F&B and Coronavirus: What It Is, Why It’s a Disaster, How You Can Help.

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NOTE FOR REVIEWERS: This is intended for restaurants/bars/cafes/pubs that must stay open during a coronavirus outbreak. It is intended almost entirely to change restaurant behavior while they stay open so they reduce the risk they will increase the rate of coronavirus transmission. It will also, later, be important to give restaurants resources for dealing with the economic stress of coronavirus but this is not the objective of this document. This document is meant to be used as a guide and will be updated as new information comes in.

What is coronavirus (aka COVID-2019) and why does it matter?

- COVID-19, sometimes simply called coronavirus, is an illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It initially seems like a cold or the flu but in some cases can make people very sick and sometimes it results in death.
- Anyone can be infected with coronavirus without knowing it.
- Coronavirus spreads when your nose, mouth, or eyes come into direct contact with infected body fluid—this can be from human contact, droplets in the air, or from infected body fluid on hands, hard and soft surfaces, cloths, aprons, and clothing.
- Older people and those who are already ill are at great risk of becoming extremely ill or dying if they are infected by coronavirus.
- Some people infected with coronavirus show no symptoms for many days. You can infect others even if you have no symptoms.
- People infected with coronavirus are probably most infectious starting when they begin to show symptoms (which are similar to symptoms of colds and flu).
• If coronavirus infections become widespread, this is likely to cause the healthcare systems to break down. This has already happened in Italy and China. This may cause a long economic recession, if not a depression, and it makes it difficult for people who might need to access healthcare for other reasons to get the care they need.

Why does coronavirus matter for the food and beverage industry?
• Restaurants, bars, coffeeshops, and pubs are places where it is especially easy for coronavirus to spread—both to your staff and to your customers. Your actions have the potential to possibly save many lives, even if you think you're not likely to become infected yourself.
• Coronavirus can remain active on surfaces for many days (we still don’t know for sure how long). These surfaces include counters, cloths, clothing, dishes, glasses, cutlery, storage containers, packing boxes, doorknobs/handles, faucets/taps, credit cards, credit card terminals, POS systems, cellphones, and money.
• Even if you are strictly following regular sanitation practices, you need to take special precautions with food safety, cleaning and personal hygiene to reduce the risk of coronavirus infection.
• There’s always the risk that one of your staff or customers will get sick from the coronavirus—unless you shut down the business temporarily. There is no other way to completely eliminate the risk that coronavirus will spread through your business—but you can and should take steps to reduce that risk.

What can you do to reduce coronavirus risk in your business?
If you have no time right now to read further, just these three actions will be enormously helpful in slowing the spread of coronavirus.

1. Ask your staff to dramatically increase frequency of handwashing.
2. Schedule much more frequent and intense cleaning and sanitizing of all equipment and surfaces in your establishment.
3. Remember: What you and your staff do will make a difference—washing hands and cleaning more often can literally save lives.

If you do have time to read on, below is a long list of things you can do to reduce the risk of your staff accidentally becoming infected with coronavirus, or accidentally infecting a customer with coronavirus.
There are options for things you can do just once, every week, and every day. There are also options for changing your menu and how you run service. Many of these things don’t cost very much.

If you do even one of these things, it is better than doing none of them. The more of these things you can do, the better.

The most important takeaways
1. A restaurant can make a lot of people sick accidentally
2. Stop sick staff from coming in to work.
3. Make sure regular hygiene practices are strictly upheld—and make them even stricter if you can. (We have suggestions below)
4. Make sure staff are very conscious of not touching things unnecessarily, including their own face, their cellphone, their clothing, cutlery, plates.
5. Train all staff in proper handwash procedure.
6. Encourage all staff to wash hands or sanitize hands as often as possible, ideally every 10-15 minutes or after touching a surface which might be contaminated (including cellphones, clothing, POS/payment machines, door or equipment handles, used plates/cutlery, used napkins/serviettes, and other people)
7. Do your best to move your business as much to takeout/delivery as possible.

