



## Running Your Pizzeria Smoothly: Expert Advice From The Industry Pros

Your pizza may be the talk of the town, but successfully maintaining your growing business is largely dependent on attention to detail and the interdependence of your team, your food, promotions and best practices — from front of the house to back.

Balancing everything falls to you as the owner/operator, and it's a big task. That's why we've created this guide — to give you a go-to resource packed with suggestions and solutions from experienced pizza pros who understand the unique challenges you face, and what it takes to keep a pizzeria operation running smoothly.

Your food may be what brings patrons in, but what keeps them coming back is how they experience your pizzeria.





## FRONT OF THE HOUSE

An engaging, efficient and consistent front of the house run by servers who are well trained and having fun gives patrons every reason to believe they'll get great food and service to match — a winning combination for repeat business.

**Assembling the “dream team”** that delivers that experience can be challenging in an industry known for substantial workforce turnover, but it can be done once you accept that it's a bit of a numbers game and will take a little time.

**When you've found the right people, remain involved in their professional growth.** It's a worthy investment in keeping them long-term.

### Train To Gain

While it's not realistic to expect that every employee has, can or wants to develop the skill sets necessary to be successful in your restaurant's culture, **it's your responsibility to assess team member capabilities and play to their strengths.**

Plus, give them the tools they need to take their natural abilities to the next level:

- Establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Take nothing for granted when creating training aids. Use pictures to demonstrate the basics: standard tabletop setting, step-by-step equipment and POS use procedures. These guides will provide important reference points for employees to be able to revisit if needed. **Consistent training instills server confidence and improves quality in and across your location(s).**
- Make your menus memorable. Require servers to know your menus inside and out so they can make value-added recommendations. Randomly quiz servers to test their skills and knowledge.
- Add it up. During training, emphasize that you (or your general manager) closely count the cash drawer and inventory popular ingredients/toppings by using the POS system. In general, **people respect what you inspect — it goes a long way in loss prevention.**



## Lead By Example

As the owner/operator, you're often the face of the operation as well as the manager, bookkeeper, cheerleader, supply clerk...and the list goes on. It all adds up to long hours.

**Having your team see you work hard inspires them to do the same, but don't be afraid to also teach them it's okay to ask for help.** If you're taking on too much, or when you have more than a few locations, hire a general manager. You can leave your pizzeria in capable, management-level hands and stay in close contact without having to be physically in every shop.

## BACK OF THE HOUSE

Even the best front of the house team can't satisfy patrons if delicious food isn't being served quickly. **Your back of the house operation is integral in meeting patron expectations.** Keep it running at peak efficiency by developing standard operation procedures to ensure the best practices below are being followed. You can even incorporate pictures into the SOPs to show where each kitchen tool is kept for workflow efficiency and how food should appear when served.

- **Weigh ingredients:** Prep time is at a premium, so portioning out exact amounts of each pie ingredient on the fly isn't practical. Instead, focus on the most common – and usually the most expensive – ingredients like cheese, sauce and pepperoni. **Develop a formula that correlates to pie size (i.e., a small pie requires X ounces of cheese, a 4-ounce ladle of sauce and X slices of pepperoni).** That way, your kitchen staff has a road map that helps them hit the mark quickly without delaying service.



## A Video Is Worth A Thousand Words

Employees often view surveillance cameras as a way for “the boss to spy on them.” While there is an aspect of trust involved in the decision to use surveillance cameras, it's not the only reason.

Overcome the widely held, negative mindset by explaining to your staff how you position and use cameras as tools for:

- **Security:** Cameras are an ideal tool for dissuading criminal activity and keeping employees safe during all shifts. Pair a surveillance camera with a quality, fireproof safe that's bolted to the floor, and would-be crooks will move on to an easier target.
- **Training:** Seeing current practices in action often reveals opportunities for improvement in key areas like guest greeting/interactions, service times and proper food preparation.
- **Patron safety/liability:** While most of the time your entrances, exits, main traffic areas and parking lots remain incident-free, video documentation comes in handy should an injury, accident or other incident occur.



- **Use per-serving piece counts:** Portion control for non-pie items, like appetizers, can typically be achieved with simple counting (i.e., 1 serving = 6 mozzarella sticks). A word of caution: **counts work great for uniformly shaped items, but appetizers that can vary in size, like chicken wings, should be weighed for serving size consistency.**
- **Keep it clean:** The food industry, like any other, is built on reputations. The perceptions that patrons, suppliers, salespeople, DSRs and other colleagues have of your shop — inside and out — can make or break you.

#### Inside:

- Inspect incoming food shipments to ensure they meet your standards and safety expectations
- Establish a regular cleaning routine and insist upon proper handwashing and glove use etiquette
- Practice safe cooking practices, from ingredient storage and refrigeration through prep and serving temperatures
- Keep cleaning supplies separated from food, as harsh chemicals could be harmful if consumed

#### Outside:

- Keep your garbage dumpster tightly shut. Avoid cramming it to overflowing
- Separate and neatly package recyclable items
- Dismantle larger items like broken tables and chairs to ready them for disposal instead of piling them by your garbage receptacles

## PROMOTIONAL ADVICE

### Build Your Business

Social media makes driving traffic to your restaurant easy and cost effective. However, relying solely on your online presence may mean you're missing opportunities to **connect offline with the community**. Why not combine the two:

- Team up with a local high school's athletic department and announce through your social media platforms that X% of in-house dining sales goes to the booster club. An easy promotion to execute, and you're sure to attract the before- and after-game crowds.



### Unsung Heroes

Since your back of the house team is rarely seen, patrons often don't give them a second thought. Unfortunately, many owners and operators also unintentionally fall into that trap.

Make a pointed effort to show your back of the house team how much you appreciate them. You'll know best what motivates your staff members, but consider including some special perks like:

- **A praise board** to draw attention to the "above and beyond" things your back-of-the-houses do, either as individuals or as a team that impact your operation
- **An "employee of the month" premium parking spot** just for a back of the house member (use a separate space for the front of the house team), coupled with a \$25 gas card
- **Birthday holiday** — paid
- **Drawings** for gift cards or restaurant swag
- **Half-price menu items** on break or after their scheduled shift



Thinking more globally, you might **build a simple loyalty program** using the popularity and reach of social media:

- Play virtual “Bingo” by Tweeting 5 code numbers, one number per weekday. Players who text all five codes to your pre-designated phone number “win” and a percent-off coupon is electronically delivered to them that they can redeem in-house. You create traffic plus gather valuable contact information for future marketing efforts.

Compared to social media, printed promotions may have seen their heyday, but don’t underestimate **the power of print** when used in certain instances:

- A flyer sheet of use-on-next-purchase coupons stapled to a takeout bag or a refrigerator magnet with your contact info included with a pie delivered to the door can do wonders for encouraging repeat business.



## Multiple Locations, Multiple Savings Opportunities

As you expand, you can take advantage of efficiency of scale to realize considerable savings:

- **Promotion:** Get cups, napkins, pizza boxes, giveaways (like calendars and magnets), car topper signs, hot bags and server swag pre-printed with your logo in larger quantities for production price breaks, and divide the goods (and expense) across locations — just be sure you have adequate storage space too.
- **Ingredients:** Work directly with a manufacturer like Alive & Kickin’ Pizza Crust to make labor-intensive items like sauces and dough balls. It takes the pressure off your kitchen and generally saves time and money while delivering consistent quality through centralized production.

*From fielding questions about pizzeria best practices to providing the quality products you need to continue to succeed, Alive & Kickin’ Pizza Crust is here to support your operation. [Contact us](#) today.*



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