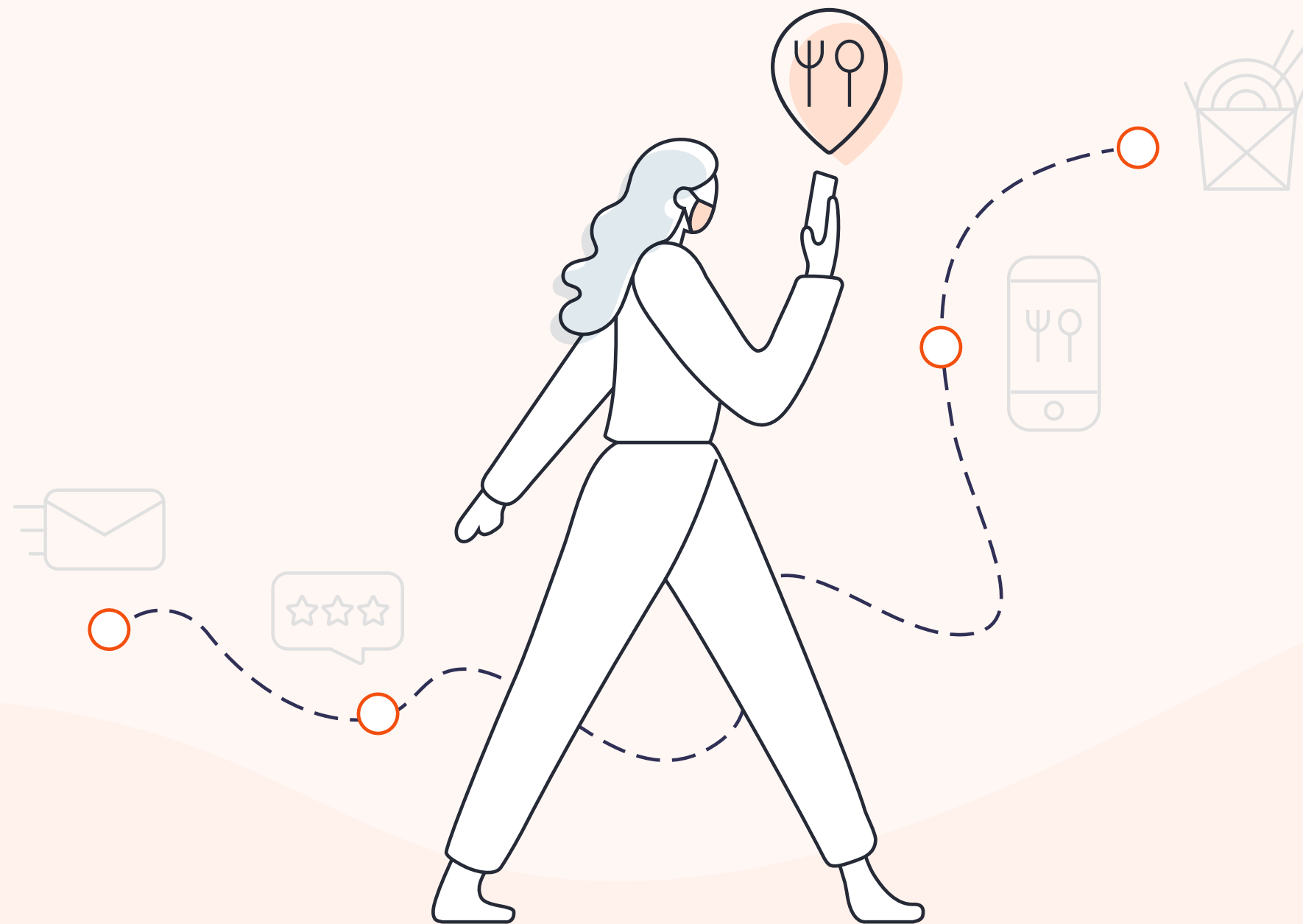




Your Guide to the Restaurant Guest During COVID-19



700+ restaurant guests share how their expectations have changed and what a great restaurant experience looks like today.

Introduction

As I sit down to write this, I reflect on the first meal I've enjoyed out in months.

On a patio, with masked servers, and with an even stronger appreciation for great hospitality. Pre-COVID-19, it wouldn't be that unusual for me to have two or three interactions with restaurants in a single day. But as states step into reopening, and others close back down, the daily rhythms of our interactions with restaurants have changed — and dramatically reduced.

At the height of the initial response to COVID-19, restaurants around the U.S. saw their [daily sales decline by 80%](#), compared to last year. Generally, those sales are starting to trend upwards again, but things remain, and will remain, different. Restaurateurs are now faced with figuring out how to overhaul how they operate their businesses in this new world.

We set out at the beginning of the year to understand guest behaviors and trends to inform our restaurant community and the products we could build to support them. Just as we were about to hit publish on the results, the whole world changed, and restaurants were forced to shut their doors. So we ran our guest survey a second time and have a trove of “before” and “after” data to share with you.

Some guests are eager to get back to their favorite spots; others are wary and will stick to takeout

and delivery for now. Everyone is navigating the new normal with a new perspective: changed expectations of restaurants, how they choose whether and where to eat out, and what great hospitality looks like to them.

A few months ago, my own decisions, like those of the guests we surveyed, were based primarily on value and food quality. Now, though, safety is top of mind, with the majority of guests sharing that certain safety measures like PPE and staff interactions would determine whether or not they'd return to a restaurant at all. Guests also have new expectations for the role technology should play in creating safe dining experiences.

Wherever your restaurant is on the curve — still sticking with takeout and delivery, open for outdoor dining only, or navigating new regulations for indoor dining,— meeting guest expectations is as important now as it's ever been. We hope this report helps you make the best decisions you can about operating your restaurant, using technology, and ultimately creating memorable dining experiences. As always, we're here to help.



Kelly Esten
Toast, Inc.
VP OF PRODUCT MARKETING

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STAGE 1

Awareness

Earning Guests' Attention

Restaurant marketing is all about connecting with your customers wherever they are and fostering strong relationships.

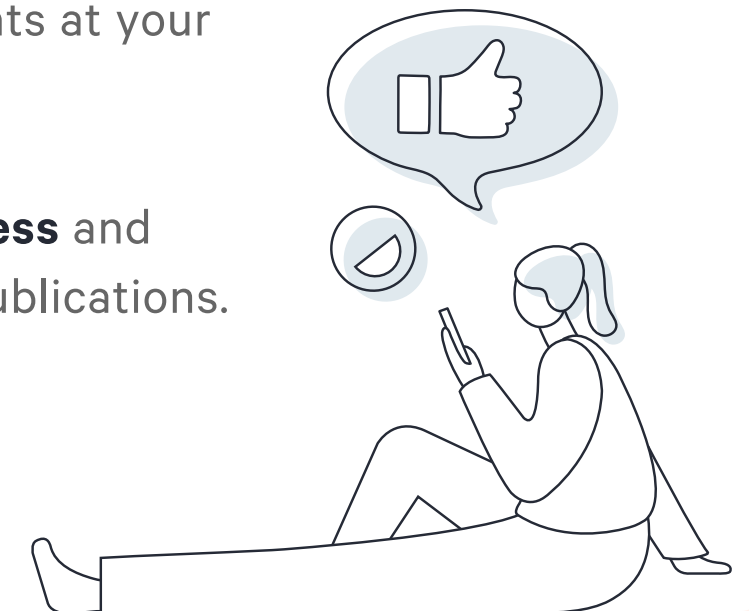
The act of attracting guests comes first, and it typically brings up some questions: What makes my restaurant unique? Where can I find my target customers? How can I showcase the best of my restaurant in a way that grabs guests' attention?

Attracting guests is all about using the channels you own to get noticed at the right time. Our research shows guests are discovering restaurants in the same ways both before COVID-19 and now. So while you can use the same channels to reach your guests now, you must also consider how to communicate with guests about how COVID-19 has affected your restaurant — all while frequently relaying new safety procedures and expectations for both staff and guests. And given the growing focus on off-premise dining, it's also become more important to promote delivery, takeout, and online ordering in your marketing.

TIPS FROM TOAST

6 Ways to Attract Guests to Your Restaurant

- 1 Make your **website** easy to find and keep it updated.
- 2 Stay active on the **social media channels** where your target customers spend their time.
- 3 Manage your **online business listings** and respond to both positive and negative reviews.
- 4 Try running **paid ads** to targeted audiences on social media.
- 5 Participate in community **events** and promote events at your establishment.
- 6 Seek out **local press** and interviews with publications.



49% **Recommendations From Friends and Family**
With guests placing such high importance on recommendations, you have to create the types of experiences that encourage your best guests to share them. Some of the best restaurants incentivize their guests to share their positive experiences on social media or online review sites through contests and gift cards. And especially now, guests are sharing their perspectives on safety and convenience with friends and family.

35% **Online Reviews**
While you can't stop guests from leaving negative reviews, what you can do is claim your business profile on sites like Yelp and TripAdvisor to maintain your brand image. Responding to both positive and negative reviews will lend you further credibility, and look out for any feedback that might help you avoid negative reviews in the future.

35% **Restaurant Website**
Build a well-designed website that showcases your restaurant brand — without breaking the bank — by using low-cost website builders like Squarespace or BentoBox. Showcase your menu and clearly point site visitors to important information they need, all while integrating it with technology like online ordering and reservation software.

