You’re invited!

Questions about the event? Contact Brandy Nielson 402.488.3999 ext. 2
bnielson@nebraska-dining.org

Tickets will be your name badge and will be waiting for you at registration.

402.488.3999 | 800.770.8006
www.nebraska-dining.org

Guest rooms will be available Saturday, April 26th - Tuesday, April 29th at the discounted rate of $129 per night. Guests can call 1-800-HILTONS and ask for the Nebraska Restaurant Association block.

Link to the room block: https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_ei_new&eventID=10970638

Nebraska Restaurant Association
1610 S. 70th Street, Suite 101
Nebraska Restaurant Association

Omaha Hilton - Downtown
Wearing a hat to the Kentucky Derby is believed to bear good luck! We encourage the women to have some fun and take part in our Parade of Hats! One lucky gal will go home with a prize for the Best Derby Inspired Hat.
Legislative report

Staff changes in 2013 provided an excellent opportunity for a strategic review on how we can fulfill our mission more efficiently and effectively. As a result of that review we recommended upgrading our financial and membership management applications to provide more efficient and frequent communications with our members. This was approved by the Executive Committee and will be complete by the March 31, 2014.

We have established strategic relationships with the University of Nebraska Culinary Arts Department to manage the ProStart® program. Fayrene Hamouz has done an excellent job of coordinating regional and state ProStart® competitions and will accompany the finalists to the national competition in Minneapolis on May 3, 2014.

The Extension Division is providing Servsafe® training in facilities statewide and we had a meeting with the UNL Extension Educators in March to discuss options for marketing and providing these services more effectively.

I plan to attend the National Restaurant Association Public Affairs Conference in Washington, DC on April 29th and 30th. This will be an opportunity to meet with our Nebraska Congressional Delegation to discuss issues of interest to our members.

NATIONAL ISSUES

Menu Labeling
The National Restaurant Association seeks maximum flexibility for restaurateurs as the Food and Drug Administration develops regulations to implement a national standard for nutrition information on chain-restaurant menus. The final FDA regulations, which will apply to chains with 20 or more locations operating under the same brand name, are expected to be released in the first half of 2014. The national law will supersede conflicting state and local regulation, limit restaurant liability and establish a uniform standard for how chain restaurants make calorie and nutrition information available.

Affordable Care Act
The NRA is urging Congress to change the law’s definition of full-time to 40 hours a week from 30, simplify the calculation to determine who’s a large employer and eliminate the auto-enroll mandate that requires companies with 200 or more full-time employees to automatically enroll full-time employees in a company health plan if they haven’t opted out within 90 days.

We will continue to coordinate with the National Restaurant Association and work with our congressional delegation to generate support for these necessary changes.
New Century Agency
Business Insurance
Contact: George & Arlene Thietje
888.424.3800
New Century Agency was founded in 1993 by George & Arlene Thietje. New Century specializes in restaurant insurance and currently writes over 500 restaurants throughout the Midwest.

Fishbowl
E-Marketing Solutions
Contact: Joe Gabriel
703.836.3421 x 230
Fishbowl has proven that targeted email marketing will generate more sales and increase guest frequency. Through a partnership with the Nebraska Restaurant Association and the National Restaurant Association, Fishbowl provides savings to current members.

Jackson Lewis LLP
Legal Services
Contact: Chad Richter
402.391.1991
Specializing in employment and labor laws, Jackson Lewis offers members a significant discount for legal services.

Heartland Payment Systems
Credit Card / Payroll Processing
Contact: Michael McCarville
402.551.9832
Heartland Payment Systems offers a full line of payment acceptance and payroll processing options designed specifically for association members. Local representation. Flexible, one-stop solution.

Nebraska.Statepaper.com
Online Dining Guide
402.403.1176
Nebraska.Statepaper.com is the premiere online dining guide of the Nebraska Restaurant Association. In addition to a free listing, members of the Nebraska Restaurant Association may receive additional discounts with enhanced listings and websites.

Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI)
Music Licensing
Contact: Cleve Murphy
615.401.2877
Nebraska Restaurant Association members can save up to 20% thru BMI. BMI collects license fees on behalf of songwriters, composers and music publishers and distributes them as royalties to those members whose works have been performed.
Are you ready for cyber liability?

High-profile cyber attacks on companies such as Target and Sears have raised awareness of the growing threat of cyber crime. The risks of a security breach for small businesses do not just include getting a bad reputation and losing customers; if a small business is found negligent of protecting information, they can be held liable for any costs of that information being breached.

Online hacking is the most common way that these security breaches happen. And when, as small business owners, we don’t know anyone who has been personally affected; or when it’s difficult to understand how hacking happens and how to set up protection against it, it often seems easier to ignore the problem.

Recent data shows that the average data breach of a non-PCI compliant restaurant is $80,000, and most restaurants don’t survive that cost. To protect your business from being held liable after a cyber attack, insurance may be the answer. Many restaurant owners assume that their general liability coverage will protect their business from cyber liability, but this is generally untrue. An easy way to protect your business is to talk to your insurance professional and invest in cyber liability coverage. Small business cyber liability insurance usually offers coverage for necessary expenses including breach notification, credit card monitoring services, costs to retain a public relations consultant, and more.