For the full list, see below

Do once
- Ensure that all food safety, hygiene and COSHH documents are updated and that all staff are informed and trained as necessary.
- Ensure staff have a designated area to store their clothing, and to have their meals, during service.
- Ensure you have a plan for staff wages, so people don’t feel undue financial pressure to work when they are sick. If you are able to, guarantee a basic level of pay for hourly staff who cannot work because they are ill.
  - In the UK, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be available from Day 1 for those unable to work because they are diagnosed with coronavirus, or self-isolating in accordance with Government guidelines.
- Find out if you have a local or national coronavirus reporting hotline number. If yes, post it prominently in the restaurant, and make sure all staff know it. In the UK, report to NHS 111.
• Issue all staff with an inexpensive thermometer.
• Remind staff not to hug, fist bump, shake hands, or high-five—if possible, not even to elbow-bump. Instead find non-contact ways to show the love.
• Put up a clearly visible sign at the entrance and on your website asking people who are ill or elderly not to enter.
• Check laundry processes for all service linens. This includes chef jackets, uniforms, towels, cloths, aprons, table linens.
  o Call your linen service to verify that it is complying with sanitation regulations for service linens.
  o If any laundering of service linens happens on site, it should be with water temperature above 160°F/70°C (add bleach at the label recommended concentration to be extra-sure). If laundry water temperature is below 160°F/70°C, you must use hypochlorite bleach or another disinfecting product at the label recommended concentration.
• Check cleaning and sanitation products to make sure they are antiviral—soap, > 60% alcohol, food service sanitation sprays, bleach, and hydrogen peroxide solutions should be effective. Unfortunately some natural or low-toxicity cleaning products such as vinegar or essential oils may not be antiviral. If you are in the US, the EPA has a list of products effective against coronavirus here: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf
• Check cleaning and sanitation products and spray bottles to make sure they are at correct dilution.
• Change how your team handles clean glass, crockery, and cutlery to reduce the number of times each piece is touched. Polishing cloths are extremely easily contaminated:
  o Stop polishing cutlery and glassware altogether.
  o If you absolutely must polish, ensure that staff wash their hands before and after touching items, and that cloths are replaced between each use.
  o Move cutlery only once between cleaning and using for service.
• Change how cooks plate so they only use spoons and tweezers (no use of hands, whether gloved or not).
• Install pump-dispenser alcohol gel sanitizer bottles at kitchen and FOH stations (make sure the gel is at least 60% ethanol).
• Provide service stations with antiviral sanitizer wipes for use on cellphones.
• Most people don’t know how to thoroughly wash their hands and wrists. Near staff and customer sinks, post the following materials:
  o Reminder to wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water.
  o Lyrics to a song or chorus that takes about 20 seconds to sing:
This diagram of the most often-missed areas when washing hands:

- Handwash instructions from the WHO:
0. Wet hands with water
1. Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.
2. Rub hands palm to palm.
3. Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa.
4. Palm to palm with fingers interlaced.
5. Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked.
6. Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa.
7. Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.
8. Rinse hands with water.
9. Dry thoroughly with a single use towel.
10. Use towel to turn off faucet.
11. ...and your hands are safe.
Do every week

- Remind all staff to clip their nails and wash their hands for at least 20 seconds as often as possible and at least every 10-15 minutes during service.
- Train (via demonstration) all staff on how to wash hands correctly: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGJNspLRdrc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGJNspLRdrc)
- Remind all staff members to measure their temperature every day. Even a few tenths of a degree C or F above normal body temperature of 37C/98.6F should be grounds to call in sick.
- Remind all staff to stay home and report (by phone) if they have very mild fever, other cold and flu symptoms, or have had any direct contact with someone known, or suspected, to have coronavirus.

Do every day

- Check your dishwash sanitation system to ensure it is working correctly, at the correct temperature, and that there are sufficient sanitizers chemicals loaded.
- Ask all staff to call out face-touching generally, and specifically in relation to food-handling.
- Remind staff not to have hug, fist bump, shake hands, or high-five—replace with non-contact ways of showing the love. If you do accidentally touch someone else, remember to wash your hands immediately.
- Remind staff to sanitize or wash hands as often as possible and at least every 10-15 minutes during service, and before and after handling cutlery, glassware, or table linens.
- **Remind all staff members to check their temperature every day and report even very mild cold and flu symptoms (including slight fever), and to stay home.**

Do before every service

- Pre-service reminder for all staff to:
  - wash hands frequently,
  - touch only handles when laying cutlery on tables,
  - avoid touching their face,
  - remind co-workers (discreetly) if they see them touching their face, and
  - change side towels more frequently than usual; every 10-15 minutes if possible, and
  - *(if they use cellphones at work) wipe down cellphones every 10-15 minutes with an antiviral sanitizer wipe. Even better, provide a secure, locked box for staff to (voluntarily) put their cellphones in at the beginning of service.*
Do before and after every service

- Use an antiviral sanitizer to thoroughly disinfect all key surfaces frequently touched by staff or customers—faucets, toilet seats, door handles, toilet flush handles, table tops, chair backs, POS system, keyboards and mice, tablets, card machine, menus.

Do as often as practical during service

- Use an antiviral sanitizer to wipe down key surfaces in dining room, kitchen, and bathroom — faucets, toilet seats, door handles, toilet flush handles, POS system, card machines. This should be done as often as possible and not less than once an hour.