27% **Facebook**
Guests continue to use Facebook to discover new restaurants, whether through their own research, recommendations from friends, or through Facebook ads. This means it's worth updating your Facebook business page, including important information, and remaining active by regularly sharing content, photos, and updates.

? How Are Guests Discovering Restaurants?

Recommendations From Friends and Family

49%

Online Reviews

35%

Restaurant Website

35%

Facebook

27%

Restaurant Social Media

25%

Apps Like DoorDash or GrubHub

24%

Online Articles

19%

Instagram

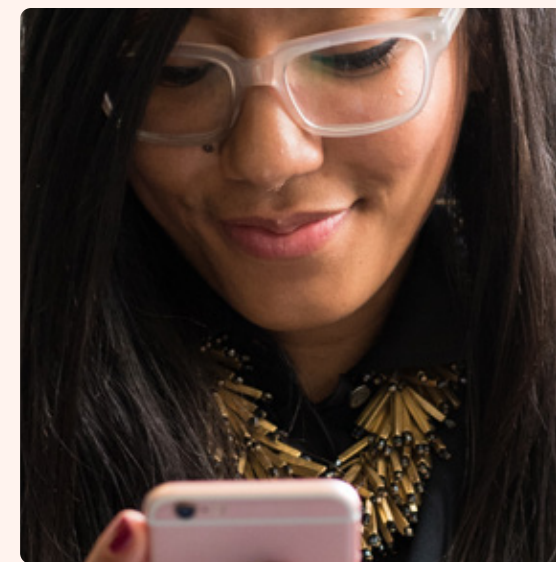
18%

YouTube

15%

Newspapers

15%



PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

? How Are Guests Communicating with Restaurants?

Restaurant Website

48 %

Calling the Restaurant Directly

36%

Google Listing

30%

Restaurant Facebook Page

29%

Restaurant Instagram Profile

18%

Yelp

17%

PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

During a global pandemic, a big part of attracting guests to your restaurant is communicating updates and information to assure them it's safe to dine with you.

More than any other channel, guests check restaurants' websites for COVID-19-related updates. Calling the restaurant directly (36%) and checking Google listings (30%) come in at second and third respectively.

The takeaway: Make sure you and your team are ready to answer guests' questions around COVID-19 when they call. But also regularly update your guest-facing channels like your website, your Google My Business listing, social media profiles, and Yelp account with new information.





★ ★ Mei Mei offers virtual dumpling making classes

 **TOAST CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT**

Mei Mei Attracts New Guests By Building Relationships With Existing Ones

Many restaurants today are doing some form of marketing, but when every restaurant on the block has a social media presence or is sending out an email newsletter, how can you make your marketing activities matter?

Alyssa Lee is the Business Development and Marketing Manager at Mei Mei in Boston, MA. Since COVID-19 started, the Mei Mei team has simplified and adapted their [menu](#), offered a prepared foods menu, sold staple grocery items, and expanded their business to offer

[online cooking classes](#) like dumpling- and noodle-making. “We are communicating A LOT with our guests right now, with the goal of getting their feedback on anything different or new we are doing,” said Alyssa.

The Mei Mei team is focused on collecting guest feedback and managing online reviews, which, as we learned earlier, is an important part of guests’ discovery process. “Over the past three years we’ve done a number of campaigns to improve our online reviews

and increase our Yelp score,” Alyssa told us. And now, “Every time we launch something new, we get guest feedback. Over the past two months, we’ve Zoom-interviewed or surveyed at least 50 guests to get their feedback. We offer guests a promo code for their time, which has turned into further repeat purchases. This outreach has built stronger ties with our most loyal guests and also brought back guests who hadn’t purchased from us since COVID-19.”

No matter the project they’re working on, the Mei Mei team’s business philosophy is to promote “guest advocacy,” which means helping guests have the best experience possible, even when they’re not dining in. This could mean

accommodating dietary restrictions, altering a dish, or using their “surprise and delight” budget where staff can send a guest something extra on the house. “We have a tiny marketing budget, so our guest advocacy philosophy, coupled with our repeat purchase and retention efforts, is our strategy to attract new guests. We want our current guests to have great experiences with us and then become advocates for our business and spread the word to others.”



Alyssa Lee
Mei Mei
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING MANAGER

Resources To Help You Attract More Guests

Restaurant Marketing Plan

Create a marketing plan that's as unique as your concept — and entice and attract the customers you want — with the help of this marketing plan template and interactive calendar.

Try the template

Category	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
Social Media									
Budget	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Notes	Normal Ad Spend	Normal Ad Spend	Quarterly Test - Facebook	Normal Ad Spend	Normal Ad Spend	Quarterly Test - Facebook	Normal Ad Spend	Normal Ad Spend	Quarterly Test - Facebook
Search Engine Ads									
Budget					\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Notes					Summer Adwords Test	Continue if Successful	Continue if Successful	Continue if Successful	Continue if Successful
Email Marketing									
Budget	\$200.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Notes	Super Bowl Email and Newsletter	Newsletter	Newsletter	Reengagement Email and Newsletter	Summer Menu and Newsletter	Newsletter	Newsletter	Newsletter	Newsletter
Sponsorship & Events									
Budget			\$100.00			\$100.00			
Notes			Local OK			Conductors Workshop			
Direct Mail									
Budget		\$100.00		\$200.00					\$100.00
Notes		University Menu Drop Off		Local School Menu Mailer					University Menu Drop Off
Video									
Budget					\$100.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		
Notes					Video Shoot	Filming	YouTube Pre-Roll Test		
Other									
Budget			\$100.00		\$200.00				\$100.00
Notes			Other		Other				Other

MORE RESOURCES

- [Templates for Responding to Online Reviews](#) →
- [How to Write Your Restaurant Marketing Budget](#) →
- [10 Restaurant Promotion Ideas](#) →
- [How to Run a Targeted Marketing Campaign in Your Restaurant](#) →
- [10 Examples of Awesome Restaurant Social Media Marketing](#) →



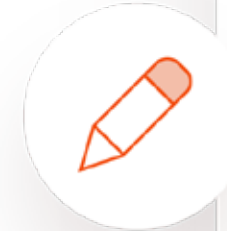


Toast Marketing

Toast Marketing is a fully integrated email marketing solution designed specifically for restaurants. Through smart segmentation and automated drip campaigns, it takes the headache out of email marketing.

[Learn more](#)

- ✓ Email marketing built directly in your POS to save you time & effort.
- ✓ With a few clicks, you can quickly set up automated email campaigns.
- ✓ Automatically send messages to your guests based on visit and purchase history.
- ✓ Robust reporting allows you to understand the impact of your marketing campaigns.



We miss you!

[See what's new!](#)



STAGE 2

Decision

Influencing Guests' Decision-Making

Before COVID-19, guests had a lot to consider when choosing a restaurant: “What kind of food do I want to eat? How hungry am I, and how long am I willing to wait? Do I want to eat from the comfort of my couch, or should I go out with some friends?”

Now, the decision is even more complex. But despite how much has changed from the impact of COVID-19, quality of food, taste, and flavor preferences are still the most important factors for guests when deciding where to dine. The only difference is that cleanliness and safety are now more top of mind when guests are deciding which restaurant to eat at or order from.

If you want to be the restaurant of choice, you need to communicate how you meet your guests' expectations. The restaurateurs who master the decision stage know that guests can be fickle, but they keep up with these fluctuations by preparing to meet guests where they are.

TIPS FROM TOAST

3 Ways to Tap Into Guests' Decision-Making Process

- 1 **Be willing to adapt** and customize your menu for guests' taste, flavor, and dietary preferences.
- 2 Stay on top of your [food costs](#) and menu pricing so that you can create dishes with high-quality ingredients **without raising menu prices too much.**
- 3 Give guests the ability to order how they want — whether through **delivery, pickup, or by dining in** — by building these capabilities into your operations or partnering with outside vendors.



How do these strategies and tactics impact guests' decision-making?

