Christmas and New Year's planning checklist

How restaurants can make the most of an uncharted season







OpenTable



Join our powerful, reliable platform with zero subscription and cover fees in 2020—so you can get back on your feet.

Make it fun and easy for people to bring the festivities home

Build a takeaway-friendly menu. Identify best-selling dishes and make sure they will travel and reheat well.

Add a personal touch. Remind guests of the team and humanity behind the takeaway bag with a personal note or other thoughtful surprises.

Create your own kits. Develop DIY kits that reflect your brand and the occasion at hand. If you specialise in drinks, maybe it's a New Year's Eve cocktail kit for two. Steakhouse? Try a festive-themed prime rib extravaganza.

Stay true to you. Think creatively to keep what makes your dishes great, even when people bring them home.

Add some flair. Consider putting a new spin on an old favourite to make it feel special for this time of year.

Don't forget gifting! If you're developing retail products, consider adding festive-themed products to the mix. Also, get creative by offering gift specials or bundling gift cards with meal kits or bottles of wine.

Celebrate in your restaurant if restrictions allow

Create unique experiences. Develop and market special experiences, such as prix-fixe menus, that mark the festive season. Play up the things that make your restaurant stand out.

Reimagine your dining room. Chances are, local regulations demand extra space between tables, so reconfigure your floor to maximise both safety and capacity.

Highlight safety measures on your website, OpenTable profile, and in booking policies to assure guests and put them at ease. Call out precautions with in-store signage, and prepare your staff to answer questions about protocols when they make confirmation calls.

Make your outdoor space cozy. If you have a patio or rooftop (and if space and regulations allow), use heaters, fireplaces, or single-use blankets to channel après-ski vibes.

Reduce no-shows and cancellations by taking credit card holds, sending SMS and/or email confirmations, and running a reservation waitlist.

Update your website and profiles

Highlight the season on your website and online profiles, including OpenTable, Google, Facebook, and TripAdvisor. Make sure information is accurate, including special menus or dishes and seasonal hours, and place special offerings front and centre.

Enhance your OpenTable profile to increase the likelihood guests will book your restaurant during the holidays. Add your holiday menus and experiences, and upload photos of the food and ambiance that showcase your festive vibe.

Add a pop-up to your website that puts special menus, events, and/or private dining spaces front and centre.

Optimise your website and online channels for search with strings that reflect what you offer, for example, “Christmas lunch delivery near me” or “NYE dinner near me.” (“Near me” wording are more important than ever today, as diners seek local options.)



Get the word out on social media

Fill your social media feeds with behind-the-scenes photos and videos to show how your team is gearing up for the season and spreading the festive spirit. Try featuring the people who make your restaurant what it is, such as a virtual farm tour with one of your favourite growers to connect with your community.

Tap into the conversation with hashtags. Aim for five to seven relevant hashtags per post – think #hotchocolate or #champagne – in the comments section of your social posts. You'll boost discoverability and reach people interested in everything delicious you have to offer.

Remind guests of all the ways they can celebrate with you, from takeaway and delivery to gift cards.

Encourage employees and regulars to share stories, Christmas offerings, photos, and videos with friends and family to get more folks in the festive spirit.



Reach out directly to guests to bring them in

Use OpenTable marketing tools to book more reservations. Try targeted campaigns, special offers, Bonus Points, and more to get in front of people looking for festive meals—don't forget to use tracking parameters to measure success.

Invite Christmas and New Year's guests back. Reach out to those who dined with you on special occasions last year, and see how your restaurants fit into their plans this time around.

Promote festive menus to all the guests in your email database, especially your most frequent diners and those who live nearby.

Recognise repeat guests. Use OpenTable's relationship management tools to identify diners and offer them something special as a token of thanks.

Review 2020 diner feedback for patterns and respond accordingly. See what your guests loved, and where you might want to improve or focus going into the holidays. Channel the spirit of the season with authenticity, gratitude, and grace.



Dig into the data you need

Identify your best-selling and most profitable items. Look at the last few months, but also winters past to see what diners love most and start planning for the months ahead.

Tap into OpenTable's network for **local benchmarking** to keep a pulse on how other restaurants are reopening and performing in your neighbourhood.



Compare your restaurant to others in your neighbourhood. Look at seated diners, spend, and more to measure success and set expectations around the season.

Connect POS and guest data. Integrating spend and reservation data gives you invaluable information about your regulars, including their favourite dishes and cocktails. Put that knowledge to work over Christmas and New Year's with a personalised thank-you note or token gift.

Start preparing for 2021. Keep track of revenue throughout the season, including profits from special menus and experiences, as well as guest feedback. The data will serve you well this time next year.

OpenTable is here to help and to make sure people rediscover their love of dining whether at your restaurant or at home.

Pay zero subscription and cover fees until the end of 2020.

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