

# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

Each year the National Restaurant Association prepares a comprehensive overview of the restaurant industry and provides a look ahead.

The Association's research is considered the authoritative source for restaurant industry sales projections and trends.

It is based on analysis of the latest economic data and extensive surveys of restaurant operators and consumers.

The Association's research and analysis have a long-standing reputation for credibility, neutrality, and accuracy inside and outside the industry.

Visit **Restaurant.org/Research** for the latest industry trends and analysis.

**Hudson Riehle**

*Research & Knowledge Group*

**Bruce Grindy**

*Research & Knowledge Group*

**Dr. Chad Moutray**

*Research & Knowledge Group*

**Beth Lorenzini**

*Enterprise Marketing  
& Communications*

**Vanessa Sink**

*Enterprise Marketing  
& Communications*

**Helen Jane Hearn**

*Enterprise Marketing  
& Communications*

Designed by

**Abstract Orange**

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**National Restaurant Association**

2055 L Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036  
(800) 424-5156 • Restaurant.org

## METHODOLOGY

The 2025 State of the Restaurant Industry report is based on analysis and forecasts by National Restaurant Association economists as well as ongoing surveys of restaurant operators and consumers.

Restaurant segment definitions: The survey data in this report categorizes restaurants in 2 broad concepts: tableservice restaurants and limited-service restaurants. Within each segment, there are 3 categories of concepts:

- Tableservice restaurants:  
Family dining, Casual dining and Fine dining
- Limited-service restaurants:  
Quickservice, Fast casual and Coffee & snack

When responding to surveys, restaurant operators were asked to self-classify their operation into one of these 6 categories.

Definition of Generations in this report:

- Gen Z Adult (18-28)
- Millennial (29-44)
- Gen X (45-60)
- Baby Boomer (61-79)

# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025

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# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH IN AN UNPREDICTABLE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT



The restaurant narrative in 2024 was dominated by value offerings—and for good reason. The recent extended period of elevated inflation stretched household budgets, even as the overall employment market remained healthy. Restaurant operators responded by offering promotions and specials to boost customer traffic levels.





While value offerings will remain an important driver of customer traffic in 2025, it's only one piece of the puzzle. Socializing with family and friends is one of the top reasons why 9 in 10 consumers say they enjoy going to restaurants. **Restaurant operators that create a compelling customer experience can build a loyal following that keeps coming back.**

In fact, for most restaurant customers, the experience is more important than the price of the meal. And this doesn't have to mean 5-star service. Consumers prioritize cleanliness and a kind and welcoming staff—two goals that are achievable for operators across the restaurant spectrum.

**Fortunately for operators looking to create that hospitality-focused team, the labor market is finally showing signs of normalization.**

That may not mean an abundance of prospective employees, but the extreme labor shortage of the last few years is easing.

The challenge of balancing rising costs will continue in 2025. Food and labor, along with other expense categories such as utilities, occupancy, supplies, insurance and credit card processing fees, will continue to pressure the bottom line.

Despite these challenges, one constant remains: the restaurant and foodservice industry is a thread in the fabric of life for many consumers.

Consumer reliance on restaurants is driven by expanding offerings—often to meet them where they are.

This innovation will continue in 2025, as successful operators remain laser-focused on the opportunities created by their customers' wants and needs.

# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025

## TOP FINDINGS FOR 2025



### ★ Value offerings will remain part of the equation.

Value will remain top of mind for both consumers and operators this year. To drive customer traffic, nearly one-half of operators plan to add **new** discounts, deals or value promotions.

### ★ Loyalty programs are increasingly important—for both operators and consumers.

For many consumers, being a member of a loyalty program is important when choosing a restaurant. A solid majority of operators say their loyalty program helped increase their customer traffic in 2024.

### ★ Restaurant sales will rise.

Driven by an economy that will continue to grow and add jobs, consumer spending in restaurants is projected to increase at a moderate rate, with sales reaching \$1.5T.

### ★ Pent-up demand is elevated across all restaurant occasions.

A strong majority of fullservice, limited-service and delivery customers say they would use restaurants more often if they had the money available to pay for it.





★ **Boosting on-premises traffic will be the focus for most operators.**

A majority of both fullservice and limited-service operators say building on-premises business will be more important for their restaurant's success than off-premises business in 2025.

★ **An enjoyable experience is a point of differentiation—and not just at fine dining restaurants.**

Many restaurant customers say their dining experience is more important than the price of the meal. Restaurant operators can build a loyal following by offering an enjoyable experience.

★ **Look beyond traditional menu offerings to boost on-premises traffic.**

Most consumers say restaurants are a good place to learn about food that they haven't tried before. Restaurant operators can facilitate by offering tasting events and private dinners with culinary experts.

# 47%

Value will remain top of mind for both consumers and operators this year. To drive customer traffic, nearly one-half of operators plan to **add new discounts, deals or value promotions.**





## TOP FINDINGS FOR 2025 (CONTINUED)

### ★ Alcohol beverage offerings can help drive on-premises traffic.

Restaurant operators with alcohol programs are uniquely positioned to drive traffic with offerings such as local sourcing, tasting events, and food and alcohol beverage pairings.

### ★ Demand for off-premises offerings continues to grow.

Half of operators say off-premises is a larger share of their total sales than in 2019, but there is ample room for expansion. Most consumers say they would like more choices of restaurants offering takeout and delivery.

### ★ Consumers are craving more off-premises choices.

Restaurant operators can expand beyond traditional takeout and delivery options by offering meal kits, multi-course meal bundles and meal subscription programs.

### ★ Restaurants will continue to invest in technology.

A majority of customers say the availability of technology options for things like ordering and paying is important to them when they choose restaurants, particularly for limited-service and delivery occasions.



### ★ What's hot in food for 2025?

Southeast Asian foods are among the most popular items this year thanks to an interest in the unique ingredients/flavor profiles, wellness benefits, and serving styles of Korean, Vietnamese and Filipino cuisines.

### ★ What's hot in beverages for 2025?

Wellness-conscious consumers of all ages are driving a growing interest in beverages that boost energy levels, lower stress, enhance digestive health and sharpen cognition.

### ★ The restaurant and foodservice workforce will continue to grow in 2025.

Broad-based job growth is expected across the industry, adding 200K jobs overall, but staffing levels in the fullservice segment will remain below pre-pandemic readings.

### ★ More teens and young adults are joining the workforce.

A positive development in recent years was an increase in labor force participation among teenagers and young adults. Together they make up 4 in 10 people in the industry workforce.

# 66%

Customers wish they had **more choices** of restaurants that offered takeout in their area



# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025

## SALES & ECONOMIC FORECAST

Restaurant sales in 2025 will continue to be driven by the strength of the economy. Consumers who have a job will spend money. Based on the expectations of continued job growth (see page 34 for economic forecast), households generally will remain in a positive financial position.

In addition, restaurant spending is influenced by consumers' desire for the food, convenience and socialization that the industry provides. Based on Association surveys, that demand is solid—and there even appears to be room for upside.







## IN THIS SECTION:

### MEETING CONSUMER WANTS & NEEDS

Many consumers are motivated by value. Others gravitate toward a quality experience. Often, it's a combination of the two. The restaurant business is as competitive as ever, and successful operators are focused on strategies to meet these wants and needs. See page 20.

### ATTRACTING VALUE-SEEKING CONSUMERS

Value will remain top of mind for both consumers and operators in 2025 and consumers are in general agreement on what resonate with them: specials and more for the prices, discounts when traffic is slow, and add-on options. See page 16.

### CREATING AN EXPERIENCE THAT KEEPS CUSTOMERS COMING BACK

It's more than just food that draws consumers to restaurants. Restaurant operators that create the right ambience, setting, atmosphere and experience can build a loyal customer base that keeps coming back. Customers want a clean, welcoming experience, with short wait times for food or the check—and if done right, these factors can even outweigh the cost of the meal when customers choose a restaurant. See page 27.

### OPERATOR HIGHLIGHTS:

Page 20:  
What value propositions were successful for operators in 2024, and what do consumers want in 2025?

Page 27:  
What are the must-haves in an experience for consumers, and are they even more important than price?

Page 24:  
How important are loyalty programs for consumers, and how can they be enhanced?

# RESTAURANT & FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY

## FOOD & BEVERAGE SALES (\$BILLIONS)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2024-2025 % CHANGE	2024-2025 REAL % CHANGE
EATING & DRINKING PLACES	\$605	\$793	\$913	\$1,012	\$1,060	\$1,103	4.1%	0.3%
FULLSERVICE SEGMENT	\$260	\$376	\$442	\$490	\$513	\$533	3.9%	0.2%
LIMITED-SERVICE SEGMENT	\$327	\$390	\$439	\$486	\$510	\$532	4.3%	0.4%
BARS & TAVERNS	\$18	\$27	\$32	\$35	\$37	\$38	3.4%	0.2%
LODGING PLACES	\$23	\$34	\$43	\$53	\$55	\$57	4.2%	0.4%
RETAIL HOSTS	\$118	\$128	\$143	\$143	\$148	\$154	4.0%	0.4%
RECREATION & SPORTS	\$26	\$35	\$44	\$52	\$55	\$58	4.5%	0.6%
SCHOOLS & COLLEGES	\$65	\$64	\$78	\$120	\$123	\$128	3.8%	0.2%
ALL OTHER FOODSERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS	\$18	\$18	\$23	\$27	\$28	\$29	3.8%	0.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$855</b>	<b>\$1,071</b>	<b>\$1,244</b>	<b>\$1,407</b>	<b>\$1,469</b>	<b>\$1,528</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>

Source: National Restaurant Association

Notes: Columns may not add precisely due to rounding. Percent change calculations are based on unrounded data, and may not match calculations based on rounded sales data.

## METHODOLOGY & DEFINITIONS:

The 2025 State of the Restaurant Industry Report contains a new methodology for estimating food and beverage sales. Based on historical data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Expenditure Series, this approach provides a more extensive scope of food and beverage purchases by households, businesses, nonprofit organizations and government agencies. One way in which this differs from the previous estimates is that it captures sales at establishments with and without payroll employees. In addition, the new methodology includes broader coverage of sales in non-restaurant categories such as lodging places, retail hosts, recreation and sports, and schools and colleges. The Association's historical sales estimates were also updated to be consistent with the new methodology. Note that the sales estimates are preliminary and subject to revision with the release of the Census Bureau's Economic Census data.

**Fullservice segment:** Includes family dining, casual dining and fine dining fullservice restaurants; caterers. Waiter/waitress service is provided, and the order is taken while the patron is seated. Patrons pay after they eat.

**Limited-service segment:** Includes quickservice restaurants; fast casual restaurants; cafeterias, grill-buffets and buffets; snack and non-alcohol beverage bars; mobile food vendors. Patrons generally order at a counter, kiosk, on-line or select items from a food bar and pay before they eat.

**Bars and taverns:** Includes bars, taverns, nightclubs, or drinking places primarily engaged in preparing and serving alcohol beverages for immediate consumption. These establishments may also provide limited food services.

**Lodging places:** Includes hotels, motels and bed-and-breakfast inns.

**Retail hosts:** Includes grocery stores; convenience stores; other food stores; gas stations; department stores; warehouse clubs and supercenters; health and personal care stores; other retailers; vending machine operators.

**Recreation and sports:** Includes movie theaters; performing arts companies; spectator sports; museums, galleries, and zoos; amusement and theme parks; casinos; RV parks and recreational camps; concessions at sports and recreation places; food contracting at sports and recreational places.

**Schools and colleges:** Includes public elementary and secondary schools; food contracting at elementary and secondary schools; private elementary and secondary schools; higher education institutions.

**All other foodservice establishments:** Includes hospital cafeterias; nursing home and residential care facility cafeterias; rooming and boarding houses; religious, grant-making, civic, professional, and similar organizations; trains; Patriot Café, Express, and Brew; contract feeding at offices, government, manufacturing and industrial plants, and transit facilities. Sales estimates exclude food furnished and donated: airline passengers (in-house); military and civilian employees; hospital inpatients; nursing home residents; child daycare centers; federal food programs; adult correctional facilities; youth correctional facilities; other institutional and noninstitutional group quarters.

## 2024 IN REVIEW: CHALLENGING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Business conditions for restaurant operators remained challenging in 2024, even as the economy continued to expand. With pandemic savings largely depleted, consumers became increasingly discerning with their spending. At the same time, an elevated cost environment negatively impacted profitability.

- 61% of operators reported a decline in customer traffic between 2023 and 2024.
- 39% of operators say their restaurant was not profitable in 2024.
- 53% of operators say their restaurant was still carrying debt that it accumulated since the beginning of the pandemic.
- Average food costs and average restaurant wages were each up over 30% from 2019.

## ELEVATED COSTS A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE FOR OPERATORS IN 2024

% of restaurant operators who said the following items were a significant challenge for their restaurant in 2024

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
LABOR COSTS	96%	97%	95%
FOOD COSTS	95%	94%	95%
INFLATION	95%	95%	94%
THE ECONOMY	92%	91%	93%
INSURANCE COSTS	88%	89%	87%
ENERGY OR UTILITY COSTS	83%	84%	81%
CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PROCESSING COSTS	81%	84%	78%
ATTRACTING NEW CUSTOMERS	79%	76%	82%
RECRUITING & RETAINING EMPLOYEES	77%	76%	79%
COMPETITION WITH OTHER RESTAURANTS	64%	59%	69%
BRINGING BACK REPEAT CUSTOMERS	50%	44%	56%
OBTAINING CREDIT/FINANCING	38%	33%	43%

Source: National Restaurant Association



## IMPORTANT RESOURCE: BOOKMARK

Check in each month for in-depth and up-to-date analysis of the state of the restaurant industry. Bookmark **restaurant.org/economic-indicators** for the latest jobs numbers, restaurant sales data, customer traffic, food costs, and menu prices.



# OUTLOOK FOR 2025: A BALANCE OF OPTIMISM & HARD WORK

**Restaurant operators are cautiously optimistic about 2025.** More than 8 in 10 operators expect their 2025 sales to be either higher (41%) or about the same (41%) as 2024; 18% are expecting a sales decline.

## CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SALES

Restaurant operators' outlook for their sales volume in 2025 compared to 2024

OUTLOOK FOR SALES IN 2025	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
HIGHER THAN 2024	41%	38%	43%
LOWER THAN 2024	18%	18%	18%
ABOUT THE SAME AS 2024	41%	45%	38%

Source: National Restaurant Association

# >80%

More than 8 in 10 operators expect their **2025 sales to be either higher (41%) or about the same (41%) as 2024**

# 48%

At the same time, restaurant operators expect to have to work hard for every customer. **48% of operators expect competition to be more intense in 2025.**

## COMPETITION WILL INTENSIFY IN 2025

Restaurant operators' outlook for competition from other restaurant and foodservice businesses in 2025 compared to 2024

OUTLOOK FOR COMPETITION IN 2025	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
MORE INTENSE THAN 2024	48%	44%	53%
LESS INTENSE THAN 2024	5%	6%	4%
ABOUT THE SAME AS 2024	47%	50%	43%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Many restaurant operators anticipate their 2025 challenges will be similar to 2024. **Labor costs, food costs, and recruiting and retaining employees are among the top challenges that both fullservice and limited-service operators expect to face in 2025.**

## LABOR & COST CHALLENGES EXPECTED TO CONTINUE IN 2025

Restaurant operators' reporting of the **most significant challenge** they expect to face in 2025

TOP CHALLENGE EXPECTED IN 2025	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
LABOR COSTS	17%	14%
RECRUITING & RETAINING EMPLOYEES	17%	16%
FOOD COSTS	14%	18%
BUILDING & MAINTAINING SALES VOLUME	13%	13%
THE ECONOMY	9%	10%
INFLATION	8%	7%
OPERATING COSTS	7%	6%
GOVERNMENT	3%	2%
MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE	2%	3%
COMPETITION	2%	2%

Source: National Restaurant Association

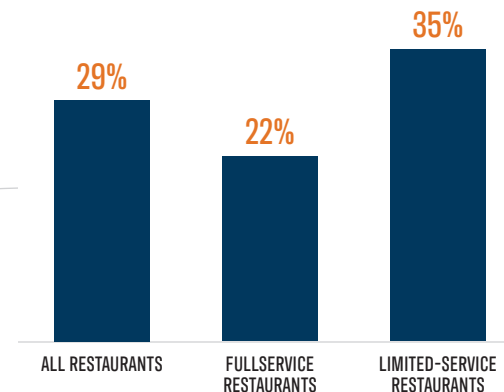
# 29%

Many operators **plan to expand** in 2025, with 29% of operators saying they will likely open new locations.

Limited-service operators (35%) are more likely than fullservice operators (22%) to report plans to add locations in 2025.

## EXPANSION PLANS

% of restaurant operators who say they will likely open new locations in 2025



Source: National Restaurant Association



## PENT-UP DEMAND REMAINS HIGH

**A strong majority of consumers say they would use restaurants more frequently if they had the money.** This cuts across all occasions: from on-premises dining at tableservice restaurants (81%) to visiting quickservice restaurants, snack places, delis or coffee shops (76%) to having food delivered at home (82%).



