good first impression.

Make sure they are greeted with a smile and give them a discount coupon they can use on their next order.

60. Free meal night

Raffle off a free meal for a night by picking a random customer who gets an entire meal for free. For the cost of one meal, you get more people coming in for the chance of winning the next free meal.

Himalayan Char Grill Glebe's Facebook page featuring there Nepalese menu.

61. Live music

Keep your customers entertained on one visit and you'll be sure to see them back again for more. Entertainment like live, acoustic music featuring artists they've never heard before will not only draw people in, it'll also make them want to linger and bring more of their friends in.

62. Contests

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

While contests can easily draw people in, make sure you create one that will also make them want to purchase. Come up with smart and creative games or contest ideas such as "Caption This" or "Name That Meal" contests, Best Photo challenge, or just anything that would encourage people to be creative and witty. The winner may get a free meal but everybody else is going to be paying!

63. Bring-Your-Own night

Have a bring-your-own night if you don't serve alcohol. Simply extend your hours and provide glasses and you're guaranteed to have people coming in your door all night.

64. Offer samples

Some customers tend to be afraid to try something new. Offer them a free sample. You never know, if they love it, they just might purchase a full order!

65. Offer a take-home option

Take-home options can easily increase sales of sit-down restaurants. Come up with a take-home offer for lunch or dinner which could include an entree, side, and dessert and is packaged for travel with proper heating/serving instructions.

Tips for successful takeout

Modern living often leaves little time for cooking at home, especially during the week. Restaurant and delivery takeout services offer a welcome alternative to working people and parents who want to relax at home but are hard pressed to make their own meals. In fact, National Restaurant Association research shows that about one-third of consumers say that purchasing restaurant takeout is an essential part of their lifestyle. In addition, nearly half (46 percent) of adults – and 61 percent of millennials – say an important factor in choosing a tableservice restaurant is the availability of takeout or delivery options.

National Restaurant Association provided these *essential tips for every restaurants on how to start or grow a takeout business*.

BUILDING YOUR OWN A-TEAM

66. Use an app or a system to create flexible schedules

Consider seasonality, holidays, marketing campaigns, and other changes in your business when creating schedules for your employees. Flexible schedules instead of fixed weekly ones help more in keeping you within your budget. Additionally, this helps your employees achieve their work-life balance.

Sassco, a Hospitality POS developer shares:

> Creating a roster for a restaurant is a challenging job. Microsoft Excel can help you with this but you are better off with downloading an app or a software program that can help you manage these rosters.

67. Monitor requests for switching shifts

If it can't be avoided, frequent switching of shifts should be monitored regularly. These requests can lead to employees working a lot of overtime hours, and this can quickly drain your budget.

68. Look for loyal employees

When hiring, look for candidates that have loyal work histories. Loyal employees who will stick can be trained as they will stay longer, making them worth investing time and money on.

"I have yet to find a company that has earned high levels of customer loyalty without first earning high levels of employee loyalty."

Frederick Reichheld
Customer Loyalty Clairvoyant
Ad Age | July 10, 2006

An inspiring message from Frederick Reichheld sourced from *Brand Autopsy*.

69. Go for experienced candidates

Donald Cooper, an international management speaker and business coach

> "Not hiring the right people carries a huge cost in missed opportunity, wasted training costs, inefficiency, destroyed morale, frustration and wasted time. And getting rid of 'bad hires' is costly and disruptive. "

Also consider a candidate's work experience when hiring. Experienced employees will need less training and the time that could have been spent on training an inexperienced new employee can be better spent on focusing on guests and other important concerns.

70. Mix full-time & part-time employees & consider outsourcing

Balance your highly reliable employees and those that are easier to afford by having enough of both part-time and full-time employees. Part-time employees have a tendency to be less committed and less reliable so have them help with tasks that don't require too much expertise and commitment instead.

You might also want to consider outsourcing. According to Murray Wright, who specialises in executive coaching and leadership development:

> "You can basically outsource anything these days, from having the books done to doing simple errands. If you find yourself or people in the business spending time on a lot of non-core tasks – ask the question: Can someone else do this quicker and better and free us up to do what we are best at? If the answer is yes get online and find the help you need."

