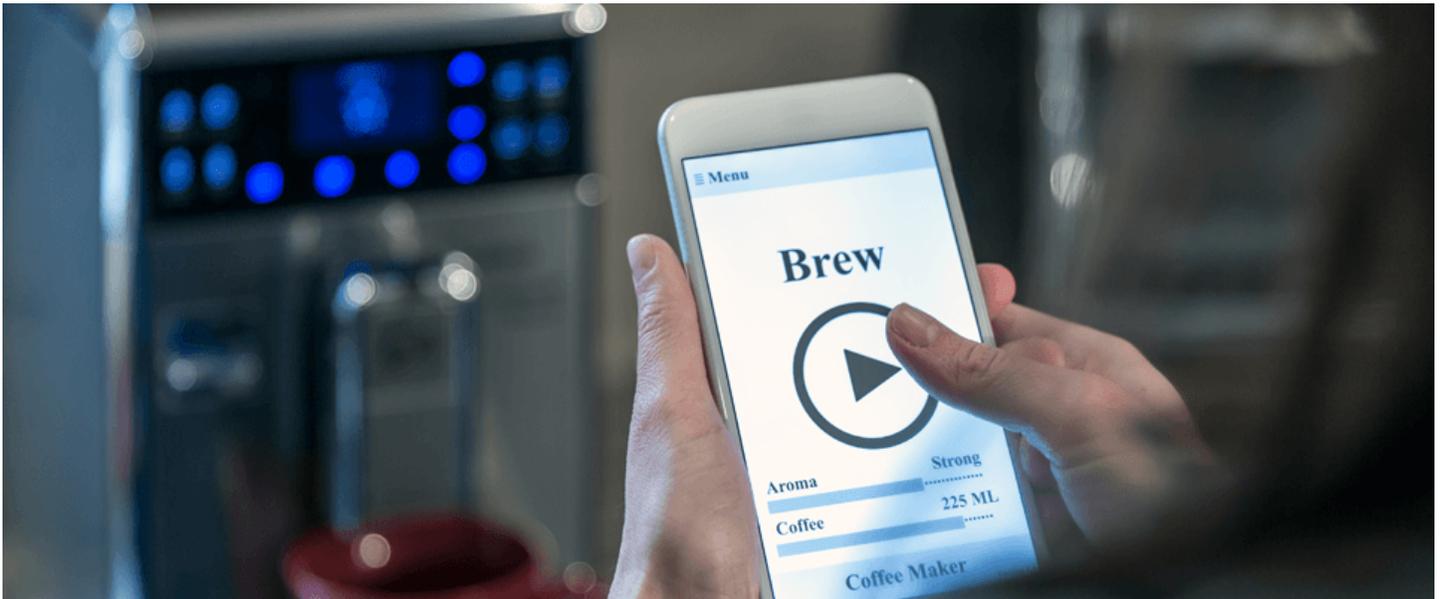# High Tech, Zero Touch Foodservice Trend

Touchless technology, like that used on water faucets, is gaining ground due to COVID-19 safety issues. Dispensers and other machines now feature zero-touch controls. Read more here.

COVID-19 has disrupted many aspects of the foodservice industry, from menu size to dining capacity to food safety and sanitation. One of the biggest trends to result from this new normal is removing touch (by both staff and customers) from the food and beverage equation.

Motion-activated handsfree sinks, towel machines, and doors are familiar examples of touchless technology, but concern about viral transmission has accelerated the move to high-tech, zero-touch solutions for ordering and payment of food and beverages.

The need for limited contact has also manifested itself in many other ways, including contactless pickup and deliveries, as well as digital or online-only menus for dine-in within locations. In particular, QR codes (Quick Response barcodes), which had fallen into disuse in the past decade, are being revived as an important tool for touch-free systems for foodservice establishments.

Apart from technological solutions, many self-service modes of food and beverage delivery are being rethought, including buffets, food bars, and coffee dispensers. For example, self-service food bars are being replaced with staff-attended customizable concepts, like salads or sandwiches, where patrons are able to view and select their favorite ingredients without actually handling them.

Even simple solutions like removing condiments from tables and replacing them with individual portion-packs of items such as salt and pepper, ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard, and salad dressing, have become standard practice.

- Beverage dispensers that are activated by hovering a finger over a sensor, rather than pushing a button

- Smartphone-enabled ordering kiosks and vending machines

- Motion-activated automatic dispensers for beverages and condiments

- Zero-contact delivery, from app-based ordering and payment to door-front drop-off

- Web-enabled prepayment for food and beverage orders, including tipping

- Contactless, "tap-to-pay" credit card machines

- QR code tabletop systems that enable customers to access the menu and connect to a remote ordering system; the codes can also be used to access loyalty programs

- Voice-activated "smart speaker" ordering systems

- Geo-tagged curbside pickup for takeout orders, which alerts the restaurant via GPS as customers arrive so that team members can bring the order right out to their car

- Menu boards with AI-based voice recognition technology that can listen to and respond to customers, and can even recommend menu items (such as popular food and drinks or daypart-specific items, upsells, and even customized suggestions based on previous orders)

Many of these systems have acquired urgency during the pandemic, but the solutions created to serve customers are becoming part of restaurants' future. According to Datassential, in fact, 76% of consumers say that COVID-19 has changed how they look at behaving in public forever.

Source: Datassential, COVID-19 Report 3: Priorities (August 2020)

The information provided is based on a general industry overview, and is not specific to your business operation. Each business is unique and decisions related to your business should be made after consultation with appropriate experts.