Online hacking is the most common way that these security breaches happen.
Big changes to Nebraska’s minimum wage in the works

On January 16, 2014, State Senator Jeremy Nordquist introduced LB943, which seeks to increase Nebraska’s minimum wage, including the minimum wage for tip earners. Nebraska’s current minimum wage is $7.25 per hour. For tip earning employees, such as waiters and waitresses, the minimum wage is $2.13 per hour plus all gratuities given to them for their services. The sum of the employee’s wages and tips must meet or exceed $7.25 per hour. In the last five years, there has been a rash of lawsuits, both individual and class actions, regarding wage hour issues like tip pooling and overtime for tip earning employees. The proposed minimum wage increase will add another consideration for employers in the hospitality industry.

This bill comes on the heels of a national movement toward raising wages. The minimum wage in thirteen states increased on January 1, 2014. In addition, President Obama signed an Executive Order raising the minimum wage for federal contractors to $10.10. The new minimum wage law, if passed, would make Nebraska’s minimum wage among the highest in the nation. LB943 proposes incremental increases to Nebraska’s minimum wage over the next three years. From January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2015, the minimum wage would be $7.65 per hour. From January 1, 2016, through December 31, 2016, the minimum wage would be $8.35 per hour. Finally, on January 1, 2017, the minimum wage would be $9.00 per hour.

LB943 also seeks to dramatically modify tip earner’s minimum wage and the portion the employer is responsible to pay. If the bill is passed, the minimum wage for tip earners will initially increase to $3.00 per hour. For each subsequent year, the minimum wage would continue to increase until it equals 70% of the normal minimum wage. Currently, employers are responsible for approximately 30% of tip earners’ wages. In essence, tip earners minimum wage will increase annually until it reaches $6.30 per hour. The minimum wage would increase each year by the lesser of $0.95 or the amount needed to reach 70% of the normal minimum wage in effect.

LB943 was passed by the Business and Labor Committee with six votes for it and only one vote against it. LB943 still faces the general vote. Employers are encouraged to keep LB943 on their radar to ensure compliance with any changes. Jackson Lewis attorneys are available if you have questions about this potential legislative change or any other wage and hour issue applicable to your organization on a federal, state or local level.
Donald Everett Sr., who grew Runza into one of Nebraska's largest restaurant chains, died Tuesday, February 11. His mother, Sally Everett, opened the original Runza Drive Inn at 2600 Park Blvd. in Lincoln with her brother Alex Brening in 1949. Everett went to work for the business in 1964. After a second Runza opened at 56th and Holdrege streets in 1966, Donald Everett bought the trade name and incorporated the business. He introduced franchising in 1979 and rapidly expanded the company, which now has more than 80 locations in four states.

By design, Everett turned down far more franchise applications than he approved, said his son-in-law Carl Sjulin. In 1991, Everett told The Lincoln Star he had at that point fielded more than 3,000 inquiries about Runza franchises.

Everett's accomplishments did not go unnoticed by those in the restaurant and business communities. Among the awards Everett won were Nebraska Restaurateur of the Year in 1994, the Corporate Leadership Award from the College of Business Administration Alumni Association at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1989 and the Small Business Administration's Award for Entrepreneurial Success in 1991. Everett was inducted into the Omaha Hospitality Hall of Fame in 2010 and the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame in January.

Runza Restaurant received numerous recognitions under Don's watching including the Chamber Cornerstone Award (2001), the Nebraska Restaurant Association Good Neighbor Award (2005), and the Rotary/Chamber Salute to business (2009).

“He really wanted to do things well, always first class and with managers and owners who were active in the business,” said Sjulin, who is president of West Gate Bank.

“When I find a good person, I build them a Runza and then we’ll be partners,” Everett said. “We invest in each other. We’re going to continue to grow that way, one Runza at a time.”

Everett’s management style and philosophy worked, resulted in engaged and loyal employees, with low turnover. Upon his death, that loyalty and respect was demonstrated in employee tributes:

“I would never have pictured myself in my 20’s making a career in fast food had it not been for Runza and the way it’s run on good core values,“

“…Don was such a huge influence in my life all those years ago…it was his vision that put together this great big Runza family and I am very proud to be part of it…”

“…He was always thoughtful and caring enough to call us at the stores on the holidays to thank the crew for working it…”

“…What I know about Don was that he was funny, hard working, cared about his employees, cared about his family and tried to make everyone around him just as successful as he was…”

“…Every interaction with him as a youngster instilled in me a sense of pride and accomplishment. He would tell me in everything I do and what I do matters to somebody…”

Everett’s entrepreneurial skills carried over to horse breeding. He founded Bluestem Farm outside of Lincoln where he bred and raced several stakes winners, including Irish Villon, Thundering Verzy, and Bach's Homebrew. The familiar yellow “BF” silks were a regular sight at racing venues through the nation over the years. He remained strongly involved in horse racing with Runza Restaurants sponsoring a family day on Easter weekend at Fonner Park for many years. Fonner has held a Runza Stakes for fillies and mares for several years.

