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Restaurant Tech Tools For 2021 and Beyond

These tech necessities will help any restaurant thrive through the pandemic and prepare for what's next.

COVID-19 Tech Challenges

COVID-19 has transformed the restaurant industry, presenting numerous operational and technical challenges. Online orders are hard to manage and don't seamlessly integrate into point-of-sale (POS) systems. Mobile ordering, third-party aggregators, and digital menus are more important than ever — **and you still need foundational tech tools to run accounting and labor.**

> With hundreds of companies offering tools and services to boost revenue, control food costs, and deal with pandemic-related problems, it's not always easy to determine which services will help and which to skip. In an industry where year-over-year revenues are down considerably, **it's crucial to choose the right providers.**

That's why we've updated our **guide to restaurant tech tools** for 2021 to showcase solutions that help you make the most margin out of the dollars you're generating now — and prepare you for life after the pandemic.

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POS

Pandemic or not, restaurants need a point-of-sale system. The days of writing orders on pen-and-paper are long gone. In restaurants today, digital POS is a must-have, and the best ones not only take orders, but provide plate and customer-level data along the way.

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OUR CHOICE: toast

Combining easy-to-use cloud-based software, payment processing, and durable hardware, Toast makes POS simple. In response to COVID-19, **Toast empowers customers to order and pay from their own devices** — making contactless dining easy. On the backend, **Toast provides detailed analytics to keep track of restaurant performance** (and integrates with xtraCHEF to provide plate-level detail and analytics). It even has payroll and team-management capabilities that reduce time spent on labor management.

KEEP IN MIND

Your POS is core to the day-to-day operations of your restaurant. That means it's essential for your POS to be cloud-based and backed up by reliable support to make sure you're always up and running when you need to be.

Accounting

Managing your bottom line is crucial to your restaurant's success, so implementing a robust, but easy-to-use accounting system is a must. **Sensitive information makes security and accuracy essential** so it's important to find a trustworthy solution with lots of happy customers and positive reviews.

OUR CHOICE: intuit quickbooks

It's the **easiest, most straight-forward accounting platform on the market.** QuickBooks has ample integrations while offering on-premise accounting applications and cloud-based versions that accept business payments, manage and pay bills, and help with payroll functions. Connect your bank account and credit cards to automatically import and sort expenses into tax categories for potential deductions.

To take it a step further, try xtraCHEF's free tool Sync, empowering restaurants to automatically sync daily sales data from Toast's POS software to create journal entries in QuickBooks – saving operators and bookkeepers time, frustration and money.

KEEP IN MIND

Restaurant accounting has some specific considerations, but you might be surprised to learn that a restaurant-specific accounting system is probably not necessary for your operation.

Delivery and Native Ordering

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Delivery apps offer restaurants great opportunity to expand their customer base. But that exposure comes at a price — fees amounting to **upwards of 30% of each customer check.**

While third party apps are often a necessary evil, **many restaurants are taking steps to entice customers to use their native ordering ordering systems** which are often cheaper and more efficient. That takes sleek, usable systems that help keep pace with the big brands, while avoiding those nasty delivery fees. Consider these options.

KEEP IN MIND

With the rise of **ghost kitchens** — cooking facilities set up for delivery only — delivery will continue to play a larger role in the way Americans spend their food budgets.

Lunchbox

ONLINE ORDERING/ MARKETING

Build an omnichannel experience with website ordering, custom mobile apps, and comprehensive marketing solutions like email drip campaigns, push notifications, and loyalty programs.

ChowNow

ONLINE ORDERING

This commission-free model offers web ordering, mobile ordering, and makes contactless conversions a snap with in-store and curbside pickup. It also helps find customers through social media and Yelp and Google reviews — and keeps them for the long haul by suggesting data-driven actions like loyalty programs.

Toast Now

INTEGRATED ONLINE ORDERING

The POS giant also provides on-demand, commission-free digital solutions like online ordering, contactless delivery, email marketing, and e-gift cards. It also allows access to thousands of potential guests with the Toast TakeOut mobile ordering app, also commission free. Plus there's no hardware to install or POS to purchase.

Third-Party Aggregator

Restaurants have been thrust into the takeout and delivery business leading to new tech problems. Too often, that leads to restaurants using multiple iPads and smartphones concurrently to keep everything working. Also, delivery platforms often bill on a monthly basis — but that's not aligned with how restaurants manage food costs and track revenue. Third-party aggregators can help solve these problems by **creating one central command center for takeout and delivery management.**

otter

ORDER AGGREGATOR/ DELIVERY MANAGEMENT

This platform keeps all of your delivery services together in one place. Simply connect your services and begin to not only manage your deliveries — but take meaningful actions across your connected services and locations.

ItsaCheckmate.

ORDER AGGREGATOR

With more than 100 ordering platform integrations to at least 40 point-of-sale systems, ItsaCheckMate reduces the need for tablets and cuts down on errors.