71. Keep your employees healthy

Employees getting sick all the time will cause frequent sick leaves and cost your business money. Keep your staff healthy by making sure they have a clean and germ-free environment to work around with. Keep your commercial kitchen clean and sanitary at all times with an Alsco clean and hygienic tea towels and linen.

Make sure you staff wears properly cleaned uniforms and that there are hand sanitisers in the washroom and kitchenso that they can keep their hands germ-free before and after handling food.

72. Avoid overstaffing

Always remember that even minimum wages add up quickly even if having a few extra employees may not look like a huge expense. Having too many staff on the floor might may also mean your servers will get less tip and that can easily deflate their morale.

> One way to find the right staffing balance for your business is to keep tabs on wages. Being able to see how much is being spent each day, week and month will help you determine whether you have the right number in your team.
>
> *Chris Tacon of Go Roster* (an online rostering system for hospitality business)

73. Focus on training and development

Any under-performing employee, may they be new or a veteran, will cost you time and money so you have to improve your employee's efficiency with training. The key, after all, to a successful business is to surround yourself will brilliant and talented people.

How to Attract and Keep Talented, Productive Employees

> "Give them the training, resources and encouragement to do their job well and then empower them to do it. When we don't train our staff properly, we're telling them that how *they perform isn't important*. And, if we don't think it's important, why should they?" – Donald Cooper

Ben Carroll of Applejack Hospitality also shares that while recruitment strategies are important, it is working on culture, training, and development that guarantees staff retention, and staff retention means less time and money spent on recruitment.

> On the training side of things we run a group internal cocktail competition, the 6 finalist battle it out at an event held at one of our venues with great prizes up for grabs (Trips to Melbourne, Booze etc). The cocktail bartenders work with the groups bars manager (Lachlan Sturrock) to help create the perfectly balanced drink whilst also having to name it and price it to ensure it has the correct GP. We run these comps *quarterly* and have *invite down industry celebrity* to assist with the judging.
> As you would imaging the *benefits of the competition are fantastic*, so good that we are looking at starting up something similar for the chefs, like a 'mystery box' competition. From the roots up there is training and development strategies in place for every single position within the company.

74. Do regular staff reviews

You will always find something to improve in your team individually or as a whole by doing regular employee evaluation. Set management priorities and predetermined references to evaluate as this will help your team deliver excellent service consistently.

Successful Performance Appraisal System by Cognology

75. Provide task checklists to your staff

Checklists encourage people start good habits. This would help your staff focus on their daily or weekly tasks, follow important restaurant procedures, and remain accountable as well.

76. Have regular staff meetings

It's best to hold regular meetings with your staff to announce important things such as changes in the menu, new policies, and even small victories. Do it everyday, pre-shift. Having regular huddles with your team will help reduce mistakes and power-up everyone's efficiency.

Here's a video with some tips on how to have the perfect restaurant meeting.

77. Create a solid employee handbook or an employee training plan

This handbook or training plan will make it easier for you to evaluate individual employee performance. Steps or processes such as initial guest greeting up to handing them the check should be included in this handbook. Having a solid training plan will also help you get rid of unnecessary steps.

78. Manage unwell employees

You can't force sick employees to work. Aside from risking their health, you will also be risking your business. If a staff is showing signs such as diarrhea, vomiting, or fever, send them home to get rest and make sure not to assign them to tasks that involve being in direct contact with food. Remind your employees that it's a must to inform the management whenever they feel sick.

79. Create an employee recognition program

Celebrating small victories and sharing success stories will help foster camaraderie among your employees and within the entire workforce. It'll bring the team together and make everyone feel a greater sense of job satisfaction.

Get lots of *employee recognition ideas from this Pinterest board* by *Gregory Smith*

Tempchefs' Matt Gimpel has these great tips to add:

80. Set clear expectations

Make it crystal clear what your staff can expect from you, and then what you expect from them in return...Do that and they will deliver what your customers expect from your establishment.

