

when the
WORLD
turned upside
DOWN



Breakfast.

How to make it a boon
to your business.

Hospitality businesses have two choices when it comes to breakfast. They could offer their customers the underwhelming experience they've struggled through countless times before – the congealed scrambled eggs and the substandard coffee. Or they could step up their game and make breakfast a pleasant surprise – fresh, tasty and on trend.

Fresh fruit and smoothies in place of mountains of toast.



Unfortunately, option two is easier said than done. While almost a quarter of hotel guests say that breakfast quality is one of their top three priorities when choosing a property, according to research from Delifrance, it's a tough mealtime for hoteliers to get right.

Business travellers want to get in and out and get on with their meetings, while leisure guests have probably been excited about the breakfast buffet for weeks or months before. It needs to look enticing to be successful, but if businesses buy too much, they risk wastage. One solution is to introduce more customisation – for example, chefs making your omelette to order in front of you – but that raises staff costs. Another option is more pre-packaged items like small boxes of cereal or plastic-wrapped pastries, but this has an environmental cost. Add a global pandemic into the mix and things become even more challenging.

More space, more staff

For many leisure guests, the breakfast buffet is one of the highlights of staying at a hotel; it feels indulgent and is a break from the norm. However, research from Delifrance has shown that, since the coronavirus pandemic, diners have been getting cold feet about the breakfast room.

Of the 76% of consumers who currently use it, only 37% want to continue to do so right now. A third would prefer to avoid other hotel guests and just over a quarter (27%) want to stop using the breakfast buffet altogether. “One alternative is to have lots of staff going backwards and forwards to the buffet, but that will increase costs for hotel operators,” says NPD analyst Dominic Allport. An à la carte offer would present similar cost challenges.

The future of breakfast

So what can we expect from breakfast in the next couple of years and what are the cost implications for hospitality businesses?

Before the coronavirus pandemic, there was a trend away from the traditional cooked breakfast and towards healthier options. Omelettes rather than fried eggs; fresh fruit and smoothies in place of mountains of toast. Alongside that, there's been a huge growth in demand for sweet pastry items. In the UK, there were 40 million servings of sweet bakery items at hotel breakfasts in 2019. These have grown three times faster than overall food and drink servings at breakfast. These trends are not likely to turn around.

Breakfast to go is likely to grow in popularity.



On the buffet front, Allport predicts that it will have to evolve, but it won't go away. "I think things will come back. People always talk about a fundamental change but people have quite short memories. That interaction with food, choosing your own food, is something different to what you have at home and it's all part of the appeal of being in a hotel. But it will have to be safer."

New concepts are essential

He expects there might be separate zones where people can grab pre-packaged items without interacting with the rest of the breakfast room, staggered breakfast slots, more emphasis on room service and perhaps even breakfast vending machines, as well as **more use of pre-book and pre-order technology such as mobile apps**, which are rapidly growing in popularity in the QSR sector to reduce the amount of contact between guests and staff members.

In addition, breakfast to go is likely to grow in popularity not only in hotels, but across the hospitality sector. Meanwhile, those that do want to dine in, Allport predicts there will be more emphasis on table service, which will make staffing costs higher and put pressure on margins.

"Of course when you're struggling to encourage demand, you don't want to put your prices up, so there's a balance there," he says. "I think more **automation and efficiency in the kitchen will be important to manage costs**. Operators will have to invest more in technology not only in terms of front of house apps but also back of house."

If any of this sounds familiar to you, our breakfast white paper explores in much more detail how hospitality businesses can widen their margins even in these tough times. Find out how breakfast can be a boon to your business, rather than an afterthought.

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