



2024 State of the Industry

# Future of In-Restaurant Dining

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# Is this report for me?

Dive into "State of the Industry: Future of In-Restaurant Dining" to navigate the evolving landscape of the restaurant industry. This report is a must-read for restaurant executives, food service entrepreneurs, and culinary innovators looking to stay ahead in a competitive market. It offers deep insights into:

- Leveraging cutting-edge technology to redefine dining experiences, enhance operational efficiency, and personalize customer interactions.
- Integrating wellness and community-building into the dining experience, creating experiences that foster deeper connections and promote a sense of belonging.
- Exploring global culinary trends with a focus on sustainability and local sourcing, offering dishes that satisfy the palate and the planet.

This report provides the tools and insights needed to refine or completely redefine your restaurant's approach, ensuring you meet modern consumer demands for convenience, personalization, and quality. Whether aiming to elevate your dining experience, incorporate sustainable practices, or transform your establishment into a community hub, this guide is indispensable.



# The Emotional Tapestry of Dining Experiences

Food is about more than sustenance; it's a pivotal part of our daily lives, shaping how we connect, celebrate, and explore the world. Quick-serve and fast-casual restaurants, however, often miss tapping into this depth. There's a ripe opportunity to transcend mere convenience and profoundly impact customers' experiences.

- **Elevating Dining to an Experience:** Restaurants have the chance to make every meal an occasion, transforming routine dining into memorable experiences that resonate with customers on a deeper level.
- **Connecting Through Culinary Stories:** By sharing the origins and inspirations behind dishes, restaurants can foster a stronger connection with their patrons, turning meals into journeys of discovery.
- **Making Every Patron Feel Special:** Personalization isn't just a trend; it's a pathway for restaurants to demonstrate understanding and care for their customers, making each visit unique.



The future of in-restaurant dining hinges on embracing technology to transform the dining experience into something far beyond the ordinary.

Through innovative use of technology, restaurants can craft deeply personal, engaging, and memorable experiences that resonate with the essence of why we gather to eat - connecting, celebrating, and exploring together. This vision for dining not only redefines convenience but also elevates the role of restaurants in our lives.

## At a Glance: Key Highlights from 2024 Findings

Utilizing food's emotional and communal power remains largely untapped, with only **13%** of restaurants offering **digital experiences that make group dining easier**.

[More in Chapter 1](#)

**Third-party delivery platforms** dominate in expanding customer bases for **77%** of restaurants, yet direct relationships lag with only **8% integrating loyalty programs**, emphasizing the need for direct engagement strategies.

[More in Chapter 2](#)

Smart technology for balancing fast service with immersive dining experiences is underutilized, with only **25% adopting efficiency tech** and **19% using mobile apps** to enhance in-restaurant experiences.

[More in Chapter 3](#)

Enhancements in operational strategy show that while **57%** manage **diverse orders**, only **38%** seamlessly integrate **POS systems for digital and in-store ordering**, pointing towards a need for continued cross-channel integration.

[More in Chapter 4](#)

**Rapid prototyping and AI** are critical to drive innovation, with **79%** focusing on new experiences but only **22%** content with tech infrastructure, underscoring the push for modernization.

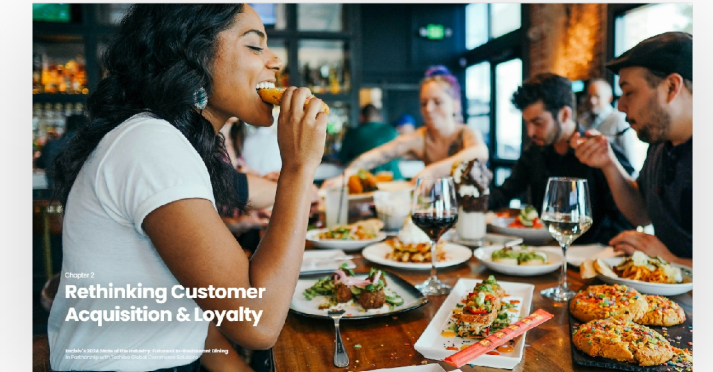
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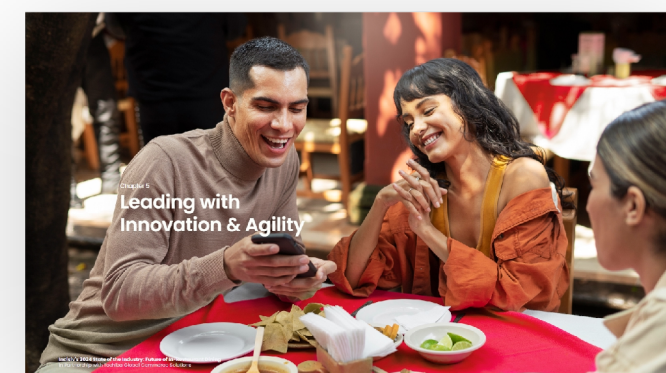
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Chapter 1