Don was also proud of his Lincoln Southeast High School roots and was inducted into the Knight Hall of Fame. His competitive mentality was forged on the LSE football team where he was undersized but always a feisty gamer. When told he could not do something, Don always redoubled his efforts and succeeded.

Don’s wife, Sandra and children, Renee Sjulin, Dawn Amend and Don Everett, Jr., all play active roles in the business. He loved his eight grandkids and got to see several of them work at the restaurants: Megan and C.J. Sjulin, Ashley, Chelsea and Stephanie Amend, and Hannah, William and Lillie Everett. Don is survived by two sisters and a brother: Mary London of Sacramento, Sharon Redmond of Denver and Rich Everett of Omaha.

Excerpts from Journal Star and Daily Racing Form
Executive directors report

mandate originally was due to take effect in 2014, but the White House moved the effective date to 2015.

The Obama Administration said that employers with 50 to 99 full-time-equivalent employees won’t be subject to the law’s employer-mandate penalties until 2016.

This change, and other changes in the final rule, will provide additional flexibility for employers, especially those at or near the 50 FTE-employee definition of a “large employer” under the ACA. The NRA also continues to advocate for structural changes in the law that only Congress can address, such as the definition of full-time employee.

The Treasury Department has not yet finalized major new reporting requirements for employers under the law. The first information reports will be required in early 2016, based on data tracked in 2015. The National Restaurant Association reiterated its concern that these rules be as streamlined as possible, since these could contain significant compliance costs for restaurants.

For continuing updates on the law, visit the National Restaurant Association’s Health Care Headquarters at http://www.restaurant.org/Healthcare.

Nebraska Issues

The 2014 session of the Nebraska Unicameral will adjourn on April 17. This is the second session of the two year legislative cycle. The 2013 session was a “long” 90 day session. This year is a “short” 60 day session. All legislation not acted on will die at the end of this session and will have to be newly introduced if it is to be addressed next session. Here are some of the issues we are working on for you.

Raise Nebraska Minimum Wage and Minimum Tip Wage

Senator Nordquist has prioritized LB 943 which would raise minimum wage to $9 per hour by January 1, 2017. As now amended it would also raise the minimum tip wage to $3 per hour initially and stair step it up over time to 75% of the minimum wage. It was advanced to the floor of the legislature by the Business and Labor committee and will be considered by the legislature in this session. We are working hard to stop this legislation. Please contact your State Senator and express your opposition to this important issue.

Sales Tax Collection Fees

Nebraska restaurants collect and remit sales tax and receive practically nothing for this service. The cost to restaurants is significant, especially on credit card sales. To understand how unfair the situation is, take a look at a $100 credit card sale. In Omaha or Lincoln, that results in $7 sales tax which also goes on the credit card. After the credit card company deducts the swipe fee, an average restaurant is left with $6.86 but still remits $7 to the state. To address this, Senator Schumacher introduced LB333 at our request which would significantly increase sales tax collection fees retained by collectors and remitters of sales tax. In an attempt to attack the problem from another direction, Senator Nordquist introduced LB991 which would prohibit collection of interchange fees by payment card networks on the sales tax portion of the charge. We were not successful in getting these bills advanced this session but they served as tools to educate the members of the legislature on the unfairness of the situation. We will continue this effort next session.

Occupation Taxes

In the recent past, the cities of Lincoln, Omaha, Grand Island, and Norfolk have enacted occupation taxes to be collected by restaurants. State law presently requires cities to get legislative approval to increase city sales tax but allows cities to enact and raise city occupation taxes. We supported legislation to put control on future city occupation taxes by requiring most to go to a vote of the people affected but the legislation was not as limiting as we had hoped. In the 2013 session Senator Krist introduced LB474 which would put further restrictions on
occupation taxes. We are supportive. The bill advanced out of committee and we are confident that it will be passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

**Dram Shop – Mandatory Training for Servers and Sellers of Alcohol**

“Dram Shop” refers to legislation that holds sellers/servers of alcohol liable for damage, injury, or death as a result of selling or serving an intoxicated person. Nebraska is one of the few remaining “non dram shop” states. There have been several attempts in past legislative sessions to make Nebraska a “dram shop” state. We have consistently and successfully opposed these past attempts.

Dram shop legislation was not introduced in the 2014 session but Senator Krist did introduce LB444 which would require all servers and sellers of alcohol to be trained and certified and impose a statewide system similar to that which was recently enacted by the city of Lincoln. We are confident that LB444 will not be advanced by the Legislature this session. However, Senator Krist is very serious about this issue and has assured us that he will address it again next session and he is requesting that we suggest provisions that we could support. In the past, we have supported training with the following provisions:

- Training programs be approved by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission.
- A “train the trainer” approach be adopted requiring managers be trained and providing resources for them to train their respective staffs.
- State approved training programs would preempt city training.
- The training programs would be accessible on line and affordable.
- Training should be valid for three years and transferable from employer to employer.