## PENT-UP DEMAND IS ELEVATED ACROSS ALL RESTAURANT OCCASIONS

% of customers who say they would use restaurants for the following occasions more often if they had the money available to pay for it

RESTAURANT OCCASION	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
ORDERING DELIVERY FROM A RESTAURANT	82%	79%	89%	84%	72%
GOING OUT TO EAT AT A SIT-DOWN TABLESERVICE RESTAURANT	81%	87%	89%	84%	68%
GOING OUT TO EAT OR PICKING UP FOOD OR BEVERAGES AT A QUICKSERVICE RESTAURANT, SNACK PLACE, DELI OR COFFEE SHOP	76%	83%	85%	82%	62%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a tableservice restaurant; went out to eat or picked up food or beverages at a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop; or ordered delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months



**Consumers' desire to visit restaurants more frequently is good news for the majority of operators who say building on-premises business is more important for their success in 2025 than greater off-premises business.**

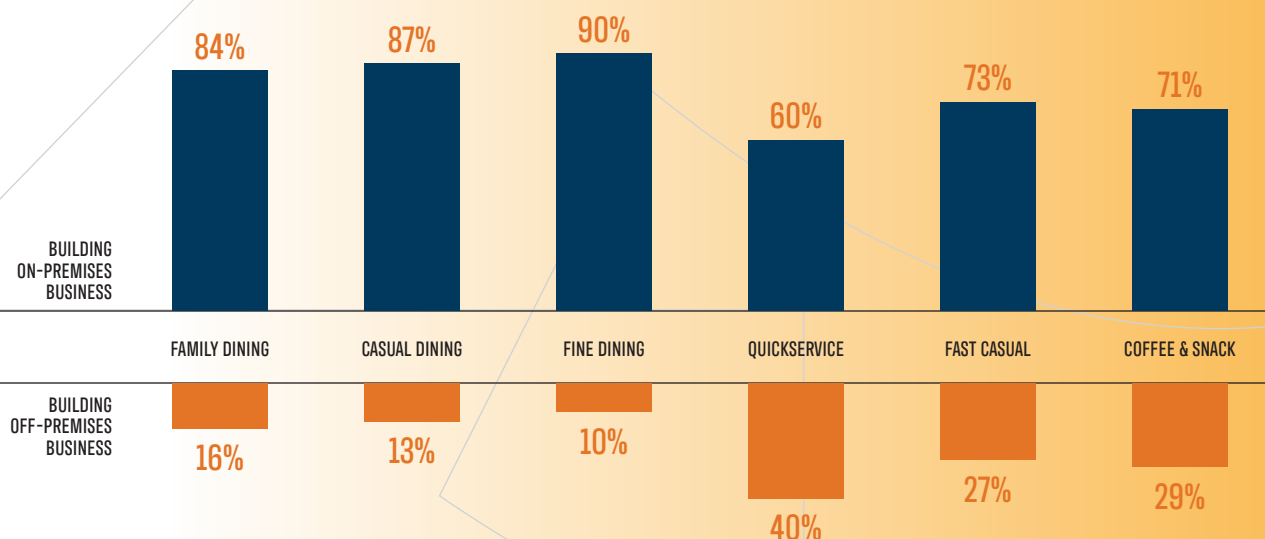
This is especially important to **90% of fine dining operators** and 87% of casual dining operators.

It also holds true for a solid majority of limited-service operators. **More than 7 in 10 operators** in the fast casual and coffee and snack segments say building on-premises business will be more important for their overall success in 2025. 60% of quickservice operators report the same.



## A YEAR TO BOOST ON-PREMISES TRAFFIC

What operators say will be **more important** for their restaurant's success in 2025: building on-premises or off-premises business



Source: National Restaurant Association

# BUILDING BUSINESS IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

The keys to success in 2025 are to attract customers by offering the right value proposition, providing an experience that meets or exceeds their expectations, and taking steps to turn them into loyal customers.

Finding the right mix of the three components will help operators find success in a challenging environment.

## VALUE

# 95%

95% of restaurant operators say consumers are **more value-conscious** than they used to be.

Value dominated the narrative in 2024, and the reason is clear: 95% of restaurant operators say consumers are more value-conscious than they used to be.

53% of operators responded by adding new discounts, deals or value promotions.

Not surprisingly, the strategy varied significantly by segment. A majority of operators in the limited-service segments added new value promotions while in the fullservice segment, it ranged from 52% of family dining operators to just 33% of fine dining operators.

Looking ahead, **47% of operators plan to add new discounts, deals or value promotions in 2025**. That includes a majority of operators in the limited-service segments, but only about 4 in 10 fullservice operators.

## A MAJORITY OF LIMITED-SERVICE OPERATORS PLAN TO ROLL OUT NEW VALUE OFFERINGS IN 2025

% of restaurant operators who added new discounts, deals or value promotions in 2024 and plan to do so in 2025

	ADDED NEW DISCOUNTS, DEALS OR VALUE PROMOTIONS IN 2024	PLAN TO ADD NEW DISCOUNTS, DEALS OR VALUE PROMOTIONS IN 2025
<b>ALL RESTAURANTS</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>39%</b>
FAMILY DINING	52%	45%
CASUAL DINING	46%	39%
FINE DINING	33%	25%
<b>LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>56%</b>
QUICKSERVICE	66%	60%
FAST CASUAL	54%	52%
COFFEE & SNACK	59%	55%

Source: National Restaurant Association

# VALUE OFFERINGS THAT WORK

The rate of success for the added value promotions in 2024 was a mixed bag.

- Limited-time offers led the way in the limited-service segment with 51% of quickservice operators and 43% of coffee and snack operators finding success.
- 45% of quickservice operators had good luck with value/combo meals, although less than half of fast casual (22%) and coffee and snack (17%) operators reported similarly.
- Quickservice operators (35%) were also more likely than fast casual (23%) and coffee and snack operators (24%) to say they found success with BOGO offers in 2024.



45%

45% of quickservice operators had **good luck** with value/combo meals.

## LIMITED-TIME OFFERS & COMBO MEALS TOP LIMITED-SERVICE VALUE DEALS IN 2024

% of limited-service operators who say their restaurant **found success** using these value offerings in 2024

OPERATORS WHO FOUND SUCCESS USING THE FOLLOWING VALUE OFFERINGS IN 2024	QUICK-SERVICE	FAST CASUAL	COFFEE & SNACK
LIMITED-TIME OFFERS	51%	35%	43%
VALUE/COMBO MEALS AT A REDUCED PRICE	45%	22%	17%
BUY-ONE-GET-ONE FREE (BOGO) OFFER	35%	23%	24%
DISCOUNTED ADD-ON, SUCH AS A DESSERT OR DRINK	18%	15%	15%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING ON LESS BUSY DAYS OF THE WEEK	10%	13%	6%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING DURING LESS BUSY TIMES OF THE DAY	9%	11%	6%
OPTION TO ORDER SMALLER-SIZED PORTIONS FOR A LOWER PRICE	9%	6%	11%
ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT OFFER	2%	6%	4%
OPTION TO ORDER LARGER-SIZED PORTIONS AT THE REGULAR PRICE	3%	3%	2%
MEAL SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAMS	3%	1%	2%

Source: National Restaurant Association





## FULLSERVICE OPERATORS REPORTED MIXED SUCCESS WITH VALUE OFFERINGS IN 2024

% of fullservice operators who say their restaurant **found success** using these value offerings in 2024

OPERATORS WHO FOUND SUCCESS USING THE FOLLOWING VALUE OFFERINGS IN 2024	FAMILY DINING	CASUAL DINING	FINE DINING
LIMITED-TIME OFFERS	26%	25%	18%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING ON LESS BUSY DAYS OF THE WEEK	16%	19%	13%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING DURING LESS BUSY TIMES OF THE DAY	19%	16%	13%
VALUE/COMBO MEALS AT A REDUCED PRICE	15%	11%	6%
BUY-ONE-GET-ONE FREE (BOGO) OFFER	11%	10%	0%
DISCOUNTED ADD-ON, SUCH AS A DESSERT OR DRINK	11%	8%	4%
OPTION TO ORDER SMALLER-SIZED PORTIONS FOR A LOWER PRICE	9%	7%	5%
ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT OFFER	8%	3%	2%
MEAL SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAMS	2%	2%	1%
OPTION TO ORDER LARGER-SIZED PORTIONS AT THE REGULAR PRICE	2%	2%	0%

Source: National Restaurant Association

## Fullservice operators were less likely to report success with value offerings in 2024.

1 in 4 family dining and casual dining operators say limited-time offers worked; less than 1 in 5 fine dining operators reported similarly.

Discounts for dining during less busy days of the week or times of the day didn't fare much better. Fewer than 1 in 5 fullservice operators reported success with these offers.



## CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE ON VALUE

Consumers definitely have value on the mind when picking a restaurant, but the degree of importance varies by occasion.

- 82% of delivery customers say the option to get a daily special, discount or value promotion is important to them when choosing a restaurant for delivery.
- 75% of customers say value is an important factor when going out to a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop. 62% of customers say the same about picking a sit-down tableservice restaurant.

### DELIVERY CUSTOMERS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO SEEK OUT VALUE

% of customers who say the option to get a daily special, discount or value promotion is important to them when choosing a restaurant

RESTAURANT OCCASION	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
ORDERING DELIVERY FROM A RESTAURANT	82%	80%	82%	85%	78%
GOING OUT TO EAT OR PICKING UP FOOD OR BEVERAGES AT A QUICKSERVICE RESTAURANT, SNACK PLACE, DELI OR COFFEE SHOP	75%	70%	76%	79%	72%
GOING OUT TO EAT AT A SIT-DOWN TABLESERVICE RESTAURANT	62%	68%	64%	59%	59%

Source: National Restaurant Association

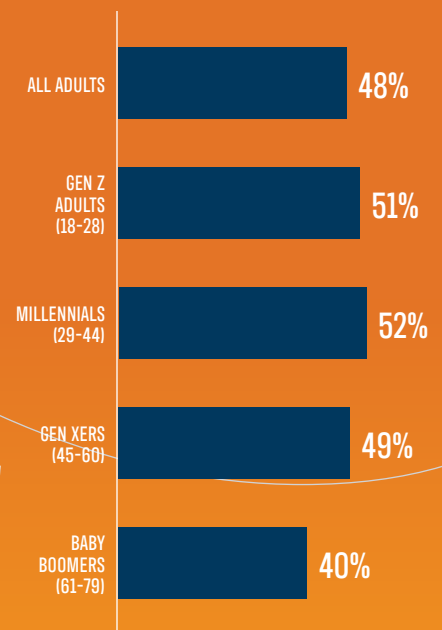
Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a tableservice restaurant; went out to eat or picked up food or beverages at a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop; or ordered delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months

## DOES VALUE TAKE A BACK SEAT FOR A SPECIAL OCCASION?

When asked to think specifically about going out to a tableservice restaurant for a special occasion, 48% of customers say it is still important to get a daily special, discount or value promotion. Baby boomers were the least likely (40%) to say value is an important factor when choosing a restaurant for a special occasion.

### STILL ORDERING THE DAILY SPECIAL FOR THE SPECIAL OCCASION

% of fullservice customers who say the option to get a daily special, discount or value promotion is important to them when choosing a sit-down tableservice restaurant for a **special occasion**



Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a sit-down tableservice restaurant during the past 6 months





## VALUE OFFERINGS CONSUMERS VALUE MOST

The good news for operators is there are a lot of value offerings that consumers like, and there is also quite a bit of overlap across occasions. So, **for operators looking to boost both on-premises and off-premises business, a one-size-fits-all approach could potentially work.**



## FULLSERVICE VALUE OFFERINGS

% of fullservice customers who say they would be likely to use the following options if they were offered by a sit-down tableservice restaurant in their area

# >80%

The most popular value offerings were **daily specials** or limited-time offers at a reduced price, **value/combo meals** at a reduced price and **buy-one-get-one free (BOGO)** offers. More than **8 in 10 consumers** say they would take advantage of each of these 3 offerings if they were available at a restaurant in their area.

OFFERING	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
DAILY SPECIALS OR LIMITED-TIME OFFERS AT A REDUCED PRICE	87%	81%	86%	91%	88%
VALUE/COMBO MEALS AT A REDUCED PRICE	86%	81%	87%	89%	85%
BUY-ONE-GET-ONE FREE (BOGO) OFFERS	82%	77%	85%	80%	82%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING ON LESS BUSY DAYS OF THE WEEK	82%	76%	81%	86%	84%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING DURING LESS BUSY TIMES OF THE DAY	81%	76%	79%	84%	83%
DISCOUNTED ADD-ON, SUCH AS A DESSERT OR DRINK	78%	78%	84%	80%	69%
FOOD & DRINK SPECIALS DURING HAPPY HOUR	76%	84%	85%	77%	66%
OPTION TO ORDER SMALLER-SIZED PORTIONS FOR A LOWER PRICE	73%	83%	75%	69%	70%
OPTION TO ORDER LARGER-SIZED PORTIONS AT THE REGULAR PRICE	71%	83%	81%	71%	60%
ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT OFFERS	70%	79%	83%	73%	51%
DISCOUNTS FOR PAYING IN CASH INSTEAD OF A CREDIT/DEBIT CARD	67%	63%	68%	70%	64%
ALL-YOU-CAN-DRINK OFFERS	64%	80%	79%	64%	48%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a sit-down tableservice restaurant during the past 6 months





## LIMITED-SERVICE VALUE OFFERINGS

% of limited-service customers who say they would be likely to use the following options if they were offered by a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop in their area

OFFERING	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
DAILY SPECIALS OR LIMITED-TIME OFFERS AT A REDUCED PRICE	87%	79%	87%	94%	87%
VALUE/COMBO MEALS AT A REDUCED PRICE	87%	76%	88%	89%	88%
BUY-ONE-GET-ONE FREE (BOGO) OFFERS	85%	77%	88%	89%	82%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING ON LESS BUSY DAYS OF THE WEEK	82%	79%	81%	87%	80%
DISCOUNTS FOR DINING DURING LESS BUSY TIMES OF THE DAY	81%	81%	78%	88%	80%
DISCOUNTED ADD-ON, SUCH AS A DESSERT OR DRINK	79%	81%	83%	84%	69%
OPTION TO ORDER LARGER-SIZED PORTIONS AT THE REGULAR PRICE	75%	76%	81%	82%	64%
OPTION TO ORDER SMALLER-SIZED PORTIONS FOR A LOWER PRICE	73%	77%	75%	71%	71%
DISCOUNTS FOR PAYING IN CASH INSTEAD OF A CREDIT/DEBIT CARD	71%	69%	69%	73%	73%
ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT OFFERS	68%	76%	79%	73%	52%
ALL-YOU-CAN-DRINK OFFERS	66%	72%	78%	68%	51%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat or picked up food or beverages at a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop during the past 6 months

Operators looking to boost business during slow times have a hungry customer base at the ready—provided they get a discount. **Roughly 8 in 10 consumers say they would take advantage of discounts for dining on less busy days of the week or less busy times of the day.**

8 in 10 consumers across all 3 customer groups say they would take advantage of a discounted add-on like a drink or dessert, if it was offered along with the purchase of a regularly priced entrée.

When given the option to order a smaller-sized portion for a reduced price, or getting a larger-sized portion while still paying the regular price, more than 7 in 10 consumers were interested.

**7 in 10 consumers say they would take advantage of a discount for paying in cash rather than with a credit or debit card.**

Although a majority of fullservice and limited-service customers say they would be likely to try all-you-can-eat or all-you-can-drink offers, both ranked toward the bottom of the list of value offerings.

## DELIVERING VALUE

% of delivery customers who say they would be likely to use the following options if they were offered by a restaurant that delivers to their area

OFFERING	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
VALUE/COMBO MEALS AT A REDUCED PRICE	87%	84%	89%	89%	84%
BUY-ONE-GET-ONE FREE (BOGO) OFFERS	86%	84%	88%	87%	85%
DAILY SPECIALS OR LIMITED-TIME OFFERS AT A REDUCED PRICE	83%	77%	79%	93%	82%
DISCOUNTS FOR ORDERING ON LESS BUSY DAYS OF THE WEEK	81%	75%	79%	85%	83%
OPTION TO ORDER LARGER-SIZED PORTIONS AT THE REGULAR PRICE	79%	81%	83%	78%	68%
DISCOUNTS FOR ORDERING DURING LESS BUSY TIMES OF THE DAY	79%	76%	77%	83%	79%
DISCOUNTED ADD-ON, SUCH AS A DESSERT OR DRINK	79%	77%	83%	81%	72%
OPTION TO ORDER SMALLER-SIZED PORTIONS FOR A LOWER PRICE	75%	71%	75%	82%	70%
DISCOUNTS FOR PAYING IN CASH INSTEAD OF A CREDIT/DEBIT CARD	67%	62%	69%	70%	64%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who ordered food for delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months





## OPERATORS: GIVE JUST-IN-TIME VALUE A TRY

Restaurant operators that don't want to dive completely into the value pool can instead limit the focus to times when the restaurant isn't busy.

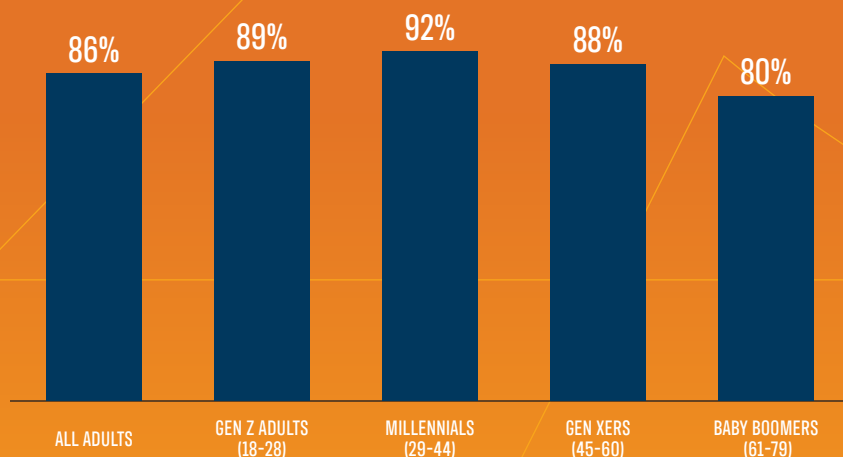
Maybe start with flexible changes that a manager could make each day, depending on how busy the restaurant is, and can be communicated to customers using a smartphone app and social media. Think: lower prices or a free appetizer, dessert, or drink on slower days.

