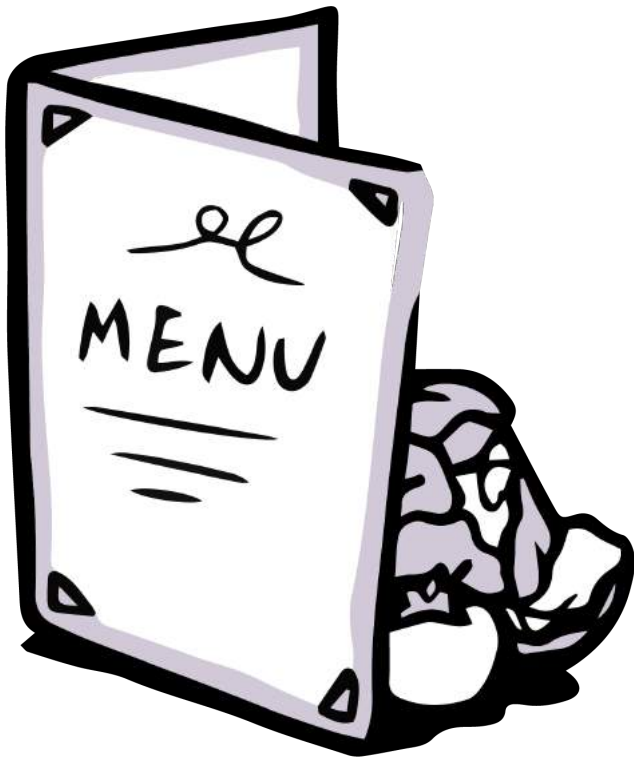




STOP PREPPING YOUR VEGGIES!

STRATEGY IN POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY



When helping restaurants optimize their produce programs, the biggest and best thing we can tell them is to stop chopping, scooping, and prepping their veggies!

Fresh prepared produce delivers many benefits to foodservice operations from cost and labor savings along with increasing back of house efficiency, food safety, and freshness. With everything that has happened with the pandemic and the new ways restaurants are operating, not prepping your produce is incredibly relevant to foodservice's post-pandemic plan of action. Let's take a look!



Fresh Cut



If you aren't familiar with fresh cut and fresh prepped produce, let me introduce you to a simple concept that has radicalized our industry and the restaurants that employ it. There are a variety of produce items that can be purchased already prepared like lettuce-based items, coleslaw, and guacamole. By keeping the prep work out of the kitchen, restaurants can bring stability and efficiency to the product yield (you only buy 100% usable produce) and price (no more fluctuations with the commodity market). Other benefits include greater product consistency, which is especially important for operators, and less wasting from chopping, scooping, and prepping fresh produce.

Supply Chain



One of the biggest pain points during and after the pandemic was supply chain. The initial onset of the pandemic hit quicker than an established supply chain could adjust, and we are still feeling the ripples of the shut-downs a year later. On the produce side of things, supply drastically shifted away from foodservice to retail. As restaurants are now bouncing back strongly, the supply chain is adjusting. However, in our world there are a few impactful strategies, like converting to a fresh cut program, that can lessen, although not entirely remove, supply constraints.



Labor

We have been talking about rising labor rates for a few years now, but what we didn't expect was the massive labor tightening from the pandemic. For various reasons, workers have opted to stay at home, something that is happening through multiple industries with entry level jobs. This was painfully evident when a couple of my coworkers and myself went to eat at a fast casual chain and waited over a half hour for food. They were turning away customers because there were only two of them on staff running the register and prepping food.

One of the ways we have seen our foodservice buyers navigate the labor shortage is simplification of the menu, or the continuance of a simpler menu from pandemic cutbacks. Another strategy is to convert a whole produce program to fresh cut. For years we have seen increased consistency and food safety by simply purchasing prepared produce. Instead of having dedicated staff prepping vegetables or even asking team members to double up on tasks, this reduces prep time and ensures the consistency of product output throughout locations.

THE KEY IS STABILITY AND CONSISTENCY

The pandemic shutdowns caused consumers to return to their kitchens pushing up retail food markets and lowering foodservice ones. We also noticed some interesting phases of food preferences from consumers such as comfort foods at the beginning of the pandemic and then a focus on nutrition as we became more and more focused on health and wellness. The post-pandemic shift we're seeing is consumers returning to their interest in new and exotic flavors. Naturally, produce is the food of wellness and can bring the nutrition and excitement restaurants can entice patrons with as business begins to shift closer to the pre-covid balance of retail and foodservice buy.



When circumstances move out of their norms, we have to look beyond our norms to find solutions to solve the problems that arise.

We've seen so many innovations and creative ideas come out of the pandemic. In the end, we may not completely return to our pre-covid normal, but we can and will walk away from the past year even better. A small change like converting to a prepared produce program can introduce stability and consistency into a volatile market that will not only help level out the ups-and downs for your business but trickle out into the larger market and creating a better, post-pandemic normalcy.

ABOUT FRESH AVENUE



We're a Veteran Team with Over 150 Years Combined Experience in Produce

For anyone in the fresh food industry, it is critical to make sure quality, safe produce is delivered to restaurants and retailers each and every time. It's also critical to work with those who know and are involved in all the areas of the fresh supply chain.

Fresh Avenue makes those connections by supporting farms, producers, distributors, buyers, and transportation providers in the industry by paying attention and caring about their business, strengthening networks, combining and expediting orders from multiple fresh vendors at our source-based consolidation facilities, getting it to anywhere in North America, and providing support long after the sale.

Visit us at www.freshavenue.com for more insights and resources!

We'd love to help you stop prepping
veggies in you restaurant's operations!
Call us today!