

Month to Month Advertising & Marketing Ideas For Restaurants

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January

New Years Resolution Month. This is a time when many people vow to stop eating out to lose weight and stick to a stricter budget. Not the best time of year or conditions for many restaurants.

- Depending on where you are located you may be able to advertise to winter vacationers, skiers, snowmobilers or in warmer climates, those looking to escape harsh winter conditions.
- Offer up weekend specials, and mid-week specials such as two for one deals.
- Create a lighter-side fare for those New Year's dieters is another way to draw in extra business.

February

Valentine's Day is one of the best days for many restaurants. Remember to start promoting your specials at least a month in advance.

- Promote your Valentine's Day specials on your website, Facebook Page and in your local paper or special edition.
- Create an urgency for reservations by advertising "Make your reservations now, limited sitting available"
- Focus your dinner menu on couples meals and decadent desserts that can be shared by two.
- Run a local contest about "Why My Valentine is Special".
- During this time many schools have a winter vacation in February, so running some lunch and dinner specials that week can also help bring in extra business.

March

Cabin Fever Month. Not warm enough for outdoor dining and not cold enough for winter sports. Here are some thoughts during this month.

- Consider advertising a specialty dinner, like a wine tasting or nightly price fix menu.

- Advertise restaurant promotions, like ladies night, two-for-one dinners or a wine tasting dinner.
- Try instead of a wine tasting dinner perhaps a beer tasting dinner with special beers & flavors along with some matching restaurant menu items.
- Contact your local chamber of commerce or other local business organizations which start putting together summer tourists' guides in late winter or early spring. If you want to draw from local tourism over the spring & summer months.
- Review your menu specials & menu for new items to add or subtract from your existing menu.

April

With the arrival of spring now is the time to advertise your springtime specials.

- Focusing on lighter fares, like salads, new vegetables, appetizers and fruity desserts.
- Don't forget your outdoor dining. Advertise that the deck/patio is now open for business. The promise of a warm, sunny outdoor lunch after a long winter appeals to many customers.
- Revamp your wine list for summer wines to match the changes in your menu.
- Add some new appetizers on your menu for the spring & summer.

May

May is a great month for restaurants to advertise.

- It is the start of wedding season, prom season, and college graduations.
- Don't forget Mother's Day as it is one of the top dining out days for restaurants. Create and run specials. Promote your new menu items.
- Create a "Free Dessert" for mom on Mother's Day with the purchase of an entrée.
- If your restaurant has a banquet room or does any kind of catering, promote it! May is the time to gear up for summering catering as well.
- It is never too early to advertise your catering services for summer picnics, weddings, barbeques or company functions.

June

Make sure if you are open on Fourth of July, to be sure to advertise your hours in June.

- Revamp your Take-Out Menus with your summer specials.

- Replenish Take-Out menus at local hotels, chamber of commerce, and any other places that they can be picked up by vacationers.
- With school out for the summer, look at ways to improve your kids menus and offer kid-friendly specials.
- Create Special or Slugger Menus for Summer fare such as wraps, signature salads and specialty drinks

July

Summer is in full swing.

- If your restaurant is in an area that has a large tourist draw in the summer months, run promotions in the local paper.
- Consider partnering with local hotels to give discounts to their guests.
- You could offer the local hotels/motels in room table tents or bounce back cards with a restaurant discount for dining at your establishment.
- Promote your wine & beer pairings
- Look at creating a special To-Go menu item of the month to promote your restaurants To-Go business.

August

Along with summer tourism, many areas have summer festivals that draw large crowds.

- Consider sponsoring festivals or other community activities for some easy advertising.
- Give away "Free Apptz or BOGO Free Cards" to different community events to draw attention and customers to your restaurant
- Now is the time to start thinking about revamping your holiday catering menus and getting ready for the change to Fall/Winter Menus.
- Start thinking about back to school ads and other fall advertising ideas with a restaurant marketing company like CAT Restaurant and Marketing Specialists. www.catrestaurantandmarketing.com

September

Labor Day marks the unofficial end to summer.

- Look at restaurant advertising ideas that include back to school promotions, harvest dinner menus or supports your local High School Athletic Booster Clubs.
- Create Friday & Saturday Game Days where a portion of the proceeds go back to your local schools.

- Partner with local farmers or your local distributor for some farm-to-table or specials offered by the distributor which you can advertise and offer in a prix fixe menu.
- This type of menu (prix fixe) refers to a type of limited menu featuring a pre-selected list of dishes at a set price. A prix fixe menu may include an appetizer, soup, salad, entrée and dessert all for a set price per person.
- Prix fixe options may include just one menu selection or a few different menu selections.

October

Get into the Halloween spirit with scary promotions.

- If you have a bar or pub, considering throwing a Halloween costume contest. Run "Scary Specials" to go along with your contest.
- This is also a good time to start sending out holiday flyers and encouraging people to book their holiday parties early.
- If you provide any off-site catering make sure you get the word out via advertising on your website or flyers that you provide that service.
- If you do orders for the holidays start promoting your pre-ordered pies & desserts.

November

Many restaurants do not know that many people now opt out of cooking their own Thanksgiving dinner.

- Growth has been significant at grocery stores and deli's for pre-ordering Thanksgiving meals. If you are not open that Thanksgiving Day pre-sell your dinners for pick-up the night before
- If you are open on Thanksgiving, advertise it well in advance.
- On Thanksgiving if you are open offer "Family Style Dining" Options and a special menu.
- Other advertising for your restaurant during this time should include holiday party promotions and New Year's Eve reservations.

December

Promote your New Year's Eve menu through local papers, radio spots and your website.

- Even if you don't normally take reservations, New Year's Eve (and Valentine's Day) is a good exception.
- Promote your holiday specials during this month.

- Remember many people forget this is a good time to advertise your Take-Out business, as many people are so busy being able to stop and grab a meal to take home is a great alternative.



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