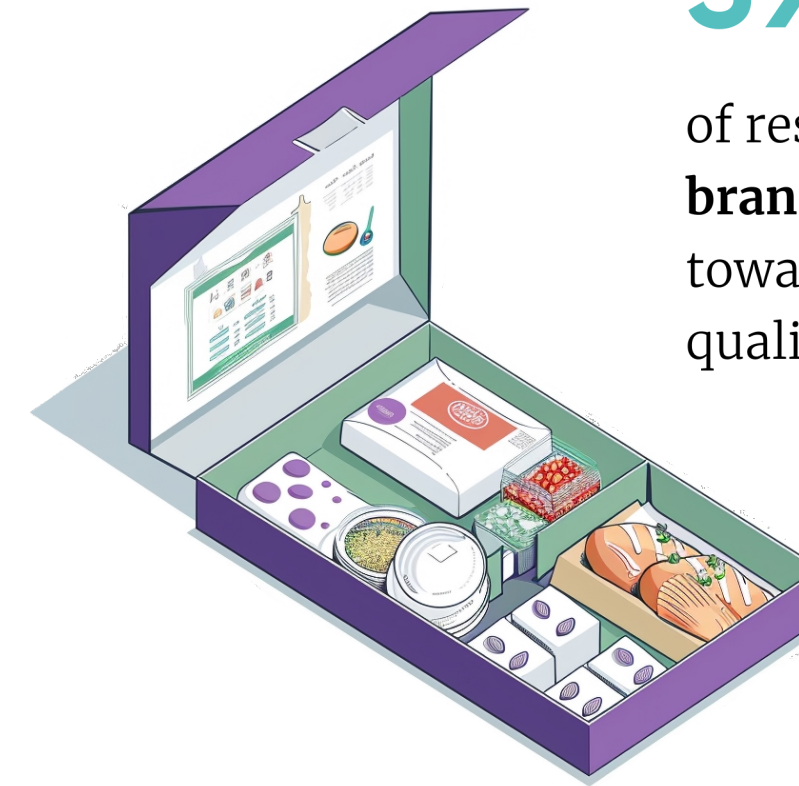
# Envisioning the Future of Dining

# Fusing Wellness with Gastronomy

Building on the importance of emotional connections in dining, there's a growing trend where health meets flavor. Restaurants have a big chance to tap into the wellness movement by offering meals that are good for both body and soul.

- **Menu Customization:** Introduce options catering to various dietary preferences, such as gluten-free or vegan, aligning with health trends and personal wellness objectives.
- **Nutritional Information:** Equip tables with tablets or touchscreens that allow diners to explore detailed nutritional facts and health benefits alongside menu items.
- **At-Home Dining Options:** Develop and market branded meal kits that replicate the dining experience at home.

Restaurants can bridge the gap between delicious meals and dietary well-being by embracing these strategies. It's not just about serving food; it's about enriching customers' health and culinary journey, positioning the restaurant as a nourishing presence in their lives.



39%

of restaurants offer **meal kits or branded products**, signifying a shift towards replicating restaurant-quality experiences at home.

31%

of restaurants utilize **apps and virtual assistants** to weave dining seamlessly into everyday routines.



# Curating Memories & Communities

Dining out is more than eating; it's an avenue for creating memorable moments and strengthening connections. Restaurants infuse each dining occasion with storytelling and community engagement.

- **Storytelling Spaces:** Integrate themed decor, interactive displays detailing ingredient journeys, ambient music, and menus designed as narrative journeys.
- **Digital Engagement:** Utilize social media and apps to share stories and behind-the-scenes content, making diners feel connected. Virtual events like cooking classes further enhance this bond, extending the restaurant experience into homes.
- **Simplified Group Dining:** Reimagine group meals with streamlined ordering and easy bill splitting. Remove logistical hurdles to shift focus to the joy of shared meals, whether in-person or virtually.

Restaurants can redefine the role of dining in fostering connections and building communities by prioritizing these narrative elements, making every visit memorable.

21%

of restaurants host community **events or workshops** that extend the brand experience.



42%

extend the experience through educational content such as **cooking tutorials**.



13%

offer digital experiences that make **group dining** easier.



# Global Flavors, Local Echoes

Restaurants have the power to take diners on a global journey, right from their plates, blending international tastes with local touches. This fusion creates a dining experience that's both worldly and personal, opening up a world of flavors to explore.

- **Global Meets Local:** Form partnerships and use digital platforms to introduce diners to international cuisines while celebrating local ingredients, making each dish a discovery.
- **Culinary Exploration:** Foster a sense of adventure with a diverse menu that encourages diners to try new flavors. Host special events and collaborate with guest chefs to bring global culinary traditions to life, enriching the dining experience.
- **Farm to Fork:** Sharing the story behind your ingredients enriches the dining experience, fostering appreciation for the meal's journey from farm to plate, and plate to palette.

This approach turns every meal into an opportunity for exploration and storytelling, enriching the dining experience with every bite.



