



# What's on the menu?

**F**oodservice operators have had to pay close attention to restaurant menus as consumer demands fluctuated during the pandemic. It is a trend that is set to continue.

It is a safe bet that the last 2 years have seen operators review their menus more times than they ever did before. Restrictions introduced due to Covid-19 – social distancing, curfews, stay at home mandates – meant that restaurants were forced to reconsider their offering, constantly looking to tweak menus to make sure they were in step with what customers wanted.

Not all food is right for delivery and some items are simply better enjoyed in the restaurant. When dining rooms opened, guests looked for more comfort or fewer dishes. There was a lot to keep on top of.

“The labor shortage also means that there are less hours for prep and less people for a la minute service. In addition, some ingredients are in short supply and deliveries are being made less frequently,” says Arlene Spiegel, founder and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates.

## ADJUSTING TO THE DELIVERY ROOM

The boom in delivery also means higher prices will be needed, says Spiegel. “Yes, prices on some items will need to increase due to higher labor and food

costs, but another factor is the higher percentage of business now being driven by third party delivery fees that eats into the operators’ margins.”

## THOUGHTFUL REFLECTION

The enforced closures during the pandemic offered chefs and operators the time to reflect on how they ran their business and what improvements they could bring in.

“I hope many operators and chefs used the lockdowns during the pandemic as a chance to review their own concepts,” she says.

The good news says, Spiegel, is that operators are rising to the challenge. “They are doing more with less in every aspect of the business. They are also realizing that there are new opportunities to reach customers that never patronized the restaurant before the pandemic and have now become loyal fans,” she says.

“The pandemic made them realize that marketing to the local community and keeping their brand top of mind is an essential part of the business.”