Please provide your input on this very important issue.

**Child Obesity**

Senator Avery is very concerned about child obesity. In a past session, he introduced a bill that would have placed significant dietary restrictions on a child’s meal that included a toy which did not advance out of committee. In the 2013 session he introduced LB447 which would impose a sales tax on soft drinks sold in stores. While this does not directly impact restaurants, it does negatively impact some of our most supportive allied members and as a result, we are in opposition. We were successful in keeping the bill in committee so it will not be successful in the 2014 session.

**Immigration Reform**

A comprehensive immigration reform bill was passed in the Senate. The House of Representatives will be debating the issue this session. Foreign policy, debt limit and budget issues will be competing for time and immigration will not be taken up until these issues are resolved. Continued pressure on our representatives is necessary to move the agenda in a positive direction.

We have been working with the Nebraska Coalition for Immigration Reform to encourage comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Our strategy has been to present the facts about immigration to the general public via presentations and forums in five communities across the state: Crete, Omaha, Norfolk, Lexington and Scottsbluff. A summary of each forum was published in Prairie Fire Journal and summarized in a final report, “Immigration in Nebraska, Part II”. A copy of this report has been provided to the Nebraska Legislature.

One of our recommendations is for the Nebraska Legislature to draft a resolution requesting federal action on immigration reform. Senator Wightman introduced the resolution and we have a bipartisan group of twelve co-sponsors. LR-399 was reported to the Legislature for further consideration on February 24, 2014. We expect that it will be on the agenda for discussion late in the session after all required legislation has been considered.

There is an excellent chance that this will pass the Legislature and inform our congressional delegation that Nebraska is on record supporting legislation already passed by the Senate and introduced in the House of Representatives.
It’s tax time, so let’s talk tip reporting. Now, if the restaurant business isn’t hard enough, complying with IRS tip reporting rules is one of the most critical and important tasks facing restaurant owners today. The IRS is accelerating its efforts to capture previously lost revenue in the form of income and FICA tax. As a restaurant owner you need to know your responsibilities regarding the reporting of your employees tips.

The bottom line is this ... restaurant employees are required to report and pay taxes on all of their wages including tips. Even with the rise in the presentation of credit and debit cards for payments, tipped employees are still receiving a significant amount of cash tips and are reluctant to fully report this income. To make matters worse, the restaurant owners are thrust in the middle because they are responsible for withholding Federal and State income tax from employee wages as well as the FICA tax. So the employer and employee are both caught up in the same conundrum and each has its own tip reporting responsibilities.

So, what do you need to know and do? Have your employees fill out Form 4070A the Employee’s Daily Record of Tips. Withhold Income and FICA tax from each paycheck and report each employee’s tips to the IRS. File the IRS form 8027 at the end of the year.

What you may be missing is filing the optional Form 8846 in order to receive the credit you deserve. If you had employees who received tips from customers for providing, delivering or serving food or beverages for consumption and you paid or incurred employer Social Security and Medicare taxes on these tips, you are entitled to tax credits. Check with your accountant to make sure you are not missing out on these credits. If you are processing your payroll with Heartland, we will prepare these forms for you, making your life a little easier and rewarding you for your employee tip reporting.

Heartland Payments Systems offers many other great tools for your business. We offer some of the best payment processing and marketing tools for the restaurant industry. We want to be your partner because we are the best provider of solutions for your business. Solutions that will bring more money to your table.

We take great pride in what we have to offer and derive great satisfaction in delivering solutions that bring more money to your table!
Every year, it seems hundreds of people claim to have become ill from eating at restaurants, social gatherings and family events.

What inspection agencies are involved in investigating food borne disease outbreaks? What can you expect from the area inspection agency? And, what should you do if your establishment is implicated in a food borne outbreak?

The responsibility for epidemiological (food borne outbreaks) investigations is with the State Epidemiologist, Dr. Tom Safranek, Disease Control Division, State Health Department. This division interviews the persons reporting the outbreak and those involved in the outbreak. A report is written, conclusions drawn, and recommendations for improvement are made based on the investigations. If samples of the suspect food are still available, they may be sent to the State Department of Agriculture Laboratory for analysis at the direction of Dr. Safranek.

In most areas of the state, food establishment inspections are done by inspectors from the Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Consumer Protection (FSCP). In Douglas County, Lancaster County and Hall County, the inspections are done by the local health departments. The area inspectors will do the preliminary investigation and interviews, and collect and ship food samples to the Agriculture Laboratory. In a major outbreak, investigators from the State Health Department will become involved.

Getting the necessary information early and securing the samples will make the job of providing, or disproving, the allegation much easier.

If you have questions, feel free to contact any of the agencies listed.

For more information:
State epidemiologist (402) 471-3121 or the Department of Agriculture (402) 471-3422 or your area inspector. The names and telephone numbers of the Ag sanitarians may be found in the Department website at www.nda.nebraska.gov in the Food Safety and Consumer Protection page. Information on food safety requirements, local health department contact information, and food safety hand outs are also found on the website.
You never compromise on ingredients.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Find updates online at www.nebraska-dining.org

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Greenleaf Properties is a full-service commercial real estate firm serving the state of Nebraska. We have an experienced team available to assist restaurant users with all of their real estate needs.