Changing how your FOH team does service

- Where practical, prop doors open so staff and customers don’t have to touch handles to enter and exit.
- Rearrange products (especially those not in their own packaging, and which may be eaten uncooked) to prevent customers from reaching or handling them. Use tongs to handle products which are not wrapped and which will be eaten uncooked (e.g. breakfast pastries, confectionery, pieces of fruit).
- Remove all tasters/samplers/sample bottles from retail displays.
- Change how menus are presented so customers handle them less or not at all—for instance, a menu board posted in a clearly visible place, or on a stand on the table, or on a portable board brought to the table by a server.
- Replace menu with laminated sheets if original menu material is difficult to sanitize.
- Proactively indicate where customers can wash their hands before eating, and ask if sharing plates and sharing utensils are desired.
- Offer hand sanitizer at the table.
- Use visually distinct serving spoons (larger or a different color from regular spoons) for sharing plates—this is so that customers don’t accidentally confuse serving spoons with their own spoon.
- Move to contactless payments if possible.
• During booking confirmation calls, remind guests that they can cancel at any time, even up to the reservation, if they have symptoms of cold and flu. Provide a dedicated number, or email address, to reduce load on reservations line during service.
• Reduce bookings and limit walk-ins as much as you can in order to prevent crowding.
• Proactively manage the seating plan to seat guests further from each other.
• If customers bring their own items, such as reusable coffee cups, ensure that the item is sanitized before use.

Changing how your beverage program works
• Most cities have a juice commissary company. Consider using them or a cold-press company for juices, instead of taking FOH time to juice (and creating an extra contamination point). Juices from these sources tend to be high in quality but slightly more acid-forward, so check your cocktail specs.
• Sterilize any bottle used for bar ingredients that isn’t the original bottle those ingredients came in. This is especially important for bottles used for non-alcoholic liquids (syrups and juices).
• For bulk cold beverages (e.g. iced tea), make sure to sterilize pitchers and hands immediately before preparation. Consider making lemonade to order rather than batching.
• Use garnish tongs for all garnishes, including two sets of tongs for expressing citrus peels (in the manner required for International Bartending Association contests). Pre-cut citrus peels for service (sanitize hands immediately preceding this prep, of course).

Changing the menu and how the kitchen operates
• Minimize, eliminate or change serving style for menu items designed to be shared at the table—this includes large cuts of meat, whole fish/poultry, communal bowls of rice/pasta.
• Minimize, eliminate or change serving style for dishes that should/must be eaten with hands instead of cutlery—this includes bread, sharing platters, chicken wings, finger foods (like nuggets/croquettes), whole crabs, sandwiches. Consider pre-slicing, changing plating, providing additional cutlery, and making alcohol handwipes/sanitizer readily available.
• Consider adding or expanding options for delivery and takeaway, to minimize the number of customers on site at any one time.
• Use tasting spoons only once—after each use, send the tasting spoon to the dish pit.
Planning for prolonged shutdowns or limitations on eat-in dining

- Know what government resources are available.
- Make a plan to reduce wage costs temporarily without having to lay off staff members
  - Reducing hours-per-person for hourly staff
  - Open later or close earlier
  - Close on your lightest day/s of the week
- Create a gift certificate program so your customers can give you some cash in hand.
- Create a “buy a meal for someone who needs it” program: Allow customers to pay you to prepare takeout that can be collected for free by someone who needs it.
- **Plan to convert most or all of your business to takeout or delivery**
  - Re-evaluate your menu for producing takeout-suitable foods (delicious and safe to eat even after several hours of storage)
  - Find suppliers of takeout packaging and purchase stocks
  - Talk to your front-of-house staff to see if they want to do deliveries of food
- Make contact with local/neighborhood organizations—such as food banks, churches, temples, shelters—that distribute food to those in need to see if you can supply them with packaged food for distribution. They may have budgets to pay you for these meals as well.

Additional Notes as of 3/14

- I think you might be better served to just specify a temperature here. 38.0 is widely regarded as a fever but I did see a publication suggesting 37.5 be used for screening since coronavirus first few days low temp is common.

- One thing you may want to add is that if employees feel worse they may need to leave during a shift if they aren’t feeling well. I would request that employees notify the employer if they test positive even when they are off work.

- The only surface I didn’t see specified but maybe is included in service items is objects like sugar packets, salt shakers, ketchup bottles. If diners are using these mid meal they make get fomites on the objects or touch their mouth. Ideally you could serve a side of ketchup in a washable bowl or ask when serving coffee if the wait staff could add the sugar.