



Convenience vs. customer experience: the food delivery trade-off?

Food delivery operators, using ghost kitchens, all aspire to be different, better and special, but can they ever truly match a quality restaurant experience without compromising on convenience, and vice versa?

ESSENTIAL TOUCHPOINTS

Arlene Spiegel FCSI, president, Arlene Spiegel & Associates, Inc believes the food delivery model “creates a journey where many touchpoints can make or break” the guest experience. “It starts with the ease of accessibility to the menu, either on an app/ mobile device; the company’s website; via phone-in; or even a QR code on a postcard,” she says. “The journey continues with the ordering process, especially in the organization and graphics of each menu item including descriptions, modifiers and prices. Communicating along the way with emails or texts from the foodservice provider acknowledging the receipt of the order and a tracking tab to anticipate arrival time. The final touchpoint is always the quality and care of the way the food is packaged.” There is, says, Spiegel, therefore “no trade-off” required if every detail is considered and delivered. In fact, she says, “it is instead “an opportunity to establish the brand as ‘better than’ in the delivery category.”

So, which food delivery brands are currently getting this right? As far as Spiegel is concerned, “ironically, the traditional restaurants such as pizza, Asian, and burger concepts have mastered delivery and fared very well during the pandemic – as delivery

was always part of their model. In New York, an independent operation, Hill Country BBQ, really nailed it by developing packaging that kept the food at the perfect temperature and added lots of side dishes, sauces and specialty beverages – for a single portion, family-size meals, catering and even meal kits.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

So, other than simply charging customers more for their food, what else will it take to change the current status quo for food delivery models – enabling them to enhance the customer experience? Spiegel feels “striving for excellence and differentiation at all touchpoints will keep brands top-of-mind and may even convince the ‘delivery crowd’ to come into the restaurant when they’re ready to resume dining out.” Clearly, this is a moving feast, but the fact that experts believe there doesn’t have to be so-called trade-off between convenience and a quality experience will be heartening for ghost kitchens and food delivery operators everywhere. Quality needs to improve, especially in the ‘last mile’ of delivery itself, but with the right training and attention to detail, it’s perfectly possible to recreate a “different, better and special” food delivery experience that will have customers hitting up those apps again and again.