



## Get Ready for Spring Fever

While it may still be hard to believe in some parts of the country, spring is here and some of the busiest dining-out occasions are just around the corner (think Easter weekend, Mother's Day and graduation weekends, for example). It's time to get ready for more business and to make sure that your operation is well positioned to catch its share of this year's spring fever. Doing so means working to freshen up three key operational areas: your menu, your facility and your staff.

**On the menu**, it's time to lighten up. File away the comfort food recipes, cut back on heavy sauces and hearty soups and put the focus on refreshing salads, grilled meats, stock-based soups, and light, citrus-based sauces. And while most are now available year-round, seasonal harbingers of spring such as asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, new potatoes, baby spinach and artichokes should grab the menu spotlight this time of year. You don't have to make wholesale menu changes, but by shifting a few ingredients, introducing a new seasonal entrée salad or vegetable pasta dish in a light sauce, you can offer fresh appeal.

Changing preparation methods does the trick, as well. For instance, moving away from winter-friendly braised lamb shank with root vegetables to marinated grilled lamb chops with sautéed spinach and minted new potatoes brings a lamb-based entrée up-to-date for the season.

**In the house**, make time to do some serious spring cleaning--both inside and out. Now's the time to get the windows washed and have the carpets cleaned to rid your facility of the salt, sand and grit that inevitably accumulates over the winter months. Get touch-up painting done for a fresh, clean look. And if you haven't done so recently, take a close look at all of your service ware, tabletop and decorative items to make sure they're in top condition and sparkling clean. Double check chairs and barstool cushions for rips and stains.

One of the simplest ways to get a fresh new look is to change your linens. A color change in this one area, enhanced with new flower arrangements or new candle bases for the tables can easily transform an entire room at a relatively low cost.

If you have outdoor dining areas, get them in shape for spring, too. Power wash all outdoor surfaces, scrub awnings and window boxes. If the threat of cold weather has passed in your location, get going on spring cleanup and landscaping as soon as

possible. Your operation should look as fresh and inviting as possible outside, as well as inside.

**With the staff**, get them pumped up for the seasonal change in business. Talk about and plan for busy shifts to come. Review last year's records and discuss what went well and what the trouble spots were. Solicit staff input and ideas for making this year's spring fever smooth, stress-free and profitable.

Also, check out staff uniforms. Do they look crisp and clean and project the look and feel that you want your restaurant to have in all aspects of the business. Is it time for replacements or perhaps an upgrade? Do you need additional uniforms or lighter weight options for staff comfort during the warm months ahead?

Now's a good time to rejuvenate the staff with creative new incentive promotions, as well. If you're introducing new seasonal menu items, create sales contests to help get them launched. Or just have some fun with incentive rewards tailored to the season – gardening tools or garden center gift certificates, rejuvenating spa treatments, bicycles, scooters, tickets to baseball games or outdoor concerts are just a few ideas. Need more incentive inspiration? Just visit [www.foodservicerewards.com](http://www.foodservicerewards.com) and click on the Shop for Rewards tab. You'll find thousands of great personal and business rewards sure to put a spring in your staff's step this season.