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Sharing Success: New Year's Resolutions



All of us in the Stanislaus Foods family hope that your holidays were as meaningful as ours. Like most folks, we stayed close to home and did our best to celebrate with distant loved ones in a remote fashion.

It is often customary to wish others a "Happy New Year." Given the sobering events of 2020 and the continuing impact of COVID-19, "happy" doesn't seem appropriate. So instead, let me wish you and yours another traditional Italian greeting - *Prospero Anno Nuovo* - which translates to *May your New Year be more prosperous!*

For me, the New Year is traditionally a time that I reflect on recent events and look ahead to what new trends may be on the horizon.

Looking back, I am extremely proud to be associated with so many tenacious restaurateurs who have faced a multitude of business challenges as a result of COVID-19.

A question on many minds is probably "When will the COVID-19 nightmare finally end?" To that, I have no definitive answer. The good news is that a vaccine program is now underway. However, it will take time to achieve adequate coverage and for the results to instill the confidence in people to return to life as we knew it.

Therefore, perhaps a better question is "How can restaurateurs continue to make the best of things until then?"

I don't pretend to know what it takes to successfully run a restaurant. But directionally, here are a few possible "New Year's Resolutions" that all business leaders might consider for the coming year:

Keep Encouraging Your Team! After almost a year of COVID-19, most folks are worn out from bad news and negativity. This is especially true of essential businesses, including restaurants, which are often understaffed and overworked. Leaders are tired too. But if you are like the restaurateurs I have spoken with, you already go out of your way to encourage your team and let them know how much their individual contributions are appreciated. Such praise from a leader can help teams tap into renewed energy and enthusiasm for the tough work they do. Sharing "sunshine" with employees can also help customers feel more upbeat!

Keep Adapting! COVID-19 has thrown a lot of curveballs which have changed the rules of business and will likely continue to do so into the foreseeable future. Many businesses had to adapt just to survive. I have been especially impressed by how dine-in restaurants have worked to protect employee health, navigate dining room restrictions, and shift gears to boost takeout sales. My advice is never stop improving!

Seek Hidden Opportunity! As my Uncle Dino is fond of saying, "Opportunity often arrives cleverly disguised as an unsolvable problem!" For you and me, COVID-19 was certainly a big problem that we could not "solve." Instead, we had to find ways to safely operate through it. That said, any kind of economic disruption creates a host of opportunities for subsequent business growth and success.

Some are relatively easy to spot. For example, tough times often cause real estate prices to adjust. If so, there may be chances to upgrade/move/add locations or lock-in better rents for longer periods of time. Others are more subtle. For example, shifts in consumer behavior which were underway prior to COVID *continue to change*. Understanding and addressing these trends can help businesses remain relevant over the long haul. In any case, keep seeking further opportunities for continued innovation!

Remain profitable! During the heat of crisis, businesses do what it takes to make it through. But going forward, you must resolve to remain profitable. Economic tough times often force us to rethink *how we "do business"* from top to bottom. It is worth the time to re-examine things like streamlining your offerings to only items which are both popular and profitable, identifying efficiency improvements and/or cost reductions, and ensuring that sales facilitated by third parties generate more profit than cost, etc. However, avoid anything that would reduce your competitive flavor advantage!

Despite current hardships, I remain incredibly positive about the future of Independent Restaurants because of two truths which have remained rock solid through this and previous tough times:

- 1) Regardless of economic challenges, consumers always prefer to eat great-tasting restaurant food.
- 2) Consumers have always appreciated the sense of community and the warmth they receive from restaurant experiences. They have missed this and crave it now more than ever.

So again, I wish you and yours a *Prospero Anno Nuovo!* We are proud to stand with you today and in the future!

Yours,
Tom Cortopassi

Tom Cortopassi,
 President and Co-Owner



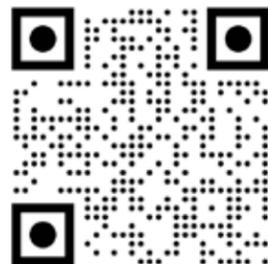
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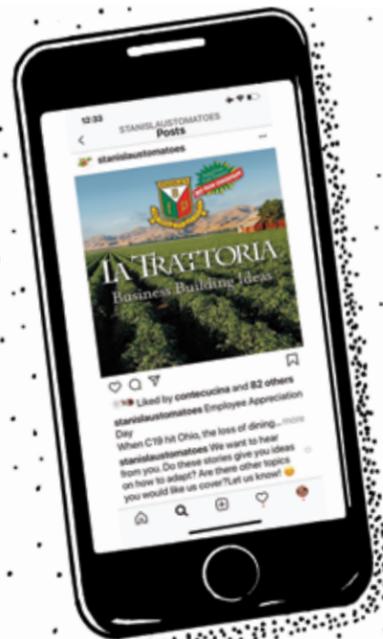
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SUCCESS STORY:

ANGELO'S CIVITA FARNESE PROVIDENCE, RI

Located in the legendary Italian-American enclave of Federal Hill, Angelo's Civita Farnese has satisfied Providence, RI, locals with flavorful homestyle Italian food, lovingly prepared, *for ninety six years.*

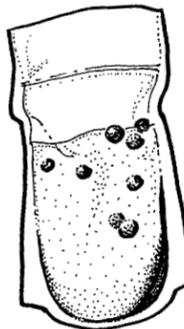
Angelo's has always embraced tradition, from its carefully preserved décor to its consistently unchanging menu. But then COVID-19 lockdowns closed the dining room and pushed fourth-generation owner Jamie Antignano and her family to seek creative new ways to boost sales and profitability.

KEY IDEA! Jamie began by tempting regulars to order takeout more often by posting new beautiful photos of their favorite entrées on Instagram and Facebook daily. Rather than mentioning price, she emphasized mouthwatering flavors and how much her team missed their customers!

KEY IDEA! To make ordering takeout easier, Jamie decided *it was finally time to start taking online orders.* Rather than waiting to find a perfect POS solution, Jamie added the "Square" app to her smartphone and began taking online orders that day. In her daily social posts, Jamie began alerting customers to its availability.

KEY IDEA! As online orders grew, Jamie worked on keeping each purchase profitable by researching and purchasing a new POS system *capable of directly processing each online purchase, thereby avoiding costly third-party fees.* For the same profitability reason, Jamie also refuses to allow third parties to deliver her food.

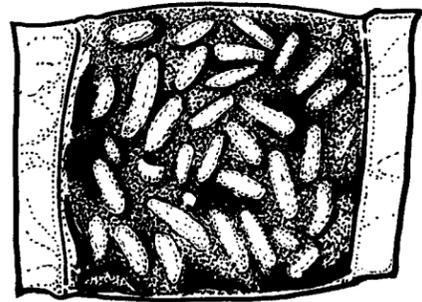
KEY IDEA! In addition to beer and wine "to go," Jamie merchandises upscale house-made cocktails in clear



beverage pouches. Popular specialties include refreshing "FROSE" (frozen rosé slush) and Pinot Grigio cocktails seasoned with spiced pear liqueur and tangy fresh cranberries.

KEY IDEA! For dessert, Angelo's sells "fill it yourself" cannoli kits, including empty shells, a disposable piping bag prefilled with sweet ricotta, and small lidded cups of pistachios, mini chocolate chips, sprinkles, etc. for dipping the ends. *Beyond DIY fun, filling shells at the last moment keeps them crunchiest!*

KEY IDEA! To boost the sales of chilled/frozen "heat and serve" soups, sauces, and entrées, Jamie broadcasts a weekly "Cooking with Angelo's Pantry" show on Facebook Live. In six-minute videos, she cheerfully demonstrates how customers can effortlessly transform Angelo's premade items into attractive multi-course meals!



KEY IDEA! Especially popular are Angelo's frozen "boil in bag" pasta entrées. Each sealed bag contains two pounds of par-cooked pasta in sauce. Customer prep is as simple as heating the sealed bag in boiling water for 20 minutes. A scissor snip later, Sunday supper is served!

Thanks to these and other improvements, the Antignano family is holding their own! BRAVO!!!

Visit Our Business-Building Library Online!

Visit our *Restaurateur Only* website for information about our company and products, family recipes, plus *multiple issues of La Trattoria!*



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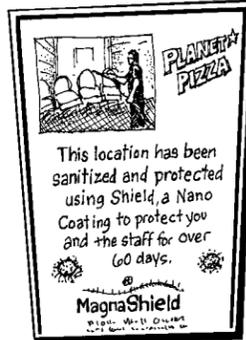


Where outdoor dining has been permitted, resourceful restaurateurs have beat inclement weather by creating attractive dining shelters featuring heat, greenery, and often twinkly lights! Beyond traditional catering tents, special structures include mini-greenhouses and even storage "PODS" remodeled into "dining villas!"