CHOWLY

ORDER AGGREGATOR

As the bridge between third-party online ordering systems and a restaurant's POS system, Chowly eliminates manual order entry — resulting in less hassle, lower labor costs, greater accuracy, and quicker delivery times.

KEEP IN MIND

Look for vendors with direct API integrations with major delivery services like UberEats, DoorDash, GrubHub and Postmates. Also, you should be able to find a service without large setup fees.

Digital Menus / Contactless Payment

Guests expect modern technology when placing takeout and delivery orders. They're unlikely to download an app for just one restaurant, so web-based menus must be user friendly and accept payments seamlessly. Those menus need to be easily updatable and the contactless payment solutions should work as well as popular e-commerce sites — especially during a pandemic.

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Bbot

CONTACTLESS ORDERING & PAYMENTS

Allows customers to order from anywhere, on any device, without having to create an account or download an app. Rather than paying commissions, use your in-house staff or integrate with DoorDash Drive or other courier services to optimize profits and avoid high acquisition costs. It also powers in-venue ordering to keep interactions contactless.

WINE N DINE

MENU MANAGEMENT

It features QR codes to help diners easily settle checks through their smartphones. It also offers online menu management to provide dynamic visual menus that are optimized for mobile and desktop and increase conversions for delivery and reservations. The company also runs EasyTab, a contactless payment solution linking mobile payments to your restaurant's POS.

KEEP IN MIND

Consumers are increasingly making purchases on mobile, so be sure your menu works flawlessly on any mobile device.

Labor

In normal times, the industry has nearly 100% turnover — making people management a complex puzzle. In 2021, **you're likely running leaner on labor but new problems emerge** like simplifying scheduling and hiring employees on demand. These tech tools will help you keep labor on track.

7SHIFTS

SCHEDULING

Employee scheduling software for restaurants built to optimize labor management, time tracking, shift planning and streamline team communication

Qwick

ON-DEMAND STAFFING

This platform features a deep roster of dependable, vetted industry professionals who are available to work on-demand. Not only does this help understaffed restaurants during the pandemic, it also solves for common problems like seasonality or last-minute callouts.

KEEP IN MIND

Some vendors have partnerships with major platforms like Facebook, Craigslist, and Indeed — and can help you recruit talent from those places.

Website, Repairs, and More

Despite the new challenges posed by the pandemic, **some aspects of the restaurant business have remained consistent.** Here are our top technology picks for managing (almost) every aspect of your restaurant.

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Bentobox

WEBSITE: BENTOBOX

Web design built specifically for hospitality businesses. It offers full-service design, commerce (like online ordering and gift cards), and valuable analytics to help you make data-driven decisions.

86 REPAIRS

REPAIRS: 86 REPAIRS

It offers 24/7/365 onsite restaurant equipment repairs and maintenance. They'll even help with heating/air conditioning, plumbing and other common building repairs too. Their preventative maintenance plans reduce downtime and lower costs — and the detailed analytics on repairs keep you informed of what might need fixing next.

SEVENROOMS

RESERVATIONS/GUEST MANAGEMENT: SEVENROOMS

Sevenrooms goes beyond reservations, providing guest management and engagement tools to guide customers throughout their journey. It provides guest profiles that allow you to track everything from allergies to dining preferences.

Ovation

GUEST FOLLOW UP: OVATION

Learn how your drive thru, third-party delivery, pickups, and in-store customers are feeling with this guest follow-up platform. It houses all guest feedback and reviews in one place, allows you to resolve concerns quickly, and uses machine learning algorithms to understand what improvements you should make.