15%

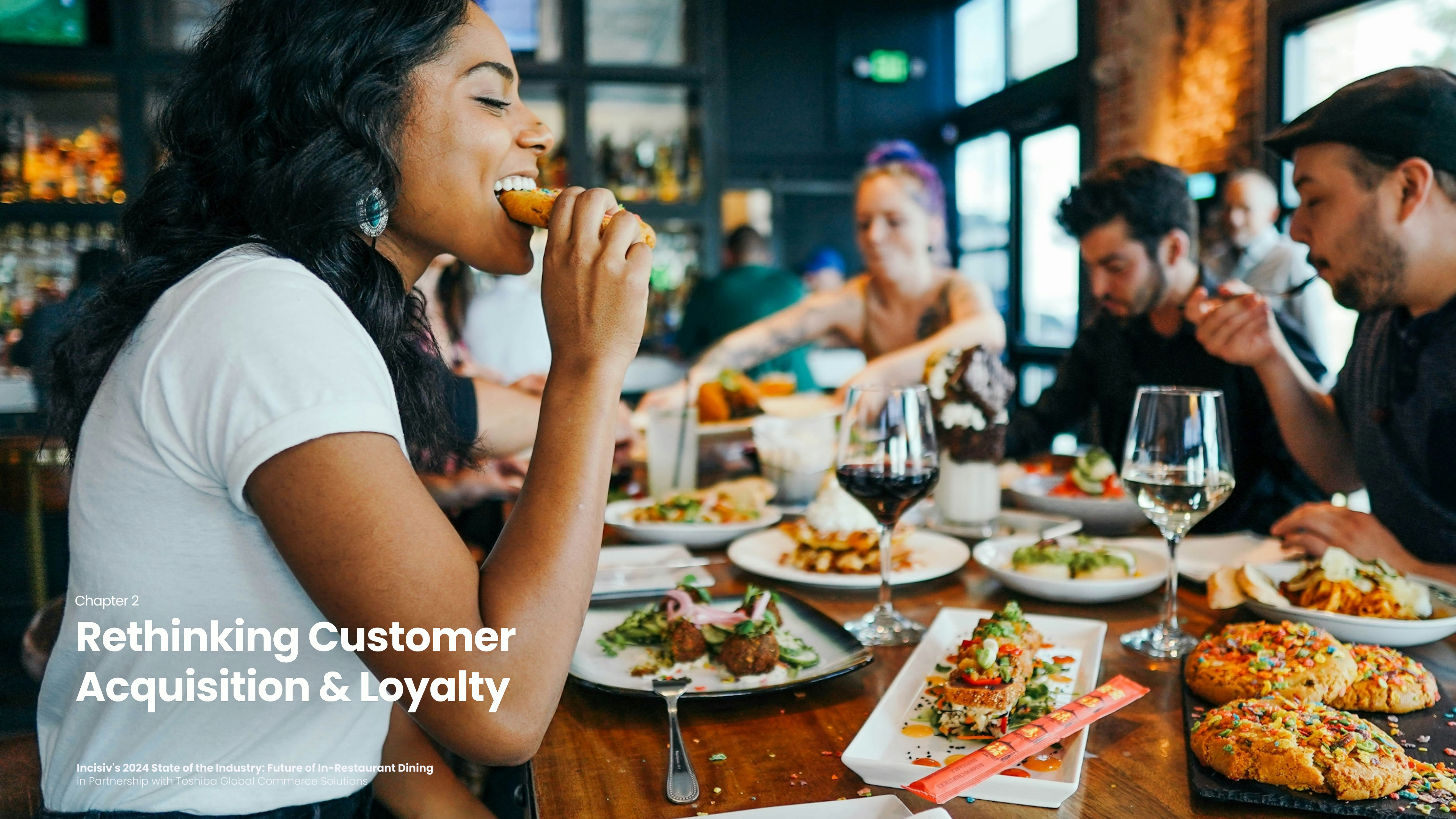
of restaurants collaborate with **local farmers** and producers to highlight their farm-to-fork story.

17%

of restaurants **promote the story of their food's journey** through marketing materials.







Chapter 2

# Rethinking Customer Acquisition & Loyalty

Incisiv's 2024 State of the Industry: Future of In-Restaurant Dining  
in Partnership with Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions

# Seamless Digital Ordering is the Price of Entry

To stay competitive and relevant in the digital age, restaurant must prioritize establishing robust digital ordering systems.

- **Implement Transparent Menu Information:** Restaurants should ensure their digital menus are user-friendly, with high-quality images and detailed descriptions, including allergen information and customization options.
- **Facilitate Easy Customization:** Introduce an online ordering system with clear options for dietary preferences and ingredient substitutions, including allergen filters and customization indicators for a streamlined experience.
- **Offer Saved Profiles for Quick Reordering:** Restaurants can streamline the reordering process by integrating customer profiles that track order history and preferences.

Restaurants can significantly boost customer satisfaction, encouraging loyalty and frequent visits by focusing in these areas.

## 68%

of restaurants deploy **interactive digital menus** that allow diners to explore dishes and ingredients in-depth.

## 35%

of restaurants offer **deep customization** options for online orders.

## 37%

of restaurants have implemented **saved order profiles** for easy reordering.



# Casting a Wider Net for Customer Acquisition

To broaden their customer base, restaurants must look beyond location, focusing on innovative strategies that enhance brand appeal and accessibility.

- **Strengthen Brand Identity:** Craft a compelling brand story and express it across all customer touchpoints, creating a strong, memorable presence that attracts a wider audience.
- **Leverage Delivery Platforms:** Collaborate with distribution networks to extend your reach. Ensure your menu is delivery-friendly and use promotional tools to capture new customers.
- **Develop New Revenue Streams:** Innovate new offerings such as meal kits, subscription services, nutrition consultations to promote health and wellness, or limited edition meals created in partnership with local chefs or celebrities. Each initiative not only draws in different market segments but also reinforces your brand identity

Restaurants can reach a wider audience while also creating deeper, more meaningful connections with customers, fostering loyalty and encouraging repeat business by adopting these approaches.



77%

of restaurants partner with **delivery platforms** to acquire new customers.

87%

of restaurants utilize **digital platforms** to share their brand story and values with customers.

91%

of restaurants utilize **targeted digital marketing campaigns** to reach new demographics.