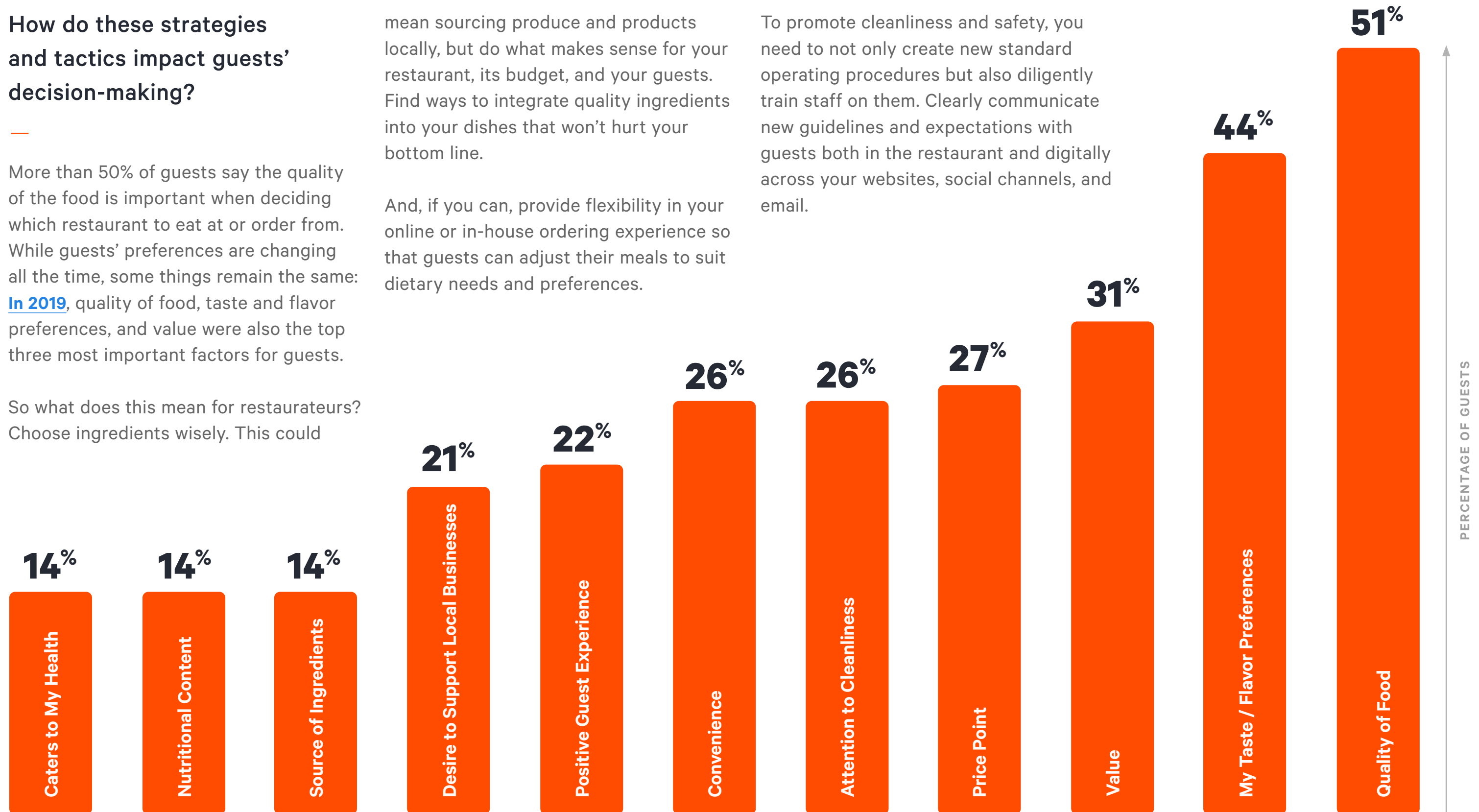
More than 50% of guests say the quality of the food is important when deciding which restaurant to eat at or order from. While guests' preferences are changing all the time, some things remain the same: [In 2019](#), quality of food, taste and flavor preferences, and value were also the top three most important factors for guests.

So what does this mean for restaurateurs? Choose ingredients wisely. This could

mean sourcing produce and products locally, but do what makes sense for your restaurant, its budget, and your guests. Find ways to integrate quality ingredients into your dishes that won't hurt your bottom line.

And, if you can, provide flexibility in your online or in-house ordering experience so that guests can adjust their meals to suit dietary needs and preferences.

To promote cleanliness and safety, you need to not only create new standard operating procedures but also diligently train staff on them. Clearly communicate new guidelines and expectations with guests both in the restaurant and digitally across your websites, social channels, and email.



? What Influences Guest Decision Making?

Resources to Help You Influence Guests' Decisions

Menu Engineering Course

This online course contains everything you need to know to make the most of your menu, from menu psychology and design to identifying your menu's stars, puzzles, plowhorses, and dogs.

Start the Course



MORE RESOURCES

- [How to Calculate Food Cost Percentage →](#)
- [How to Accommodate Guests With Food Allergies →](#)
- [How to Make Your Menu a Money-Maker →](#)
- [How to Clean a Restaurant →](#)



STAGE 3

Dining: Off-Premise

Delivering Delight & Mastering Takeout

Before COVID-19 hit, little did we know how important delivery and takeout would become to businesses' survival following government-mandated shutdowns.

Some restaurants had only experimented with online ordering and off-premise in the past; others were old pros forced to overhaul their strategies and operations. Wherever your restaurant stands, we can all agree that digital and off-premise are here to stay.

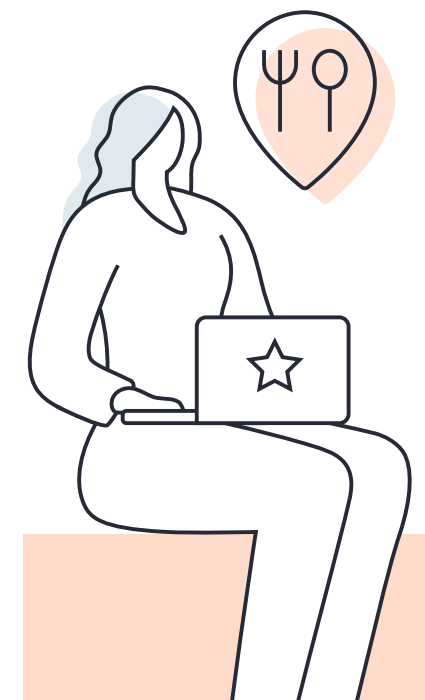
The majority of guests we surveyed reported that there would be no change to their dining preferences after restaurants reopen and resume on-premise dining. But a portion of respondents shared that they would be ordering takeout and delivery more than they were prior to COVID-19.

15% of guests reported that they would be ordering takeout more, while **12% of guests reported that they would be ordering takeout significantly more.** 13% of guests reported that they would be ordering delivery more, while **10% of guests reported that they would be ordering delivery significantly more.**

TIPS FROM TOAST

5 Ways to Build a Robust Off-Premise Dining Experience

- 1 Invest in an **online ordering system** to maintain greater control over the online ordering dining experience and avoid the fees charged by third-party companies.
- 2 Create an **off-premise-specific menu**, prioritizing popular, profitable menu items that'll travel well.
- 3 Provide a **new guest experience** for off-premise orders by incorporating elements of your restaurant's ambiance and personality in every order.
- 4 Train your staff to handle off-premise orders with an **off-premise training manual** that standardizes operating procedures.
- 5 Maximize the discoverability of your restaurant's website and **create a digital presence** to build relationships with customers and market your brand online.



The majority of guests are regularly placing online orders with restaurants.

29% of guests reported that they place an online order a few times a month. 25% of guests reported that they place an online order a few times a week. And 22% of guests reported that they place an online order once a week.

Only 14% of guests reported that they didn't place an online order in the past month. This subset of guests might be ordering takeout or delivery over the phone, but they're not the only ones.

52% of guests also reported that they've ordered **takeout** over the phone in the past month. And 39% of guests reported that they've ordered **delivery** over the phone in the past month. These phone orders are in addition to or in replacement of online orders.

Phone ordering is still an important part of off-premise dining, so take the time to train your team on how to efficiently take these orders and keep the process organized. But phone ordering's continued popularity also underscores an opportunity to direct guests to order online. By directing guests to order online, you'll streamline the ordering process for all, increasing order volume and reducing labor costs.

? How Frequently Are Guests Ordering Online?

A Few Times in the Past Month

29 %

Multiple Times a Week

25%

Once a Week

22%

I Did Not Place an Order

14%

Once a Day

6%

Multiple Times a Day

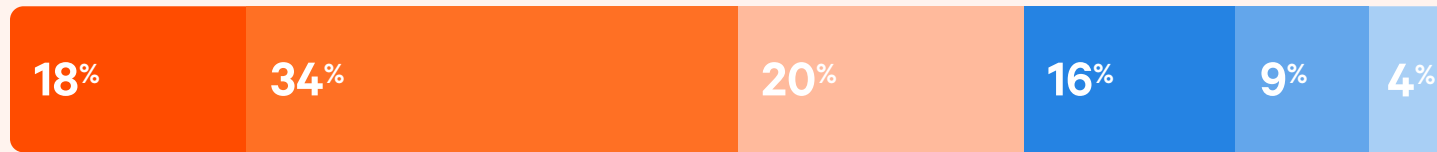
4%



PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

? How Are Guests Ordering Takeout and Delivery?

