

wiki report

How to better package and prepare menu items for delivery and take out:

As takeout and delivery increasingly becomes the primary source of income for restaurants, it is more important than ever to understand how to prepare and package food in a way that allows it to survive, and even thrive in the delivery/takeout journey.

Here's how.



Step

1

Observe in Isolation

Observe how your menu item changes over time, when isolated.

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1. Observe and document how the dishes on your menu change over time on a sterile non-reactive surface.

A large aspect of how delivery and takeout affects the overall dining experience and the taste of your food is in the time it takes for the food to reach the customer from your restaurant—flavors meld and distort and textures change.

So it is extremely important to understand just how your menu items are changing over time. The specific ways your dishes are prepared will also have a large impact on how it changes over time, **so it's best do your own tests rather than rely on conventional information.**

This process is can become very tedious, especially for restaurants with larger menus, but it will give us a much needed baseline to compare the results from steps 2-5.

To speed things up, you can conduct the tests from steps 1-5 simultaneously, but its very careful about the documentation, as doing this can make it very easy to get the notes from different tests mixed up.

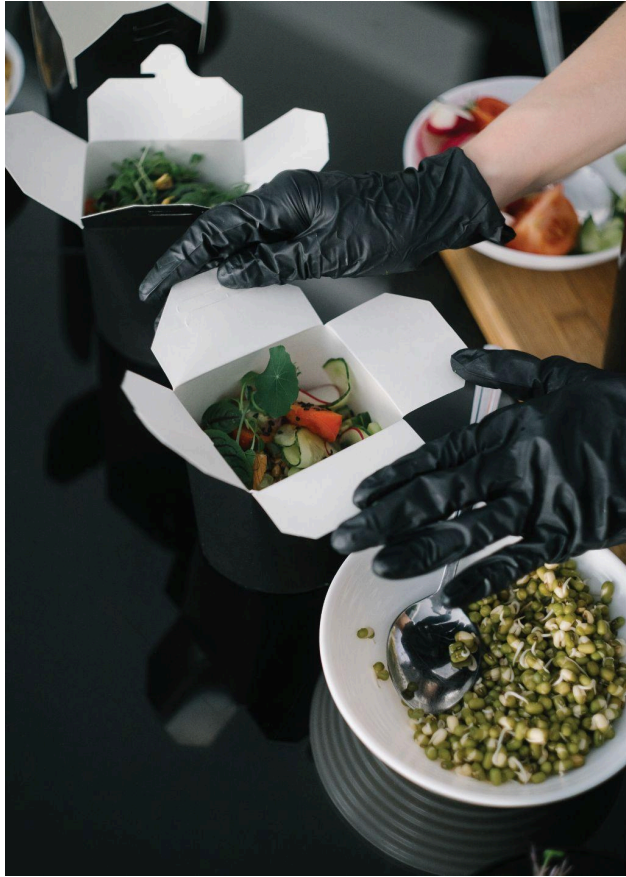
If your menu is really long or if there is extreme need to prioritize, you can do step 2 first, as that will tell you which menu items are most affected and thus need to be prioritized.

Process:

1. If the finished version of the dish can be separated into components (like a burger) separate the components and conduct a test for each of them. This won't take more time, but it requires a little more physical space. **You will also need to do this same test for that menu item as a whole.**
2. Place the food item on a non-reactive surface and document the changes that happen over incremental periods of time, such as every 5 mins for 1 hour.

For the surface, a conventional ceramic plate is perfectly fine, although, if the food item (or its components) can stand on its own, placing it over a wire rack will yield even more accurate results as there will be much less surface contact.

3. At every interval, you will want to document how the texture, taste, temperature, and smell of your food has changed compared to the previous time you sampled/documented it. This is not an exact science, but it doesn't have to be, if a change isn't large enough to be obvious, then perfect!
 - Some of these changes might seem obvious, like temperature, this way, you'll have a good understanding of
4. If the weather outside is drastically different than the one inside your restaurant (like in freezing winters or blazing summers), you will also want to do a version of this test for both indoors and outdoors.



Step

2

Observe in Packaging

Observe how your menu item changes over time in its current packaging.

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2. Observe and document how the dishes on your menu changes over time when put in its current packaging.

Now conduct the test from step one on the food item in its current packaging.

Like in step one, if the food item is made up little components, then you will want to test each component as well as the whole.