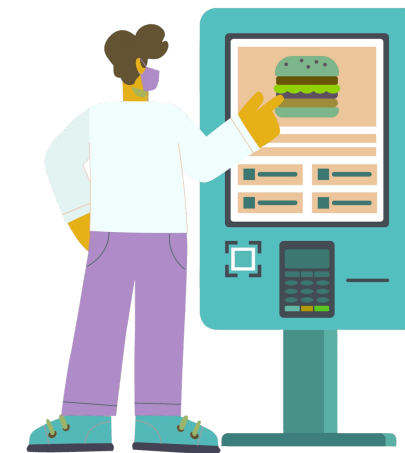


# Building Stronger Customer Intimacy

The rise of third-party delivery platforms, while expanding reach, poses a challenge for restaurants by distancing them from their customers, diluting direct relationships and personal interactions. To bridge this gap and foster deeper connections:

- **Personalized In-Restaurant Experiences:** Encourage repeat visits by offering personalized dining experiences that can't be replicated online, such as chef meet-and-greets or menu customization based on previous orders.
- **First-Party Data Collection:** Implement a system to collect customer data directly during visits or through a branded app, enabling tailored marketing and communication strategies.
- **Revamped Loyalty Programs:** Redesign loyalty programs to reward not just frequent visits but also engagement activities, such as social media interaction or feedback submission.

Adopting these strategies enables restaurants to rebuild and deepen connections lost to third-party platforms and ensures customers feel valued and seen, fostering a sense of community and belonging with every interaction.



17%

of restaurants utilize **tablets** and **kiosks** to gather first-party customer data.

While 86%

of restaurants implement **loyalty programs** that reward referrals and repeat business,

only 17%

offer **in-app rewards** for direct orders to collect preferences & order history.



Chapter 3

# Elevating the In-Restaurant Experience

# Seamless Fusion of Fast Service & Elevated Dining

Restaurants should consider integrating proven technological solutions to enhance the dining experience while meeting the demand for speed.

- **Sensory Tech for Smarter Dining:** Proximity sensors streamline dining by detecting guest presence, enabling efficient table management and reduced wait times. They alert staff to vacant tables for quick turnover, enhancing customer satisfaction.
- **Unified Digital Ordering System:** Implementing POS systems that handle both in-store and online orders can streamline operations, ensuring a seamless flow from kitchen to table.
- **Enhanced Staff Synergy:** Introducing in-ear wearables for team communication can enhance coordination among staff, leading to faster service and a more responsive dining experience.

Embracing these technologies enables restaurants to offer quicker, more efficient service while maintaining high-quality dining experiences, aligning with modern consumer expectations for convenience and excellence in hospitality.

25%

of restaurants have integrated **proximity sensors** and AI for efficient management of dine-in, pick-up, and delivery logistics.



38%

of restaurants have integrated **POS systems** that support both in-store and online orders.

45%

of restaurants have adopted communication devices such as **in-ear wearables** to improve crew communication and collaboration.



# Integrating Digital with Physical for an Enhanced Experience

Integrating digital tools with the physical dining experience is vital for restaurants to stay relevant and cater to the evolving preferences of diners who seek both convenience and engagement. Here's what restaurants can do to unify these experiences.

- **Interactive Digital Menus:** Implement menus that allow guests to explore dish details and origins, fostering a deeper connection with the food they consume.
- **In-Restaurant Mobile App Mode:** Develop a specialized app mode for in-dining use, streamlining orders and payments, and offering order status updates to enhance operational efficiency.
- **Augmented Reality Experiences:** Utilize AR to visualize the farm-to-table journey, providing an educational and immersive element that elevates the dining experience.

Restaurants can offer a modernized, interactive experience that resonates with today's diners by marrying digital advancements with the tangible aspects of dining.

23%

of restaurants have introduced **interactive digital menus** that track choices and preferences for future personalization.



19%

of restaurants utilize **in-restaurant mobile app** such as real-time order updates, payments.



5%

of restaurants have implemented **augmented reality** experiences for guests to learn about the journey of their meal.



# Crafting a Compelling Brand Ethos Beyond Convenience

In the crowded dining market, restaurants can stand out by crafting a brand ethos that resonates with the values of their customers.

- **Embrace Health & Wellness:** Clearly communicate commitment to healthful eating by incorporating organic, non-GMO ingredients, and offering a range of dietary options.
- **Create Memorable Experiences:** Design unique dining experiences that go beyond the meal, such as themed nights or interactive dining.
- **Champion Sustainability:** Make sustainability a core part of the brand identity, from sourcing ingredients locally to minimizing waste and using eco-friendly packaging.

Restaurants can attract diners who prioritize health, experiences, and sustainability while also carve out a distinctive identity in a competitive landscape by articulating a clear brand ethos around these value building a loyal customer base motivated by shared values.

31%

of restaurants have implemented **eco-friendly** practices such as reduced plastic use.