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Constellation Energy is a leading competitive supplier of natural gas to businesses across the continental United States. Our customers, including two-thirds of the Fortune 100, rely on our commitment to innovation, reliability, transparency and service. Constellation Energy has a regional office in La Vista and a sales representative in Lincoln to provide our Nebraska customers high level service and competitive natural gas prices.
March Madness is not only about basketball. Culinary Madness is preparing a chef inspired dining experience in two hours. After weeks of planning, a three course meal is prepared using two butane cooking units, all under the watchful eye of chefs and culinarians.

What happens when the cream doesn’t whip? Or too much salt is added to the fresh pasta? Confer with teammates, develop a strategy and continue. All of this goes on under the scrutiny of the judges. The resiliency of the secondary school students is amazing. In addition to problem solving, team members demonstrate knife skills, culinary techniques, sanitation, and professionalism. A challenge even seasoned professionals may be reluctant to undertake.

Team members also have the opportunity develop a unique restaurant concept—menu development, facility design and financial planning—for the community of Prostartville, USA. Judges review the concept, the team presentation, and team communication skills.

Since late February, 20 ProStart teams participated in three regional competitions held in Omaha, Scottsbluff and Lincoln. One hard-working team will have the opportunity to advance to the National ProStart Invitational in Minneapolis.

Special thanks to the regional sites—The Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College, Scottsbluff High School and Southeast Community College—for hosting and supporting the Nebraska ProStart students.
Honor your employees at the Taste of Nebraska

Your employees are the key to your success.

Nominate one or more of your hard-working employee’s today!

Everyone has one – two if they are lucky. That one employee that goes above and beyond what is asked of them during their shift. They are dedicated to the company. They show up on time for their shift and sometimes even stay late. They are often caught smiling and helping fellow coworkers with tasks. Then you bust them for polishing extra silverware........GASP!

Do you have an employee that fits this description? If so, they deserve to be honored as Employee of the Year. To honor one of your employees please email the information below to Brandy Nielson (bnielson@nebraska-dining.org).

All employees will be invited to attend the Taste of Nebraska on Monday, April 28th. They will be honored in front of over 500 guests and receive a plaque recognizing their hard work and dedication to the restaurant industry.

Name

Place of Employment

Number of Years He/She has worked there

Nominated By

Reasons for your nomination:

Examples

* Excellent customer service skills
* Helps co-workers when needed
* Willing to cover additional shifts

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New Century Agency

www.newcenturyinsagency.com
My favorite event is right around the corner! I hope you all have plans to attend our Kentucky Derby themed Taste of Nebraska dinner and awards banquet on Monday, April 28th at the Omaha Hilton. We are planning a “Night at the Races” with a spectacular menu prepared by Executive Chef Chip Hawkins. Unique to this year will be a top shelf Bourbon tasting to kick the night off during the cocktail reception from 6:00-7:00pm.

Calling all ladies! What is the Kentucky Derby without fancy big hats? Come dressed in your best fancy hat and take part in the “Parade of Hats”. One lucky lady will go home a winner!

Be sure to reserve your tickets by contacting me before April 14th. I can be reached by phone at 402.488.3999 ext. 2 or by email at bnielson@nebraska-dining.org

We think it IS good business to be a part of your industry association for many reasons.

• You add your voice to that of hundreds of other Nebraska restaurateurs on issues in Congress and the Nebraska Legislature that can have a tremendous impact on your profitability
• You receive information on the regulations on food safety and operations that will help to prevent expensive fines and penalties
• You receive discounts on products and services that increase your bottom line
• You receive information on the industry trends, commodity pricing, and building customer satisfaction and loyalty that lead to your success

Thank you for your membership to the Nebraska Restaurant Association – It’s just good business!

Brandy Nielson
Membership & Marketing Director

The Nebraska Restaurant Association is comprised of Nebraska Restaurateurs, Food Service Professionals, and Allied Members who are committed to excellence and safety in hospitality and food service.

Help us spread the word!
- Display your current membership sticker on your front door
- Add the NRA membership logo to your website, FB page, or menu
- Like us on Facebook (and tell your friends to like us, too!)
- And let your employees know you’re a proud member of the NRA (and why!)
The science behind menu design

A restaurant menu is more than just a list of food and prices. Your menu is the most significant marketing tool in your toolbox. It's a reflection of your concept, and an advertisement for your restaurant. The look and feel of the design, and the descriptions of your dishes all tell a story to the diner about what they are going to experience.

Ask a typical operator how often they update their menu and they might say once a year...maybe. Many of the updates are simply focused on price increases to keep up with the current cost of goods, and adding and removing a few items. While these updates are important and necessary, there is more that goes into designing a profitable menu. In defense of the independent operator, most don't have a marketing team dedicated to the psychology behind menu design. A look at successful menus reveals a strong focus on the science behind profitable menus. Yes! There is science behind what makes a profitable menu. Operators can make a big impact on their bottom line with a few adjustments.