On-Site Meal Pickup Through A Restaurant's App or Website



On-Site Meal Pickup Through A Food Ordering App



Delivery Through A Delivery App



Delivery Through A Restaurant's App or Website



PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

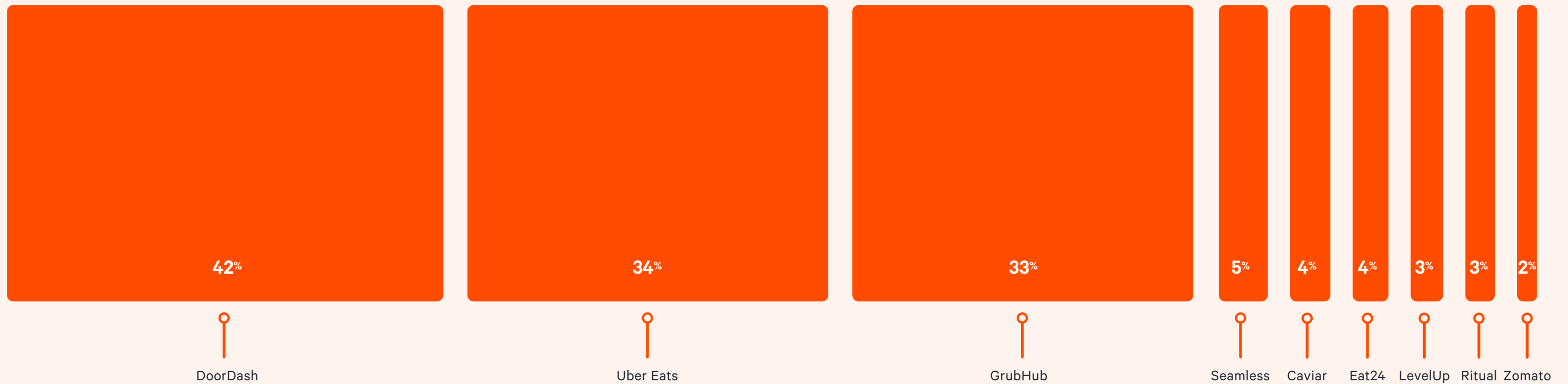
- Never
- Once a week
- Once a day
- A few times a month
- Multiple times a week
- Multiple times a day

Many guests reported **ordering takeout more frequently than delivery**, using different methods.

7% of guests reported ordering takeout through a third-party app multiple times a day. 9% of guests reported ordering takeout through a restaurant's app or website once a day. 16% of guests reported ordering takeout through a restaurant's app or website multiple times a week. And 20% of guests reported ordering takeout through a restaurant's app or website once a week.

Guests' current preference for takeout over delivery could point to potential concerns around the safety of food delivery. While food delivery is still a popular off-premise channel, there are more variables involved, like delivery driver contact, that might make guests uneasy. And, at least for now, they might prefer the level of control over cleanliness and safety they get when picking food orders up themselves.

? Which Third-Party Apps Are Guests Using?



As we saw in the previous chart, the majority of guests place online takeout and delivery orders directly through restaurants' websites or apps. But it's tough to ignore the growing presence of third-party apps and platforms.

Guests are using DoorDash more than any other third-party online ordering system. 42% of guests reported using DoorDash in the past month. Uber Eats comes in at second, with 34% of guests reporting using Uber Eats in the past month. Grubhub comes in at third, with 33% of guests reporting using Grubhub in the past month.

It's important to note that third-party app and site popularity depends on your region and your guests' preferences. So research where your neighborhood restaurants are most active and ask your guests which apps and sites they use most to order online takeout or delivery. That way, you can remain focused on what your guests actually use and avoid paying various fees to all of the different online ordering systems.

ONLINE ORDERING:

Delivery

Delivering Delight During and After COVID-19

When it comes to ordering delivery, **guests care about many of the same things both pre-COVID-19 and now.** The main difference is that cleanliness and safety must now be an important part of the delivery experience.

In the research we conducted on restaurant guests in both January and June of 2020, guests reported that **quality of food** and **ease of ordering** were most important to the delivery experience.

Guests also reported that **value** and **speed** were top of mind in both January and June. One key difference is that, in June, attention to cleanliness and safety made it to the top three spot, becoming more important to guests than value and speed.

Maintaining food quality through delivery can be tricky, so focus your off-premise menu on food that travels well. It can also be tough to control food quality when working with third-party

delivery services, so consider whether or not you're able to create your own in-house food delivery service.

As it relates to health and safety as part of the delivery experience, you should regularly communicate your restaurant's safety and cleaning procedures – on your website, across your social media accounts, and in apps – to make guests feel at ease, even when they're not physically present.

Give guests the option to order contactless delivery, and, if you have your own internal delivery service, make sure your drivers wear personal protective equipment.

? What Do Guests Care About When Ordering Delivery in 2020?

Quality of Food When Delivered

65%

Ease of Ordering

50%

Attention to Cleanliness and Safety

48%

Value

48%

Speed

45%

Tracking Driver Progress

26%

Ability To Gain Loyalty Points

19%

PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

ONLINE ORDERING:

Takeout

Mastering the Takeout Process During and After COVID-19

Guests believe many of the same attributes are important when it comes to ordering pickup both pre-COVID-19 and now. Similar to delivery, the difference is that safety and cleanliness are now more top of mind.

In the research we conducted on restaurant guests in both January and June of 2020, guests reported that quality of food was most important to the takeout experience.

Guests also reported that **ease of ordering** and **speed** were top of mind in both January and June. One key difference is that, in June, attention to cleanliness and safety made it to the top two spot, becoming more important to guests than ease of ordering and speed.

Same as delivery, you should regularly communicate your restaurant's safety and cleaning procedures – on your

website, across your social media accounts, and in apps – to make guests feel at ease, even when they're not physically present.

Another interesting finding is that guests marked ease of pickup as more important to the takeout experience than it was in January, 2020. When picking up takeout in the time of COVID-19, guests want the experience to be quick and seamless, as to limit their interactions and thus potential exposure. You could consider implementing a pick-up station inside your restaurant and curbside pickup to keep things seamless and low-contact for guests.

? What Do Guests Care About When Ordering Takeout in 2020?

Quality of Food When Picked Up

57%

Attention to Cleanliness and Safety

40%

Ease of Ordering

39%

Speed

35%

Ease of Pick Up Once Arriving at the Restaurant

33%

Proximity of Restaurant

30%

Ability to Customize Food Order

30%

Sustainable Food Packaging

21%

Ability to Gain Loyalty Points

14%



PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS



★ ★ ★
Barcito's new takeout-friendly concept includes menu favorites like mix-and-match empanadas



TOAST CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Barcito Pivots to Off-Premise to Meet the Changing Needs of Guests

Takeout and delivery weren't always part of the strategy at Barcito, a restaurant serving Argentinian fare, coffee, and cocktails in Los Angeles. "We're primarily a bar," shared Owner and GM Andrea Borgen Abdallah. "And the experience really revolves around our regulars, the relationships we've developed with them, and the community we've built within the four walls of our restaurant."

But that all changed when COVID-19 hit. Like most restaurants, Andrea and

the Barcito team had no choice but to find ways to provide the same great experience through off-premise dining. And the flip wasn't without its set of challenges.

"If you aren't known as a takeout restaurant, it's hard to really change that guest perception. So we've really pivoted our entire concept, menu, and prices to meet the demand, and become an incredibly value-driven, takeout-friendly deli, bottle shop, and bodega. Not only because it's what we anticipate will carry

us through this crisis, but because we believe it's what our guests will want forever."

Part of this re-concepting – as Andrea calls it – has involved rethinking physical aspects like their menu, packaging, and labels to make sure everything they're doing is a reflection of their new brand. They've also thought through how they can continue to drive repeat business when they can't engage with guests in-person. Andrea and team have started to do this by leaving handwritten notes in takeout bags for regulars and upping the ante on digital communication overall. She wants to make sure guests feel like

they're in the loop, connected, engaged, and remembered.

"Ultimately, I think we all need to ask ourselves what our goals are and what we want to achieve – not just right now, but in the future – and then build out a strategy that can get us there," says Andrea.



Andrea Borgen Abdallah
Barcito
OWNER AND GM

Resources to Help You Create a Great Off-Premise Dining Experience

How to Run an Off-Premise Restaurant

In this guide to off-premise strategy and online food ordering, we're breaking down everything you need to know about off-premise dining in the restaurant industry, today and tomorrow.

Get the Guide



MORE RESOURCES

- [Trapper's Sushi Saves \\$25k in 3rd-Party Commissions With Toast Digital Ordering](#) →
- [Should I Use a Third-Party Delivery Service or Create My Own?](#) →
- [Create an Online Ordering Menu With Food That Travels Well](#) →
- [How to Increase Your Online Ordering Sales](#) →
- [How Loco Taqueria and Fat Baby Have Made Changes on the Fly](#) →