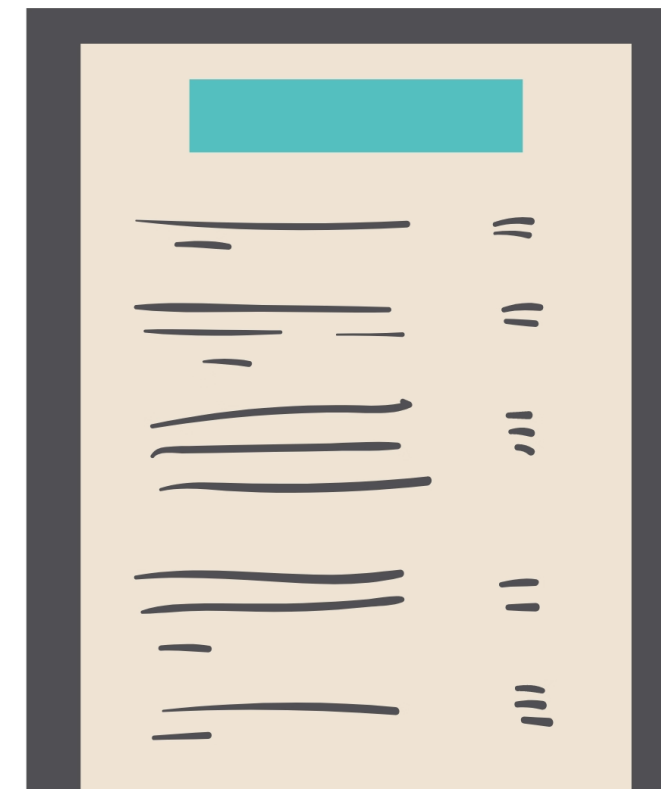
19%

of restaurants highlight **locally sourced** and **sustainable** ingredients in their menus.



20%

of restaurants offer **health-conscious** menu options with detailed nutrition information.







Chapter 4

# Rewiring Restaurant Operations for the Digital Future

# Optimizing Kitchen Operations with Smart Technology

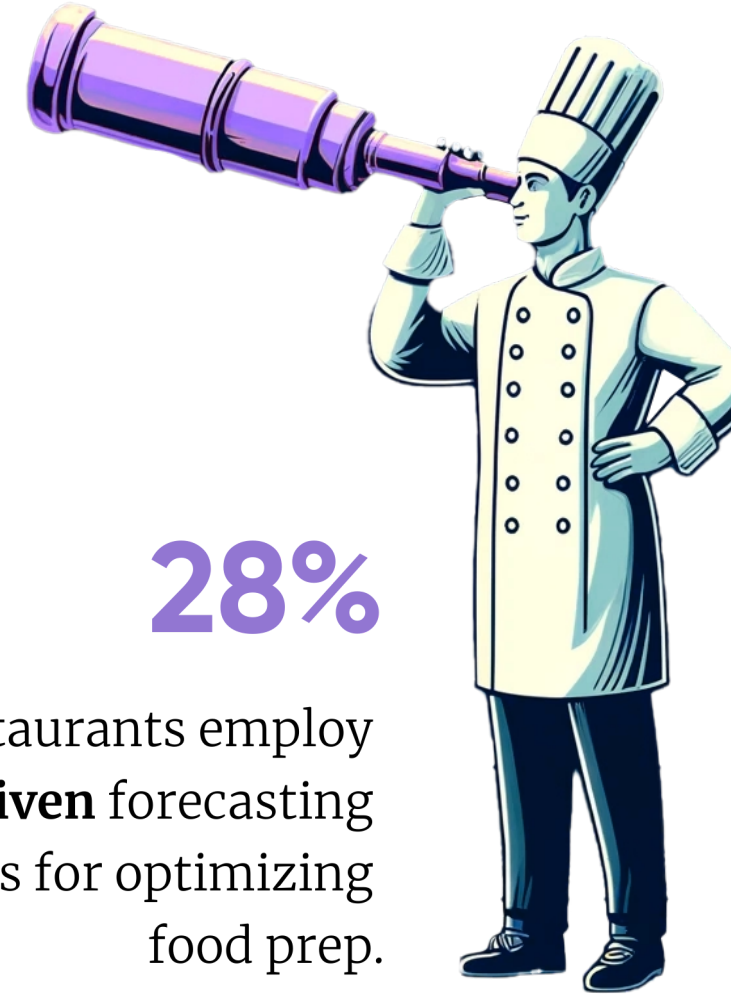
To excel in the modern dining ecosystem, it's crucial for restaurants to innovate kitchen operations, blending smart technology with culinary artistry.

- **Utilize AI for Forecasting:** Adopt AI tools to predict demand and manage inventory, optimizing preparation and minimizing waste.
- **Deploy Digital Kitchen Display Systems:** Implement KDS to streamline order processing, enhancing accuracy and reducing wait times.
- **Integrate Inventory Management:** Connect real-time ordering with inventory systems to maintain optimal stock levels and ingredient freshness.

Adopting these innovations allows restaurants to seamlessly handle both digital and dine-in requests, ensuring operational excellence.

## 35%

of restaurants use **digital inventory** management systems for real-time stock updates.



## 28%

of restaurants employ **AI-driven** forecasting tools for optimizing food prep.

## 36%

of restaurants have integrated order timing **with Kitchen Display Systems** to synchronize ordering and delivery.



# Balancing Digital and In- Restaurant Demands

To adeptly manage both in-restaurant dining and digital orders, restaurants must employ strategic approaches that balance these dual demands without compromising service quality.

- **Redesign Kitchen Layouts:** Create designated areas within the kitchen for handling online orders, ensuring that both digital and dine-in services operate smoothly without interfering with each other.
- **Leverage Scheduling Software:** Utilize advanced scheduling and order management software to efficiently prioritize and time orders, making sure that all customers receive prompt and accurate service.
- **Optimize Order Flow:** Implement systems that integrate digital order flows with in-restaurant demands, allowing for real-time adjustments based on kitchen capacity and customer presence.