A successful menu is defined simply as one that is profitable to the operator and pleasing to the guest. There are three basic components to a successful menu: a well-planned layout, enticing descriptions and a good pricing strategy. Here are some tips to help you create a more profitable menu.

Layout

• Keep your menu simple and organized with no more than two columns per section.

• Ditch the $ signs. Research indicates people order less expensive items when they see $ or the word “dollars” spelled out.

• Offer less. Having more than seven or eight items in a category can overwhelm guests.

• Carefully choose your font. It should be easy to read and not too big or too small. 12 point is a safe bet.

• Know which items are your profit stars and place them in the prime real estate on your menu, dictated by the well-researched Eye Flow Patterns. The eye naturally travels in a pattern depending on the layout of the menu. You see on each layout below where the “sweet spot” lies, indicated by the number one. This is where you want to put your most profitable items. In addition, consider highlighting high-profit items by boxing or marking with a “house specialty” icon. Bury your less profitable, high labor items where the eye travels last.

• Place add-ons next to the dishes they will enhance the most. Don’t bury your add-ons within the “sides” list.

• And lastly, make sure your design matches your concept. Stay true to your brand.

Descriptions

Evoke emotion in your descriptions, and view them as short advertisements for every dish by using “power words”. Power words help sell dishes by exciting customers.

Menu Eye Flow Patterns
and enticing their appetites. Tell a story. How does the word “big” sound compared to “towering” or “colossal”? Here is a short list of “power words” to inspire you:

- Fire-roasted
- Coal-Fired
- Carved
- Dollop
- Famous
- Fiery
- Fluffy
- Blackened
- Braised
- Herb Crusted
- Hickory Smoked
- Slow Aged
- Glazed
- Rustic
- Robust
- Sizzling

Hungry yet? Keep descriptions short, simple and delicious. You want to say enough to stimulate the guest’s interest, knowing the average guest only spends 109 seconds looking at the entire menu. Above all, make sure the description matches the dish or your credibility will be “charbroiled” to a “crisp” and your guest will be “steaming hot”!

**Price**
- It all starts with updating your menu cost analysis. Know your current profit on each item. This is vital to the layout. Successful operators know exactly which items are the most profitable and they focus on selling more of them through strategic menu placement and the staff. Every guest is a unique earning opportunity and being able to increase profits per seat is the goal.

- Know your competition. Research concepts similar to yours in the same area. Understanding what they offer and charge will help you understand what guests expect to pay and help you define how you are different and unique.

- Do you need to end all of your prices in 5’s? There are different philosophies on this, but it is truly unique to each operation. Your desired profit per plate should dictate the price first, and then follow a consistent pricing theme.

- The price should be integrated with the description of the menu item and placed only a few spaces away from the last words of the description. No longer is a dotted line leading to the price a good practice. Prices should not be aligned to the right and stacked beneath one another. Stacking allows the guest to find the least expensive item without even looking at the descriptions.

- Do not bold prices. This gives the guest the impression that the dish is more expensive than it actually is.

- Remember to focus on profit per plate - not food cost percentages. Real profit dollars are what we take to the bank.

Consider the following example:

**Chicken fried steak**
- at 32% food cost = $6.29 profit

**NY Strip Steak**
- at 50% food cost = $12.23 profit

Which would you rather sell?

Your menu should work hard to make you money, and that requires some work to get it into prime condition. As operators continue to search for ways to maintain or increase profitability in today’s climate, analyzing the menu and making adjustments to increase profitability and guest satisfaction is one of the most important and worthwhile projects an operator can choose to spend time on. Updating your menu is important to keep up with food costs and trends. If it has been a while, consider putting this project at the top of the to-do list and look forward to increased profits as a result of your hard work and consideration!
Mario Ochoa Vital

Mario Ochoa Vital made his career decision in high school. Now he’s doing what he loves to do.

He’s a chef – and a chef mentor for the Omaha Career Center ProStart® program.

When he was a junior in high school, Mario liked his core classes – English, business classes and history, but it was the culinary classes that captured his interest and in which he started to excel. That interest led to him earning a place in the Omaha Public Schools Career Center where he could focus on the culinary arts and where he was first introduced to the ProStart program.

One of Mario’s favorite parts of the program, besides earning college credits while in high school, was ProStart competitions. “I learned a lot from the program that most high school students never learn. Being able to compare my skills to that of others was invaluable. And the competitions boosted my confidence level 1000%!”

Mario competed in a variety of areas, earning the title of ProStart student of the year in 2007 along with a $1000 scholarship. He credits a ProStart professionalism competition for giving him a real world perspective on job interviewing. He came in second in the competition, and credits that competition, and being able to put “ProStart student” on his resume for helping to land his current position as Chef at Omaha’s 90th and Center Hy-Vee store.

After high school, Mario went on to Metro Community College and continued to compete in American Culinary Federation events, gaining valuable experience with different types of competitions. When he completed his education, he missed competing. He mentioned it to Michele Romano at the Omaha Career Center, and she immediately recruited Mario to be a Chef Mentor.

