

2025

RESTAURANT &

HOSPITALITY

TRENDS

The [restaurant and hospitality](#) industry is experiencing a dynamic shift due to changing consumer demands and technological advancements that are reshaping its landscape. Businesses are leveraging technological advancements as they seek to enhance efficiency and reduce costs. Concurrently, the rise of ghost kitchens has transformed the culinary scene, allowing brands to expand their reach through delivery without the overhead of a traditional dining space. The push for sustainability has emerged alongside a growing focus on health and wellness.

To meet these demands, establishments are prioritizing eco-friendly practices and responsible sourcing as they assess their menus and operational practices to ensure they align with the health-conscious preferences of today's diners. Creating experience-based service has become crucial, as consumers increasingly seek memorable interactions and personalized dining experiences that go beyond just the food. Collectively, these trends are reshaping the future of the restaurant and hospitality industry, pushing it toward greater innovation and responsiveness to consumer needs as we enter 2025.

1 STREAMLINING
OPERATIONS WITH
ADVANCED
TECHNOLOGY

2 WILL GHOST
KITCHENS
CONTINUE TO
RISE?

3 WILL THE PUSH FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
CONTINUE?

4 CAPTURING
CUSTOMER
PREFERENCE FOR
HEALTH AND
WELLNESS

5 CREATING
EXPERIENCE-BASED
SERVICE

1 STREAMLINING OPERATIONS WITH ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

In the past year, the restaurant and hospitality industry has seen a large increase in the resources spent prioritizing operations. This is transforming how businesses function and serve customers. Faced with rising labor costs, staff shortages, and increasing demand for faster, more convenient service, companies are [turning to technology and automation](#) to enhance efficiency. From drive-throughs to full-service hotels, the whole industry is trying to make their customer interactions as [seamless and efficient](#) as possible.

Companies are implementing a variety of methods to achieve efficiency including mobile ordering, [contactless payments](#), automated inventory systems, and data-driven personalization, leveraging innovative tools to optimize processes, reduce costs, and improve the guest experience. We have seen cooking robots rolled out across the industry making items such as tortilla chips, wings, bread and pizza. Additionally, some businesses are optimizing staff roles and using AI to automate drive thrus and over the phone ordering. These strategies help cut costs and boost operational effectiveness while delivering a more seamless customer journey.

While not all companies are going “all in” into automation, most companies are leveraging some type of technology to streamline their SOPs. Today, [60% of restaurant owners](#) use contactless payment solutions, while [88% of restaurant operators](#) believe replacing traditional menus with QR code menus allows them to streamline their business.

This shift helps companies maintain a solid bottom line to stay competitive in a fast-evolving market. By adopting more efficient processes, they can reduce operational costs, especially in areas like labor and inventory management. It also helps address staffing challenges, allowing businesses to maintain high-quality service with fewer employees. Furthermore, by meeting modern consumer demands for speed, convenience, and personalized service, owners can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to increased revenue. In a competitive market, prioritizing operations is essential for staying relevant, improving profitability, and ensuring sustainable growth.

Today, 60% of restaurant owners use contactless payment solutions, while 88% of restaurant operators believe replacing traditional menus with QR code menus allows them to streamline their business.

-SOURCE

2 WILL GHOST KITCHENS CONTINUE TO RISE?

The rise of ghost kitchens, also known as cloud kitchens or dark kitchens, represents a significant shift in the food service industry. If you haven't heard of this concept before, ghost kitchens are commercial cooking spaces that produce food exclusively for delivery and takeout, without a traditional dine-in option. These kitchens can sustain multiple brands or menus out of a single location.

This industry sector has been growing quickly, as from 2021 to 2024, the number of ghost kitchens rose from 3,500 to over 7,500. The rise of ghost kitchens is driven by consumer preferences changing to favor convenience and speed over traditional restaurants or time-consuming cooking. This is shown as 60% of consumers order delivery every week.

These kitchens offer cost efficiency through lower overhead costs and shared resources, allowing multiple brands to operate from a single space. The growth of food delivery platforms, coupled with data analytics, also enhances market reach and operational efficiency and allows these companies to serve consumers and on a large scale. Additionally, ghost kitchens provide flexibility and scalability, enabling quick brand launches and menu testing with minimal risk. This combination of factors positions ghost kitchens as a dynamic and innovative solution in the evolving food service landscape.

The rise of ghost kitchens is significant for business owners as they offer a cost-effective and flexible entry into the food industry, requiring lower initial investments and operational costs compared to traditional restaurants. This model enables quick adaptation to changing consumer preferences as well. Additionally, ghost kitchens facilitate rapid scalability into new markets and leverage technology for data-driven insights, optimizing menus and enhancing delivery logistics. As consumer trends increasingly favor online ordering and delivery, ghost kitchens help entrepreneurs meet these demands and maintain a competitive edge.



60% of consumers order delivery every week.

3

WILL THE PUSH FOR SUSTAINABILITY CONTINUE?

Across all industries there has been an increase in sustainability efforts over the past few years, driven by a combination of consumer demand and a growing recognition of the environmental impact of operations. The restaurant and hospitality industries are at the forefront of this movement. The push for sustainability extends from customer-facing activities to back-office operations to raw material sourcing. Consumer demand for eco-friendly options drives these changes, making sustainability a core aspect of modern dining experiences.

The restaurant and hospitality industry is increasingly embracing sustainability through several key initiatives. The farm-to-table movement supports local sourcing and seasonal menus, while waste reduction efforts, including composting and food donation, minimize environmental impact. Energy and water efficiency measures, such as LED lighting and low-flow fixtures, are becoming standard. Sustainable sourcing emphasizes ethical meat and seafood while prioritizing organic ingredients. Green certifications enhance credibility, and sustainable packaging reduces plastic waste. Technology systems can also help to manage inventory, thus reducing waste.