These strategies ensure that restaurants can simultaneously cater to the surge in digital dining trends and maintain the essence of the in-restaurant experience, fostering a seamless operational harmony.



36%

of restaurants  
dynamically manage  
**staffing levels** based on  
demand patterns

57%

of restaurants have built  
the ability to manage  
**multiple order** types  
from the same kitchen.

41%

of restaurants have  
improved **kitchen flow**  
to better accommodate  
both in-store and online  
orders



# Sustainable Practices as Operational & Ethical Imperatives

Implementing sustainable practices is a strategic necessity for restaurants, crucial for both operational efficiency and ethical commitment.

- **Initiate Waste Reduction:** Aggressively tackle waste with strategies such as optimizing food usage and enhancing recycling efforts to cut environmental impact and reduce costs.
- **Upgrade to Energy Efficiency:** Replace old stoves, refrigerators, and dishwashers with modern, energy-efficient models that consume less power and water, reducing utility costs and supporting environmental sustainability.
- **Embrace Sustainable Sourcing:** Forge partnerships with local, eco-conscious suppliers to decrease the carbon footprint and ensure access to fresh, quality ingredients.

Adopting these measures positions restaurants as leaders in sustainability, meeting consumer demands for responsible dining.

82%

of restaurants are implementing a **waste reduction** program (e.g., composting, recycling, donating leftover food).



77%

of restaurants use **energy-efficient** appliances and lighting to reduce energy consumption.

41%

of restaurants source ingredients **locally** to support local farmers and reduce transportation emissions.



Chapter 5

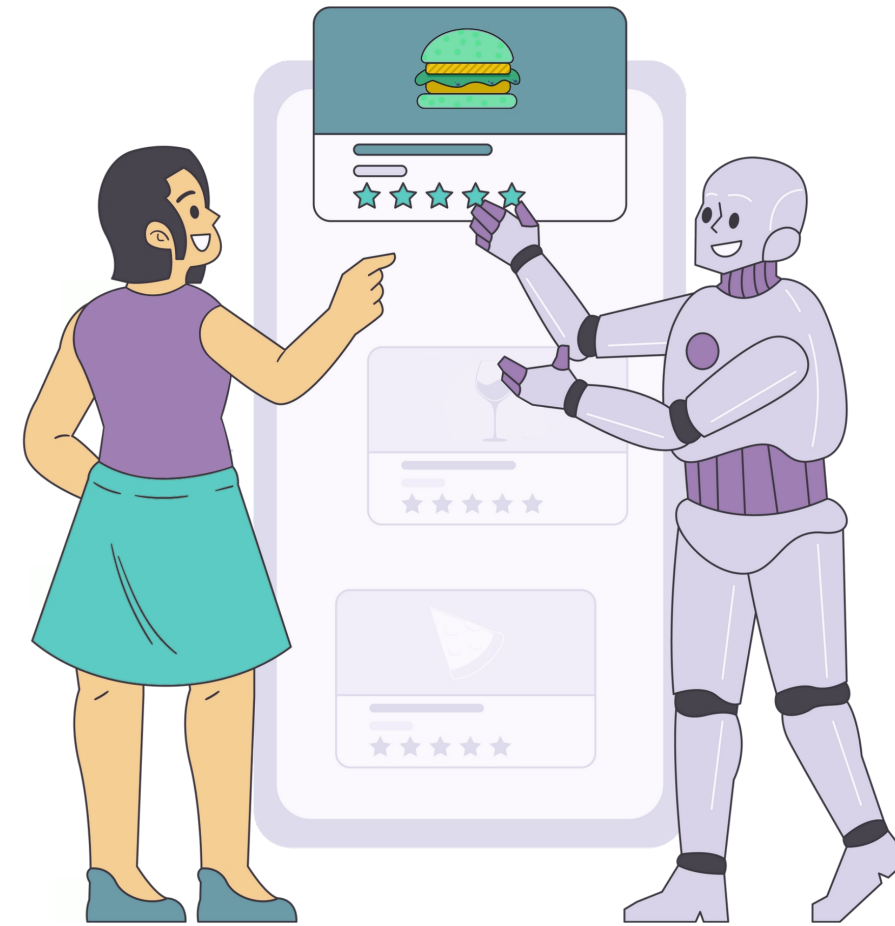
# Leading with Innovation & Agility

# Harnessing AI for Personalization & Efficiency

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the restaurant industry, offering unprecedented opportunities for customization and efficiency. Restaurants must embrace AI to not only meet but exceed the evolving expectations of their customers.

- **Personalized Recommendations:** Restaurants must use AI to analyze historical order data, providing customers with personalized menu suggestions that cater to their tastes and dietary preferences.
- **Dynamic Staff Scheduling:** AI forecasts customer flow, enabling precise staff scheduling that optimizes service and reduces overhead.
- **Kitchen Efficiency:** AI optimizes inventory management and predicts order volumes, reducing waste and ensuring smooth kitchen operations.

Restaurants position themselves for success by adopting AI, leveraging technology to offer a customized dining experience and maintain operational agility.