# 86%

When presented with this idea, consumers are overwhelmingly in favor of real-time promotions: **86% of fullservice customers** say they would likely pay attention to, and take advantage of, these kinds of promotions.

## CONSUMERS ARE STANDING BY FOR VALUE

% of fullservice customers who say they would be likely to pay attention to and take advantage of real-time promotions if they were offered by a restaurant in their area



Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a sit-down tableservice restaurant during the past 6 months



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# LOYALTY PROGRAMS

# 61%

61% of delivery customers say loyalty program membership is an important factor when choosing a restaurant for delivery.

For many consumers, being a member of a loyalty program is an important consideration when choosing a restaurant.

61% of delivery customers say it is an important factor when choosing a restaurant for delivery.

54% of quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop customers say they gravitate toward places where they are loyalty members. 41% of fullservice customers say it is an important factor in choosing a restaurant.

**For restaurant operators, that means a compelling loyalty program can be a critical step in turning a first-time visitor into a repeat customer.**

## LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBERSHIP IMPORTANT IN RESTAURANT DECISIONS

% of customers who say an important factor when choosing a restaurant is whether they are a member of its customer loyalty and reward program

RESTAURANT OCCASION	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
ORDERING DELIVERY FROM A RESTAURANT	61%	58%	64%	66%	51%
GOING OUT TO EAT OR PICKING UP FOOD OR BEVERAGES AT A QUICKSERVICE RESTAURANT, SNACK PLACE, DELI OR COFFEE SHOP	54%	53%	58%	57%	46%
GOING OUT TO EAT AT A SIT-DOWN TABLESERVICE RESTAURANT	41%	45%	46%	43%	32%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a sit-down tableservice restaurant; went out to eat or picked up food or beverages at a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop; or ordered delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months





# LOYALTY PROGRAMS WERE SUCCESSFUL IN 2024

Among restaurant operators that offer a loyalty program, a solid majority say it helped increase their customer traffic in 2024.

A majority of limited-service operators offer loyalty programs and 3 in 4 say these programs helped increase traffic in 2024.

Loyalty programs are much less common in the fullservice segment. Roughly 4 in 10 family dining and casual dining operators and 20% of fine dining operators report them. **However, a majority reported the programs successfully boosted traffic in 2024, led by 80% of fine dining operators with programs.**

76%

3 in 4 limited-service operators say loyalty programs helped increase traffic in 2024.



## LOYALTY PROGRAMS HELPED BOOST CUSTOMER TRAFFIC IN 2024

% of restaurant operators who have a customer loyalty/rewards program, and if that program helped boost customer traffic in 2024

	HAS A CUSTOMER LOYALTY/REWARDS PROGRAM	CUSTOMER LOYALTY/REWARDS PROGRAM HELPED BOOST CUSTOMER TRAFFIC IN 2024
ALL RESTAURANTS	52%	70%
FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	38%	64%
FAMILY DINING	43%	69%
CASUAL DINING	41%	76%
FINE DINING	20%	80%
LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS	66%	76%
QUICKSERVICE	71%	75%
FAST CASUAL	56%	76%
COFFEE & SNACK	80%	78%

Source: National Restaurant Association

## WINNING STRATEGY: COMBINE LOYALTY WITH VALUE

Many consumers gravitate toward restaurants where they are members of the loyalty program, so why not give them even more reasons to come back on a regular basis with meal subscription programs or house accounts.

# 62%

62% of adults—including 78% of both Gen Z adults and millennials—say they would be likely to participate in a **meal subscription** program where they could sign up to receive a specified number of fully-prepared meals on their schedule and offered at a discount from the regular menu price.



# 56%

56% of adults—including roughly 7 in 10 Gen Z adults and millennials—say they would be likely to participate in a **house account** program where they pre-pay a certain amount to the restaurant, and they get a bonus amount added to their account.

For example: customers who pay \$50 get \$60 in their account; customers who pay \$100 get \$125 in their account; and customers who pay \$300 get \$400 in their account. Funds would be deducted from the house account each time the customer patronizes the restaurant.

## GIVE LOYAL CUSTOMERS A DISCOUNT

% of consumers who say they would likely use the following options if they were offered by a restaurant in their area

OPTION	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
MEAL SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAMS	62%	78%	78%	63%	38%
HOUSE ACCOUNTS	56%	67%	70%	58%	39%

Source: National Restaurant Association



# EXPERIENCE

# 90%

9 in 10 consumers say they  
enjoy going to restaurants.

It's more than just food that draws consumers to restaurants. The opportunity to socialize with family and friends is one of the top reasons why 9 in 10 consumers say they enjoy going to restaurants.

**Restaurant operators that create the right ambience, setting, atmosphere, and experience can build a loyal customer base that keeps coming back.**

While expectations for the overall level of service differs by segment, the core tenets underlying the quality of the experience are relatively consistent across fullservice and limited-service customers. **If done well, these factors can even outweigh the cost of the meal for many consumers.**

## THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS

When asked to pick the attributes that have the biggest impact on their personal experience when they visit a sit-down tableservice restaurant, **73% of consumers put cleanliness in their top 3.**

Next on the list were 'staff is kind and welcoming,' 'responsiveness of the staff to their requests and needs' and 'wait time for things like food, beverages and the check.'

### FULLSERVICE CUSTOMERS RANK THE ATTRIBUTES THAT HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON THEIR EXPERIENCE

Factors that are most important to customers when visiting a tableservice restaurant

FACTORS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO CUSTOMERS WHEN VISITING A TABLESERVICE RESTAURANT	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
CLEANLINESS OF THE RESTAURANT	73%	65%	73%	74%	75%
STAFF IS KIND & WELCOMING	48%	54%	52%	47%	45%
RESPONSIVENESS OF THE STAFF TO YOUR REQUESTS & NEEDS	46%	43%	43%	47%	50%
WAIT TIME FOR THINGS LIKE FOOD, BEVERAGES & THE CHECK	46%	44%	44%	46%	47%
COMFORTABLE TABLES & SEATING	35%	38%	35%	32%	39%
STAFF IS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE FOOD & BEVERAGES	31%	29%	28%	33%	33%
A PLACE WHERE OTHER CUSTOMERS ARE ENJOYING THEMSELVES	18%	26%	21%	20%	11%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a tableservice restaurant during the past 6 months

Note: Survey respondents were asked to rank the top 3 factors that are most important to them personally, when visiting a tableservice restaurant. The figures in the table represent the percent of respondents that ranked each item in their top 3.

As a follow up, consumers were asked what is more important to them when dining at a tableservice restaurant: things related to their experience or the price of the meal. **64% of fullservice customers say their top-ranked experience attributes are more important than the cost** when they go out to eat at a tableservice restaurant. That was true among a majority of consumers across all age groups.

## A GREAT EXPERIENCE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN PRICE AT FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS

Fullservice customers' reporting of what's more important to them when visiting a sit-down tableservice restaurant

WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT WHEN VISITING A SIT-DOWN TABLESERVICE RESTAURANT	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
THINGS RELATED TO THE EXPERIENCE	64%	59%	71%	65%	60%
THE PRICE OF THE MEAL	36%	41%	29%	35%	40%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a sit-down tableservice restaurant during the past 6 months

## THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: QUICKSERVICE RESTAURANTS, SNACK PLACES, DELIS OR COFFEE SHOPS

Even though much of their traffic is off-premises, the customer experience is also an important factor at quickservice restaurants, snack places, delis or coffee shops. Consumers are more likely to linger on-premises in these places than they used to, as they offer unique socialization qualities for both individuals and groups.

When given the same list of 7 attributes, 73% of limited-service customers put cleanliness in their personal top three. That was followed by 'wait time for things like food and beverages' and 'responsiveness of the staff to their requests and needs.'

# 73%

73% of limited-service customers put **cleanliness** in their personal top three.



## RESTAURANT CLEANLINESS TOPS THE LIST OF ATTRIBUTES FOR LIMITED-SERVICE CUSTOMERS

Factors that are most important to customers when visiting a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop

FACTORS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO CUSTOMERS WHEN VISITING A QUICKSERVICE RESTAURANT, SNACK PLACE, DELI OR COFFEE SHOP	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
CLEANLINESS OF THE RESTAURANT	73%	63%	71%	69%	84%
WAIT TIME FOR THINGS LIKE FOOD & BEVERAGES	57%	50%	57%	60%	58%
RESPONSIVENESS OF THE STAFF TO YOUR REQUESTS & NEEDS	47%	43%	48%	55%	41%
STAFF IS KIND & WELCOMING	41%	50%	39%	38%	41%
STAFF IS KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE FOOD & BEVERAGES	33%	30%	33%	30%	38%
COMFORTABLE TABLES & SEATING	28%	36%	24%	27%	28%
A PLACE WHERE OTHER CUSTOMERS ARE ENJOYING THEMSELVES	18%	26%	23%	18%	10%

Source: National Restaurant Association • Base: Consumers who went out to eat or picked up food or beverages at a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop during the past 6 months • Note: Survey respondents were asked to rank the top 3 factors that are most important to them personally, when visiting a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop. The figures in the table represent the percent of respondents that ranked each item in their top 3.

Limited-service customers were also asked what's more important: things related to their experience or the price of the food/beverages. Sentiment was split—47% of customers say things related to the experience are more important, while **53% say the price is more important.**

## GEN Z ADULTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO VALUE EXPERIENCE OVER PRICE AT LIMITED-SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

Limited-service customers' reporting of what's more important to them when visiting a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop

LIMITED-SERVICE CUSTOMERS' REPORTING OF WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO THEM WHEN VISITING A QUICKSERVICE RESTAURANT, SNACK PLACE, DELI OR COFFEE SHOP: THINGS RELATED TO THEIR EXPERIENCE OR THE PRICE OF THE FOOD AND/OR BEVERAGE	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
THINGS RELATED TO THE EXPERIENCE	47%	58%	50%	44%	41%
THE PRICE OF THE FOOD AND/OR BEVERAGE	53%	42%	50%	56%	59%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Consumers who went out to eat or picked up food or beverages at a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop during the past 6 months

# RESERVATIONS

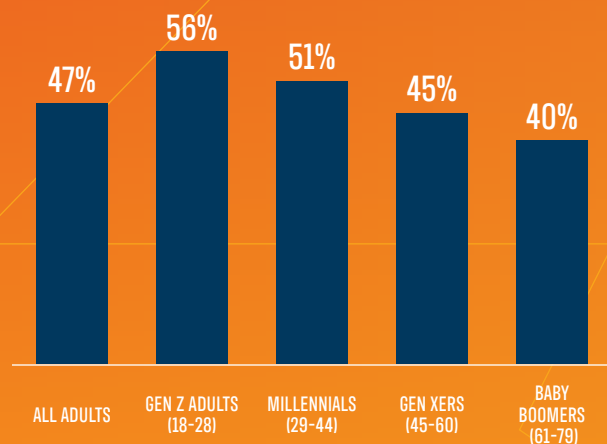
When choosing a tableservice restaurant, **8 in 10 consumers** say it's important that they can get in and out quickly without waiting.

Nearly half of customers say the option to make a reservation is important to them when choosing a restaurant. This sentiment is highest among Gen Z adults (56%) and millennials (51%).



## ABILITY TO MAKE A RESERVATION MOST IMPORTANT AMONG GEN Z CONSUMERS

% of fullservice customers who say the option make a reservation is important to them when choosing a sit-down tableservice restaurant



Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a sit-down tableservice restaurant during the past 6 months

## MAJORITY OF FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS TAKE RESERVATIONS

% of fullservice restaurants that take reservations and ways in which customers can make reservations

	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	FAMILY DINING	CASUAL DINING	FINE DINING
RESTAURANT TAKES RESERVATIONS?	68%	61%	63%	97%
WAYS IN WHICH CUSTOMERS CAN MAKE RESERVATIONS				
BY CALLING THE RESTAURANT	93%	94%	92%	93%
ON THE RESTAURANT'S WEBSITE	57%	44%	57%	74%
THROUGH A THIRD-PARTY COMPANY	52%	32%	51%	78%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Note: Multiple responses were allowed





## PARTIES WITH RESERVATIONS HOLDING STEADY FOR MOST RESTAURANTS

Fullservice restaurant operators' reporting of parties with reservations as a percent of their total customer traffic compared to two years ago

	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	FAMILY DINING	CASUAL DINING	FINE DINING
LARGER THAN 2 YEARS AGO	22%	15%	26%	23%
SMALLER THAN 2 YEARS AGO	24%	32%	24%	16%
ABOUT THE SAME AS 2 YEARS AGO	54%	53%	50%	61%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Restaurants that take reservations and were open two years ago

More than 9 in 10 operators that take reservations allow customers to call the restaurant for the reservation. **Fine dining operators are the most likely to give customers the option of making reservations on their website or through a third-party company.**

Most fullservice operators say parties with reservations represent about the same percent of their total customer traffic as they did 2 years ago.

Family dining operators are the most likely to say parties with reservations are a smaller part of their business compared to 2 years ago.

# 56%

56% of Gen Z adults say the option make a reservation is important to them when choosing a sit-down tableservice restaurant.

# STATE OF THE CONSUMER

The state of the consumer is complex.

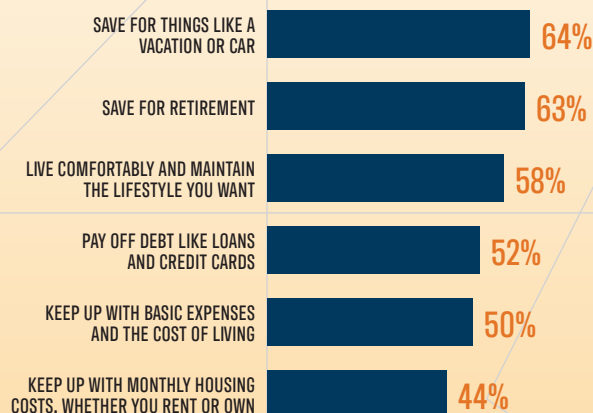
On one hand, consumer spending is bolstering the U.S. economy, preventing a recession and adding resilience to overall growth. On the other hand, economic pressures are leading many consumers to be more cautious with their spending, particularly with discretionary spending.

Despite some softening, the labor market remains tight, and wage growth robust. Equity and home values are at or near record highs, pushing household wealth to new peaks and supporting increased spending for some. However, inflation has chipped away at purchasing power, forcing many households to tap into savings or make difficult trade-offs with their limited resources.

Restaurant consumers reflect this dual perspective: 48% rate the economic conditions in their local area—including job availability—as ‘excellent’ or ‘good,’ while only 38% said the same of the national economic landscape. However, this means that more than half (52%) of consumers feel their current local economic situation is either ‘fair’ or ‘poor,’ with 62% saying the same thing about the national picture.

## CONSUMERS ARE FEELING STRAINED ECONOMICALLY

% of consumers who suggest that doing the following are ‘very’ or ‘somewhat difficult’ to do



Source: National Restaurant Association



When looking at consumers by demographics, those with higher education levels, larger household incomes, and those living in urban or suburban areas tended to view the economy more favorably, as did married individuals and homeowners. Interestingly, men and younger generations—Gen Z and millennials—were more optimistic, with Gen X being the least positive.

More than 60% of consumers reported difficulty saving for significant goals like vacations, cars, or retirement. At least half are struggling to comfortably maintain their desired lifestyle, pay down debt like loans and credit cards, or keep up with basic expenses. These challenges are similarly reflected across demographic groups.

Amid these concerns, 40% of customers report being very worried about their personal finances and have actively reduced their spending. Another 41% are adopting a wait-and-see approach, holding back on making purchases as they monitor their financial situation. 1 in 5 respondents were confident enough in their financial situation to spend more freely.

Yet, there is room for optimism. 81% of consumers expect their personal finances to either improve or remain stable over the next 12 months, with only 19% anticipating a decline.



## CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ECONOMY ARE HIGHLY SEGMENTED

% of consumers who describe the current economic situation—including the availability of jobs—as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’

	ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL ECONOMY	ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL ECONOMY
ALL ADULTS	48%	38%
<b>GENDER</b>		
MALE	58%	44%
FEMALE	39%	33%
<b>GENERATION</b>		
GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	55%	45%
MILLENNIALS (29-44)	50%	42%
GEN XERS (45-60)	42%	32%
BABY BOOMERS (61-79)	47%	37%
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>		
LESS THAN \$50,000	41%	31%
\$50,000 TO \$99,999	47%	41%
\$100,000 OR MORE	66%	49%
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR LESS	42%	34%
COLLEGE INCOMPLETE	44%	32%
COLLEGE GRADUATE	59%	47%
<b>TYPE OF COMMUNITY</b>		
URBAN	55%	44%
SUBURBAN	50%	39%
RURAL	33%	26%
<b>HOME OWNERSHIP</b>		
OWN	54%	43%
RENT	41%	34%
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
MARRIED	57%	44%
NOT MARRIED	43%	34%

Source: National Restaurant Association



## CAUTIOUS CONSUMERS

Consumers' description of their personal spending behavior

- TAKING THE WAIT-AND-SEE APPROACH, AND HOLDING BACK SOMEWHAT ON SPENDING — 41%
- VERY CONCERNED ABOUT PERSONAL FINANCES AND HOLDING BACK SIGNIFICANTLY ON SPENDING — 40%
- CONFIDENT IN PERSONAL FINANCES AND NOT HOLDING BACK ON SPENDING — 19%

Source: National Restaurant Association



## DESPITE CHALLENGES, CONSUMERS ARE CAUTIOUSLY UPBEAT ABOUT THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Consumers' expectations of their personal finances in the next year

- GET BETTER — 44%
- GET WORSE — 19%
- STAY ABOUT THE SAME — 37%

Source: National Restaurant Association

# STATE OF THE ECONOMY & OUTLOOK FOR 2025

The U.S. economy has remained resilient, defying recession forecasts and demonstrating strength, despite facing significant challenges in recent years. Although consumer assessments of the economy vary, growth has been driven largely by their spending, though, consumer spending on goods shows more volatility compared to services.