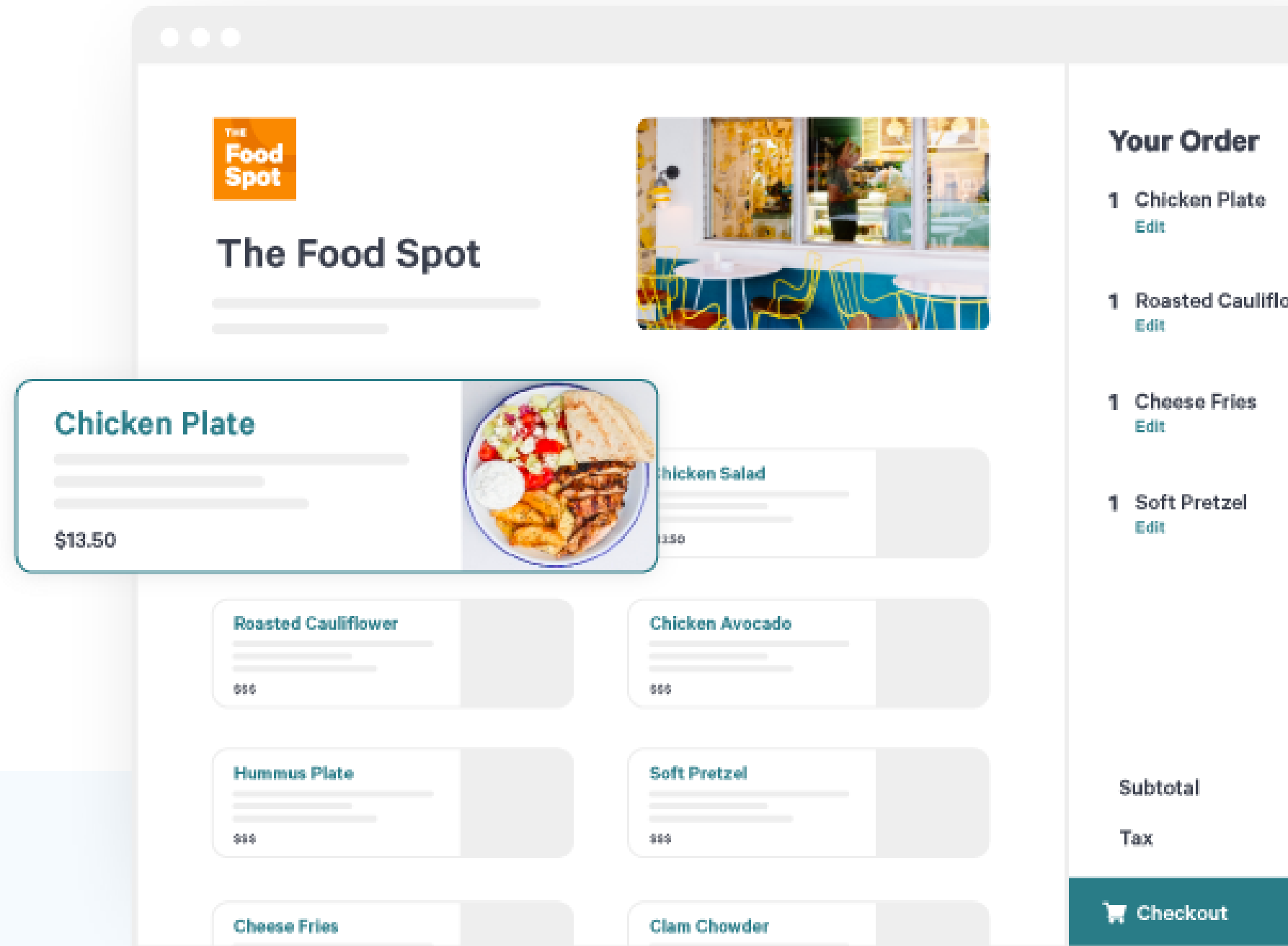


Toast Digital Ordering

Allow guests to easily order directly from your restaurant for pickup or contactless delivery to keep revenue flowing during these uncertain times, commission-free.

Get started

- ✓ Meet your guests wherever they are.
- ✓ Take control of your operations without creating chaos for your staff.
- ✓ Delight your guests with a seamless experience that will keep them coming back.
- ✓ Eliminate third-party delivery fees and take control of the guest experience.



STAGE 3

Dining: On-Premise

Creating Safe Spaces to Delight Guests

It might seem like a lifetime ago, but just earlier this year, on-premise dining was the dominant force in the restaurant industry. That all changed after COVID-19 struck and forced restaurants to (temporarily) shutter their doors and use takeout and delivery channels to provide the same great experiences.

Now, with some states entering varying stages of reopening, restaurants in a growing number of areas are allowed to resume on-premise dining. But resuming on-premise dining is easier said than done. Reopening is expensive, and guidance is unclear and coming from multiple sources. And restaurateurs have to carry the weight of ensuring that their staff and guests remain safe – all while adapting operations, understanding new guest expectations, and doing everything they can to keep the doors open.

Some guests are hesitant about on-premise dining and will stick to takeout and delivery for now. Others are eager to get back to their favorite spots, but only if the experience feels safe. However your guests feel, now's the time to emphasize safety and build procedures and guidelines to create safe spaces for staff and guests in the wake of COVID-19.

TIPS FROM TOAST

5 Ways to Create a Great On-Premise Dining Experience

- 1 Create and train your team on new operating procedures to adhere to state and local guidelines and keep safety and hygiene top of mind.
- 2 Find ways to adapt your people operations and let your staff know you've got their back with traditional or alternative benefits.
- 3 Keep a close eye on your business's finances. See where you can bring down costs, and identify which areas of your business require close attention.
- 4 Identify technologies that will allow you to create a safer, more streamlined experience for both guests and staff.
- 5 Despite other changes to the dining experience, guests still care about your restaurant's food and hospitality more than anything else.



Safety and cleanliness are growing concerns for restaurant diners. The majority of survey respondents (64%) reported that **seeing staff taking safety precautions and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)** will be most important to the dining experience as restaurants resume on-premise service.

Hand sanitizer at the table (49%) and **single-use menus** (40%) came in at second and third respectively. But other factors like **contactless payment / pay at the table technology** (38%), **single-use utensils** (37%), **written statements about cleaning procedures** (37%), and **order at the table capabilities** (33%) are also important to guests.

As we covered elsewhere, you need to implement strict safety and sanitation procedures to ensure the safety and comfort of your guests. When your guests are feeling safe and at ease, they'll focus on what they really care about: your delicious food and exceptional hospitality.



? What's Most Important To Guests When Returning To On-Premise Dining?

Seeing Staff Taking Safety Precautions and Wearing Personal Protective Equipment

64%

Hand Sanitizer at the Table

49%

Single-Use Menus

40%

Contactless Payment or Pay at the Table Capabilities

38%

Single-Use Utensils

37%

A Written Statement About Cleaning Procedures Posted in the Restaurant

37%

Order at the Table Capabilities

33%

PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

? What Concerns Do Guests Have About Dining Out During Covid-19?

Cleanliness of Tables, Surfaces, & Menus

52%

Food Safety and Handling

48%

Staff Wearing and Frequently Changing PPE

45%

Staff Health

44%

Kitchen Cleanliness

42%

Occupancy Numbers

36%

Contact with Servers & Staff

30%

PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

This research also highlights how important safety and cleanliness have become to the on-premise dining experience. 52% of survey respondents believe that **cleanliness of tables, surfaces, and menus** will be their biggest concern while dining out at restaurants during and after COVID-19.

Food safety and handling (48%) and **staff wearing and frequently changing PPE** (45%) came in at second and third respectively.

Updating your operating procedures to focus on safety and sanitation will be key to creating safe, comfortable spaces for all.



When asked which technologies would be most important to their dining experiences when dining out during and after COVID-19, restaurant guests reported that **drive-through availability** will be most important, with 37% of respondents marking it as extremely important.

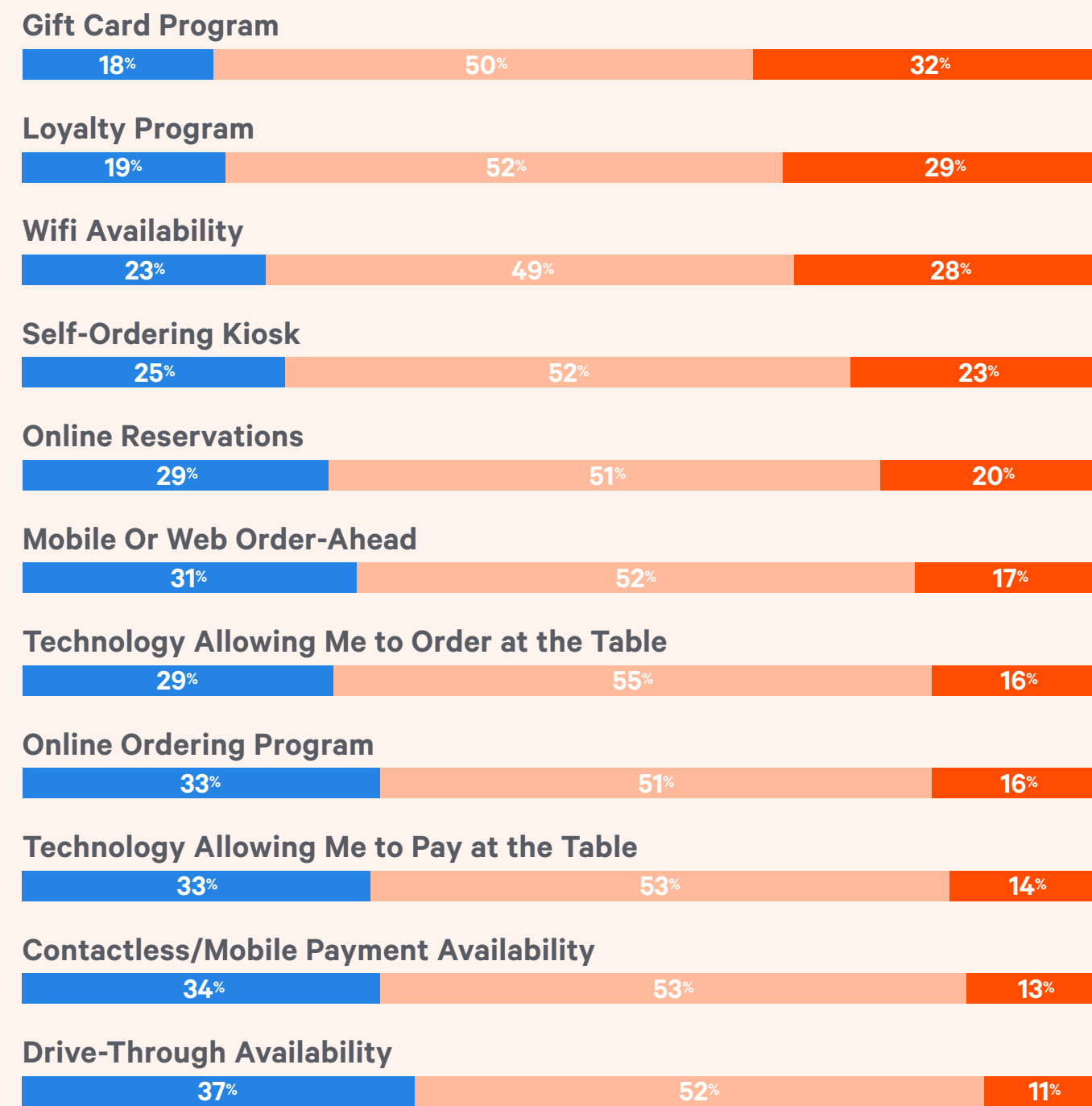
Other technologies that stood out as important to guests' dining experiences during and after COVID-19 are **contactless / mobile payment availability** (34%), **pay at the table technology** (33%), and **online ordering** (33%).