39%

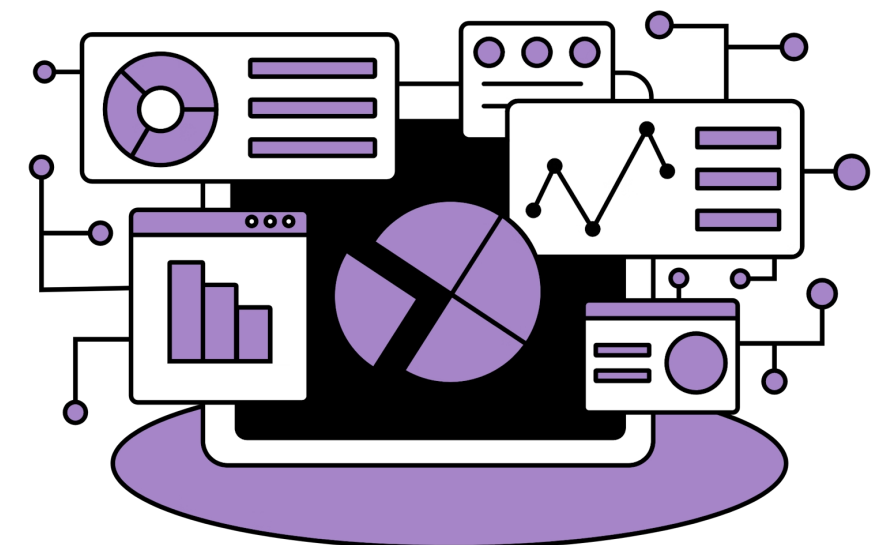
of restaurants use **recommendation engine** for suggesting related or preferred items based on customer history and preferences.

23%

of restaurants use **predictive analytics** for optimized staff scheduling to match forecasted customer volumes.

29%

of restaurants use AI-driven **inventory management** to reduce waste and ensure fresh supply.



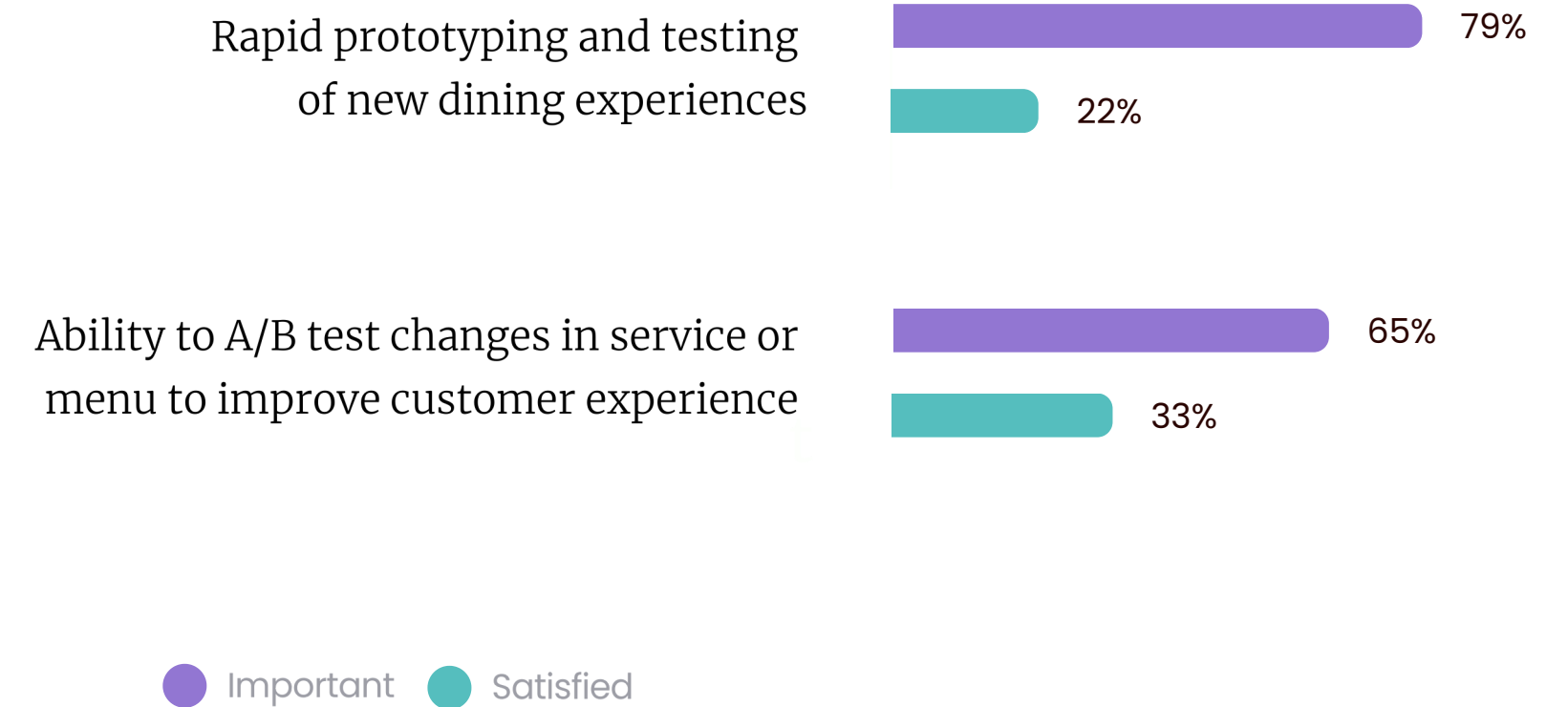
# Cultivating an Agile Response to Market Trends

To navigate the fast-paced culinary landscape, restaurants must embed agility and innovation into their core operations.

