



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

nerej

The new dynamics of restaurant dining - by Dennis Serpone

March 28, 2025 - Spotlights



Dennis Serpone

In the beginning, we ate because our bodies needed nourishment. Our Creator, with a sense of humor, built into our existence the need to eat in order to function.

At some point, eating became a family thing where a man would bond with a woman, and it became his responsibility to provide food for his mate and offspring. This construct goes back to Adam & Eve sharing an apple. Somewhere along the way, a person discovered that opening a storefront where strangers could come to eat and drink for a fee would work...i.e. Viking long houses and Irish pubs. Soon it became apparent that people would pay a fee to be fed and able to socialize.

Now, come forward hundreds of years, there are hundreds of thousands of food and beverage businesses in every country on the planet. When the economies are strong, food and beverage businesses thrive. New ideas spawn new variations of proven concepts. Those determined to be successful often find themselves restructured into a franchise which ultimately may grow into a chain. With the right ingredients, blended with perfect timing, and seasoned management, a concept chain could be your next McDonald's or Pizza Hut.

From the infancy of an idea, infused with capital to grow, and tempered with the wisdom of experience, the food and beverage industry grows around the world.

Whether a local pub, a sports bar, a fast food outlet, full service or casual dining, liquor or convenience store, or a nondescript concept, our lives have become infused with the chemistry of socialized eating.

With the more than eight billion people on this blue marble of a planet forced to eat to survive, could there be a safer business to be in?

Ask the thousands of businesses that failed due to the COVID-19 hysteria. Even though the government attempted to support businesses with stimulus packages, only the financially strong companies survived the first phase. The second phase is being felt now with some legacy chains going bankrupt and some ill-conceived concepts never reaching maturity.

The new reality is a shock-to-the system for people who don't eat out often.

Except for fast food outlets and breakfast and lunch places, there are no other choices. Many of our standard places no longer open for lunch during the week...many are closed Monday and Tuesday. Of those diner houses, moderate and high-end, their peak hours are 6 pm – 8 pm...generating, maybe, one turn.

The new reality is the stepchild of inflation...the vicious circle that affects everyone. COVID-19 introduced the world to online ordering making Grubhub, Uber Eats, and DoorDash household lingo. For those people who just need sustenance, online ordering is fine. For others, online ordering is a temporary solution to a need but is integrated with site visitation.

The new reality stems from the decreasing value of the dollar. Years ago, one only saw \$100 bills in the bank. Today, \$100 bills flow through our fingers like \$20 bills of yore.

People who dine out prefer places where they are recognized, enjoy a competitive advantage, and get good value. Eating out, which used to be a mindless decision, today engages the mind and pocketbooks of all but the few very privileged people. People with money and financial security will spend more than their share. Those of us with measured income will evaluate all choices before committing to an outing. The exception are the millennials and the financially mature. Boston, Burlington, Newton, Brookline, Sudbury, Cohasset, Duxbury, Concord, Andover, Wenham...north, south, east and west consistently attract and support young men and women earning \$100,000 - \$250,000 per year.

The new reality is that people need to eat and socialize, the way in which they choose to do it will change. Those individuals or families that have gotten accustomed to home delivery, will continue, those who cherish the camaraderie and excitement that comes with sports will choose a favorite sports bar, and those that are used to, and are willing to pay for table service will support the full service restaurants.

After 45 years, the National Restaurant Exchange has been through numerous cycles of feast or famine. Each time, those businesses that weather the storm grow stronger. Today, the realignment of our national and international economies will result in years of prosperity. Without reservation, almost any part of the food and beverage industry will reap huge rewards for those willing to dedicate themselves to serving others.

Dennis Serpone is the founder of The National Restaurant Exchange, The Hotel Exchange, and Cannabis Business Brokers, Wakefield, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540