Real GDP is projected to grow by a modest 2.4% in 2025, down from 2.8% in 2024 and 2.9% in 2023. While the labor market is expected to remain strong, the historically tight conditions of recent years will likely ease. The unemployment rate is anticipated to hover around 4%, close to what economists consider “full employment.” Wage growth should remain robust and job openings will continue to exceed the number of unemployed workers. However, job postings, hiring, and labor market churn are expected to normalize to pre-pandemic levels, which should improve workforce recruitment efforts.

Inflation is another major concern affecting both consumers and restaurant operators alike. Since 2019, the average cost of food and labor has risen by 30% or more. Additionally, other key expenses for a typical restaurant—such as rent, supplies, credit card fees, and insurance—have surged.

Restaurant owners have had to raise menu prices to offset higher input costs, particularly with customer traffic still below pre-pandemic levels, to maintain



pre-tax margins of 3-5%. As a result, average menu prices have increased by more than 28% since February 2020, aligning with the price hikes necessary to maintain an average 5% profit margin.

Inflationary pressures are starting to ease and consumer prices are expected to only grow by 2.4% in 2025, down from 2.9% in 2024 and sharply lower than the 8.0% seen in 2022. The slowing inflation allowed the Federal Reserve to begin lowering short-term interest rates, with further cuts anticipated.

For restaurant operators, this reduction in interest rates is a welcome relief for two reasons: First, it indicates the Federal Reserve's commitment to lower rates, supporting stronger growth. Second, reduced rates will lower borrowing costs, encouraging more consumer and business spending and investment.

Looking ahead to 2025, the main catalysts for growth will be a strong labor market, solid wage gains, and lower interest rates. However, downside risks include geopolitical tensions, sluggish global economic growth, rising fiscal debt, and political uncertainty.

## SLOWING BUT RESILIENT GROWTH IN THE U.S. ECONOMY

INDICATOR	2022	2023	2024	2025
REAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT	2.5%	2.9%	2.8%	2.4%
REAL DISPOSABLE PERSONAL INCOME	-5.6%	5.1%	3.0%	1.7%
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX	8.0%	4.1%	2.9%	2.4%
TOTAL U.S. EMPLOYMENT	4.3%	2.3%	1.6%	1.0%

Source: National Restaurant Association projections



### IMPORTANT RESOURCE: BOOKMARK

Economic conditions shift throughout the year

Check in each month for an updated [Economic Outlook](#) and [Consumer Outlook](#) from the Association Economists.

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION RESEARCH INSIGHTS

The restaurant and foodservice industry is one of the nation's largest economic contributors and one of the largest employers in most states. Now—there's a resource to help contextualize these specific economic contributions.

The Association's State Economic Contribution reports provide a comprehensive analysis of direct contributions to the economy, broken down by state, metropolitan statistical area (MSA), and congressional district and across industry segments, including fullservice restaurants and limited-service restaurants. They also look at the multiplier effect—the significant spillover effects the industry generates—throughout the economy. The data shows how the restaurant industry influences local employment, tax revenue, and supply chain activity.

**Armed with these insights, restaurant and foodservice operators can make more strategic decisions—identifying ideal expansion opportunities, aligning with economic trends, and building relationships with key stakeholders.**

Recognizing their business's broader economic role also positions operators to cultivate stronger partnerships with local suppliers and engage in community initiatives, which, in turn, bolsters brand visibility and strengthens their reputation.

### EATING & DRINKING PLACES:

**\$1.4T Sales**  
in 2024

**6% Real GDP**  
in 2024

**\$472.4B**  
Labor Income

**\$216.7B**  
Taxes Paid

### MULTIPLIER:

**\$3.5T Spending**  
in 2024

**22.9M**  
Jobs

**\$1.1T**  
Labor Income

**\$490.4B**  
Taxes Paid

## SUPPLY CHAIN SNAPSHOT

Like restaurant operators, supply chain professionals—individuals working for manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and brokers—reported challenging business conditions in 2024, though they remain generally optimistic about 2025.

**29%**

29% of supply chain professionals say their total revenue was higher in 2024 than it was in 2023. 47% reported a revenue decline, while 24% say it remained about the same as 2023.

**22%**

22% of supply chain professionals say their business was not profitable in 2024.

**32%**

32% of supply chain professionals say the overall health of their business is currently stronger than it was in 2019. 46% say the health of their business is weaker, while 22% say it is about the same as 2019.

**51%**

Outlook for 2025: 51% of supply chain professionals expect their business's total revenue to be higher in 2025 than it was in 2024. 24% expect to have lower revenue in 2025, while 25% expect it to remain about the same.



### IMPORTANT RESOURCE: BOOKMARK

See how the restaurant and foodservice industry impacts your state.

Download an Economic Contributions Insight report at [restaurant.org/stateimpact](https://restaurant.org/stateimpact)



# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025

## WORKFORCE TRENDS

A shortage of available labor put significant strains on restaurant operations in recent years. While conditions continued to normalize in 2024, labor concerns remained top of mind for many operators. In fact, 77% of operators say recruiting and retaining employees are still significant challenges for their restaurant.

The good news: labor market conditions are improving. Unfilled job openings are back down to pre-pandemic levels, and employee-initiated turnover is at its lowest point in nearly a decade.

More teens and young adults are entering the labor force and many choose restaurant jobs—making up more than 4 in 10 of restaurant employees.

The net result is that more restaurants are fully staffed. In 2021, 78% of operators said their restaurant did not have enough employees to meet customer demand.

Today, 32% of operators say so.





## IN THIS SECTION:

### WHAT'S WORKING IN RECRUITMENT?

Restaurant operators say they're most successful at recruiting people who are only looking for part-time or flexible schedules. The best leads to find them in 2024 were referrals from current employees, while online job postings topped the list for direct job-opening outreach. See page 42.

### IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

A solid majority of operators say investments in technology improved the overall efficiency of their restaurants, but a smaller proportion see it directly improving employee satisfaction, employee training or recruitment, or retention initiatives. Look for investments to continue in this area in 2025. See page 44.

### OUTLOOK FOR RESTAURANT JOBS

The industry workforce is expected to grow in 2025, holding its place as the nation's second largest private sector employer.

And while job growth is expected across all restaurant segments, the fullservice segment is not yet expected to fully recover to pre-pandemic employment levels. See page 38.

### OPERATOR HIGHLIGHTS:

Page 39:  
Where the jobs are: Outlook for restaurant employment in 2025 and beyond.

Page 43:  
Recruiting successes: Where are operators finding employees in today's labor market?

Page 44:  
Impact of technology: Have tech innovations changed the restaurant workforce?

# THE EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK: 2025 & BEYOND

The restaurant and foodservice workforce continued to grow in 2024, but at a much slower pace than recent years when the industry was rebuilding staffing levels following pandemic job losses.

## 200K

The industry is expected to **add roughly 200K jobs**, bringing total restaurant and foodservice employment to 15.9M by year end.

At the end of 2024, the industry was still the nation's second largest private sector employer, providing 15.7M jobs—or 10% of the total U.S. workforce.

That included 12.5M jobs at eating and drinking places, and about 3.2M foodservice jobs in other sectors such as health care, accommodations, education, food-and-beverage stores, and arts, entertainment and recreation venues.

But the economy has an impact: 64% of operators say they'd be likely to lay off employees in 2025 if business conditions deteriorate and the U.S. economy goes into recession.

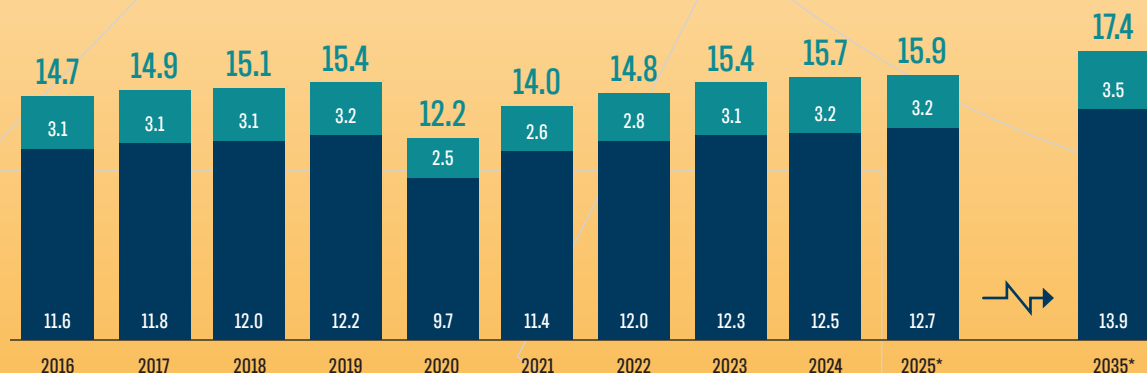
Employment growth will vary by restaurant segment. By the end of 2025, it's likely fullservice restaurant employment will still be more than 150K jobs below pre-pandemic levels.

Looking ahead, restaurant and foodservice employment will continue to grow at a moderate rate. **Between 2025 and 2035, the industry is projected to add an average of 150K jobs a year (1.5M total), with total staffing levels reaching 17.4M by 2035.**

## RESTAURANT INDUSTRY WILL ADD JOBS IN 2025

Number of restaurant and foodservice jobs (millions)

■ NON-RESTAURANT FOODSERVICE JOBS  
■ EATING & DRINKING PLACE JOBS



Source: National Restaurant Association, based on historical data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: Figures represent year-end employment levels

\*projected



## STATE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT: 2024 TO 2035\*

STATE	2024	2035	EMPLOYMENT CHANGE, 2024 - 2035	
			NUMBER OF JOBS	PERCENT CHANGE
ALABAMA	202,200	221,800	19,600	9.7%
ALASKA	31,800	34,100	2,300	7.2%
ARIZONA	324,900	379,000	54,100	16.7%
ARKANSAS	126,200	138,300	12,100	9.6%
CALIFORNIA	1,853,800	2,080,500	226,700	12.2%
COLORADO	313,000	360,000	47,000	15.0%
CONNECTICUT	151,800	162,200	10,400	6.9%
DELAWARE	52,600	59,500	6,900	13.1%
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	66,400	74,000	7,600	11.4%
FLORIDA	1,113,700	1,274,400	160,700	14.4%
GEORGIA	508,800	593,000	84,200	16.5%
HAWAII	91,400	102,000	10,600	11.6%
IDAHO	84,100	97,200	13,100	15.6%
ILLINOIS	585,400	625,200	39,800	6.8%
INDIANA	316,400	348,500	32,100	10.1%
IOWA	147,800	158,100	10,300	7.0%
KANSAS	132,700	141,200	8,500	6.4%
KENTUCKY	203,000	218,000	15,000	7.4%
LOUISIANA	198,400	212,000	13,600	6.9%
MAINE	70,200	75,000	4,800	6.8%
MARYLAND	252,800	274,200	21,400	8.5%
MASSACHUSETTS	354,300	385,700	31,400	8.9%
MICHIGAN	423,500	454,400	30,900	7.3%
MINNESOTA	276,800	307,200	30,400	11.0%
MISSISSIPPI	127,100	136,000	8,900	7.0%
MISSOURI	302,300	322,500	20,200	6.7%
MONTANA	62,300	67,000	4,700	7.5%
NEBRASKA	100,800	108,500	7,700	7.6%
NEVADA	227,300	265,000	37,700	16.6%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	68,600	73,500	4,900	7.1%
NEW JERSEY	375,000	400,700	25,700	6.9%
NEW MEXICO	94,200	103,700	9,500	10.1%
NEW YORK	869,500	934,000	64,500	7.4%
NORTH CAROLINA	512,000	595,100	83,100	16.2%
NORTH DAKOTA	38,300	40,700	2,400	6.3%
OHIO	564,500	608,000	43,500	7.7%
OKLAHOMA	191,500	207,600	16,100	8.4%
OREGON	200,000	224,800	24,800	12.4%
PENNSYLVANIA	557,200	596,500	39,300	7.1%
RHODE ISLAND	57,600	61,200	3,600	6.3%
SOUTH CAROLINA	268,600	310,000	41,400	15.4%
SOUTH DAKOTA	51,000	54,200	3,200	6.3%
TENNESSEE	344,500	378,000	33,500	9.7%
TEXAS	1,472,500	1,710,000	237,500	16.1%
UTAH	154,200	179,000	24,800	16.1%
VERMONT	30,900	33,000	2,100	6.8%
VIRGINIA	378,800	415,000	36,200	9.6%
WASHINGTON	343,100	389,000	45,900	13.4%
WEST VIRGINIA	69,700	73,500	3,800	5.5%
WISCONSIN	282,600	304,000	21,400	7.6%
WYOMING	31,900	34,000	2,100	6.6%

\*Includes employment in all eating and drinking place occupations, plus employment in foodservice positions that are not located at eating and drinking places  
Source: National Restaurant Association projections, based on historical data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

## THE LOCAL LABOR SCENE

The industry workforce is expected to grow in every state over the next decade. Between 2025 and 2035, Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas and Utah are projected to set the pace with more than 16% employment growth. Texas, California and Florida are expected to add the *most* restaurant jobs over the next 10 years.



## LABOR CHALLENGES ARE EASING

While operators are finding a measure of relief in their pursuit of a stable workforce—the availability of employees is much more in balance with demand—it doesn't mean there's an abundance of qualified applicants. **77% of operators say recruiting and retaining employees is still a significant challenge.** And while 32% of operators say their restaurant doesn't have enough employees to support existing customer demand, that's down from 45% in 2023 and is well below the 78% who reported so in 2021.

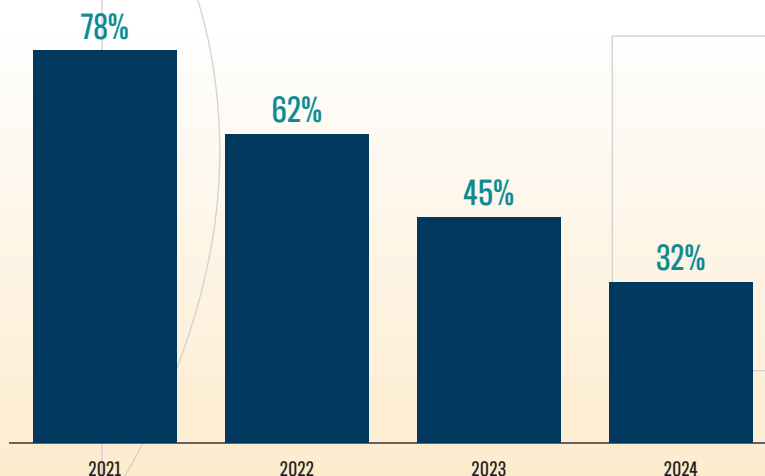
Some jobs are harder to fill than others. 59% of operators say they have openings that are tough to fill, but that's an improvement over 2022 (79%) and 2023 (70%).

Among fullservice operators who report hard-to-fill openings, most say they're challenged finding chefs/cooks (78%) and kitchen support staff (61%), illustrating the degree to which shortages are impacting day-to-day operations.

Limited-service operators are the most likely to report difficulties finding managers (61%) and customer service (customer facing) employees (55%).

## STAFFING SUPPLY & DEMAND MORE IN BALANCE

% of operators who said they don't have enough employees to support existing customer demand

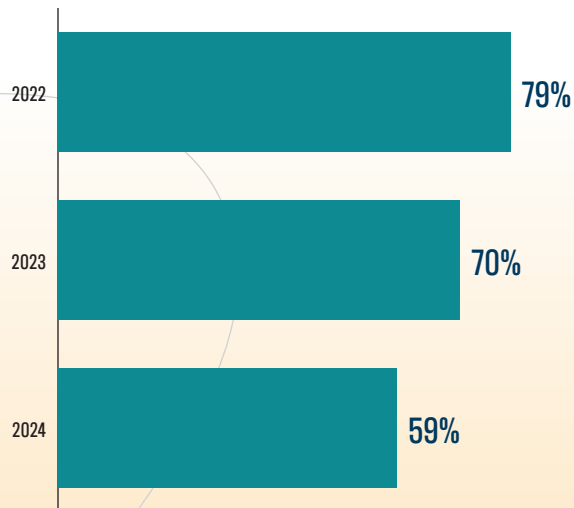


Source: National Restaurant Association  
Note: Surveys were fielded in Q4 of each year



## HELP WANTED SIGNS STILL POSTED

% of operators who said they have job openings that are hard to fill



Source: National Restaurant Association  
Note: Surveys were fielded in Q4 of each year

## NOT ENOUGH COOKS IN THE KITCHEN

% of operators who report they are having difficulties filling open positions in the following areas

EMPLOYEE CATEGORY	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULL-SERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
CHEF/COOK POSITIONS	59%	78%	41%
MANAGER POSITIONS	54%	48%	61%
KITCHEN SUPPORT POSITIONS	54%	61%	47%
FRONT-OF-HOUSE OR CUSTOMER SERVICE POSITIONS	52%	49%	55%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Restaurants that currently have job openings that are hard to fill



### → OPERATORS:

In this economy, many people are looking for a supplemental job that can be flexible to other jobs or responsibilities for 10-15 hours a week. This could include people who don't have regular paying jobs but might have blocks of time available (for example, stay-at-home parents or other caregivers), or people who have other jobs but might want to pick up a shift or two on their days off.