81. Have mutual respect

Respect each team member and they will not only treat you with respect, but treat your customers that way too.

82. Lead by example

Keep in mind that nothing and no one is below you. As their leader, you wouldn't ask them to do something you wouldn't do. The standard you walk past is the standard you set.

83. Catch your staff doing something right

Nothing breeds success like success. Influence more positive behaviour by positive reinforcement of even the smallest examples of great customer service.

84. Have your emotions under control

A great tip from Eric Cacciatore of Restaurant Unstoppable.

> Don't let your emotions, specifically anger, get the best of you. Understand that you have control over your emotions. When you feel your emotions welling, "snip it", like Jerry Posner says in episode 273. Give people the benefit of the doubt until you fully have your emotions under control. Then as Stephen R Covey says, "Seek to understand, then be understood."

Here's an *animated book review of Stephen Covey*'s "Habit 5 – The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Seek first to understand, then be understood"

WAYS TO KEEP CUSTOMERS COMING BACK

85. Greet and treat single customers with care

Make sure single diners don't feel uncomfortable dining alone at your restaurant. Be very welcoming with these types of customers. Avoid asking if they're waiting for someone else and being surprised that they aren't. That can put them off and make them feel awkward being there.

86. Quick service

Nothing irks customers more than slow service at a restaurant. Make sure your staff provides not just personalised service, but also quick service.

> Improving operational efficiency in every part of your business. You cannot be price competitive and profitable without developing world-class operational efficiency ...even in a small business. – *Donald Cooper*

87. Offer FREE wi-fi connection

Restaurants with Free WiFi in *My Parramatta*.

Today, diners are usually never without their smartphones, tablet, or computer. They will really appreciate it if they can use their gadgets while they eat, especially those who are waiting for important work-related emails and notifications.

88. Go the extra mile for single diners

Never dine alone when you're in Tokyo's Moomin House Café. Photo: CNN

It wouldn't cost you too much to try to grant a single diner's wishes. You can add a small side salad to their main dish or perhaps give them hot chocolate instead of a dessert.

After all, these little favors won't cost as much as when you're dealing with demands from a table of four. Plus, that single diner you just went the extra mile for will want to come back and perhaps they'll even bring their friends.

89. Be aware of your business score

Always check sites like TripAdvisor or TheFork as these kinds of sites are where both satisfied and unsatisfied customers leave their feedback about restaurants they've previously dined in.

Being aware of your business score on these sites will help you determine whether your prices match the quality of your offering.

Do check the "Value for money" section as this is where restaurants generally get good scores.

Scoring breakdown

A possible total of: 10 points for food, 5 for service, 3 for ambience and 2 for X factor.

12	Reasonable
13	Solid and satisfactory
14	Good
15	Very good, consistently notable
16	Great: worth seeking out
17	Excellent: one of the best
18	Outstanding
19	Brilliant
20	The best of the best

Good Food's scoring guide

If you have a bad score, that means customers have not been completely satisfied with their dining experience and may even feel like they have been ripped off. This is also a sign that you might need to adjust your prices.

My scoring system is really tailored to what I value in a restaurant. Some may value the food even more, or the service, or some other intangible aspect. Scores are in the end

just numbers, and shouldn't be too heavily-relied upon. In the end, it's really a way to help me categorise and rank the many places I visit. I think any consumer should reasonably expect at a first – good food, followed by service. Any interesting ambiance/décor aspect is tertiary and should not outweigh what matters most. In other words, a fancy fitout won't save a restaurant serving mediocre food or providing subpar service. – *Michael Shen, the restaurant reviewer of ImStillHungry.net*

90. Do a satisfaction survey

Sample surveys from *Snap Surveys*.

It always helps to understand your restaurant's weaknesses. Don't worry, every restaurant faces this issue.

This is where conducting customer satisfaction surveys help. You will learn what your customers focus on most. And if you do understand these concerns, you'll know exactly where to improve.

Guest Satisfaction Surveys featured the Fazoli's Guest Experience Survey.