- **Rapid Concept Testing:** Establish a dedicated team for quick rollout and evaluation of new dining concepts or menu items, allowing for real-time adjustments based on customer feedback.
- **Technology Trials:** Regularly identify and trial emerging technologies, from AI-driven customer service tools to kitchen automation, to find fits that enhance efficiency and guest satisfaction.
- **Innovation Workshops:** Hold monthly workshops where staff from various departments can pitch ideas for new trends, technologies, or menu items, creating a culture that values and acts on innovative thinking.

These strategies ensure restaurants can swiftly adapt to new trends, customer preferences, and technology, keeping them competitive and responsive to market demands.

Exploring the gulf in what restaurants consider important in next-generation restaurant technology, versus how satisfied they are with their current technology infrastructure.



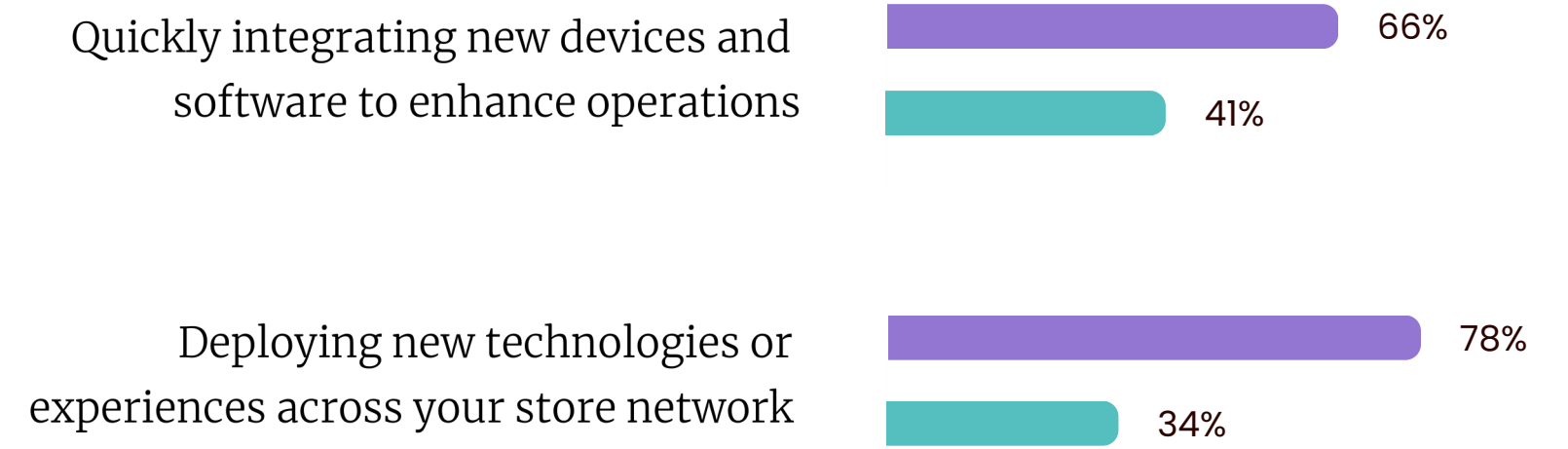
# Embracing Open Technology Platforms

In an ever-changing dining landscape, restaurants, particularly franchises, must harness the power of open technology platforms to seamlessly blend innovation with consistency across their operations.

- **Empowering Adaptive Tech Frameworks:** Restaurants should prioritize open platforms for their ability to effortlessly incorporate cutting-edge technologies and services, ensuring they remain at the forefront of industry advancements.
- **Ensure Brand Consistency Across Franchises:** Adopting open platforms is crucial for maintaining uniform operational standards and customer experiences, reinforcing brand integrity and loyalty.
- **Adapt Swiftly to Market and Local Demands:** Leveraging the flexibility of open platforms allows restaurants to quickly respond to emerging trends and consumer preferences, ensuring relevance and competitiveness.

Implementing open technology platforms empowers restaurants to navigate the digital era with agility and precision, crucial for sustaining growth and delivering a consistent, high-quality dining experience.

Exploring the gulf in what restaurants consider important in next-generation restaurant technology, versus how satisfied they are with their current technology infrastructure.



● Important ● Satisfied





The dining industry is at a turning point, merging tradition with innovation to meet evolving expectations.

This report outlines a vital strategy: leveraging modern technology to enhance the dining experience. It's a call to action for the industry to not only compete but to set new standards in storytelling, personalization, and efficiency.

The leaders in this new era will be those who can adapt and innovate, offering experiences that resonate with tomorrow's diners.

The path forward is clear—embrace change, utilize technology, and transform every meal into an opportunity for connection and innovation.

# Survey Demographics

Incisiv conducted a hybrid online + Computer Aided Telephonic Interview (CATI) survey of 127 restaurant executives in the US and Canada. The study was conducted from February 23, 2024 – March 11, 2024.

## Respondent Distribution by Industry Segment

Quick Service Restaurant	40%
Fast Casual Restaurant	39%
Casual / Family Restaurant	21%

## Respondent Distribution by Number of Stores

51 – 250 stores or locations	42%
251 – 1,000 stores or locations	40%
1,001 or more stores or locations	18%

## Respondent Distribution by Function

Information Technology	43%
Marketing and Strategy	10%
Digital and eCommerce	18%
Owner and Operator	7%
Restaurant Operations	22%

## Respondent Distribution by Designation

CXO	23%
VP/SVP	39%
Director	31%
Manager	7%

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