## RECRUITING SUCCESS IN 2024

# 90%

**9 in 10** restaurant operators say they **filled job openings** in 2024.

**7 in 10** of them say they found success recruiting people who were only looking for **part-time and/or flexible schedules**.

**6 in 10** operators say they **recruited people who were working in other restaurants**, a more common response among fullservice (66%) than limited-service operators (58%).

The restaurant industry has long been the primary training ground for people just entering the workforce, and 2024 was no different. 6 in 10 limited-service and 4 in 10 fullservice operators say they hired first-time workers and teens last year.

1 in 4 operators say they found success hiring people returning to the workforce in 2024.

Although the number of older workers in restaurants continues to rise, most restaurants aren't tapping into this demographic to fill staffing needs. About 1 in 5 operators say they hired workers from the 55-and-older cohort in 2024.



### PART-TIME WORK, FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES A DRAW

% of operators who found success recruiting people from the following groups in 2024

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
PEOPLE WHO ARE ONLY LOOKING FOR PART-TIME AND/OR FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES	68%	67%	70%
PEOPLE WORKING IN OTHER RESTAURANTS	62%	66%	58%
FIRST-TIME WORKERS	51%	43%	59%
TEENAGERS	49%	41%	58%
PEOPLE RETURNING TO WORKFORCE	23%	20%	25%
PEOPLE WORKING IN OTHER SECTORS	21%	20%	23%
OLDER WORKERS (55+)	18%	16%	20%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Restaurants that filled job openings in 2024  
Note: Multiple responses were allowed



**Employees are often the best ambassadors for their workplace. 2/3 of operators say they filled positions with people who were referred by current employees.**

Positive word-of-mouth is a great way to attract new customers, and the same holds true for employees. **Nearly 6 in 10 operators say they attracted applicants when customers, friends, and family spread the word about job openings.**

In terms of direct outreach, 64% of operators found online job postings substantially more effective than social media campaigns (37%), help wanted signs (25%) and newspaper job postings (3%).

## HAPPY EMPLOYEES ARE GREAT RECRUITERS

% of operators who found success using the following recruiting methods in 2024

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
REFERRALS FROM CURRENT EMPLOYEES	67%	67%	67%
ONLINE JOB POSTING	64%	63%	65%
WORD OF MOUTH	57%	56%	58%
SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN	37%	39%	34%
HELP WANTED SIGN	25%	17%	33%
APPRENTICESHIPS	4%	5%	3%
NEWSPAPER JOB POSTING	3%	4%	3%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Restaurants that filled job openings in 2024  
Note: Multiple responses were allowed



### → OPERATORS:

Get people talking about your job openings. Referrals by your staff, friends, family and customers are the best ways to reach people.



## TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON THE RESTAURANT WORKFORCE

Among restaurant operators that incorporated more technology into their operation in the past 2 or 3 years, 7 in 10 say their restaurant became more efficient and productive—fullservice operators (74%) more so than limited-service (63%).

3 in 10 say these tech investments improved overall employee satisfaction or improved employee training in their restaurant.

15% of operators say technology made it easier to recruit or retain employees.

Nonetheless, **49% of operators say technology and automation to help with labor challenges will become more common within their segment in 2025** and 74% say technology integration in restaurants will augment rather than replace human labor.

Only 13% of operators say their restaurant's investment in technology resulted in the permanent elimination of any jobs during the past 2 or 3 years.

### TECH IMPACT ON WORKFORCE METRICS

% of operators who say investments in technology impacted their performance in the following ways

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
MAKE THE RESTAURANT MORE EFFICIENT/PRODUCTIVE	69%	74%	63%
IMPROVE EMPLOYEE TRAINING	29%	28%	31%
IMPROVE OVERALL EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION	29%	32%	26%
MAKE IT EASIER TO RECRUIT OR RETAIN EMPLOYEES	15%	14%	16%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Restaurants that incorporated more technology into the operation during the past 2-3 years



### → OPERATORS:

Get more information about where operators are making tech investments in the Operations section, on page 60.



## LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY IN A SHIFTING WORKFORCE LANDSCAPE—COMING IN MARCH!

Watch for a new in-depth look at how technology can enhance the restaurant industry's talent recruitment processes.

Get an inside look at the current labor market landscape, recruitment strategies, and how operators say they're using technological tools in workforce identification.



## LABOR MARKET MORE STABLE

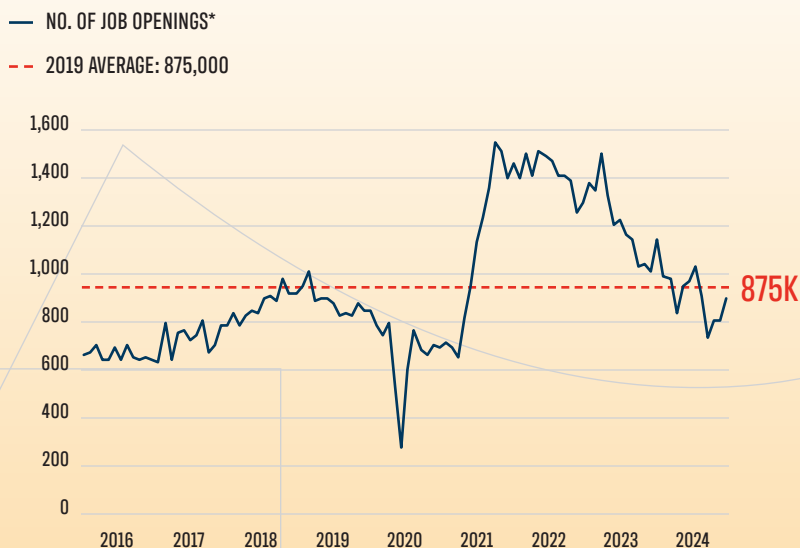
Restaurant and foodservice industry job churn is normalizing.

In 2021 and 2022, the average number of job openings in the combined restaurants and accommodations sector soared to record highs of more than 1.5M, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS). By late-2024, job openings hovered around the 2019 average of 875K.

Operators are having more success keeping the employees they have. Fewer than 4% of employees in the combined restaurants and accommodations sector quit their jobs each month (in late-2024), well below the 2021 and 2022 highs of more than 6%. These were the lowest readings since 2015 (excluding early-pandemic months).

## JOB OPENINGS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR BACK TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

No. of job openings\* in the restaurants and accommodations sector (thousands)



Sources: BLS, National Restaurant Association; figures are seasonally adjusted and preliminary

\*Job openings represent vacancies on the last business day of the month

## QUIT RATE FELL SHARPLY IN 2024

Monthly quit rate in the restaurants and accommodations sector



Sources: BLS, National Restaurant Association; figures are seasonally adjusted and preliminary  
Note: The job openings and quits data presented above are for the broadly-defined Accommodations and Food Services sector (NAICS 72), because the BLS does not report data for restaurants alone. Eating and drinking places account for nearly 90% of jobs in the combined sector.

## YOU'RE HIRED! TEENS, YOUNG ADULTS TRENDING

Teens and young adults make up 4 in 10 people working in the restaurant and foodservice industry. In comparison, 16-to-24-year-olds only represent 13% of employees in the overall economy (see chart on pg. 48). They're a critical age group and the number of them entering the workforce has increased.

**In 2024, 37.2% of teens (16-to-19-year-olds) were in the restaurant and foodservice industry labor force.** That was the 4th consecutive annual increase and represented the highest level since 2009 (37.5%). The record high was 1979's 57.9%. The young adult (20-to-24-year-old) participation rate was 71.4% in 2024, also, the 4th consecutive annual increase and highest reading since 2019 (72.2%).

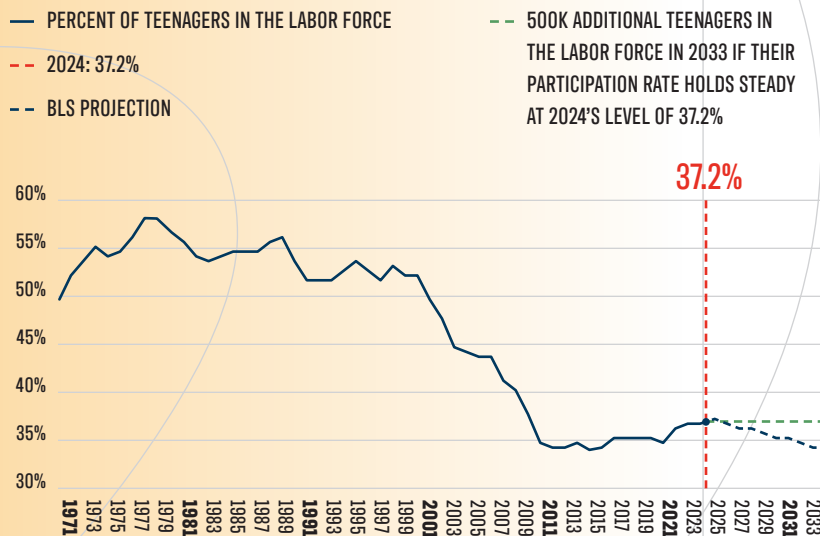
Looking ahead over the next decade, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) expects the labor force participation of teens and young adults to trend lower, leading to a sharp drop in the number of young workers in the labor force.

Fortunately, over the last few years, we've seen solid evidence teens and young adults are willing to participate in the workforce when given the right opportunities.



## A STEADY PARTICIPATION RATE WOULD PRODUCE AN ADDITIONAL 500K TEENAGERS IN THE LABOR FORCE

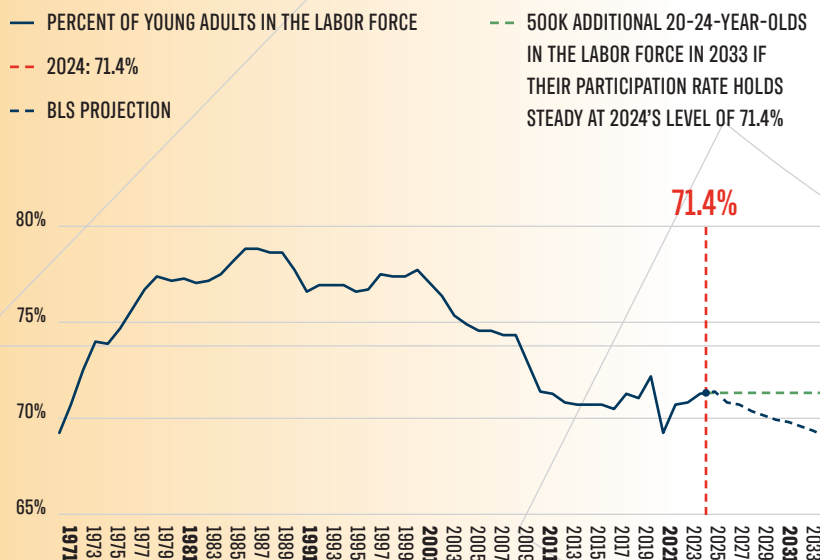
Labor force participation rate of  
**16-to-19-year-olds:** historical and projected



Sources: BLS, National Restaurant Association

## A STEADY PARTICIPATION RATE WOULD PRODUCE AN ADDITIONAL 500K YOUNG ADULTS IN THE LABOR FORCE

Labor force participation rate of  
**20-to-24-year-olds:** historical and projected



Sources: BLS, National Restaurant Association



**Fortunately, over the last few years, we've seen solid evidence teens and young adults are willing to participate in the workforce when given the right opportunities.**

If the participation rates of 16-to-24-year-olds in the labor force hold steady during the next decade instead of declining as the BLS projects—it would result in an additional 1M teens and young adults working in the industry.



# THE U.S. RESTAURANT & FOODSERVICE WORKFORCE

Restaurant employees are more likely than the overall U.S. workforce to be young, single, racially diverse, students, and working part-time.



## RESTAURANT WORKFORCE MORE DIVERSE THAN OVERALL LABOR FORCE

Characteristics of employees in the restaurant & foodservice industry and overall U.S. workforce

CHARACTERISTIC	RESTAURANT WORKFORCE	OVERALL U.S. WORKFORCE
<b>SEX</b>		
MALE	45%	52%
FEMALE	55%	48%
<b>AGE</b>		
16 - 17	9%	1%
18 - 24	31%	12%
25 - 34	20%	22%
35 - 44	15%	22%
45 - 54	12%	20%
55 - 64	9%	17%
65 OR OLDER	4%	7%
<b>RACE/ETHNICITY</b>		
WHITE	49%	59%
HISPANIC	27%	19%
BLACK	12%	11%
ASIAN	7%	7%
NATIVE AMERICAN	*	*
NATIVE HI / PACIFIC ISLANDER	*	*
2 OR MORE RACES	5%	4%

CHARACTERISTIC	RESTAURANT WORKFORCE	OVERALL U.S. WORKFORCE
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
NEVER MARRIED	62%	35%
MARRIED	27%	51%
WIDOWED/DIVORCED/SEPARATED	11%	14%
<b>HOUSEHOLD POSITION</b>		
HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	34%	51%
SPOUSE/PARTNER OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD	18%	27%
CHILD/GRANDCHILD OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD	33%	13%
OTHER	15%	8%
<b>PLACE OF BIRTH</b>		
UNITED STATES	78%	80%
ANOTHER COUNTRY	22%	20%
<b>SCHOOL ENROLLMENT</b>		
ENROLLED IN SCHOOL	27%	10%
NOT ENROLLED IN SCHOOL	73%	90%
<b>USUAL WORK SCHEDULE</b>		
FULL-TIME / FULL-YEAR	44%	72%
PART-TIME / FULL-YEAR	29%	13%
PART-TIME / PART-YEAR	21%	8%
FULL-TIME / PART-YEAR	6%	7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey • Note: Figures may not add precisely to 100% due to rounding. • \*Less than 1%





# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025



## OPERATIONAL TRENDS

With input costs continuing to put pressure on restaurant operations, operators are making changes to protect their small margins. While they are reluctantly raising menu prices, they are also making significant investments in cost saving and revenue generating areas—including off-premises, technology and managing elevated costs.







## IN THIS SECTION:

### MEETING THE NEEDS OF AN EXPANDING OFF-PREMISES MARKET

Most consumers wish they had more choices of restaurants that offer takeout and delivery in their area and the vast majority would also order a greater variety of food items, if the restaurant used packaging that helps the food maintain the same temperature, taste and quality as when it is served in the restaurant. Find out more about where customers would like to see improvements. See page 54.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT RESTAURANT TECHNOLOGY

Operators say technology is making their operations more efficient and productive, but the impact on other performance metrics was a mixed bag. Only 28% of operators say their investments in technology improved the profitability of their restaurant. However, customers say technology for things like ordering and paying is important. Find out where operators plan new investments in 2025. See page 62.

### OPERATING IN AN ELEVATED COST ENVIRONMENT

Higher costs put additional stress on the bottom line as customer traffic softened in 2024. Consumers were mostly sympathetic: 67% of adults say it is acceptable that restaurants increased their prices to cover the higher cost of doing business. But additional operational adjustments also had to be made. Find the top additional actions operators took. See page 65.



## OPERATOR HIGHLIGHTS:

Page 55:  
The one change that would please off-premises customers the most.

Page 64:  
Find out what restaurant technology is on customers' wish list.

Page 66:  
When prices aren't enough, where operators are turning to preserve their small margins.



# OFF-PREMISES TRENDS

The numbers are clear: Takeout and delivery are an integral part of daily life for many consumers.

51% of consumers—including 67% of Gen Z adults and 64% of millennials—say ordering takeout food from a restaurant is an **essential** part of their lifestyle.

41% of consumers feel similarly about ordering food for delivery—including 6 in 10 Gen Z adults and millennials.

What's more, the frequency of off-premises use is increasing for younger adults: a majority of Gen Z adults and millennials say they order takeout and delivery more often now than they did a year ago.

While the essentiality and growth numbers are impressive, there is even more room for expansion in the off-premises space.

66% of consumers—including 83% of Gen Z adults and 76% of millennials—wish they had more choices of restaurants that offer takeout in their area.

61% of consumers—including 79% of Gen Z adults and 72% of millennials—would like to see more restaurants offering delivery in their area.



# 51%

51% of consumers  
say ordering takeout  
food from a restaurant  
is an **essential**  
part of their lifestyle.

## BY THE NUMBERS: CONSUMER SENTIMENT ABOUT TAKEOUT & DELIVERY

% of consumers who agree with the following statements

STATEMENT	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
ORDERING TAKEOUT FOOD FROM A RESTAURANT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR LIFESTYLE	51%	67%	64%	50%	34%
ORDERING FOOD FOR DELIVERY FROM A RESTAURANT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR LIFESTYLE	41%	59%	61%	40%	14%
YOU ORDER TAKEOUT MORE OFTEN NOW THAN YOU DID A YEAR AGO	44%	67%	59%	35%	26%
YOU ORDER DELIVERY MORE OFTEN NOW THAN YOU DID A YEAR AGO	37%	64%	53%	32%	15%
YOU WISH YOU HAD MORE CHOICES OF RESTAURANTS THAT OFFER TAKEOUT IN YOUR AREA	66%	83%	76%	65%	49%
YOU WISH YOU HAD MORE CHOICES OF RESTAURANTS THAT OFFER DELIVERY IN YOUR AREA	61%	79%	72%	67%	37%

Source: National Restaurant Association





# 50%

Fully one-half of restaurant operators say off-premises represents a **larger proportion of their total sales** now than it did in 2019.



## RESTAURANT OPERATORS AGREE

Just like consumers, off-premises is an increasingly essential part of daily business for many restaurants.