You can send a satisfaction survey to customers via email tafter they leave the restaurant. Or perhaps send those out through your monthly email campaigns.

91. Ask about your customer's dining experience

Another way you can get feedback from your customers is by asking them directly about their dining experience. You can do this in a natural and non-commercial conversation.

You can also give away cards or flyers with a list of websites they can leave their reviews on your restaurant. Check your customers' reviews on a daily basis on the internet, Facebook, social networking accounts and especially on specialised sites.

92. Analyse your competitors

Get to know your competitors and look at what they do and how they do things. This way, you'll discover exactly how to differentiate yourself from them.

93. Create a unique selling proposition (USP)

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

Shared by Eric Cacciatore of Restaurant Unstoppable, coming up with a unique selling proposition or what Seth Godin calls a "Purple Cow", something that is truly unique and special in your community.

Unique Selling Proposition Examples & Ultimate Writing Guide by Will Swayne

Hint, the best brands create USPs that are intangible; things like core values, missions, visions, and principle. Appeal to the consumer psychographic. Ask, "how will this make the guest feel?" or "How will the guest think they are being perceived by society when they align their personal brand with your restaurant's brand"

94. Stand out

When consumers choose a restaurant over another, it's usually because that restaurant has something the other doesn't. Be that restaurant that consumers are going to choose every time:

- Provide the best possible service
- Offer added value, be innovative
- Perhaps specialise in a type of traditional cooking from a particular country
- Or pick a theme for your restaurant

> A unique offering, a lot of hype build-up (I'm a sucker for following trends), or restaurants whose cuisines are aligned with my preferences (e.g. Japanese) – *Michael Shen* of ImStillHungry.net

Make sure that guests leave the restaurant with a memorable dining experience. This will not only keep them coming back, this will also give you a the competitive edge over your rivals.

Another great tip on standing out from Murray Wright is to come up with a signature item. It can be a dish, drink, décor, service approach, uniforms or a combination all of these things.

> Be famous for one thing that gets people so excited that they talk about it to their friends and recommend you or if they see it being served in the restaurant they want to order it. (If a dish make it a high dollar contribution item!)

CLEANLINESS & HYGIENE IS KEY TO CUSTOMER'S HAPPINESS

95. Steam clean the cooker hood

The cooker hood can be home to grease and bacteria over time so the best way to keep it clean and hygienic is through steam cleaning method, except for the wire mesh underneath that should be cleaned with warm, soapy water.

You can also use the same cleaning method for extractor fans that have a removable mesh.

For those extraction fans that use paper filters that soak up grease and grime, the best thing to do is to clean the mesh and replace the old filter.

Don't forget to soak and scrub all washable items with brushes that are not abrasive to avoid damaging the material.

96. Polish all stainless steel surfaces

You want to avoid damaging those stainless steel exteriors so make sure you are using microfiber cloths when cleaning and polishing them. It is also best to use high quality commercial cleaning products for a better finish.

Here's a handy guide to cleaning stainless steel surfaces from Hospitality Design.

97. Keep carpets, curtains, and linen clean and stain-free

Always check your carpets, curtains, and linen for obvious and unsightly wear and tear.

- Stains can be removed by high pressure cleaning, heat and steam extraction
- Vacuum carpets regularly to keep them free of debris such as dirt and dust that could tangled in the carpet fibres
- Make sure all curtains and window dressings are properly laundered

Alsco offers managed floor mat rental services for your restaurants so you don't get to worry about cleaning dirty mats. Mats are cleaned and maintained regularly.

Alsco *Personalised Mats*

98. Clean the fridge and freezer regularly

When cleaning, make sure to remove everything from fridges and freezers and check every item's expiration dates.

Use multipurpose cleaners and damp cloth to clean and defrost shelves where necessary using a multipurpose cleaner and damp cloth.

Only a damp cloth is needed to wipe down the exterior of these appliances for a perfect finish.

99. Staff Uniforms

Customers notice how your staff present themselves. Make sure they don't only have nice uniforms to wear, but also that these uniforms are always kept looking neat and professional.