The growing importance of these technologies underscores the importance of speed, efficiency, and contactless interactions during the time of COVID-19.

Back in January, respondents reported that wifi availability was most important to their on-premise dining experiences. Since then, wifi has dropped in significance. In January, guests also reported that loyalty programs were very important to their restaurant experiences, but since then, loyalty programs have dropped in importance. Now, 29% of guests marked loyalty programs as not at all important to the guest experience.

It's important to note that this research applies to all restaurant types — from full-service restaurants to cafes and bakeries — so which technologies are most important to guests will likely vary.

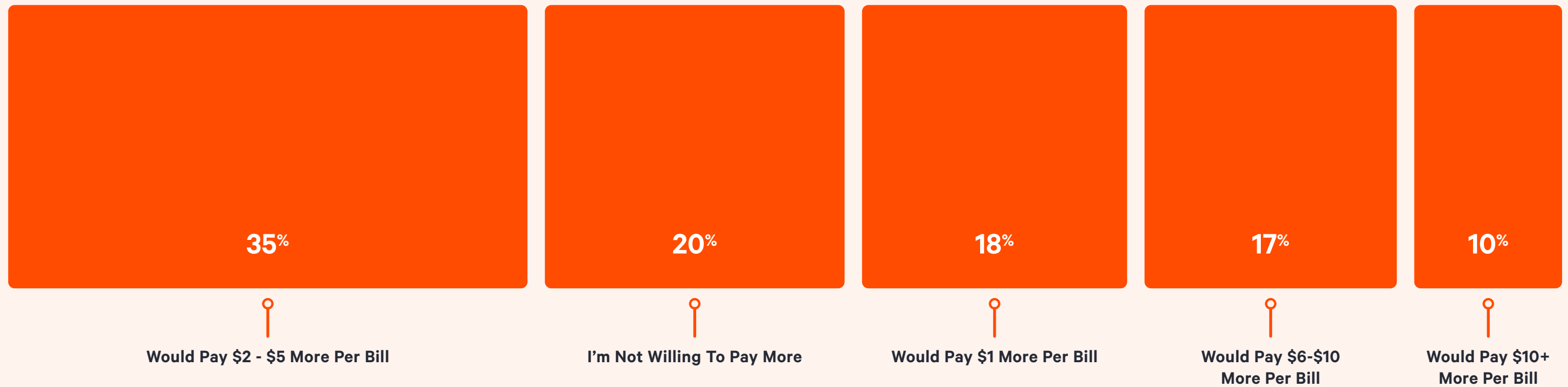
? Which Technologies Are Important To Guests During Covid-19?



PERCENTAGE OF GUESTS

● Extremely Important ● Somewhat Important ● Not At All Important

? How Willing Are Guests To Pay Increased Menu Prices?



With increased safety and health precautions due to COVID-19, restaurants may have to increase prices — how willing are guests to pay increased menu prices?

The cost of running a restaurant is on the rise, as restaurateurs add new safety measures and continue to rebuild from the fallout of COVID-19 – on top of rising food costs. As a result, most restaurateurs will have to increase menu prices to offset the associated costs.

Fortunately, the majority of survey respondents reported that they'd be willing to pay more to support restaurants as they get back on

their feet. 35% of restaurant diners reported that they would pay \$2 - \$5 more per bill, and 17% even reported that they'd be willing to pay \$6 - \$10 more per bill.

There are detractors, though – 21% of guests reported that they are not willing to pay more at all.

The important thing is to be communicative and remain honest with your guests. Communicate any changes in menu prices so they aren't caught off guard, and let them know what any new menu price increases or surcharges are going towards.

★ ★ MIDA's personal touch shines through alongside new safety procedures



TOAST CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

MIDA Delights Guests by Focusing on Safety (and Hospitality)

For the team at MIDA, an Italian-influenced neighborhood restaurant in Boston's South End, the introduction of safety procedures and social distancing isn't the end of hospitality as we know it. Instead, it's a challenge to get creative and find new opportunities to generate amazing hospitality.

"Our guests can still feel a smile from behind a mask. If we use the circumstance to relinquish hospitality then we fail," says Seth Gerber, a partner at MIDA. "We need to continue to create

experiences through thoughtful service and hospitality – part of that now includes safety. Our steps of service have changed, but our mission, values, and vision have not."

With safety now a means to a more relaxed, enjoyable on-premise dining experience, the MIDA team has created procedures to ensure staff and guest safety – regularly evaluating every part of their operation and daily timeline to see how they can mitigate risk.

When team members arrive for their shifts, they have their temperatures taken and are required to sanitize their phones and hands. Guests are checked in outside and then guided to their tables so that they eliminate traffic at the front door. When not seated at their tables, guests are required to wear masks. And all menus are now contactless, with the team strongly promoting contactless payments.

Despite all of these changes to procedures, Seth and the team don't see the core of hospitality and on-premise dining being affected deeply in the long run. "I believe that restaurant dining is ingrained in the fabric of society," Seth

said. "COVID-19 will not extinguish the primal need for social interaction and experiential dining. Wearing masks and other sanitary precautions will remain as new social norms and takeout will be a bigger financial driver, but dining at its core will not be irrevocably changed long term. For now, we just have to navigate the waters."



Seth Gerber

MIDA
PARTNER

Resources to Help You Create Safe On-Premise Dining Experiences

The COVID-19 Restaurant Reopening Checklist

This 78-item restaurant reopening checklist covers all of the necessary to-do's. Your entire business – from the back office to the host stand – will be prepped and ready to safely welcome guests back for a long-awaited visit.

[Get the Checklist](#)



MORE RESOURCES

- [How to Create Standard Operating Procedures](#) →
- [How to Calculate Restaurant Performance Metrics](#) →
- [How to Take Care of Your Staff During a Health Crisis](#) →
- [Black Sheep Restaurants Shares a COVID-19 Playbook](#) →
- [How to Clean a Restaurant \[Checklist\]](#) →