BRANDED HOSPITALITY MARKETPLACE

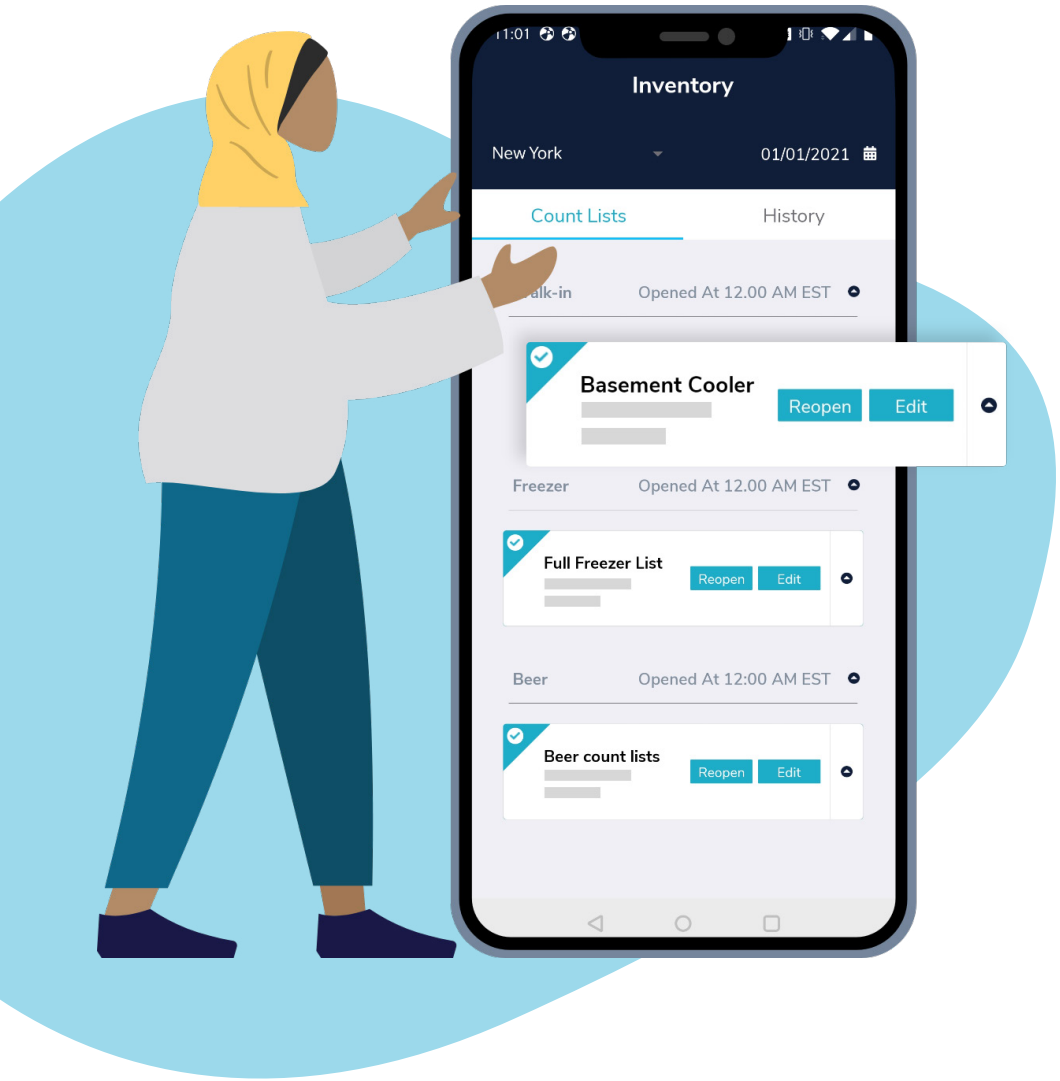
MORE RESOURCES: BRANDED HOSPITALITY MARKETPLACE

This digital e-commerce platform provides best-in-class technology, innovation, professional services and suppliers in every aspect of the food-and-beverage ecosystem. It will help you find leading hospitality vendors to meet the unique needs of your business.

Back of House Business Intelligence, Operations and Automation

XTRACHEF

xtraCHEF is a cloud-based restaurant management platform that gives your team from kitchen staff to accountant — **tools and insights to improve productivity and maximize profits.** Leveraging a combination of machine learning, data science, and quality control, **xtraCHEF combines business intelligence, operations, and automation in one easy-to-use platform.**



AP AUTOMATION

Receive, process, and pay invoices easily by digitizing and storing invoices, automatically assigning GL codes for each line-item, and inputting them into your accounting system.

FOOD COST ANALYTICS

Dynamic, interactive dashboards provide unprecedented visibility into your food costs – making it easier than ever to control cost of goods sold (COGS) and turn a profit.

BUDGETS & FORECASTING

Cloud-based restaurant budgeting and forecasting software takes the leg work out of tracking budget performance in real-time.

PURCHASING & ORDER MANAGEMENT

Make purchases and manage vendor orders directly from the platform's easy-to-use web interface or any mobile device.

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

Save time, reduce waste and increase profits with xtraCHEF's easy-to-use — and automatically updated — inventory management solution.

RECIPE MANAGEMENT

Calculate plate costs easily, accurately and dynamically with tools empowering operators to monitor the fluctuating prime costs of every menu item without having to constantly update ingredient prices.

SYNC

Our free tool integrates Toast and QuickBooks. It automatically syncs daily sales data from Toast's POS software to create journal entries in QuickBooks – saving operators and bookkeepers time, frustration and money.

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Available on the App Store

ANDROID APP ON Google Play

The Backbone of Your 2021 Tech Stack

xtraCHEF, Toast, and QuickBooks are at the core of a robust, easy-to-use restaurant tech stack for 2021 and beyond.

From the front-of-house, to the back-of-house, to the management office, **every part of your restaurant can use these tools to generate and track revenue.** Better yet, you can seamlessly integrate all three systems so your data is automatically accurate and effortless to manage.