Customised chef uniform managed by Alsco

Classic and durable chef aprons from Alsco

100. Get rid of grease in your fryer and grill

Grease that build-up on your fryers and grills can become a fire hazard. Clean the baskets, filters, hangers and tank racks separately and keep the interior surface of your fryer and grill free of signs of oil by wiping it with paper towels and a wet sponge soaked in warm soapy water.

You may also soak your grills in soapy water for 24 hours to remove hardened deposits and blackened carbon.

101. Keep stockroom and storage organised

Regularly check your stockroom shelves to see if items have reached or are nearing their expiration dates, if containers are worn out, or have cracked lids, and broken labelling.

102. Clean your washroom and toilet every hour

Customers remember restaurants with clean washrooms and make sure never to forget those without. You want them to remember yours as one that is up to par with hygiene standards.

Denny's restaurant restroom sign from *Yelp's website*.

Clean your washroom and toilet every hour. Never miss important 'touch points' like handles, switches, and faucets as these are the areas that are most prone to the spread of bacteria.

- Any fixture or fitting that people touch, including on and off buttons of hand dryers, should be thoroughly cleaned with disposable disinfectant wipes to avoid further spreading the germs around.
- Also check fixtures, taps, and toilet seats for damages that may need repairs or replacement.
- Get rid of those loose toilet seats as they are considered as health hazards, fix broken door locks, brush the grout between tiles with a hard-bristled grout brush, and do something about those cracked mirrors and tiles as they can house thousands of germs too.

Urinal and Shower Deep Clean by Fresh & Clean

Get Fresh & Clean's managed washroom service to make your washroom maintenance effortless. No need to constantly worry about refilling soap dispensers, bad odour, and overflowing sanitary bins.

103. Powerwash and prettify your exteriors

A restaurant that looks neat outside gives customers the impression that there must be something good inside. So the outside area of your restaurant should also stay clean as it will provide an all-important first impression.

The Grounds Guys are experts in cleaning and brightening business properties in a snap through *Commercial Power Washing*.

The best way to get rid of dirt from walkways, pathways, and exterior walls is to blast them clean with a power/pressure washer. Don't forget to clean exterior doors and repaint them if they look worn out.

- If you have the space, outdoor and garden furniture that can endure adverse weather conditions make great investments
- Artificial plants, flowers, and hanging baskets will also cost you less
- Add patio benches or welcome planters to attract more people into your restaurant.

104. Wheelie bins need regular cleaning too

Regularly clean your bins, inside and out. You may also want to power wash them to ward off unwelcome pests and keep them looking fresh. Make sure your bins do not collect water as this attracts rats and other animals. It is best to hide your bins from view with a bin store or secure them with fences.

105. Use the correct method to wash hands

Regular hand washing should be a habit in your restaurant. Make it 100% sure that your employees understand the importance of keeping their hands clean and sanitised at all times.

Put up reminder posters in the kitchen on when they need to have clean hands:

- Before, after, and while preparing cooked food
- When handling meat, uncooked eggs, seafood, and poultry
- After they go to the toilet, sneeze, blow their nose, touch garbage
- After assisting someone who is sick

Or maybe reminders on how to properly wash hands, in case they forget. Here are free, print-ready hand washing posters that you can post in your kitchen and in your washrooms.

Download and print poster

More hand washing and hygiene posters here.

106. Follow HACCP principles

Make sure that everyone in your restaurant is aware of the HACCP food safety management system principles and the practices in keeping and preparing food to prevent the growth and spreading of bacteria.

Not only will these practices help ensure that the food you serve is kept sanitary, they will also minimise the risk of spoilage and cross contamination of food while in the storage, or during preparation and cooking.

107. Clean surfaces and utensils

After use, every single utensil used and every surface in the kitchen should be thoroughly cleaned. Use hot, soapy water and disposable paper towels to clean up spills and if you are going to be using cloths on other surfaces, make sure these are washed using a hot cycle on a washing machine.

