

Foodservice Disruptors - US - 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and the foodservice market
- Consumer interest in and usage of disruptive restaurant technology
- Attitudes toward disruptive foodservice concepts
- How higher consumer expectations for convenience are driving opportunities in retail/foodservice delivery

Consumers generally have a favorable view of restaurant technology and have adopted much of it over 2020 and 2021. However, operators will have to proceed with caution. 57% of consumers agree fancy sit-down restaurants should not use tabletop restaurant technology. Operators must employ technology in a consumer-focused manner, emphasizing how it improves the overall dining experience and highlighting efforts taken to protect diners' data.

Throughout the pandemic, the foodservice industry was quick to pivot to off-premise operations to navigate restrictions. This spurred a chain of problem-solving and improvement initiatives that are driving innovation in the industry in 2021. LSRs that were better positioned to pivot operations have also been among the first to test new technologies and restaurant formats.

The US labor crisis is playing a major role in determining the future of the foodservice industry. Some operators have responded by raising wages and offering more employment benefits, while others are looking to automation in the kitchen to reduce the need for hiring more personnel.

Consumer interest and operators' investment in tech-enabled off-premise offerings will remain high, with some larger players testing more innovative concepts such as drone delivery. Restaurant formats are also changing, with current players creating small-footprint, takeout- and delivery-focused locations, and more ghost kitchens and home-based food businesses are entering the market. Overall, how and where consumers interact with



“Amidst a struggling industry, nimble and innovative operators are disrupting traditional foodservice models, adding automation and new operating formats as well as online engagement strategies to continue reaching consumers.”

– Varchasvi, Analyst – US Foodservice and Mintel Menu Insights

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restaurants is being disrupted, with the interaction shifting to online and at-home or retail spaces, respectively.

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