And he loves it. “I get to work with the students – and since I’ve been there, I know what they’re feeling. They’re pumped. They may not know it now, but they will soon, how ProStart gives them an edge over their peers.”

Mario meets with students after school and teaches them some of the things he learned in ProStart – developing menus, presentation, different techniques in food preparation, tasting, how to make things simpler – and helps to prepare them for competitions. At 24, he was concerned that he wouldn’t be able to garner the respect and attention of his teenage students, but by sharing his stories and experience, he’s built strong teams. With only six weeks preparation time, his teams won the silver and qualified for state, making Mario “very proud”.

Culinary classes at Omaha South, teacher and Chef Maybell Galusha who mentored him, culinary arts classes at Metropolitan Community College, the creative freedom he is allowed with his current position at Hy-Vee and ProStart, “helped groom me into the chef I am today,” says Mario. He wants to stay involved with ProStart, citing public speaking as an addition he would make to the program and competitions since chefs are often called upon to speak with the public. He’d like to see the two-year program in more schools since students who complete the two year programs have the ability to earn college scholarships.

In addition, Mario sees growing interest in the culinary arts among high school students and understands the important role the food service industry can play in helping develop the employees, managers, and owners the industry needs for success. He appreciates that his Hy-Vee store has allowed him to dedicate part of his time to ProStart, and proud that he is part of a four year old program that has a goal of having at least one chef in each of the company’s 253 stores. He’d like to serve as liaison between ProStart and the industry – because “he’s fortunate to be here”.

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Restaurant safety

Of all the issues the hospitality industry faces, i.e., market research, concept choice, location, recruitment, retention, guest comfort, food, customer loyalty and labor costs and profitability, none is more human than the safety of both guests and staff.

While competitors may consider service concepts and recipes proprietary, many other aspects of hospitality should be shared. Among topics appropriate for sharing are food safety, compliance and the physical safety of our teammates and our guests.

**Back Safety.** A chiropractor recently told a Nebraska Safety Council gathering that, when lifting, the knees should extend beyond the toes of the lifter's feet. This keeps the back straight and helps to prevent pain and injury. Folks are tempted to be macho when lifting and carrying heavy loads. The wise leader will create a culture of praise for those who use good judgment. Beginning in the orientation phase, back safety techniques should be taught. A valued employee should not be permitted to carry a side of beef on a shoulder, while descending steps. Carts and elevators should be utilized.

**Slips and Falls.** A proper ventilation system will not allow grease vapor to mist through the air and drift to the floor which can result in slips and falls. After lifting a basket from frying grease, the excess grease should be allowed to flow back into the reservoir instead of on the floor. If liquid is spilled on the floor, one staffer should guard the puddle while another goes for a mop. The staffer at the puddle is actually protecting an unsuspecting person from slipping and falling.

**Knives.** Sharpen kitchen knives regularly. Dull knives are the main source of lacerations. Distractions, resulting in cuts, cause pain, loss of the product, loss of time and medical expense. Even if a new employee states that have had prior knife training, we should give every new kitchen employee a thorough training in knife safety and evaluate if the training is effective.

A detailed check-off list for knife safety could include:

1. Determine which kitchen teammates are eligible to train others on knife safety and which are not. Only experienced kitchen managers should teach proper slicing techniques to new teammates.
2. Review knife safety weekly for 3 months.
3. Observe, supervise and critique cutting for 4 months.
4. Have kitchen managers evaluate each other's knife safety practices every 6 months.

**Exterior Safety.** Curbs and ramps outside the restaurant should be painted yellow.

These are some of the more important and obvious techniques to accomplish human safety. There are many safety practices, such as don't pick up broken glass with your bare hands, but you get the picture. Safety is a team effort of trainers, supervisors and the staffers and guests. Be safe. It's for the good of all concerned. And, if you experience a safety insight, share it with others.

**Advise, Teach... Share your experience!**

Do you have an idea for an article that describes a method, sums up a best practice, shows how you solved a problem, or reflects on the restaurant and food service industries in Nebraska? Or are you willing to share what you've learned being in the business with students enrolled in the ProStart® program?

Call Brandy at 488-3999 x2 or email bnielson@nebraska-dining.org We want to hear from you!
Past Webinars
Changes to the 2013 Food Code
The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has released the FDA 2013 Food Code which provides all levels of government and industry with practical, science-based guidance and manageable, enforceable provisions for mitigating known risks of foodborne illness in foodservice, retail and vending operations.

Hispanic Consumers and Adult Beverages: Insights & Opportunities
The largest and fastest-growing minority group in the U.S., Hispanics are increasingly important to restaurants. Learn the characteristics of this important demographic and its purchase and consumption behaviors regarding beer, wine, cocktails and spirits. Attendees will also hear about ways to engage Hispanics with their adult beverage programs.

Gluten Free Food Labeling
In August, the FDA released the Final Rule for Gluten Free Food Labeling. Join this webinar to learn more about what this ruling entails.

