



Tips for Pizzeria Operators: Working with Food Distributors

Food distributors are such an essential part of pizzeria operations, the relationship sometimes slips into “automatic pilot” or cost-centric, and operators overlook opportunities to gain product insights and expert guidance that an experienced or specialty food distributor provides.

Use these tips to choose and make the most of your distributor relationship.





PRODUCTS

Your distributor has an established food manufacturer network that allows them to offer considerable depth in products. However, quantity is only part of the equation when aligning with a distributor:

- **VARIETY:** Instead of a lot of product lines, make sure your distributor offers the food items you need to fulfill your menu and meet your patrons' expectations.
- **RECOMMENDATIONS:** A distributor attuned to your needs will welcome your request for recommendations, or they may proactively make suggestions when you place an order. They may also make you aware of limited time, trial or new offerings. Conversely, you may need an item like a specific pizza crust type that they don't carry – suggest they consider adding it to their portfolio.
- **QUALITY:** On rare occasion, you may experience a quality concern with a food product. Your distributor is there to handle these types of challenges, so tell them. If, for example, a pizza crust isn't performing well in your oven, they may offer you product alternatives, or they could consult with a pizza crust manufacturer like [Alive & Kickin' Pizza Crust](#) to help resolve the issue.



SERVICES

Distributors are on the front lines of the food industry and, as such, are typically well versed in food trends, benchmarks and best practices that are the basis for value-added services:

- **FORECASTING:** Anticipating the future keeps your operation fresh, and your distributor can contribute valuable information about emerging food trends, availability of specialty and premium ingredients, and certain economic factors that could influence how you construct your menu in the short- and long-term.
- **DEMOS AND COST ANALYSIS:** Distributor Sales Reps (DSRs) often arrange for manufacturers to provide demonstrations and samplings so you have experience with the products first-hand, and are able to ask questions of the supplier directly. These meetings also provide the opportunity for the manufacturer to assist you with cost/ROI analyses to determine if it makes sense to switch from scratch-made to pre-made pizza crusts or dough balls.
- **PURCHASING POWER:** While some operators choose to use multiple distributors either due to preference or necessity, finding a primary vendor that can provide 80-100% of your food items could translate to cost savings due to reduced shipping expense and help prevent headaches over logistics. Also, should you periodically put your Cost of Good Sold (COGS) out for bid, having a small pool to compare simplifies the process and ensures you're making the most cost-effective decisions.



PARTNERSHIPS

A distributor-operator relationship isn't a one-way street. Mutual success means mutual responsibility, and understanding your role as a customer will net you a trusted distributor partnership. Distributors want to work with owners and operators who are committed to:

- Honesty and open communication
- Timely ordering and payment
- Maintaining reasonable expectations
- "Win-win" profitability

Your distributor can also be a real value-add for brand building and industry knowledge. Most have connections with local or regional food shows, which are perfect opportunities for you to meet with and compare vendors. Ask your distributor to arrange for your attendance as they provide presentation schedules, facilitate supplier meetings and help you make the most of your time at the show. Plus, they may have an inside track on discounted transportation and accommodations.

For more information on building a distributor relationship, or how manufacturers like Alive & Kickin' Pizza Crust work with distributors and foodservice operators, give us a call at 920.662.0304 or [visit us online](#).



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