The difference here is that you will also what look at how the packaging changes over time. For example: does it melt or become soggy, or flimsy? Paying attention to this lets you know how the food interacts with its packaging.

- If weather is a key factor, then this also lets you know how the packaging behaves as a result of weather. If you want to be really clinical about this, you can also just the packaging out (without food) to get an understanding of how the packaging behaves when weather is the only factor.



Step

3

Distill

Analyze and synthesize
your data.

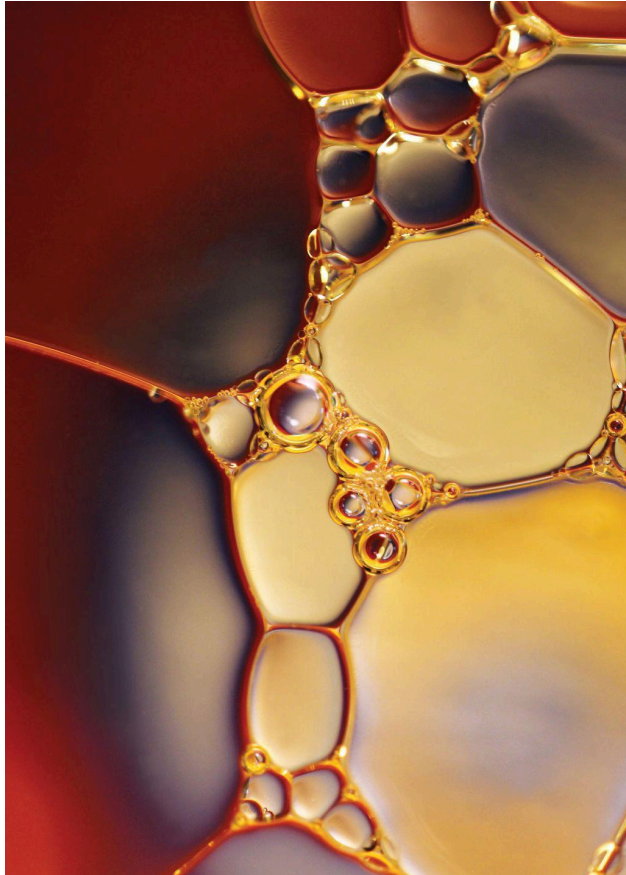
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3. Analyze and synthesize your data to identify undesired changes and their causes.

This is stage, where you analyze and synthesize the data that you have gathered to answer the question of how exactly that food item changes over time

- One its own and in its component forms
 - When it is in its current packaging
 - In different weather conditions
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- What happened to its texture, taste, temperature, and smell?
 - How did the packaging change?
 - Were there any positive changes?
 - Were there any negative ones?
 - What caused these changes?
 - At what rate did the changes to each factor unfold? And what was happening in relation to the other factors?

The synthesis of this will not only tell you what happened and when, but also, and more importantly, a rudimentary understanding of why it happened and thus what to change.



Step

4

Research & Experiment

Research and Experiment
Solutions Iteratively

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4. Research the root causes of the undesired changes and how to prevent them.

Now that you know what the biggest changes were and some semblance of why it happened, research the issue and its cause. For example, if fried food is getting soggy, research and understand what the exact mechanics of it is and how to prevent it (if you keep fried food submerged in oil, it doesn't get soggy, even if you leave it there all night). If moisture is an issue, you might research what packaging solutions there are that soak up or dissipate moisture or different food preparation methods that are more resilient to it.

There is no right way to do this, or a perfect place to start, but Google (or Bing (ew...)) is your friend. So is the local library and librarians. As you research, experiment different possible solutions in an iterative way—keep what works and work on what doesn't.

About the Authors

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Allison is a graduate student at the University of Michigan pursuing her MBA and MPP. She is passionate about bringing together the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build and scale more sustainable and equitable communities and economic systems. Previously, she worked at Deloitte Consulting in Chicago, advising a variety of private and nonprofit clients on their strategic and operational goals. She has deep Midwestern roots, growing up in Cincinnati, OH and earning her bachelor's degree in nonprofit management from Indiana University.

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Zhihui Zhu is a graduate student at the University of Michigan pursuing her MSI. She is really into digging the reasons behind human behavior and transfer human's need into tangible solutions. As a dedicated UX designer, she is also curious about how the world works. As a result, she is also exploring market theory, microeconomy and cognitive science. In her mind, collaboration makes things happen.