

# Finding The Perfect Balance

**It is safe to say that technology will continue to play a vital role within all industries, and whilst it improves speed, efficiency and reduces human error, it is important to strike the perfect balance between tech-enabled kitchens and a personalised customer experience argues Ben Gardner, CEO of Navitas Safety.**



Technology should be used to enhance the role of humans, not replace them entirely. By digitising a few aspects of restaurant and hotel kitchens, such as daily safety checklists, business owners of small premises alone can save more than 10 hours per month by removing paper-based reporting - resting easy in the knowledge that they are compliant with current regulations.

With a digital food safety system in place, hospitality business managers can minimise, if not completely mitigate, the risk of a hygiene breach, which they are able to monitor through a live dashboard.

Digitising essential and time-consuming tasks, such as cleaning checks and temperature recording via automated temperature pods for fridges and freezers, provides staff and business owners with the opportunity to turn their attention to their customers, ensuring that all food safety is taken care of.

Automated temperature monitoring allows appliances to be monitored 24/7; ensuring items are always kept at compliant temperatures. Kitchens are now introducing technologies such as food temperature taking devices, for instance Smart Probes which automatically log data online and can work on a direct alert system that will also ensure staff are quickly notified of any potential issues before they arise.

Reducing the manual aspect of food safety management can quickly allow business owners to focus on providing customers with an unforgettable experience, but for all the right reasons.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Going forwards, having a digital allergen management and tracking system is going to be essential for businesses within the food and beverage sector. This will ensure that the seller can always prove that they have clearly labelled all allergens within the food they produce for direct sale.

If businesses fail to do so, they will be putting themselves and their customers at risk. A digitised system, which maintains a record of all allergen labels printed, will guarantee that businesses are entirely protected.

And, with Natasha's Law coming into force as of October this year, it is more apparent and important than ever before.

The Navitas Digital Food Safety system, for example, keeps a record of the food that has been produced, as well as information such as who printed the label, the allergens that were present within the food and when the label was printed.

You can also cross reference this with the barcode and your POS system for complete traceability. This will provide businesses with total confidence that they have remained compliant with Natasha's Law.

## COMBATting MORE THAN JUST COVID-19

Technology isn't something to just support and help us navigate our way through the current circumstances, though.

Although kitchen staff are unable to work from home, technology can help support workforce management and staff availability. And, when all other areas of the business run smoothly, this will transcend into the kitchen too.

With the ability to monitor customer trends and forecasts, improve data collection and check stock levels, why would businesses choose not to utilise the power of technology?

Household brands such as Samsung are integrating new technology into their kitchen appliances, so it is now essential that brands and businesses within the food and beverage sector follow suit.

Now, many of Samsung's fridges are somewhat of a family hub. Although integrated with WIFI and the ability to watch TV, they are much more than that.

Utilising SmartThings technology, these fridges allow people to see what is inside their fridge, wherever they may be. Aiding the weekly food shop, such technology also allows homeowners to limit food waste, helping with the all-important sustainability efforts within the UK.

Whilst these are transforming the homes of thousands, they could now be used to benefit and transform restaurant and hotel kitchens too.

Covid-19 may be the pandemic that has taken over the world recently, but there are a number of other crises that will continue beyond the effects of coronavirus. Food waste and, of course, global warming are just two of them.

By introducing technology into kitchens, this will help contribute positively to both of these incredibly important issues, as well as reducing the UK's carbon footprint.

## IMPROVING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

2021 is the year to go digital and food businesses need to do more with less. Consumers are going to be even more sensitive to food hygiene standards and will choose not to dine with businesses if they feel they are not conforming to the highest levels of safety.

Aiding safety and transparency, remote technologies such as in-app ordering and digitised menus should be continued to help limit the need for human contact and disease transmission.

By going digital, food businesses can focus on the customer experience and let technology innovate, and take care of, many food safety procedures.

With that being said, I believe these steps will continue beyond Covid-19 and the likes of online ordering, allergen tracking, plus the ability to pay online straight from your table, will be here to stay.