- Fully one-half of restaurant operators say off-premises represents a larger proportion of their total sales now than it did in 2019. On a segment level, that breaks down to 58% of limited-service operators and 41% of fullservice operators.
- Only 1 in 5 operators say off-premises makes up a smaller share of their business now than it did in 2019.
- To support this evolving business model, more than 1 in 3 operators made changes to their restaurant's inside space and/or parking lot to accommodate off-premises orders. Those actions were taken by 40% of limited-service operators and 30% of fullservice operators.

## OFF-PREMISES IS A GROWING SHARE OF THE BUSINESS

Restaurant operators' reporting of their total off-premises sales (as a % of total sales) in 2024 compared to 2019

OFF-PREMISES AS A % OF TOTAL SALES	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
HIGHER THAN 2019	50%	41%	58%
LOWER THAN 2019	20%	22%	19%
ABOUT THE SAME AS 2019	30%	37%	23%

Source: National Restaurant Association

## COMING IN APRIL 2025!

Watch for a new report exploring the growing importance of the off-premises side of the business and the factors influencing and motivating consumers to use takeout and delivery.

Find out more at [restaurant.org/research](https://restaurant.org/research)



## CUSTOMERS ARE SATISFIED – & THEY ALSO HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Takeout customers generally gave high marks to their most recent takeout experience, with the vast majority saying they were satisfied with the ease of ordering/paying, food quality, convenience and packaging.

They were somewhat less satisfied with the cost of the food, though nearly 3 in 4 customers still gave positive marks. Baby boomers were more likely than Gen Z adults or Gen X to say they were satisfied with the cost of the food.



## CONSUMERS GIVE HIGH MARKS TO THEIR TAKEOUT RESTAURANTS

% of customers who say they were very or somewhat satisfied with the following attributes of their most recent takeout order from a restaurant

	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
HOW EASY IT WAS TO ORDER AND PAY FOR THE FOOD	95%	90%	96%	95%	99%
OVERALL FOOD QUALITY	95%	88%	95%	95%	99%
HOW CONVENIENT IT WAS TO GET IN AND OUT OF THE RESTAURANT	94%	91%	94%	93%	96%
PACKAGING THAT CONTAINED THE FOOD	94%	89%	93%	95%	97%
TEMPERATURE OF THE FOOD	92%	86%	92%	92%	97%
ACCURACY OF YOUR ORDER	92%	86%	92%	91%	97%
CUSTOMER SERVICE	92%	91%	93%	91%	93%
AMOUNT OF TIME IT TOOK TO RECEIVE YOUR ORDER	91%	88%	92%	89%	95%
COST OF THE FOOD (INCLUDING TAXES AND TIPS)	73%	67%	72%	67%	85%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who ordered takeout food from a restaurant during the past 6 months



In terms of areas in which takeout customers would most like to see restaurants improve, 'maintaining the proper temperature of the food' topped the list. That was followed closely by 'reduce the wait time to receive the order' and 'improve the quality of the food.'

Gen Z adults were the most likely to say they want restaurants to improve the quality of the food for takeout, while baby boomers were the most likely to say they would like to see a greater variety of food options for takeout.

## MAINTAINING TEMPERATURE, REDUCING WAIT TIME & BETTER FOOD QUALITY TOPPED CUSTOMERS' LIST OF IMPROVEMENTS

Areas in which customers would most like restaurants that offer takeout to improve

	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
MAINTAIN THE PROPER TEMPERATURE OF THE FOOD	40%	40%	38%	36%	46%
REDUCE THE WAIT TIME TO RECEIVE THE ORDER	39%	42%	40%	39%	36%
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE FOOD	38%	47%	42%	31%	34%
INCREASE THE VARIETY OF FOOD OPTIONS FOR TAKEOUT	35%	22%	35%	35%	40%
MAKE IT EASIER TO CUSTOMIZE ORDERS	33%	33%	28%	37%	35%
IMPROVE THE ACCURACY OF ORDERS	33%	27%	37%	39%	28%
MAKE IT MORE CONVENIENT TO GET IN AND OUT OF THE RESTAURANT	31%	31%	27%	31%	35%
MAKE IT EASIER TO ORDER AND PAY FOR THE FOOD	25%	30%	29%	26%	16%
IMPROVE THE PACKAGING THAT CONTAINS THE FOOD	19%	21%	15%	17%	24%

Source: National Restaurant Association • Base: Consumers who ordered takeout food from a restaurant during the past 6 months

Note: Survey respondents were asked to rank the top 3 areas in which they would like restaurants that offer takeout to improve. The figures in the table represent the percent of respondents that ranked each item in their top 3.



# >90%

More than 9 in 10  
delivery customers  
say they were  
satisfied with the ease  
of ordering and paying,  
customer service, the  
overall food quality and  
the food packaging.

Delivery customers were mostly happy with the various attributes of their most recent order. More than 9 in 10 customers say they were satisfied with the ease of ordering and paying, customer service, the overall food quality and the food packaging.

Like their takeout counterparts, delivery customers gave somewhat lower marks to the cost of the food.



## CONSUMERS ARE MOSTLY SATISFIED WITH THEIR DELIVERY ORDERS

% of customers who say they were very or somewhat satisfied with the following attributes of their most recent delivery order from a restaurant

	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
HOW EASY IT WAS TO ORDER AND PAY FOR THE FOOD	95%	92%	98%	95%	97%
CUSTOMER SERVICE	92%	88%	93%	94%	93%
OVERALL FOOD QUALITY	91%	88%	93%	90%	93%
PACKAGING THAT CONTAINED THE FOOD	91%	86%	93%	89%	94%
ACCURACY OF YOUR ORDER	89%	91%	87%	89%	94%
AMOUNT OF TIME IT TOOK TO RECEIVE YOUR ORDER	87%	82%	85%	89%	92%
TEMPERATURE OF THE FOOD	86%	78%	88%	84%	93%
COST OF THE FOOD (INCLUDING DELIVERY FEES, TAXES AND TIPS)	67%	64%	65%	62%	82%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who ordered food for delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months





When asked for the ways that they would most like to see restaurants improve, 'maintaining the proper temperature of the food' topped the list for delivery customers. That was followed closely by 'reduce the wait time to receive the order' and 'provide an accurate time when orders will be delivered.'

Gen Z adults were the most likely to say they want better quality food for delivery, while baby boomers would like more choices.

## MAINTAINING TEMPERATURE, REDUCING WAIT TIME & PROVIDING ACCURATE DELIVERY TIME TOPPED LIST OF IMPROVEMENTS

Areas in which customers would most like restaurants that offer delivery to improve

	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
MAINTAIN THE PROPER TEMPERATURE OF THE FOOD	43%	44%	44%	41%	41%
REDUCE THE WAIT TIME TO RECEIVE THE ORDER	39%	35%	42%	41%	34%
PROVIDE AN ACCURATE TIME WHEN ORDERS WILL BE DELIVERED	36%	39%	33%	41%	31%
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE FOOD	34%	45%	35%	30%	25%
MAKE IT EASIER TO CUSTOMIZE ORDERS	32%	22%	26%	45%	41%
INCREASE THE VARIETY OF FOOD OPTIONS FOR DELIVERY	31%	23%	34%	31%	41%
IMPROVE THE ACCURACY OF ORDERS	30%	29%	34%	26%	31%
IMPROVE THE PACKAGING THAT CONTAINS THE FOOD	24%	27%	24%	24%	19%
MAKE IT EASIER TO ORDER AND PAY FOR THE FOOD	22%	30%	23%	14%	21%

Source: National Restaurant Association • Base: Consumers who ordered food for delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months

Note: Survey respondents were asked to rank the top 3 areas in which they would like restaurants that offer delivery to improve. The figures in the table represent the percent of respondents that ranked each item in their top 3.

# 90%

90% of off-premises customers say they'd likely order a **greater variety of food items** for takeout or delivery, if the restaurant used upgraded packaging.

## BETTER PACKAGING = MORE CHOICES

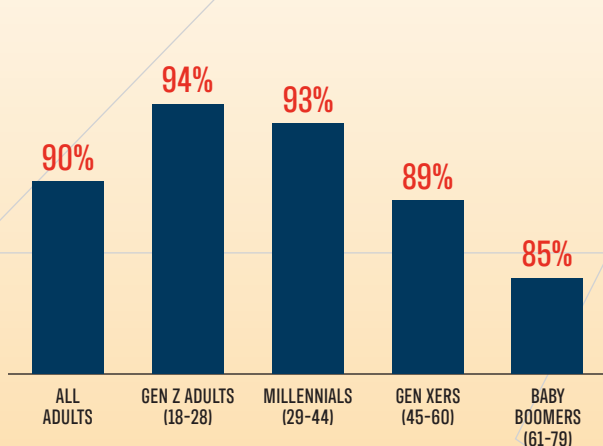
For both takeout and delivery customers, 'maintain the proper temperature of the food' topped the list of ways in which they would like restaurants to improve.

At the same time, the vast majority of consumers would like more choices beyond the traditional off-premises options: 90% of off-premises customers say they would likely order a greater variety of food items for takeout or delivery, if the restaurant used upgraded packaging that helps the food maintain the same temperature, taste and quality as when it is served in the restaurant.

Moreover, a majority of consumers would pay extra for it. 53% of off-premises customers—including nearly 6 in 10 Gen Z adults and millennials—say they would be willing to pay a little more for these takeout and delivery orders than they would in the restaurant, to cover the cost of the upgraded packaging.

## CONSUMERS WANT MORE OFF-PREMISES FOOD OPTIONS...

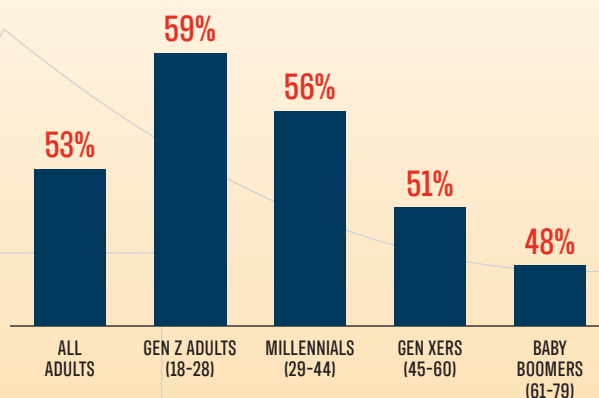
% of off-premises customers who say they would be likely to order a greater variety of food items for takeout or delivery, if the restaurant used packaging that helps the food maintain the same temperature, taste and quality as when it is served in the restaurant



Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Adults who ordered takeout or delivery food from a restaurant during the past 6 months

## ...AND MOST WILL PAY EXTRA FOR UPGRADED PACKAGING

% of off-premises customers who say they would be willing to pay a little more for these takeout and delivery orders than they would in the restaurant, to cover the cost of the upgraded packaging



Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Off-premises customers who say they would be likely to order a greater variety of food items for takeout or delivery, if the restaurant used packaging that helps the food maintain the same temperature, taste and quality as when it is served in the restaurant.



## EXPANDING OFF-PREMISES OPTIONS

With the off-premises side of the business growing in importance, many restaurant operators are considering ways to increase touchpoints for consumers.

- **Curbside takeout** is a popular option among both fullservice and limited-service operators, with nearly half expecting it to become more common within their segment in 2025.
- Offering a **dedicated takeout counter or window** garnered more interest among limited-service operators (51%) than fullservice operators (31%).
- Roughly 3 in 10 operators think **restaurant locations that only offer takeout or drive-thru** will become more common in their segment—a sentiment that was more popular among limited-service operators.
- 30% of limited-service operators think the addition of **drive-thru lanes** will be more common within their segment in 2025, while 12% of their fullservice counterparts reported similarly.
- Only 1 in 5 operators think **ghost kitchens** will become more common within their segment in 2025.

## EXPANDING OFF-PREMISES TOUCHPOINTS

Restaurant operators' expectations of whether the following options will become more common within their segment in 2025

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
OFFERING CURBSIDE TAKEOUT	49%	43%	54%
OFFERING A DEDICATED TAKEOUT COUNTER OR WINDOW	41%	31%	51%
RESTAURANT LOCATIONS THAT ONLY OFFER TAKEOUT OR DRIVE-THRU	28%	22%	34%
ADDITION OF DRIVE-THRU LANES	21%	12%	30%
DELIVERY FROM A VIRTUAL OR GHOST KITCHEN	21%	19%	23%

Source: National Restaurant Association



# TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

83% of operators say the use of technology in a restaurant provides a competitive advantage. Limited-service operators (86%) are somewhat more likely than fullservice operators (79%) to have that view.

With that in mind, operators made technological investments across many facets of their restaurant in recent years.

67% of operators (73% of limited-service operators and 60% of fullservice operators) say they **incorporated more technology** into their restaurant operation during the past 2-3 years, including both customer-facing and operational items.

Most of these operators agree that these tech investments boosted productivity. Among operators who incorporated more technology during the past 2-3 years, **69% say it made the restaurant more efficient and productive.**

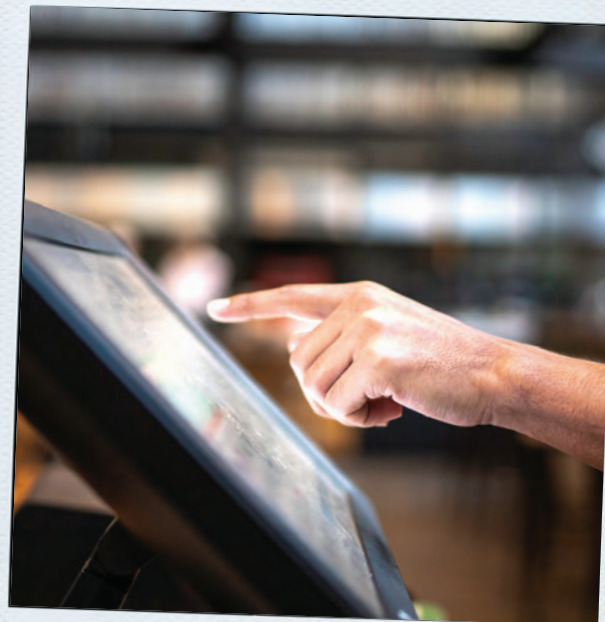
Beyond that, technology's impact on other performance metrics was a mixed bag.

**4 in 10 operators say tech investments improved overall customer satisfaction in their restaurant.** 34% say it helped them expand marketing techniques, while 30% say it led to cost savings in other areas of the operation.

In the HR arena, 3 in 10 operators say overall employee satisfaction improved as a result of their tech investments.

**3 in 10 operators say technology improved employee training, while 15% say it made it easier to recruit or retain employees.**

Most operators say it hasn't really impacted the bottom line: only 28% of operators say their investments in technology improved the profitability of their restaurant.



## HOW IS TECHNOLOGY IMPACTING RESTAURANTS' PERFORMANCE?

% of operators who say investments in technology impacted their restaurant's performance in the following ways

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
MAKE THE RESTAURANT MORE EFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE	69%	74%	63%
IMPROVE OVERALL CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	39%	39%	40%
EXPAND MARKETING TECHNIQUES	34%	38%	29%
COST SAVINGS IN OTHER AREAS	30%	35%	25%
IMPROVE EMPLOYEE TRAINING	29%	28%	31%
IMPROVE OVERALL EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION	29%	32%	26%
IMPROVE PROFITABILITY	28%	32%	25%
MAKE IT EASIER TO RECRUIT OR RETAIN EMPLOYEES	15%	14%	16%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Restaurants that incorporated more technology into the operation during the past 2-3 years.

## WHAT DO CONSUMERS WANT?

When it comes to technology in restaurants, topping consumers' wish list are options that reduce frictions in the experience.

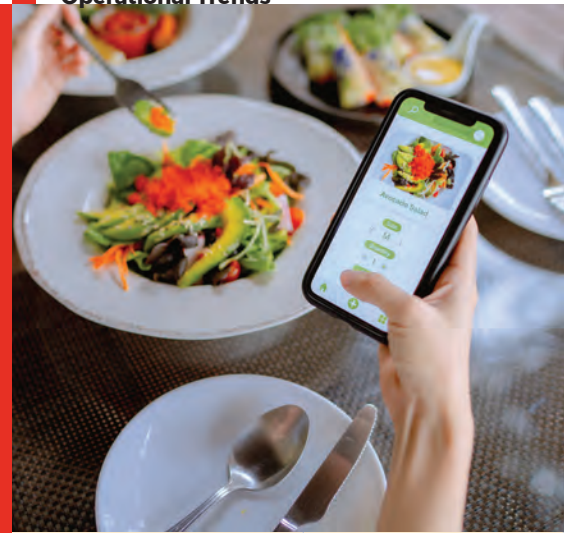
In the Association's 2024 **Restaurant Technology Landscape Report**, the most popular tech options among all three customer categories were items that made ordering and paying easier.

It's therefore not surprising that these are sought-after options when choosing a restaurant, particularly among younger consumers.

3 in 4 delivery customers—including 65% of baby boomers—say the availability of technology options for things like ordering and paying is important to them when ordering delivery.

Tech options are somewhat less important when choosing a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop. Overall, 53% of limited-service customers say it factors into their decision. However, it still plays an important role for 68% of Gen Z adults and 61% of millennials.

The availability of technology options for things like ordering and paying are less common in the fullservice restaurant experience, yet 42% of customers say it is important to them when choosing a sit-down restaurant. Gen Z adults (71%) are the most likely to say this factors into their decision-making process.



# 75%

3 in 4 delivery customers say the **availability of technology options** for things like ordering and paying is important to them.