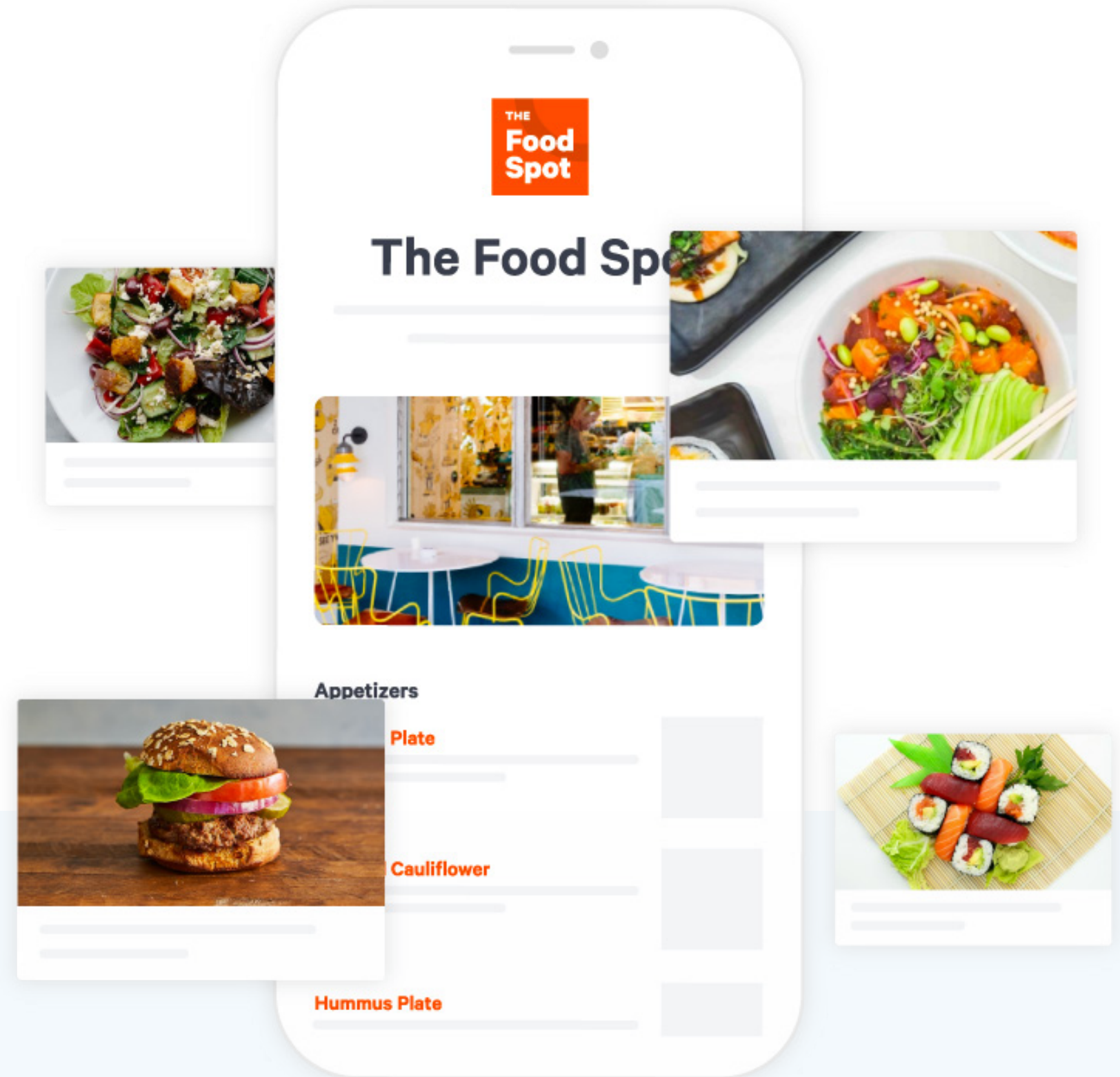


Order & Pay at the Table

Give your guests the ability to order and pay for their meal from the convenience and safety of their own device.

Get started

- ✓ Improve table turn times and reduce your labor costs.
- ✓ Drive higher average tips with prompted gratuity.
- ✓ Create a contactless experience for your staff and guests.
- ✓ Better understand your guests with valuable data.



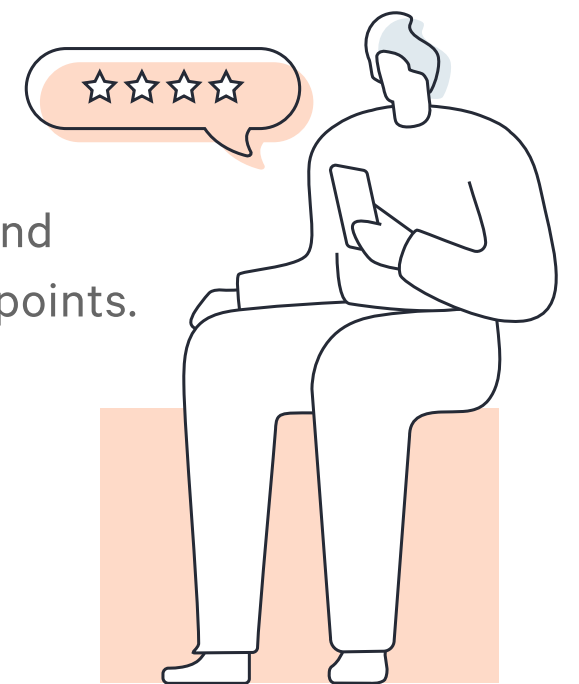
Engagement

Turning Guests Into Regulars

After earning guests' attention and turning them into paying customers, you've done a lot of the heavy lifting, but it doesn't stop there. Once you've built a solid foundation, it's just as important to build strong connections and keep guests returning. And now, providing great hospitality (as we knew it) isn't enough — you've got to create a safe experience to get guests coming back.

4 Ways to Engage With Guests After They've Dined With You

- 1 Encourage guests to give you feedback directly to learn what they like and if they'd make changes to their experiences.
- 2 Use email marketing to communicate with guests and let them know about how you're reopening or COVID-19 restrictions, promotions, or menu updates.
- 3 Use customer data from your technology platforms to tailor your communications and marketing campaigns.
- 4 Use customer loyalty programs to encourage guests to return and spend more by earning reward points.



50% of guests marked **food quality** as an important factor in influencing whether they'll return to a restaurant. You can maintain food quality through produce sourcing and analyzing your winning menu items. One other thing you could do is collect feedback directly from your guests. Ask what they look for in food quality and ingredients and what they do or don't like to see on their plates.

Attention to cleanliness and safety took the number two spot, with 43% of respondents marking it as important. But safety and cleanliness are more than growing concerns for guests – a lack of caution and diligence is enough to make them not return to a restaurant.

Staff members appearing to be ill would drive a large majority of guests to never visit a restaurant again, with 50% of guests saying they would definitely not visit a restaurant again if they noticed that.

A lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) is another big influencer, with 32% of survey respondents reporting that they would definitely not visit a restaurant again if they noticed that workers weren't wearing PPE.

The high-level takeaway here: Restaurateurs need to keep safety, cleanliness, and health top of mind.

Following food quality and safety and cleanliness, guests also marked **value (31%)** and **menu options (27%)** as important factors in influencing whether or not they return to a restaurant. Ask customers how they feel about your menu options, evaluate your most and least popular items, and see if you might need to adapt anything accordingly. As for value, [keep an eye on food costs](#) and [how you're pricing menu items](#).



? Which Factors Influence If Guests Return to a Restaurant?

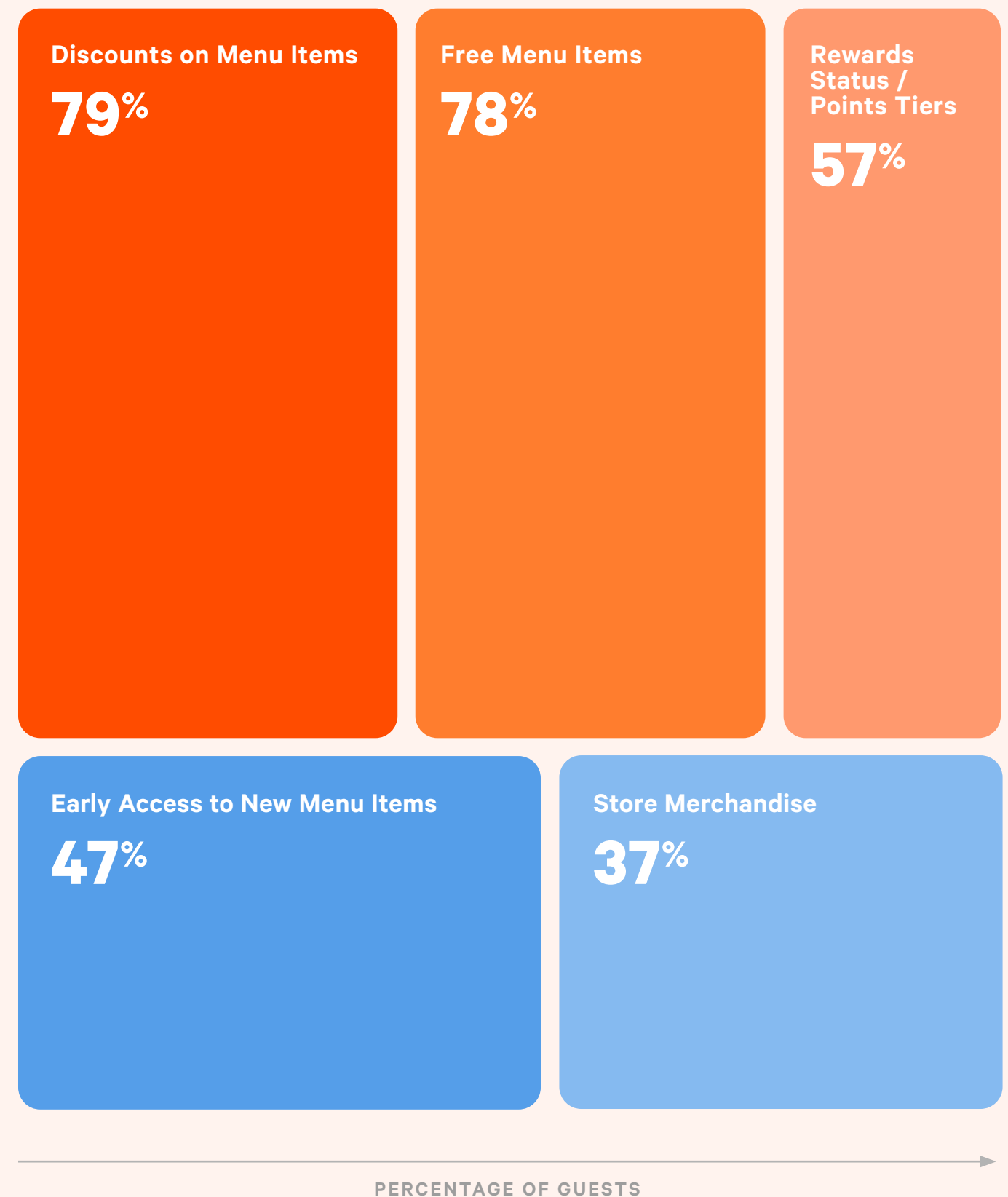
In January, 2020, guests reported loyalty programs as very important to their restaurant experiences. But, since then, loyalty programs have dropped in importance. Now, 29% of guests marked loyalty programs as not at all important to the guest experience.

