



JP Centre/South Main Streets Small Business Toolkit

Holiday Business During COVID

Food Service

We are in unprecedented times as we prepare for an uncertain holiday season. In order to preserve holiday business and revenue, business owners should anticipate that reopening remains uncertain and can roll back at any time.

With an advance strategy to research, innovate, and adapt, you can preserve your holiday revenue stream, and maybe even surpass expectations.

The holiday gift-giving season has always been vital to retail businesses. Some obstacles this year may include:

- Resurgence of COVID and another shutdown of businesses;
- Supply chain shutdowns and changes, including LACK OF PRODUCT;
- Customer concerns about safety and social distancing.



How can you pivot your holiday money-makers?

Dining

1. Limited seating capacity will most likely continue. One way to increase capacity is to consider barriers between tables. Reopening guidelines allow that *"tables may be positioned closer only if separated by protective non-porous barriers at least six (6) feet in height installed between tables and high foot traffic areas."*
 - a. Consider using these partitions to create cozy nooks that give diners privacy and safety, while enabling you to add to your seating capacity.

2. The city has approved extending outdoor seating in public spaces (parking or sidewalk) to December 1. Private outdoor seating areas can be extended further. Some ways that you can prepare include:
 - a. Blankets with your logo are inexpensive and easy to wash. Offer them for one-time use with your customers, then wash and reuse. If you use a linen company, ask if they can customize a rental option for you.
 - b. Space heaters are option.
 - i. Electric heaters are allowed and do not need to be permitted but electric cords CANNOT CROSS the public way.
 - ii. Propane heaters require a permit from the Fire Department, however the fee will most likely be waived. Propane heaters need proper ventilation, hence it's likely that Inspectional Services may conduct surprise inspections.
 - c. Tents and coverings are absolutely not allowed on public spaces (parking or sidewalk).

Catering

1. The holidays will be more stressful than ever before. Advertise your catering options so your customers can avoid the stress and enjoy their holidays!
 - a. Because families may not be able to gather together, maybe they can still share a meal. If they each order the same meal, they can share online. It might not be the same, but every connection helps.
 - b. Offer prix fixe menus. This will allow you to determine costs and plan inventory for the season, while offering customers stress-free ordering.
2. If you have a beer/wine/alcohol license, highlight to your customers that this can be included with their catering order now.
 - a. Your staff can pick a wine flight to match their custom meal.
 - b. Invent cocktail or cocktail mixes to suit your customers' special occasions.
3. White Glove Service. Perhaps your customer wants a premium experience.
 - a. If you have the staffing availability, you could offer premium delivery with real dishes, glassware, silverware, and linens; plating service at the customer's home, and then pick-up after the meal, so that there's no clean-up for the customer.

Inventory Tip

You should anticipate that more catering than usual will happen this holiday season, so catering SUPPLIES may be hard to find.

If you plan to do significant catering business, order your supplies early and abundantly. Research alternative suppliers, in case you need them.

- b. Be sure to charge *profitably* for this service. A customer who would want this, is a customer who can afford it.
 4. Delivery - not doing it? Get on board. There are a lot of options for you.
 - a. Third party apps are the fastest, least troublesome options. Be sure to research prices thoroughly. The city has a guidebook that explains more:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uhvrPr8ZafcZzVimow0QJOyzHf-qrlp7kjM4JtzX17Q/edit>
 - b. Developing your own delivery options is more difficult. You should check your insurance policies to allow for this.

JP Centre/South Main Streets is looking into the idea of subsidizing a delivery service for our local businesses. It would be a service for the strict use of Jamaica Plain businesses for deliveries within Jamaica Plain. Please let us know if you would like to receive updates.

Venue Rental

Holiday Parties/Celebrations

This will be the biggest difference for restaurants this holiday season. Many businesses will rethink their usual holiday party gatherings. Consider now how to innovate and adapt this holiday institution to offer safe celebrations and reassure your customers.

1. Whereas renting out your space may have been cost-prohibitive for customers in the past, maybe it is something that you can pivot.
 - a. Timed Rentals - 90 to 120 minute seating; prix fixe menu price x socially distanced seating capacity = equals a holiday party under the indoor gathering limit. Beer/wine or alcohol service for an additional fee.
 - b. Limit to one night a week; in one night, you can do up to three seatings with a 15-min turnover.
 - c. To make this profitable, your customer should fill every seat in the house for their rental. Know your break-even point.
2. Consider movable partitions that will allow you to further sub-divide your space for smaller socially distant parties.
3. Make use of outdoor spaces. Boston Parks and Recreation is now allowing permits for outdoor events at their public parks, for gatherings under 50 people. This does require an extensive permitting process. Please contact JP Centre/South Main Streets if you would like information or assistance.



How can you distinguish your offerings?

Your business will be in less competition with other venues; in fact, there are less venues this year than ever before in Boston. But you may find that you still need a significant advertising and marketing push to convince people that it is safe to patronize your business during the holidays. What can you offer with your venue rentals or catering options?

- Accompanying Music or Books
- Desserts
- Video or Chat with the Chef/Wine Tasting with your Sommelier
- Recipes
- Think outside of the box!

JP Centre/South Main Streets would welcome your suggestions to our toolkit!