108. Sanitise smaller kitchen items and utensils

Consider investing on a commercial dishwasher that will help you sanitise utensils and other small kitchen items. When it comes to eliminating bacteria, you will really need high temperatures when cleaning for them to be killed.

109. Cleaning commercial kitchen floors

Grime and bacteria build up mostly on kitchen floors. So make sure all kitchen floors are mopped regularly. If you are going to be mopping the floors everyday or every four hours, you might want to apply a non-slip coating to prevent staff from slipping when moving about.

110. Improve your 'mat game'

Alsco *Anti-fatigue Mats*

As basic of a necessity they may seem, mats play huge and important roles in every restaurants. So get mats that will prevent your staff from slipping, get mats that will prevent dirt from outside get inside the restaurant when customers come in, get a mat that will not cause fatigue or exhaustion for staff who need to stand for long periods of time.

Maybe even get a mat that will promote your restaurant better or one that sends a message!

Alsco *Message Mats*

111. Have a regular cleaning schedule

Make sure you have a regular cleaning schedule. Also encourage each employees to never leave their assigned station in the kitchen dirty. For best results, you might want to consider hiring Alsco's Food and Beverage linen service to deliver clean and hygienic linens for your restaurant every single day. We understand cleaning and will get the job done right.

Clean and hygienic linens from Alsco

ACHIEVING YOUR #GREENGOALS

112. Conserve water

Start a green initiative in your restaurant by avoiding wasting too much water. Simple habit changes such as running the dishwasher only when it is completely full, loosening dried food by soaking them in a sink instead of running hot water on them, installing low flow faucets and toilets. All these can help cut down on water usage as well as soap and energy costs.

A *restaurant case study was conducted by Water Corporation* to test how waterless wok technology can reduce water and improve efficiency.

113. Enough with the plastic

It's about time to stop using plastic materials in restaurants. A lot of restaurants these days are going down that road. Why not? This 'green' move does not only save the environment, it also helps restaurants save on garbage expenses.

Sea Shepherd Sydney has a call for cafe/shops and restaurants.

Peter Giannakis of The Hospitality Coach shares a great way to use silverware instead of plastic:

> "Actually something I used to do with our local Alsco services is collect the silverware that gets into the bags of dirty linens and sorted out at your laundry sites. We would pull out our silverware, then use the rest on festivals where we had a booth so we used reusable silverware rather than plastic.
> I've also sent several people to *Alsco and linen services* when they've wanted to get reusable silverware at their schools. Donating silverware to schools, soup kitchens or the like would be an awesome program for you to start company-wide. Over the years we collected buckets and buckets – many hundreds of pounds of silverware from one single site.
> Before we collected it, the silverware was kept a while, then thrown out because none of the restaurants came to sort through and collect theirs."

114. Switch to glass

Instead of using disposable plates, cups, and utensils, why don't you consider a one-time investment for glass, plates and utensils?

115. Get your staff involved in your green initiative

For your restaurant to succeed in your green initiative, everyone should be in on it. Educate your staff about the importance of sorting out recyclable items. Tell them to turn off lights when they're not needed. Encourage them to bring in their own take-home containers instead of using the restaurant take-outs.

Get inspiration on how your restaurants can 'go green' from *Concrete Playground's list of sustainable restaurants and bars*.

TEN SUSTAINABLE RESTAURANTS AND BARS KICKING ECO-FRIENDLY GOALS FOR SYDNEY

CP *in partnership with* Museum of Contemporary Art Australia C3west

Awesome local businesses making Sydney greener (and not just talking about it, actually doing it).

Words like 'sustainable' and 'eco-friendly' are bandied about left, right and centre these days, but few restaurants really take them on as unswervable principles. After all, going green isn't easy — it means all kinds of adjustments, from making friends with organic farmers to working out what to do with food waste, to installing solar panels and revamping your larder (so it's stocked full of nasty-free ingredients).

116. Start using energy efficient lighting

Save energy using efficient lighting by *sa.gov.au*

Make the big switch to energy efficient light bulbs in your restaurant. You will not only save up to $22 per bulb per year, but this wise move can also add up to quite a savings over time by chipping away at your electricity bills.