These sustainability measures are not simply good for the environment but are also good for business. According to the [National Restaurant Association](#), 38% of diners are more likely to choose a restaurant offering locally sourced products, and 30% are likely to choose a restaurant offering food grown in an environmentally friendly way or raised organically over one that doesn't. Further, even though sustainable options may be more expensive, 70% of Millennials and 72% of Gen Z are willing to pay extra for eco-friendly packaging. On the hospitality side, [81% of consumers](#) plan to choose a sustainable accommodation in the next year.

Sustainability is crucial for business owners in the restaurant and hospitality industry because it offers both immediate and long-term benefits; implementing eco-friendly practices can lead to significant cost savings through energy efficiency, waste reduction, and optimized inventory management. As consumer demand shifts toward more sustainable and ethical options, especially amongst younger generations, businesses that prioritize sustainability attract and retain customers, enhancing brand loyalty and reputation. Sustainability ensures long-term viability by safeguarding essential resources for future operations, making it not just a trend, but a smart business strategy.

38% of diners are more likely to choose a restaurant offering locally sourced products.

-SOURCE

4 CAPTURING CUSTOMER PREFERENCE FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Similar to sustainability efforts, health and wellness trends are transforming the restaurant and hospitality industry, influencing menus, services, and marketing strategies alike. Consumers are demanding healthier options like plant-based foods, organic ingredients, and alternatives tailored to specific diets. As a result, many restaurants now offer detailed nutritional information, functional foods, and [alcohol-free beverages](#) to meet the needs of health-conscious consumers, while hotels are increasingly incorporating wellness-focused amenities, such as fitness programs, healthier room service options, and wellness retreats.

Consumers are increasingly pressing restaurants to healthier options. [One survey](#) showed that 35% of Americans rank diet as most important to overall health, and 61% of 18–29-year-olds stated that they actively try to include organic foods in their diet; additionally, 88% of consumers are willing to pay more for healthier foods.

Food transparency is increasingly recognized as a vital component of ensuring clean food options. As consumers become more informed and vocal about their food choices, businesses that prioritize clean ingredients, transparency, and sustainability can enhance their appeal, foster customer loyalty, and contribute positively to the broader food system. By providing clear information about ingredient sourcing, nutritional content, and food safety practices, businesses in the restaurant and hospitality industry can build trust with their customers and position themselves as responsible and ethical choices in the marketplace.

88% of consumers are willing to pay more for healthier foods.

-SOURCE



5

CREATING EXPERIENCE-BASED SERVICE

The restaurant and hospitality industry has shifted its focus toward creating unique and memorable experiences for clients, rather than just providing food and accommodation. This trend is driven by changing consumer expectations and the desire for more personalized, immersive, and engaging interactions.

Personalization has become a cornerstone of customer experience in the restaurant and hospitality industry. Businesses are increasingly utilizing data analytics and [customer relationship management \(CRM\) systems](#) to track guest preferences and behavior. This allows them to tailor services; for example, offering customized menus, suggesting dishes based on dietary restrictions, or recognizing special occasions like anniversaries and birthdays with personalized greetings or complimentary treats.

Consumers are searching out these experience-based services as shown by [an Eventbrite survey](#) in which 75% of respondents stated they would pay more for a unique experience; 76% want a memorable location; 84% want a surprising menu or theme; and 74% seek a one-of-a-kind experience.

The integration of technology in the restaurant and hospitality industry is [reshaping how guests interact with services](#). Mobile applications and online platforms enable customers to make reservations, order food, and manage their stays with ease. Innovations such as contactless payment systems and digital check-ins enhance convenience and streamline processes, allowing guests to focus more on their experience rather than logistics. Furthermore, some establishments are experimenting with augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to provide unique experiences, such as virtual tours of a hotel or interactive menus that highlight the origin of ingredients, enhancing guest engagement and satisfaction. This extends from McDonalds putting VR goggles in happy meals to Aerobanquets RMX's '[mixed-reality, immersive gastronomy experience](#)' created by Michelin Star chefs.

Enhanced service is a vital aspect of the customer experience in the restaurant and hospitality industry. Establishments are investing in comprehensive training programs for staff to ensure they provide exceptional and personalized service. This includes training in communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to anticipate guest needs. By creating a warm and welcoming environment where staff members can connect genuinely with guests, establishments can continue to enhance the overall experience.



“Personalization has become a cornerstone of customer experience in the restaurant and hospitality industry.”

LOOKING AHEAD

As the restaurant and hospitality industry continues to evolve, embracing these key trends will be vital for success in a competitive landscape. Streamlining operations and adopting ghost kitchens allows businesses to optimize resources and cater to the growing demand for convenience, while sustainability initiatives resonate with an increasingly eco-conscious consumer base. Prioritizing health and wellness ensure that offerings align with the preferences of today's diners, who prioritize nutrition and well-being. Moreover, a focus on experience-based service will create lasting connections with customers, fostering loyalty and encouraging repeat visits.

By integrating these trends into their strategies in 2025, businesses in the restaurant and hospitality industry can not only enhance their operational efficiency but also cultivate a more meaningful relationship with their clientele, paving the way for a resilient and innovative future.

ABOUT CLARKSTON CONSULTING

Businesses across the retail industry partner with Clarkston Consulting to enhance strategic decision-making, improve operational efficiencies, implement new technologies, and promote business growth and market diversification. Leveraging deep functional and industry expertise, our people discover, design, and deliver solutions that fit your business, your goals, and your future. At Clarkston, your purpose is our purpose.

For more information about how we can help your company, [please contact us](#).

