



# PIZZA MAGAZINE

THE WORLD'S AUTHORITY ON PIZZA | PMQ.COM | PIZZATV.COM

MARCH 2021



## THE PIZZA WITCH



[www.caputocheese.com](http://www.caputocheese.com)

BALANCING WATER PH 24

OUTDOOR DINING 38

OILS & VINEGARS 46





# Stepping OUT

Between the approach of springtime and the COVID-19 pandemic ushering in an era of outdoor activities, it's the perfect time to establish (or enhance) your alfresco dining.

**BY TRACY MORIN**

As local governments scrambled to help rescue COVID-affected restaurants during 2020, outdoor dining setups suddenly became a necessity. After all, with indoor dining capacity greatly reduced (or forbidden altogether), tables and chairs spilled out onto sidewalks, patios, streets and parking lots wherever possible.



And the focus on outdoor dining looks like it'll be sticking around for at least part of 2021. Luckily, warmer weather is on the way—and we asked industry experts for their top tips to help you prepare. Read on to find out how you can get your operation alfresco-ready for springtime and beyond.

## 1 STAY ON-BRAND.

With the push for increased outdoor dining space over the last year, landlords and operators have gotten creative. In some cases, restaurants' outdoor spaces are a short distance away or carved into a parking lot. Therefore, Mark Moeller, president of The Recipe of Success, a national restaurant consulting firm in Westport, Connecticut, believes that a restaurant's brand should be carried through its entire layout, including outdoors. "The look, feel, colors, chairs and tables outside should all reflect the current design inside—and this is especially important if the outdoor dining area isn't adjacent to the restaurant," he says.

## 2 POLISH YOUR IMAGE.

Mary Jane Riva, CEO of Pizza Factory, based in Oakhurst, California, with more than 100 locations, emphasizes that an inviting atmosphere is a must for outdoor dining, so staying on top of your team to monitor for cleanliness and sanitizing is important. "No one wants to sit in an area that looks unattended to," Riva says. "Lighting is important and certainly can be fun—and not very expensive. But less is more: You want to provide an atmosphere but not take up all of your real estate with decor."

Ultimately, Moeller says, outdoor dining spaces should not look like an afterthought and will vary according to use. "Conscious thought needs to go into whether the space will be an extension of the dining room, with servers, or if it will be used solely by takeout patrons," he notes. "This will drive the specific needs of the design. Seating should be comfortable, tables level, heaters placed where appropriate, and lighting positioned to provide both ambience and security." You can also consider installing an exterior security camera for safety.

**"Private dining pods and bubble pods can accommodate those who prefer additional privacy or protection from the elements and can help make outdoor dining more efficient and comfortable."**

— EUGENIA LEBEDYNSKA, MCDONALD PAPER & RESTAURANT SUPPLIES

## 3 POWWOW WITH THE POWERS THAT BE.

With spring right around the corner, Tim Spiegelglass, owner of St. Louis-based Spiegelglass Construction Company, stresses that owners should start conversations now with their landlord and/or city officials to understand what creative outdoor dining options might look like. "We're seeing some cities allow outdoor seating on the sidewalks, streets and/or parking lots due to the pandemic," he says. "Reach out to your city to understand the regulations that are in place."

You can also inquire about tenant improvement (TI), in which landlords and restaurant owners work together so that both parties benefit. "TI might include adding an overhang on an existing outdoor patio to increase the number of meals that can be served outside," Spiegelglass explains. "It might also include expanding or renovating the patio area, adding a pickup window, and/or adding dedicated parking spots for curbside pickups."

## 4 PLAN AHEAD FOR INTELLIGENT DESIGN.

If you're creating a new space, Spiegelglass recommends reaching out to your architect and general contractor to think through what an efficient and effective outdoor space might look like for you. "As you're designing your space, think about the flow of getting food and



drinks from the kitchen to your guests, limiting the number of steps taken, and utilizing one-way pathways if possible,” he advises. “You’ll need to take spacing requirements into consideration for seating, of course, keeping in mind that those could change as the pandemic evolves.”

Spiegelglass stresses that an owner should get his general contractor (GC) on board early to get the permitting process started and determine costs and timing. “Your GC can help you figure out what’s feasible for your space—everything from MEP (mechanical/electrical/plumbing) to utilizing the right materials for weather, like nonslip concrete for your patio,” he says. “Also consider building openness into your outdoor space, so instead of a closed-in four-season patio, consider a pergola or roof structure for coverage while leaving the space open, per city requirements. Most cities are requiring a certain percentage of open air on the sides to allow for circulation.”

## 5 ESTABLISH PRIVACY.

Eugenia Lebedynska, CPO of McDonald Paper & Restaurant Supplies in Brooklyn, New York, recommends privacy-friendly layouts and furniture when setting up your outdoor dining area. “Use fences or dividers, string lights and planters to make your outdoor space as inviting as possible,” she suggests. “If you don’t have a permanent patio, you can also use dining pods; some are easy to install, decorate and maintain. Moreover, private dining pods and bubble pods can accommodate those who prefer additional privacy or protection from the elements and can help make outdoor dining more efficient and comfortable.”

**“As you’re designing your space, think about the flow of getting food and drinks from the kitchen to your guests, limiting the number of steps taken, and utilizing one-way pathways if possible.”**

— TIM SPIEGELGLASS, SPIEGELGLASS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

## STAYING SAFE OUTSIDE

You’ve likely heard that outdoor dining is safer during the COVID-19 pandemic. That’s because the virus mainly spreads through the air, and better-ventilated spaces help dissipate virus particles, according to Janilyn Hutchings, a certified food safety professional at StateFoodSafety in Orem, Utah. To add additional layers of safety, she shares her top tips for outdoor dining:

- **Don’t cut off airflow.** If you plan to install a removable roof or tent to protect guests from inclement weather, make sure there are still sufficient gaps to allow fresh air to circulate. For example, refrain from unrolling canvas walls all the way down, instead leaving space at the bottom for air to get in and out.
- **Space tables properly.** According to CDC guidelines, all customer parties should be seated at least 6’ apart to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19, which also applies to guests eating outside.
- **Post physical reminders to wear masks and social distance.** Post signs and/or use tape on the floor to help parties remember to maintain distance. Ask guests to wear a mask anytime they’re not seated at their assigned table.