A Tweet by *Energy Action AUS*

117. Don't need lights yet? Keep them off

Make it a habit to keep lights off when they're not needed. You might also want to try intelligent lighting that will automatically turn lights off when an area is bright enough and doesn't need to be lit yet.

118. Turn down the thermostat

During the colder months, turning your thermostat down by a degree or two can make a lot of difference in your energy costs. If you can still be comfortable turning it down from 72 to 70 degrees, then this shouldn't be a problem.

Ways to save energy by Switch On.

You can also control the heating with a thermostat timer that will warm the place up just in time for opening, and cool down on closing time.

119. Wood-burning stove, maybe?

You'll be spending a sizeable amount of your energy bill on heating during the colder season and going for a wood-burning stove just might work wonders for your business. Aside from being cost-efficient, they will give your restaurant a cosy look and feel that customers will love.

Wood-burning stove oven. *Pinterest collection* of Darren Bradley.

120. Drinks just need to be cool, not frozen

Your restaurant kitchen will be needing refrigerators to keep food and beverage cool. Use your fridge efficiently by only keeping the drinks cool as they don't really need to be frozen.

121. Go for a fridge update

Newer models of refrigerators use less energy than the old ones so a fridge update would make a smart decision that will save you more money. Also, knowing how to maintain your commercial

refrigerators will keep them running efficiently now and for years to come and will save you money in unnecessary repair costs and downtime.

How much does it cost to run a fridge?

Fridge Size	Typical annual energy consumption (kWh)	Running cost per year
100-199 litres	358	$118.14
200-299 litres	410	$135.30
300-399 litres	490	$161.70
400-499 litres	495	$163.35
500-599 litres	738	$243.54
600-699 litres	1356	$447.48

Information source from *sa.gov.au* and *Canstar Blue*

122. Invest in an efficient HVAC system

It would be smarter to invest in an efficient HVAC system that will consume less energy to heat or cool down a room. Saves a lot on your operational budget and you wouldn't have to tell customers that you can't go any cooler because you're trying to conserve energy.

Here's a video from *Coolairaustralia.com* with *different energy saving HVAC solutions* that you can consider for your restaurants.

123. Go for 'energy efficient' everything

Energy efficient appliances may cost more but they definitely consume less. In just a year or two, you'll be able to pay for the appliance itself from all the savings you'll get from the less energy you consume.

Paul Kuck of sustainablefoodservice.com shares that:

> It's great to *purchase Energy Star rated equipment* that will reduce the long term cost of your restaurant. Items like refrigeration, ice machines and ovens can be found for the same up-front cost as standard efficiency units.

124. Conduct an energy audit

Do regular checks on everything that uses electricity, including those that use gas or other fuel. An energy audit will help you see clearly where you are spending the most money and where you are overspending, allowing you to make adjustments and lower your overall expenses.

WATCHING YOUR WASTE

125. Be creative with the scraps

Educate your employees on the importance of not wasting food by using every piece of a product.

126. Manage Kitchen Waste and Spoilage

Too much waste in the kitchen often leads to rising food costs. So it's important to always remind your employees of the common practices that prevent food waste.

- Store and handle food properly
- Accurately measure portion sizes
- Avoid preparing large quantities of food in advance
- Avoid purchasing too much inventory.

What can we do about food waste? Fresh facts for restaurant, catering and hospitality staff.

Train and monitor your kitchen staff. Pay attention to what is usually in the kitchen's trash cans so you know what's being wasted. This will help you keep your food costs under control.

Now that you have all these great tips and ideas to choose from, coming up with a strong business plan for your restaurant shouldn't feel like a total burden anymore!

We bet you have even already thought of more great tips and ideas yourself as you were going through this list, right? The key is be one with your business – to know exactly what it is, inside and out, so you also know exactly what your customers would love and remember about your restaurant.

Come to think of it, there really are countless of great and unique restaurant business ideas out there just waiting to be discovered! This article was just meant to open the door for you and give you a little push! Again, with creativity, resourcefulness, and being wise with every decision you make, you are bound to create the best plan for your restaurant business.