## YOUNGER CONSUMERS DEMAND TECH OPTIONS IN ALL RESTAURANT OCCASIONS

% of customers who say the availability of technology options for things like ordering and paying is important to them when choosing a restaurant

RESTAURANT OCCASION	ALL DULTS	CEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	CEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
ORDERING DELIVERY FROM A RESTAURANT	75%	82%	79%	74%	65%
GOING OUT TO EAT OR PICKING UP FOOD OR BEVERAGES AT A QUICKSERVICE RESTAURANT, SNACK PLACE, DELI OR COFFEE SHOP	53%	68%	61%	51%	39%
GOING OUT TO EAT AT A TABLESERVICE RESTAURANT	42%	71%	48%	41%	21%

Source: National Restaurant Association • Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a tableservice restaurant; went out to eat or picked up food or beverages at a quickservice restaurant, snack place, deli or coffee shop; or ordered delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months

## RESTAURANT TECH INVESTMENTS ON THE HORIZON

Looking ahead to 2025, a majority of operators plan to incorporate more technology into their restaurant.

Roughly 6 in 10 operators say they plan to invest in equipment or technology that will improve the productivity and efficiency of both the front of the house and the back of the house.

6 in 10 operators are planning tech investments that will enhance the customer experience.

53% of operators say they will be investing to strengthen their cybersecurity in 2025.

# 53%

53% of operators say they will be investing to strengthen their cybersecurity in 2025.



### TECH PLANS FOR 2025

% of operators who plan to make investments in these technology-related areas in 2025

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
EQUIPMENT OR TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE THE FRONT OF HOUSE MORE PRODUCTIVE OR EFFICIENT	61%	60%	62%
EQUIPMENT OR TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	59%	57%	62%
EQUIPMENT OR TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE THE BACK OF HOUSE MORE PRODUCTIVE OR EFFICIENT	57%	56%	59%
EQUIPMENT OR TECHNOLOGY TO STRENGTHEN ITS CYBERSECURITY	53%	49%	57%

Source: National Restaurant Association



# 65%

65% of operators plan to devote resources to **digital or location-based marketing.**

Drilling down into more specifics, restaurant operators were asked if they have plans to invest in 15 technology-related areas in 2025.

Areas that topped the list are designed to boost sales and customer traffic. 65% of operators plan to devote resources to digital or location-based marketing. 58% also expect to invest in loyalty/reward systems, with limited-service operators (66%) somewhat more likely than fullservice operators (51%) to report these plans.

Many restaurant operators plan tech-related investments to boost efficiency. 54% of operators are planning to incorporate technology into back-office functions, such as payroll, finance, tax compliance and food safety compliance. 51% plan to invest in workforce management software/apps, which help support hiring, scheduling, training and payroll.

52% will devote resources to point-of-sale systems, while 47% plan to make investments in cybersecurity. 47% of operators say they plan to invest in inventory management software in 2025.





## RESTAURANT OPERATORS ARE INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

% of restaurant operators planning to devote resources to the following technology-related areas in 2025

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
DIGITAL MARKETING/LOCATION-BASED MARKETING	65%	62%	68%
LOYALTY/REWARD SYSTEMS	58%	51%	66%
BACK OFFICE: PAYROLL/FINANCE/TAX COMPLIANCE/FOOD SAFETY COMPLIANCE	54%	54%	55%
POINT-OF-SALE SYSTEMS	52%	50%	55%
WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE/APPS (HIRING, SCHEDULING, TRAINING, PAYROLL)	51%	47%	55%
CONTACTLESS ORDERING/PAYMENT	49%	41%	56%
INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE	47%	45%	48%
CYBERSECURITY	47%	42%	51%
SMARTPHONE APP DEVELOPMENT	40%	31%	48%
SELF ORDER/SELF PAY: TABLETS OR KIOSKS	30%	22%	38%
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) INTEGRATION	28%	26%	30%
FLEXIBLE/DYNAMIC MENU PRICING	28%	29%	28%
AUGMENTED REALITY (FOR TRAINING OR MARKETING CAMPAIGNS)	22%	20%	24%
ROBOTICS	9%	7%	10%
DRONES/AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE DELIVERY	5%	5%	5%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Tech-related investments to enhance their customer's experience are also high on the list. Roughly one-half say they will devote resources to contactless ordering/payment, while 40% will invest in smartphone app development. Limited-service operators (48%) are more likely than fullservice operators (31%) to have plans for smartphone app development in 2025.

3 in 10 operators are planning to devote resources to self-ordering/payment systems (such as tablets or kiosks).

Some operators are also devoting resources to the more cutting-edge tech. 28% say they will make investments to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into their operation, while 22% plan to devote resources to augmented reality for training or marketing campaigns.

# 28%

28% of operators say they will make investments to integrate **artificial intelligence (AI)** into their operation.

## OPERATING IN AN ELEVATED COST ENVIRONMENT

Food and labor costs—the two largest input costs for restaurants—have both risen more than 30% since 2019. Other expenses—such as utilities, occupancy, supplies, general/administrative, repairs/maintenance and credit card processing fees—also rose sharply in recent years.

**With customer traffic levels still dampened for many restaurants, that means the only way most restaurants could cover their higher input costs was to increase menu prices.**

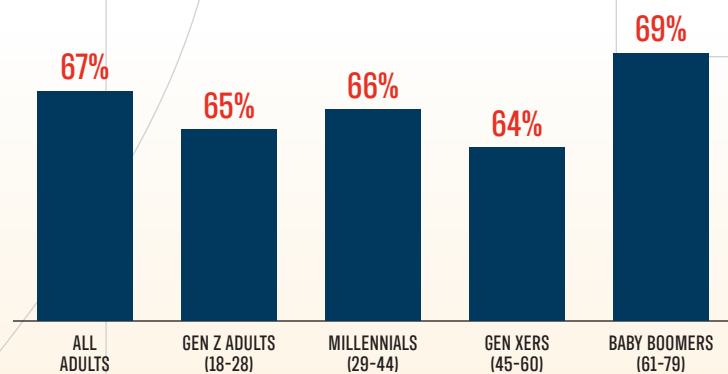
For the most part, consumers are sympathetic to higher prices at restaurants: **67% of adults say it is acceptable that restaurants increased their prices to cover the higher cost of doing business.**

The vast majority of operators say labor costs, food costs, insurance costs, energy/utility costs and credit/debit card processing costs are **currently** a significant challenge for their restaurant.



## CONSUMERS ARE SYMPATHETIC TO HIGHER MENU PRICES

% of consumers who say it is acceptable that restaurants increased their prices to cover the higher cost of doing business



Source: National Restaurant Association

## RESTAURANT OPERATORS CONTINUE TO GRAPPLE WITH ELEVATED COSTS

% of operators who say the following items are currently a very significant or fairly significant challenge for their restaurant

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULL-SERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
LABOR COSTS	96%	97%	95%
FOOD COSTS	95%	94%	95%
INSURANCE COSTS	88%	89%	87%
ENERGY OR UTILITY COSTS	83%	84%	81%
CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PROCESSING COSTS	81%	84%	78%

Source: National Restaurant Association





With the feasibility to continue raising prices limited by a challenging business environment, restaurant operators took a number of other actions to address higher costs in 2024. Topping the list was swapping out higher cost menu items for more affordable ones, which was done by 65% of fullservice operators. Only 44% of limited-service operators did the same, as they have less flexibility for change.

Operators also took steps to reduce labor costs: 4 in 10 operators reduced the number of employees in their restaurant, while 2 in 10 postponed plans for hiring.

Other operational changes included postponing expansion plans (37%), reducing hours of operation (33%), not operating at full capacity (21%) and closing on days that the restaurant would normally be open (16%).

27% of operators say they incorporated more technology in their efforts to control costs.

## CHANGE THE MENU TO CUT COSTS

% of restaurant operators who took the following actions in 2024 to address higher costs

ACTION TAKEN IN 2024	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
CHANGE MENU ITEMS	54%	65%	44%
REDUCE THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	40%	38%	42%
POSTPONE PLANS FOR EXPANSION	37%	37%	38%
REDUCE HOURS OF OPERATION ON DAYS THAT IT IS OPEN	33%	36%	30%
INCORPORATE MORE TECHNOLOGY	27%	25%	29%
NOT OPERATE AT FULL CAPACITY	21%	21%	20%
POSTPONE PLANS FOR NEW HIRING	20%	20%	20%
CLOSE ON DAYS THAT IT WOULD NORMALLY BE OPEN	16%	20%	13%

Source: National Restaurant Association

# 27%

27% of operators say they incorporated more technology in their **efforts to control costs.**

## UPDATED REPORT PROVIDES OPERATIONAL DATA ON RESTAURANTS

Controlling costs in a restaurant is critical, and the National Restaurant Association's *Restaurant Operations Data Abstract* provides important data to help.

Based on financial and operating information provided by nearly 1,000 restaurant operators nationwide, the *Abstract* contains important data for restaurant operators to see how their business compares with those of a similar profile. The information may help sharpen financial performance and quickly identify cost categories where data could substantially vary by type of operation. By analyzing operating costs, restaurant operators may detect potential problems, determine how to manage costs, and become more efficient.

This unique collection of operating data includes specific financial information for the fullservice and limited-service segments. Additionally, the data is presented by attribute including average check size, annual sales volume, size of community and restaurant location.

The 2024 edition of the *Restaurant Operations Data Abstract* is available for purchase in the **Association store** (<https://shop.restaurant.org>).





# STATE OF THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY 2025



## FOOD & MENU TRENDS

The hallmark of the restaurant industry is delicious food and beverages, and the opportunity to try flavors and dishes diners can't always make at home. This section explores the food and menu items that restaurant operators can offer to attract customers in today's competitive landscape.







## IN THIS SECTION:

### MUST-HAVE MENU OFFERINGS

When asked to rank the most important factors they consider when choosing a tableservice restaurant, a limited-service restaurant, and a restaurant to order food for delivery, the same top 3 items rose to the top: favorite foods, comfort foods, and variable portion size. When it comes to finding those restaurants, social media has become a primary source for what's trending and how to find it. See page 71.

### WHAT'S DRIVING TRAFFIC

Beyond the menu, consumers show interest in other offerings, which can drive traffic both on- and off-premises. Exclusive and small group events, meal kits to make at home, and the chance to take home a restaurant's special BBQ sauce or pasta all appeal to consumers. See page 76.

### ELEVATED ALCOHOL BEVERAGE EXPERIENCES

Customers are interested in alcohol programs that go well beyond the traditional beverage lists and happy hours. Local sourcing, tasting events, and perfect pairings attract the interest of wine, beer and cocktail drinkers, setting restaurants apart from their competition. See page 80.



## OPERATOR HIGHLIGHTS:

Page 73:  
How customers choose and the must-have menu options they seek.

Page 81:  
Beverage alcohol marketing strategies adult customers want to see most.

Page 82:  
Impact of rising food costs: Where operators are finding savings.

# 82%

8 in 10 adults say going to a restaurant is a **better use of their leisure time** than cooking at home.

## CUSTOMERS CRAVE RESTAURANTS

Most consumers prefer a menu to a shopping cart—88% of adults say they enjoy going to restaurants, compared with 73% who say they enjoy going to the grocery store.

And 8 in 10 adults say going to a restaurant is a better use of their leisure time than cooking at home.

3 in 4 adult consumers also say it's hard to replicate the flavor and taste sensations of restaurant food in their home kitchen, which is part of the reason 54% say restaurants are an *essential* part of their lifestyle.

Social media has become a primary source of information for consumers, and this also holds true for the world of food. **3 in 4 adults say social media is a good way to learn about nearby restaurants and foods they haven't tried before** and this sentiment carries across a majority of adults across all age groups.

Consumers also look to restaurants to expand their palates. 58% of adults—including 7 in 10 Gen Z adults and millennials—say they eat a wider variety of global cuisines now than they used to, including Asian, South American, European or African dishes.

## CONSUMER SENTIMENT ABOUT RESTAURANTS REMAINS POSITIVE

% of consumers who agree with the following statements

STATEMENT	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
YOU ENJOY GOING TO RESTAURANTS	88%	94%	87%	85%	87%
GOING OUT TO A RESTAURANT WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS GIVES YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO SOCIALIZE AND IS A BETTER WAY FOR YOU TO MAKE USE OF YOUR LEISURE TIME RATHER THAN COOKING AND CLEANING UP	82%	83%	84%	83%	79%
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A GOOD WAY TO LEARN ABOUT RESTAURANTS IN YOUR AREA	76%	84%	85%	77%	65%
SOCIAL MEDIA IS A GOOD WAY TO LEARN ABOUT FOOD THAT YOU HAVEN'T TRIED BEFORE	74%	86%	84%	76%	59%
YOUR FAVORITE RESTAURANT FOODS PROVIDE FLAVOR AND TASTE SENSATIONS THAT CAN'T BE EASILY DUPLICATED IN YOUR HOME KITCHEN	74%	79%	77%	70%	72%
YOU ENJOY GOING TO THE GROCERY STORE	73%	78%	73%	72%	69%
YOU EAT A WIDER VARIETY OF GLOBAL CUISINES NOW THAN YOU USED TO, SUCH AS ASIAN, SOUTH AMERICAN, EUROPEAN OR AFRICAN	58%	71%	68%	59%	42%
RESTAURANTS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR LIFESTYLE	54%	59%	63%	56%	43%

Source: National Restaurant Association

## WHAT ARE CONSUMERS' MUST-HAVE OFFERINGS AT TABLESERVICE RESTAURANTS?

% of fullservice customers who say the following offerings are important to them when choosing a tableservice restaurant

### MENU MUST-HAVES

When it comes to choosing a restaurant—to dine in or off-premises—what menu offerings are important to consumers? And how does it differ by segment?

Fullservice, limited-service, and delivery customers were given a list of the same 12 items, and were asked rate their importance in their decision-making process.

The similarity of responses across the 3 restaurant segments is notable.

**Consumers in all 3 segments say the availability of their favorite foods was the most important driver, followed closely by a choice of portion sizes and the option to order comfort food.**

Younger consumers are more likely than their older counterparts to want sharable food options on the menu and they're also more likely to want to order diet-specific food items as well as food grown or raised in an organic or environmentally friendly way.

OFFERING	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
SOME OF THEIR FAVORITE FOODS ARE ON THE MENU	93%	87%	92%	93%	96%
IT OFFERS 'COMFORT FOOD' ON THE MENU	82%	80%	80%	87%	81%
A CHOICE OF PORTION SIZES	76%	79%	76%	76%	75%
OPTION TO ORDER DAILY SPECIALS THAT AREN'T REGULARLY ON THE MENU	75%	67%	78%	83%	69%
HEALTHY OPTIONS	73%	65%	75%	76%	70%
INNOVATIVE OR CREATIVE FOOD THEY CAN'T REPLICATE AT HOME	72%	68%	74%	76%	73%
FOOD THEY HAVEN'T TRIED BEFORE	68%	71%	73%	70%	62%
SHARABLE FOOD OPTIONS	66%	75%	76%	67%	51%
LOCALLY SOURCED FOOD	64%	69%	64%	66%	62%
FOOD THAT WAS GROWN OR RAISED IN AN ORGANIC OR ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WAY	57%	63%	63%	60%	48%
A CHILDREN'S MENU	44%	59%	63%	43%	20%
DIET-SPECIFIC FOOD LIKE VEGETARIAN, VEGAN, OR GLUTEN-FREE	41%	50%	50%	39%	27%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat at a tableservice restaurant during the past 6 months







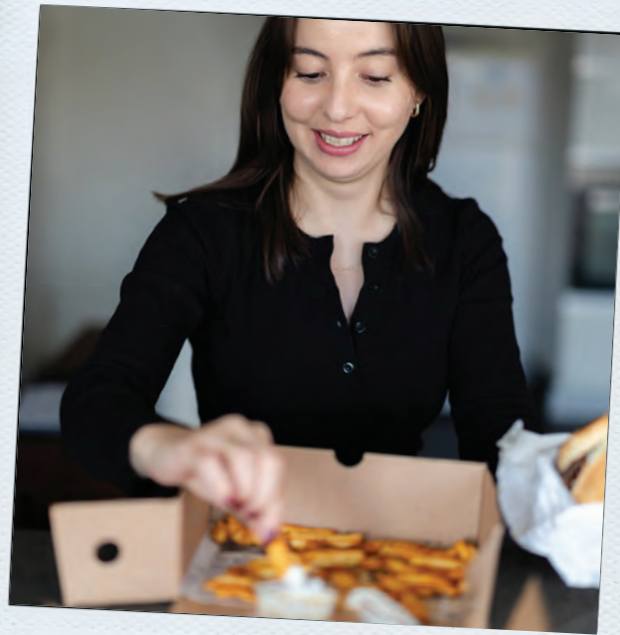
## CONSUMERS IDENTIFY THEIR MUST-HAVE OFFERINGS AT LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS

% of limited-service customers who say the following offerings are important to them when choosing a quickservice restaurant, snack place or deli

OFFERING	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
SOME OF THEIR FAVORITE FOODS ARE ON THE MENU	92%	87%	89%	91%	97%
A CHOICE OF PORTION SIZES	82%	83%	84%	81%	81%
IT OFFERS 'COMFORT FOOD' ON THE MENU	80%	78%	81%	84%	78%
OPTION TO ORDER DAILY SPECIALS THAT AREN'T REGULARLY ON THE MENU	66%	71%	70%	71%	57%
INNOVATIVE OR CREATIVE FOOD THEY CAN'T REPLICATE AT HOME	66%	74%	72%	63%	60%
HEALTHY OPTIONS	66%	70%	68%	64%	63%
SHARABLE FOOD OPTIONS	62%	78%	69%	62%	47%
FOOD THEY HAVEN'T TRIED BEFORE	59%	73%	60%	58%	52%
LOCALLY SOURCED FOOD	56%	61%	60%	56%	49%
FOOD THAT WAS GROWN OR RAISED IN AN ORGANIC OR ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WAY	52%	62%	59%	53%	41%
A CHILDREN'S MENU	45%	61%	66%	44%	18%
DIET-SPECIFIC FOOD LIKE VEGETARIAN, VEGAN OR GLUTEN-FREE	39%	52%	48%	38%	26%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who went out to eat or picked up food at a quickservice restaurant, snack place or deli during the past 6 months



## CONSUMERS IDENTIFY THEIR TOP FACTORS WHEN ORDERING DELIVERY FROM A RESTAURANT

% of delivery customers who say the following offerings are important to them when choosing a restaurant to order food for delivery

OFFERING	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
SOME OF THEIR FAVORITE FOODS ARE ON THE MENU	89%	86%	87%	89%	96%
IT OFFERS 'COMFORT FOOD' ON THE MENU	83%	80%	82%	89%	76%
A CHOICE OF PORTION SIZES	80%	86%	83%	73%	77%
SHARABLE FOOD OPTIONS	75%	82%	76%	76%	59%
OPTION TO ORDER DAILY SPECIALS THAT AREN'T REGULARLY ON THE MENU	74%	69%	76%	76%	71%
INNOVATIVE OR CREATIVE FOOD THAT YOU CAN'T REPLICATE AT HOME	72%	75%	71%	71%	68%
FOOD THEY HAVEN'T TRIED BEFORE	68%	70%	72%	63%	63%
HEALTHY OPTIONS	66%	65%	67%	68%	57%
LOCALLY SOURCED FOOD	63%	63%	64%	65%	55%
FOOD THAT WAS GROWN OR RAISED IN AN ORGANIC OR ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WAY	62%	65%	69%	57%	48%
A CHILDREN'S MENU	53%	63%	65%	50%	24%
DIET-SPECIFIC FOOD LIKE VEGETARIAN, VEGAN OR GLUTEN-FREE	46%	55%	51%	39%	31%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Consumers who ordered food for delivery from a restaurant during the past 6 months



## WHY CONSUMERS VALUE LOCALLY-SOURCED FOOD

64% of adults say the availability of locally-sourced food is important to them when choosing a tableservice restaurant.

