

Rising to the Challenge

Foodservice operations have to be more resourceful than usual as they face down the challenge of labor shortages.

By Howard Reill



The labor shortage continues, but businesses still need to open their doors each day, even if shorthanded. What to do?

Resourceful restaurateurs can employ a variety of strategies to keep their establishments working smoothly even while shorthanded.

“Restaurant operators are the most creative and flexible people in the industry,”

says **Arlene Spiegel**

FCSI, president of

Arlene Spiegel & Associates in

New York City. “They always figure out how to provide a memorable guest experience.”



According to Spiegel, the following are some of the strategies that can help keep an under staffed restaurant running efficiently:

- **Limit seating:** “Rather than risk poor service, operators are only booking tables that can be properly handled.”
- **Limit menu offerings:** “Provide enough variety by choosing only ‘best sellers’ and trimming the low sellers from the menu.”
- **Offer complete meal combinations:** “Not only are these a value to the guest, but these offerings also provide predictability and efficient production.
- **Keep hiring inclusive and flexible:** “Attract non-foodservice professionals who can be trained and developed during hours that work for them.”
- **Offer internship/externship programs:** “Reach out to local high schools and colleges with culinary programs and offer paid internships to the students.”
- **Outsource production:** “Many mainline and local suppliers will do all the cutting, peeling, chopping and packaging of your produce, which reduces in-house hourly labor. It actually saves money and time.”
- **Pay bonuses:** “Offer a sign-on bonus to existing employees if they bring in new candidates that get hired.”
- **Create reward programs:** “Coordinate and collaborate with local restaurants to offer free meals to each other’s employees as a reward for attendance.”
- **Be nice:** “Show your appreciation by being generous, kind and appreciative in the day-to-day operations. Throw a party.”