

The new normal.

Pivoting to casual
concepts to survive.

In the last year, dine-in has been all but decimated by the pandemic, with the hospitality sector's turnover dropping drastically compared to 2019 and hundreds of thousands of foodservice businesses closing either permanently or temporarily. The ones that have managed to survive – from restaurants of 5 star hotels to fine dining restaurants – are the ones that have taken parts of their offer and packaged them up for takeaway or delivery.

Consumers
new dining
habits will stay.



Fluctuating demand
is a big challenge
for catering
companies.

In fact, so successful have some of these pivots been that many businesses plan to continue their more casual concepts – in combination with dine-in – post-pandemic.

Investors certainly don't think consumers new dining habits are going away any time soon. Food delivery companies and startups across the world have been flooded with cash in recent months.

Restaurants: takeaway goes mainstream

The restaurants that have hit the headlines for their success – or at least survival – during the pandemic are those that created a **limited menu for curbside pickup or delivery**, which they knew they could package well and which represented their brand.

“Initially they were doing it to keep staff busy and create revenue during Covid, but a lot of them will end up keeping those offers because too many customers have gotten used to them and they like them,” says hospitality specialist and foodservice consultant Chris Tripoli.

Implementing new systems – such as delivery, click and collect technology – have been key to the success of many operators' new offers. The hope amongst industry experts is that as these continue to grow in popularity, they will become more integrated both with EPOS and third-party delivery systems, making the process smoother for diners and staff, something the younger generation have come to expect.

Company caterers: adapting to WFH

Global lockdowns have led to huge growth in the number of people working remotely, with research by Eurofound revealing that over three-quarters of EU employees want to continue to work from home at least occasionally, even when Covid restrictions are lifted. Very few want to telework all the time. **The preferred option is a mix of remote work and presence at the workplace. But this will still have a huge impact on workplace catering.**

Contract caterer Sodexo has adapted by creating healthy meal kits that employees can pick up at the office and take home for their work-from-home days. For example, selected company restaurants in Germany are offering a cooking bag that contains everything employees need to cook their own food quickly, as well as nutritional information, allergen information and tips and tricks.

Sodexo has also expanded its Good Eating Company (GEC) concept from the UK and Ireland to North America and acquired California-based commissary kitchen operator Nourish. Both concepts will allow customers to use Sodexo's app to order food that can then either be delivered to a workplace or to the employee's home if they are working remotely.

The challenge from a margin perspective is that these sorts of measures create revenue through food, but don't offer many opportunities to sell drinks, which are the cash cow of many gastronomic concepts.



Fluctuating demand is another challenge for catering companies. UK-based contract caterer Bartlett Mitchell is addressing this through a new subscription-based model, which enables its clients to flex their services and use credits based on what they feel is suitable for the workplace at any given time.

Our outlook

What will come after the pandemic? We believe there will be a boom for foodservice providers – people can't wait to get outside, gather with each other and experience the camaraderie of the office again. But it won't be the end of takeaway or delivery. Now that we've experienced that level of convenience, there's no going back.

"People are social and we are looking forward to going back to a time where we can sit in a large group and huddle with our friends, but operators are wrong if they believe we're going back to our old habits," says Tripoli. "They have to realise that the demands we've been answering during the pandemic are now going to become standard ways of operating."

How can RATIONAL help.



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- › The challenges foodservice operators faced before the pandemic – including staff turnover and training – remain. Intelligent kitchen technology, such as RATIONAL's ConnectedCooking system, can be easily operated even by new and untrained staff. Recipe transmission, unit inspections, HACCP data, software updates, service remote access - the RATIONAL networking solution lets you do everything from your desk. On all of your networked units. At all of your locations.
- › Space is scarce and expensive, especially in capital cities. RATIONAL's compact, multi-functional equipment can be installed in a surprisingly small kitchen.
- › Standardized processes and workflows guarantee a safe and consistent rate of production and high quality results.
- › Contact our foodservice experts on info@rational-online.in to discuss a solution tailored to your business.