With so much uncertainty around our social and economic futures, it's no surprise guests aren't prioritizing loyalty. It's also important to note that this research applies to all restaurant types — from full-service restaurants to cafes and bakeries — so guests' priorities will likely vary.

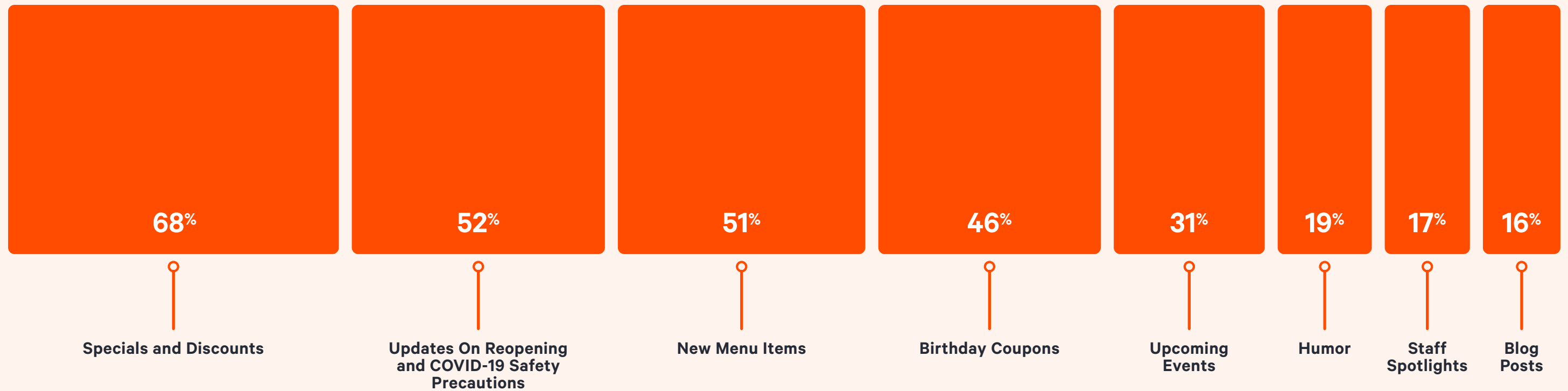
But what guests are looking for out of a loyalty program has remained the same. 79% of guests marked discounts on menu items as important, 78% say free menu items are important, and 57% marked rewards status and point tiers as important.

Knowing that guests largely want discounts and free menu items, loyalty programs can be unappealing to restaurants that can't afford to be discounting regularly. However, Toast data from early 2020 showed that, while guests in a loyalty program spend more and visit more, only 15% of guests actually redeem points within 18 months. So the net benefit for restaurants is positive — more visits and revenue with minimal discounting. It's a win-win.

? Which Rewards Do Guests Find Most Important in a Loyalty Program?



? Which Types Of Emails Do Guests Want To Receive From Restaurants?




Email marketing is a great way to stay in touch with your guests once they've left your restaurant. Start by determining which frequency makes the most sense for your audience.

The majority of guests (34%) said they want to receive email communications from a restaurant a couple of times a month. But, especially now, as guidelines and operations are constantly changing, guests are looking for certainty in communication with businesses. In fact, 52% of guests are seeking updates on COVID-19 from the restaurants they love. Consistent, reassuring communication is a great way to build relationships with your guests right now.

After that, figure out what content to send your customers to keep them engaged, loyal, and returning to your restaurant. 68% of guests say hearing about specials and discounts is most important to them, with announcements about new menu items (51%) and emails with birthday coupons (46%) coming in third and fourth respectively.

By sending targeted email messages at the right moment to the right people about promotions you're running or new menu items, you can encourage customers to make purchases when you want them to.



Flour maintains its focus on great food and great service



TOAST CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Flour Maintains a Dedicated Fan Base by Staying Guest-Focused

There are a bunch of technologies out there to help restaurateurs build relationships with guests. But as Mike Brucklier, Director of Operations at Flour Bakery & Cafe, tells us, the secret to creating a loyal, dedicated customer base hasn't changed much.

“Provide really exceptional food and great service, and you're going to create that [loyalty],” Mike says. But some things have changed. “With that in mind, we need to have perfect execution, packing, timeliness, and everything about the

digital experience needs to be enhanced,” he said.

While those pillars Mike mentioned — great food and great service — contribute to Flour's success, it's helped that they've made a conscious effort to digitally adapt. “We have really ramped up social media. We have a whole Instagram live series, which is basically a weekly cook-along with Joanne [Chang, Flour Bakery & Cafe's Owner]. We have increased the consistency and information that we

share on social and on our website. We have made a concerted effort to improve the online ordering experience, the app experience, and all versions of digital communication,” he said.

Another important part of Flour's customer loyalty strategy is its rewards program. “We're always working hard to keep that exciting,” Mike told us. “We can't just drop \$3 into everyone's account every time they spend \$50. It doesn't work. So it started out by coming up with the right levels and tiers for our guests

that are really loyal fans. And even in the last year, we've launched a new program for what we call super users. For those guests, we've now started this program where every six months they'll get a full catered brunch or lunch on us.”



Mike Brucklier
Flour Bakery & Cafe
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Resources to Help You Engage Your Guests

22 Ways to Delight Your Restaurant Guests in 2020

This article shows you 22 proven ways — both staff-driven and tech-driven — to delight your guests in 2020.

[Read the Article](#)



MORE RESOURCES

- [Chicago Bagel Authority Drives 300 Repeat Visits Using Toast Marketing Automated Email Campaigns](#) →
- [5 Restaurant Email Marketing Ideas](#) →
- [Why Your Restaurant Needs an Integrated Guest CRM System](#) →
- [How to Solicit Guest Feedback](#) →
- [5 Ways To Breed Customer Loyalty With a Loyalty Program](#) →

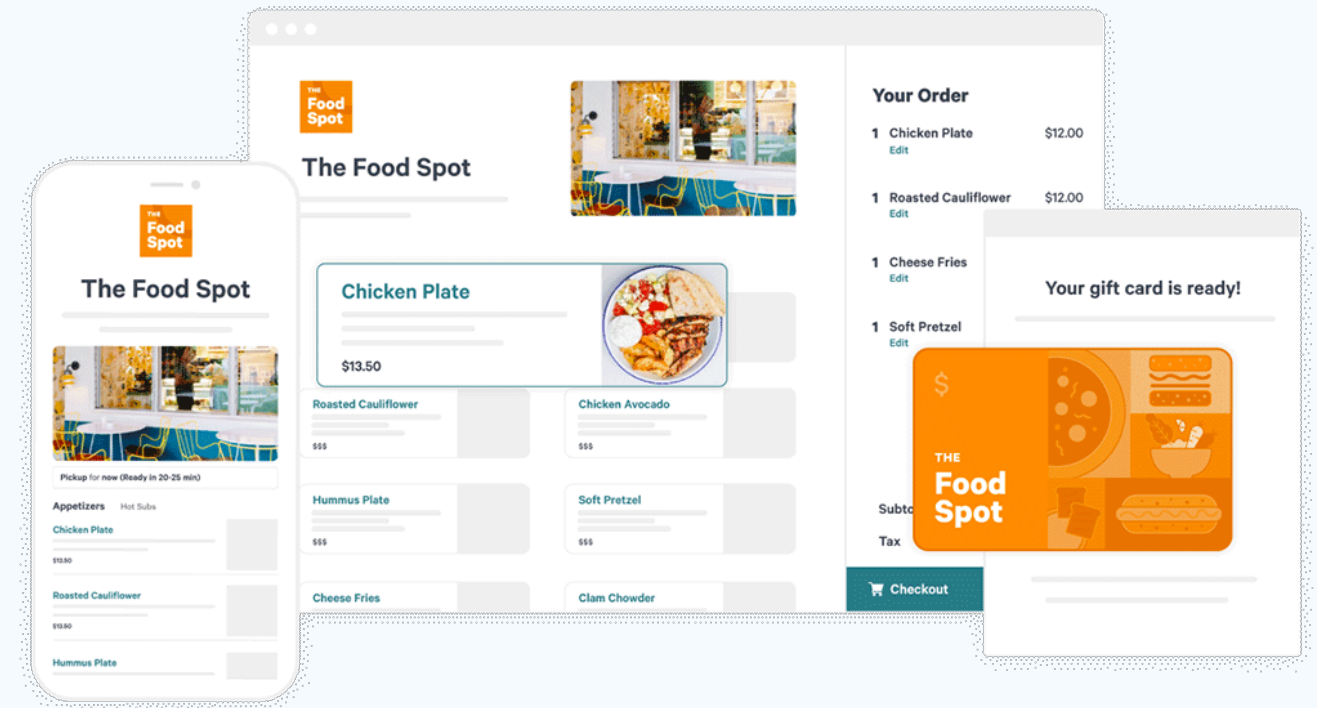




Toast Point of Sale

Increase revenue, streamline operations, and delight your guests with a point of sale platform built with your restaurant in mind.

Get a demo



Toast Now

Set up on-demand, commission-free digital solutions like online ordering, contactless delivery, and email marketing. No hardware or POS purchase required.

Get started