Payment Card Industry Compliance and the Restaurant of the Future
In this National Restaurant Association webinar, you’ll learn the basics of PCI compliance and a practical approach to achieving and maintaining it. The webinar will be presented by Kamran Chaudhary, Director of Compliance Technology and a Qualified Security Assessor from ANX eBusiness, and Jim Lippard, Senior Product Manager for Security Products at EarthLink Business.

Notification Tool Overview
The NRA’s Notification Tool is an online solution to help restaurateurs comply with the October 1, 2013 deadline of the new Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) notification requirement and keep track of the employees whom they’ve notified.

ServSafe® Allergens
Studies show 15 million Americans have food allergies. Those who deal with this life-threatening condition are often unsure which restaurants can safely accommodate them — if at all. Are you prepared to serve these guests?

Solve Your Direct Deposit Dilemma
Over the past few years employers have begun to introduce payroll cards to employees as an alternative to receiving a paper check. The benefits for employers are numerous, including reduced check cutting costs and limiting service disruptions on payday. Employees also benefit by receiving their pay immediately via direct deposit, reducing fees associated with cashing checks and, very important for some, having an opportunity to become integrated into the banking system.

Millennials and Adult Beverages: Insights & Opportunities
One of the largest generations in American history, Millennials are unique not only for their size but for many other factors, all of which influences how they approach adult beverage in restaurants.

Health Care Grassroots Webinar
To help NRA members understand how the mandate that would require employers to provide medical insurance under the Affordable Care Act change affects them, and what they can do to encourage more favorable changes. You will be educated on the NRA’s Health Care grassroots short and long-term strategies on health care advocacy.

Using Tumblr to Promote Your Restaurant Brand
Playfully irreverent, upbeat and dynamic, Tumblr can be a tricky place for a restaurant brand. Some restaurants have used the blogging service as a traditional web platform, posting menu items and hours, but others have moved beyond the established and are using the space to build a more interesting brand experience.

Keeping Commercial Deli Slicers Safe
Find out how to extend the life of your commercial deli slicer while adhering to revised food safety standards. Join us for a member-only webinar on revisions to the national standard for commercial-powered food preparation equipment.
April 28
Taste of Nebraska
The Hilton Omaha Downtown
- Cocktail Hour and Entertainment
- Silent and Live Auction
- Awards presented for Restaurateur of the Year and Allied Member of the Year
NEW LOCATION!

May 3-5
National ProStart Invitational
Minneapolis, MN

June 16
HEF Golf Outing
Oak Hills Country Club, Omaha

August 11
Omaha Restaurant Association Golf Outing
Champions Run, Omaha

September 22
NRA Fall Golf Outing
Hillcrest Country Club, Lincoln

September 12-21
Omaha Restaurant Week

October 19
Hall of Fame Dinner
Omaha, NE

### SERVSAFE Calendar

- **April 9**
- **April 23**
- **May 14**
- **May 28**
- **June 11**
- **June 25**
- **July 16**
- **July 30**
- **August 11**
- **August 27**

**ServSafe Classes** will be held at daVinci’s, 745 South 11th Street, Lincoln, NE

All classes will start at 8 AM; Exam will begin at 4 PM. Cost $110.00 for NRA members; includes lunch.

**Instructors:**

Julie Albrecht, PhD is an Extension Food Specialist and Professor at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Albrecht has taught ServSafe for over 20 years including training Nebraska Extension Educators to teach ServSafe. She has conducted applied food safety research associated with consumer and foodservice issues.

Georgia Jones, PhD is an Extension Food Specialist and Associate Professor at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Jones worked in the food industry in quality control and production supervision. For the last 12 years, Dr Jones teaches the Nutrition and Health Sciences food safety class for undergraduates. She works in the area of food literacy with Extension audiences.

To register for a class contact:
Ann Grasmick, 402.472.768; Email: agrasmick2@unl.edu

### SERVSAFE Instructors

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
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<td>Beatrice</td>
<td>Julie Albrecht</td>
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<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>Amy Peterson</td>
<td>402.747.2321</td>
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Display your NRA member window sticker proudly!

Being a member of the NRA, I always feel like I have someone in my corner. I know that when there is an issue that needs to be addressed before any of the many government entities, I feel confident that the NRA will be fighting for me and my business.

As a member, I can count on their knowledge regarding a wide range of issues that affect my business on a daily basis; from the ever changing rules and regulations about food safety to trends in the market.

The work they did in putting together informational seminars on the ACA (Affordable Care Act) has been invaluable to myself and my business.

Thanks for all you do for Nebraska’s restaurants.

Kelly Knudson
Owner - daVinci’s
Your Dairy...

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Your customers trust that Hiland Dairy products are fresh and local. We have earned this trust by providing dairy products to their families for decades. We’re proud to deliver fresh, delicious and healthy dairy products to both their tables and yours. In addition to traditional dairy products, Hiland Dairy now offers new products like Lactose-Free Milk, Almond and Soy Beverages, Greek Yogurt, Low-Sodium Cottage Cheese and Red Diamond Iced Tea and Tea Blends.

For product information and images, please visit: HilandDairy.com/image-library

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