When asked why they like locally-sourced food in restaurants, 4 in 10 fullservice customers—including 59% of baby boomers—say because it supports farms and food producers in their community. 22% say the top reason is because it's fresher; 17% say because it's higher quality.

## CONSUMERS CHOOSE TO EAT LOCAL TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY

Top reason why consumers like locally-sourced food at tableservice restaurants

TOP REASON	ALL ADULTS	CEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	CEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
IT SUPPORTS FARMS AND FOOD PRODUCERS IN THE COMMUNITY	41%	30%	27%	43%	59%
IT'S FRESHER	22%	18%	21%	27%	20%
IT'S HIGHER QUALITY	17%	27%	21%	14%	11%
IT'S MORE TRUSTWORTHY	11%	14%	18%	9%	4%
IT'S BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT	10%	12%	13%	7%	7%

Source: National Restaurant Association

Base: Fullservice customers who say the availability of locally-sourced food is important to them when choosing a tableservice restaurant

THE  
TABLE



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## WHAT'S HOT 2025

Southeast Asian foods lit up the What's Hot 2025 Culinary Forecast, taking the top three spots under Dishes and two of the Top 10 overall. More than 70% of U.S. counties boast an Asian restaurant, but where Chinese, Japanese and Thai have dominated, consumers are now digging into the unique ingredients/flavor profiles, wellness benefits, and serving styles of Korean, Vietnamese and Filipino cuisines.

Wellness-conscious consumers of all ages are driving a growing interest in beverages that boost energy levels, lower stress, enhance digestive health and sharpen cognition. They're seeking beverages that not only taste good but that potentially improve immunity and increase general well-being.

Macro trends reflect consumers' bigger-picture priorities, and those considerations cover a lot of ground in 2025. AI integration, smaller and streamlined menus and convenience proteins speak to the labor shortage in the kitchen.

Download the full What's Hot 2025 Culinary Forecast!  
[restaurant.org/whats-hot](https://restaurant.org/whats-hot)

## TOP 10 OVERALL

1. Sustainability & Local Sourcing
2. Cold Brew
3. Korean Cuisine
4. Hot Honey
5. Vietnamese Cuisine
6. Hyper-Local Beer & Wine
7. Fermented/Pickled Foods
8. Wellness Drinks
9. Creative Spritzes
10. Value Deals



## TRAFFIC DRIVERS

Beyond traditional menu offerings, a number of on-premises, off-premises, and retail opportunities can boost business.

**86% of consumers** say restaurants are a good place to **learn about food they haven't tried before**, and that's consistent across all age groups. **So why not invite consumers into the restaurant to learn about food through events, private dinner and cooking classes?**

**7 in 10 adults**—including a majority of consumers across all age groups—say they'd likely participate in **tasting events** at a restaurant.

**52% of consumers**—including more than 6 in 10 Gen Z adults and millennials—say they'd likely participate in **private dinner events** at a restaurant with the chef or an expert on a type of cuisine.

**50% of adults**—including 6 in 10 Gen Z adults and millennials—say they'd likely participate in **cooking classes** at a restaurant.

**41% of consumers**—including 72% of adults with children in their household—say they'd likely participate in **interactive cooking demos for kids** if they were offered at a restaurant they go to.

**39% of adults age 21+—including a majority of Gen Z adults and millennials—say they'd likely participate in cocktail making classes.**



## ON-PREMISES OPPORTUNITIES

% of consumers who say they would likely use the following options if they were offered by a restaurant in their area

OPTION	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
TASTING EVENTS AT THE RESTAURANT THAT OFFERS A SELECTION OF FOOD ITEMS FOR CUSTOMERS TO TASTE	70%	79%	73%	71%	62%
PRIVATE DINNER EVENTS AT THE RESTAURANT WITH THE CHEF OR AN EXPERT ON A TYPE OF CUISINE	52%	68%	63%	53%	32%
COOKING CLASSES AT THE RESTAURANT	50%	62%	59%	51%	32%
INTERACTIVE COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS FOR KIDS	41%	55%	58%	40%	18%
COCKTAIL MAKING CLASSES AT THE RESTAURANT*	39%	54%	57%	37%	19%

Source: National Restaurant Association

\*Asked of adults age 21+



# 86%

86% of consumers say restaurants are a good place to **learn about food they haven't tried before.**

## OFF-PREMISES OPPORTUNITIES

With such a sizable customer base standing by, restaurants have great opportunities to expand beyond traditional takeout and delivery options to offer something unique.

**7 in 10 adults**—including 84% of both Gen Z adults and millennials—say they'd be up to **buy meal kits** from a restaurant that contained pre-measured, raw ingredients for a complete meal, along with instructions on how to cook it at home.

**67% of consumers**—including 3 in 4 Gen Z adults and millennials—say they'd be interested in **meal bundles** (such as an appetizer, entrée and dessert) for takeout or delivery from one of their favorite restaurants.

**62% of adults**—including 78% of both Gen Z adults and millennials—say they'd likely opt in on a **meal subscription program** where they can sign up to receive a specified number of prepared meals during the month for a discounted price.



## OFF-PREMISES OPPORTUNITIES

% of consumers who say they'd likely use the following options if they were offered by a restaurant in their area

OPTION	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
MEAL KITS	70%	84%	84%	73%	48%
MULTI-COURSE MEAL BUNDLES FOR TAKEOUT OR DELIVERY	67%	78%	75%	71%	53%
MEAL SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAMS	62%	78%	78%	63%	38%

Source: National Restaurant Association



# 60%

6 in 10 adults are more likely than they used to be to blend **restaurant-prepared items**—such as a main dish, side, or dessert—into home-prepared meals.

## RETAIL RINGERS

**6 in 10 adults**—including 74% of Gen Z adults and 69% of millennials—are more likely than they used to be to **blend restaurant-prepared items**—such as a main dish, side, or dessert—into home-prepared meals. **Restaurants can take advantage of this demand by offering both fresh and packaged items for sale on-site.**

**65% of adults**—including 3 in 4 Gen Z adults and millennials—say they would be likely to **purchase packaged food and beverage** items (such as sauces or frozen items) if they were offered by one of their favorite restaurants.

**57% of consumers**—including 75% of Gen Z adults and 69% of millennials—say they would be likely to **purchase fresh, uncooked food items** such as meat, produce, dairy, bread or pasta, if they were offered by one of their favorite restaurants.

**Looking to spread the word about your restaurant?** Look no further than your loyal customers. Outfit your biggest brand ambassadors with swag and send them on their way.

**44% of adults**—including 65% of millennials and 55% of Gen Z adults—say they're likely to **purchase apparel** (such as sweatshirts or caps) with a restaurant's name and logo if their favorite restaurants offered them.

## RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES

% of consumers who say they would be likely to purchase the following items if they were offered by one of their favorite restaurants

OPTION	ALL ADULTS	GEN Z ADULTS (18-28)	MILLENNIALS (29-44)	GEN XERS (45-60)	BABY BOOMERS (61-79)
PACKAGED FOOD AND BEVERAGE ITEMS—SUCH AS SAUCES OR FROZEN ITEMS—FROM THE RESTAURANT'S MENU	65%	77%	75%	69%	46%
FRESH, UNCOOKED FOOD ITEMS SUCH AS MEAT, PRODUCE, DAIRY, BREAD OR PASTA	57%	75%	69%	60%	34%
APPAREL—SUCH AS SWEATSHIRTS OR CAPS—CONTAINING THE RESTAURANT'S NAME AND LOGO	44%	65%	55%	42%	23%

Source: National Restaurant Association

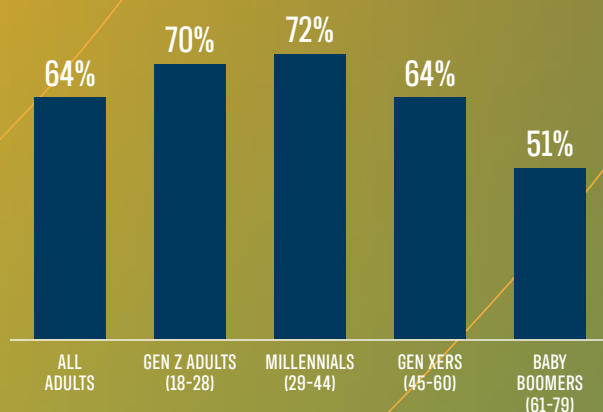
## TAPPING INTO THE SNACKING TREND

Whether it's an on- or off-premises offering, restaurants can drive customer traffic by offering snacking options outside of traditional meal periods.

64% of adults—including 72% of millennials and 70% of Gen Z adults—say they are increasingly likely to replace traditional meals (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) with snack items during the day.

### SNACKING THE DAY AWAY

% of consumers who say they are increasingly likely to replace traditional meals (breakfast, lunch or dinner) with snack items during the day



Source: National Restaurant Association

# 64%

64% of adults say they are increasingly likely to **replace traditional meals** (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) **with snack items** during the day.





## MAKE A MARK WITH ALCOHOL BEVERAGE OFFERINGS

Restaurants are one of the primary venues that consumers learn about alcohol beverages. In fact, 57% of adults—including 75% of Gen Z adults (21+) and 70% of millennials—say restaurants are a good place to learn about alcohol beverages they haven't tried before.

Beer, wine, and cocktails are also a point of differentiation for many consumers. Among adults who identify as beer, wine or cocktail drinkers, 7 in 10 say the availability of alcohol beverages make them more likely to choose one restaurant over another similar restaurant.

Restaurants with alcohol beverage programs are uniquely positioned to drive traffic. This section provides a list of offerings and promotions that wine, beer and cocktail drinkers would most like to see at restaurants in their area.

# 70%

7 in 10 say the **availability of alcohol beverages** make them more likely to choose one restaurant over another similar restaurant.



## STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT WINE DRINKERS

### Go local:

**77%** of wine drinkers would like the option of ordering wine that was made by a local winery

### Expand their palate:

**77%** say they would participate in tasting events at restaurants

**76%** say they would like to be able to order a glass of wine that is typically only offered by the bottle

**74%** would like the option to order smaller tasting-sized glasses of wine from the menu

### Incorporate food:

**72%** say they would attend a wine dinner event with a special menu of food and wine pairings

**71%** say they would like to order wine selected by the restaurant to pair with food items on the menu

### Offer value:

**3 in 4** say they would take advantage of discounted wine during times or days when the restaurant isn't busy

### Bottle it up:

**59%** say they would like the option to include wine by the bottle with a takeout or delivery order

**57%** say they would join a wine club offered by the restaurant, which includes bottles of wine selected by the restaurant's staff

**53%** say they would like the option to include wine by the glass with a takeout or delivery order

### Hold the alcohol:

**49%** say they would like the option to order low- or no-alcohol wine

## SHAKE IT UP FOR COCKTAIL DRINKERS

### Offer value:

**8 in 10** cocktail drinkers would like discounted drinks during less busy days or times at the restaurant

### Try new drinks:

**75%** say they would participate in events at the restaurant that offer a selection of cocktails or mixed drinks for customers to taste

**69%** would like the option to order smaller tasting-sized cocktails or mixed drinks from the menu

### Local spirits:

**74%** would like to order drinks made with locally-produced distilled spirits

### Make it a pair:

**71%** would go to cocktail dinner events with a special menu of food and cocktail pairings

**68%** would order cocktails or mixed drinks selected by the restaurant to pair with food items on the menu

### Off-Premises options:

**62%** say they would include pre-made cocktails or mixed drinks with a takeout or delivery order

**61%** would like the option to include a cocktail kit with a takeout or delivery order, which contains the ingredients to make a batch of cocktails at home

### Bartender in training:

**60%** say they would participate in cocktail making classes at the restaurant

### Mocktails are in:

**52%** say they would like the option to order low- or no-alcohol cocktails

## A BLUEPRINT FOR BEER DRINKERS

### Happy hour options:

**77%** of beer drinkers would like discounted beer when the restaurant is less busy

### Offer some local craft options:

**74%** want the option to order beer that was made by a local brewery

### Opportunity to sample new beer:

**74%** would participate in tasting events at the restaurant that offer a selection of beer for customers to taste

**67%** would order smaller tasting-sized glasses of beer from the menu

### Beer and a bite:

**69%** say they would participate in a beer dinner event hosted by the restaurant with a special menu of food and beer pairings

**69%** would order beer selected by the restaurant to pair with food items on the menu

### Send it home:

**64%** would like the option to include beer with a takeout or delivery order

**62%** would join a beer club offered by the restaurant, which includes bottles/cans of beer selected by the restaurant's staff

### Alcohol-free brews:

**44%** say they would like the option to order low- or no-alcohol beer



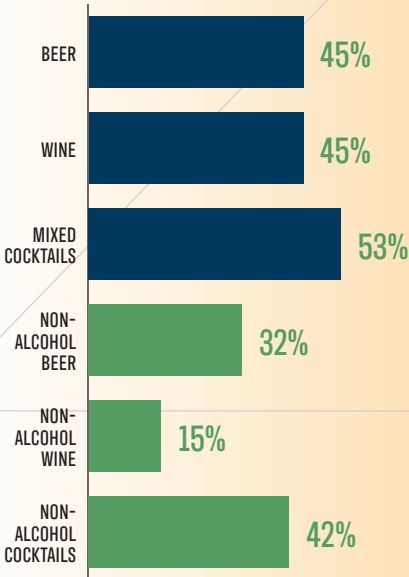
# OPERATORS PLAN TO EXPAND THEIR ALCOHOL BEVERAGE OFFERINGS

To meet consumer demand, many restaurants are planning to expand their alcohol beverage offerings in 2025. Among fullservice operators that serve alcohol beverages, 53% plan to add new mixed cocktails. 45% plan to expand the beer and wine sections of their drink menus.

Non-alcohol options are growing, too. 42% plan to add new non-alcohol cocktails and 32% plan to add new non-alcohol beer offerings.

## EXPANDING ALCOHOL BEVERAGE OFFERINGS

% of fullservice restaurants that plan to add new offerings in the following categories in 2025



Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Fullservice restaurants that serve alcohol beverages

# IMPACT OF RISING FOOD COSTS

In 2024, any food pricing relief restaurant operators felt in 2023, evaporated. 82% of restaurant operators say their average food costs were higher in 2024 than they were in 2023. Only 6% reported a decline in food costs.

In response to elevated food costs, restaurant operators took a number of actions in 2024. Fullservice operators had more options at their disposal, both in terms of supplier choices and menu items.

55% of fullservice operators negotiated with their existing suppliers, while 63% say they shopped around for other suppliers.

Nearly half of operators removed items from the menu, an action that was much more common among fullservice operators (60%) than limited-service operators (31%).

Fullservice operators were also more likely than limited-service operators to adjust portion sizes (38%) and substitute lower-cost items on the menu (34%).

## ADJUSTING TO RISING FOOD COSTS

% of restaurant operators that took the following actions in 2024 due to higher food costs

	ALL RESTAURANTS	FULLSERVICE RESTAURANTS	LIMITED-SERVICE RESTAURANTS
SHOP AROUND FOR OTHER SUPPLIERS	52%	63%	41%
REMOVE ITEMS FROM THE MENU	46%	60%	31%
CUT COSTS IN OTHER AREAS OF THE OPERATION	44%	46%	41%
NEGOTIATE WITH EXISTING SUPPLIERS	44%	55%	32%
INCREASE TRACKING OF FOOD WASTE	37%	36%	37%
ADJUST PORTION SIZES	28%	38%	19%
SUBSTITUTE LOWER-COST ITEMS ON THE MENU	25%	34%	15%
PURCHASE MORE ITEMS FROM LOCAL SOURCES	16%	20%	12%

Source: National Restaurant Association  
Base: Restaurant operators that said their average food costs were higher in 2024 than they were in 2023







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