

## Food & Beverage - Best of Times? - By Joe Dunbar

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As many operators fight to make their business model more profitable, the number of operational changes is high. Companies are adjusting staffs, menus, suppliers and equipment. This is a great time to fine tune your operation. Plato stated: '...the true creator is necessity, who is the mother of invention.' over 2,300 years ago.

Restaurant operators see lower check averages, lower mid-week guest counts, higher cost of sales and higher energy costs. The world is thinking green and the term "carbon footprint" has entered the lexicon. Your patrons and employees are more sensitive to the impact of energy on the environment. Take a look at deliveries. You are paying more for each trip each supplier makes to your restaurant. Their trucks are burning much more gas for those who insist on daily deliveries.

If you have one of those dining rooms where the patrons need a sweatshirt or jacket when its 90 degrees outside, turn your thermostat up. You could turn ovens off when they are not in use. This saves the energy to heat the oven and you can also save on the air conditioning bill.

A slightly smaller center of the plate portion size can translate to faster cooking times and a lower cost of sales. Fine tuning production will cut costs. Any major over-production produces waste, higher labor costs and bigger garbage bills (in the long run).

Hopefully, many of you are seeing a better sales picture. In May, we've had Cinco de Mayo and Mother's Day. June brings the stimulus checks and Father's Day. Americans have begun adjusting their driving behavior. In today's news, the local radio station quoted an economist who is projecting 10% less gasoline usage this summer (based on Memorial Day weekend 2008 vs. 2007). Urban centers may not experience the typical summer exodus this year. More people are staying in town for their vacation.

The best part about survival tactics is the long term benefit. These are the best of times for making your operation more cost efficient. Future sales increases will bring greater profits.

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