BONUS TIPS

1. Daily reports

Tracking important information on a daily report will help you and your manager to operate each shift more efficiently. Reports make it easy for managers to manage the labor cost and inventory while meeting the sales goal for the day.

Daily sales report, menu item sales report, and hourly staff labor report are the most important items that need to be tracked on a regular basis.

2. Know who your target audience is

Be very clear on what type of target audience you want to attract. It would hurt your business to attract a high number of customers only to fall short in satisfying all of their needs.

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

The best way to define who your restaurant's target audience is is to answer the following questions:

- What are their consumer criteria?
- What's their profession?
- What are their interests?
- What type of menu are you serving?
- What is the atmosphere of your restaurant like?
- Where is your restaurant located?
- What is the price range of the items in your menu?

Make sure that your restaurant's style, concept, location, and price range will match with that of your target customer as these are big factors in determining who will be coming at your door.

3. Keep your menu description short and simple

Food descriptions in your menu should be enticing enough to make a guest want to order it but it's also important to keep it short and simple. No one really has the time to read a paragraph-long menu item description.

Flickr Image by Dana Lipar

4. Avoid price increases on your menu

This should not be an option at all, or if you really have to do it, make it your last resort. As much as possible, keep your affordable food prices as is. Guests tend to feel uncomfortable when they see that the old prices have increased.

Think of other ways you can avoid increasing prices. Perhaps work on your menu by reconstructing a dish using ingredients that are less expensive instead.

Control portions, order wisely, manage your staff and vendors. All these can contribute to food cost so make sure everything has perfect balance.

5. Take your employee recognition program online

Did you know that you can improve the visibility of your business's company values by sharing employee achievements online? This does not only encourage your staff to appreciate and inspire each other, it also amplifies engagement with your customers.

Take advantage of the fact that this generation spends a LOT of time on social media. You can reward your employees' achievements with something gift cards and have them post about it on social media.

Engagements like these will get employees excited about getting rewards and motivated to do well at their work too.

6. Cross-train your staff in related job functions

For better functionality, your staff should know how to perform each other's job duties. Your prep cook can be trained to saute or handle the grill. The busboys should also know how to run food to

tables when the servers are busy. This way, you can be sure that your staff are equipped to assist in other duties should the need arise.

7. Set aside strategic tables for single diners

Just because they're alone doesn't mean they're not as important as a group of guests who will order more food. Single diners can be placed in small tables or at the bar if they're okay with it.
Avoid placing them in large tables, near the bathroom, or facing a wall. Instead, have them seated near to windows or on those little private corners in your restaurant/cafe. Just let them choose from the different areas available.

8. Create a customer database

Having a customer database will help when providing guests with personalised attention or special treatmentevery time they dine, increasing turnover and loyalty.

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

Know a guest by their first name, get them a spot they would like, and remember the usual meals they order and ask if they would like to have those again. When a customer sees that you know and remember them, they feel comfortable and 'at home' and will prefer to dine at your restaurant.

Make sure that all waiters are polite, fast, and shows how much they enjoy their work. Adding this kind of personalised attention into the mix will guarantee that customers will keep coming back.
You might also want to do this:

Contributed tip from *Howard Tinker* of *restaurantprofits.com.au*

9. Do regular furniture inspections

To prolong furniture life and keep you from having to replace them with new ones, always watch out for signs of wear and tear in your restaurant's furniture by doing regular inspections.

Make sure all bolts and screws are secure and that chairs' legs are still stable and sturdy. Check for dents, chips, and torn fabric. For minor scratches, you can touch up and smooth them over with paint or varnish.

10. Use the right cleaning solutions

Cleaning commercial kitchen is going to be different from cleaning your small kitchen at home. There are high hygiene standards you need to follow so make sure that you are using the right cleaning solutions – chemicals that are specifically designed to keep your workplace sanitary.

Featured image background from *Flickr* by *Jeremy Oakley*

THANK YOU

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Special Thanks to Our Contributors

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