Pizzaiolo Woodfired Pizza
Oakland, CA



Spotlighting Special Sanitation



To help protect his guests from COVID-19, Dave Kuban had special virus resistant coatings applied to his tables and chairs. To help reinforce guest confidence, Dave then tastefully displayed photos and an explanation of the process in his restaurant. That's just one more step in reminding his faithful regulars how much he values their well-being!

Dave Kuban, Owner
Planet Pizza
Norwalk, CT

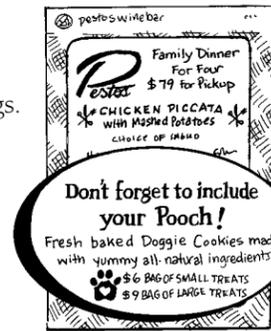
Doggie Cookies!



To boost sales, some restaurants have expanded takeout menus with unique offerings.

At Pesto's Wine Bar, that includes selling "freshly baked Doggie Cookies made with yummy, all-natural ingredients." Adding pet snacks to their order is popular among homebound dog owners spending far more time with their furry companions!

Pesto's Wine Bar
Chandler, AZ



Donation Scoreboard

For months, restaurateurs Michael and Vicki Nelson have encouraged their generous customers to donate pizza in support of community hospital workers.



To keep the ongoing drive top of mind, they post a "Donated Slices" scoreboard on Instagram. These visual reminders keep donors engaged and giving. And Michael and Vicki have earned community praise for spearheading the campaign!

Michael and Vicki Nelson, Owners
Little Pop's New York Pizza
Naperville, IL

KEY IDEA: TRULY TOUCHLESS TAKEOUT

Located in Estes Park, CO, *Antonio's Real New York Pizza* has satisfied locals and seasonal visitors for two decades. Pre-COVID, more than half the restaurant's revenue came from its 200 seat dining room.

But when the first COVID cases appeared in the US, owner Anthony DeSousa decided to voluntarily close his dining room and begin operating on a 100% touchless takeout basis. His wife, Tracey, a critical care nurse, had explained that respiratory viruses like COVID-19 spread fastest wherever large groups "share air." Since they couldn't isolate their kitchen crew from their often-crowded dining room, the DeSousas chose instead to seal off the entire restaurant to non-employees.

Here's how Anthony's "touchless takeout" system minimizes staff/guest/staff exposure.

- 1) All customers order and prepay via the restaurant's website, which was already equipped to process customer transactions. At the end of the purchase, guests provide their cell number, which will direct their order pickup.
- 2) As soon as Anthony's POS accepts their order and payment, customers get a confirmation email with their receipt and estimated pickup time. *The email also reminds them to watch their smartphone for pickup instructions via text message.*
- 3) Outside the restaurant, guests wait comfortably in their vehicles. When their order is ready, they are texted to approach **one of three curbside tables** labeled A, B, and C.
- 4) Just before texting, employees **double check each completed order** for accuracy and completeness.
- 5) A masked employee then exits the restaurant with their order. After placing it on the table, the staffer politely confirms the guest's name and order contents, thanks them for their business, and returns inside. The guest then carries the order to their car.



Beyond minimizing face to face contact, *portions of Anthony's approach can also help restaurants streamline their takeout operations long after COVID-19 fades.*



Requiring *online prepayment* for takeout makes pickups faster and easier for customers. The moment their food is ready, *prepaid customers can grab and go without further delay.* Eliminating cashiering from the end of the process also frees up employees, especially during peak demand.



Alerting *takeout guests via text* (vs. voice) when *their order is ready* reduces customers having to crowd forward to hear their names. Guests no longer have to concentrate on hearing EVERY SINGLE NAME CALLED to not miss theirs. It also reduces order mixups from misheard names.



Double checking each order before summoning customers and *reconfirming their name and order contents* before releasing their order further prevents customer disappointment. *Insisting on both steps* also greatly reinforces an employee culture of excellence.

Anthony DeSousa, Owner
Antonio's Real New York Pizza
Estes Park, CO

If we publish your idea, we'll send you \$100!

La Trattoria's proven ideas come from successful Independent restaurateurs like you.

What are you doing differently in your business (besides making great food) that adds to your success?! If we publish your idea, we'll send \$100 to say "Grazie!"

Call me, *La Trattoria* Editor Steve Rouse, at (800) 328-8667!

