

Is Your Restaurant Ready for Football Season?

October 14, 2024



Fall can be an ideal time for operators to kick off a sports-oriented

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- [Trends](#)
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approach to menu planning—which could potentially help increase profitability.

During the football season, bars and restaurants in cities with an NFL team sell 2% more food on game day Sundays than on other Sundays throughout the year.¹

Venues in some areas see an even more pronounced rise in sales. In Green Bay, Wisconsin, for instance, home of the Green Bay Packers, restaurant-related food spending jumps 27% on football Sundays.¹

From tailgating-primed takeout to festive specials that let patrons drink for less, the following marketing, menu and other ideas can help you successfully serve football fans—and keep them coming back for more—all season long.

Lean Into In-House Specials

Restaurant- and bar-sponsored watch parties offer customers a chance to view games on a bigger screen than they likely have at home; giveaways and deals can also be an incentive to stop by.

Last year, football fans in cities such as Miami, Atlanta and Kansas City were able to make a reservation to dine in a blimp Subway had fashioned to look like one of its sandwiches; customers could also scan a QR code at one of the chain's locations for a shot at winning

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a trip to the Super Bowl or a discount on a Deli Hero sub.²

In August, Chili's—which has supplied college and pro football season deals in recent years—announced its weeknight happy hour drink specials would be available any time a major football game is played this fall.^{3,4,5}

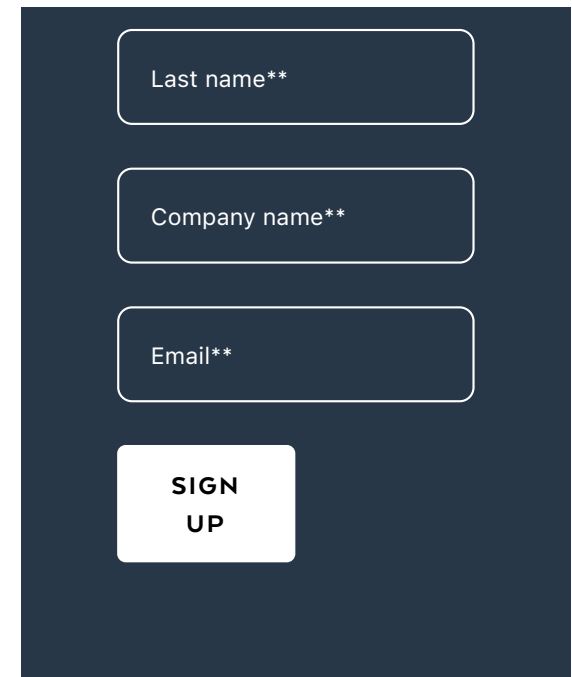
Wings, soups and stews were some of the top dishes restaurants sold during the 2023 season. Shareable football-themed menu items can also entice hungry fans on game days. Put a spin on these [Hatfield® Premium Reserve Pork®-stuffed street tacos](#), for example, by referring to them as Touchdown Tacos.¹

Appeal to fans everywhere with regionally inspired items, such as a New Orleans-oriented [Andouille sausage-stuffed Po'boy](#) and [St. Louis-style ribs](#).

Add Exciting Takeout Offers and LTOs

While drink discounts can prompt patrons to dine on-premise, buy-one-get-one-free and other to-go deals could also help boost takeout business.

Super Bowl Sunday is among the most popular days to get takeout. An estimated 1 in seven Americans order it to eat as they watch the game.⁹



A dark blue sign-up form with three input fields and a sign-up button. The input fields are labeled "Last name**", "Company name**", and "Email**". The button is labeled "SIGN UP".

Last name**

Company name**

Email**

**SIGN
UP**

Value is a consideration for a number of consumers; 68% of restaurant customers paid close attention to menu prices in the first quarter of this year, according to Technomic data, and 43% say they're ordering delivery from third-party services less often than they used to.⁶

Takeout can provide a similar level of portability and convenience without the associated delivery fees. Football fans who plan to host people at home may be interested in picking up party platters and family meal selections.⁷

The 61% of fans who tailgate more than five times a year—and the 41% who do it eight or more times—might appreciate grillable fare. Research shows 93% of tailgaters prepare their food at the stadium or venue.⁷

Along with catering discounts like the 15% off \$150-or-more tailgating orders Red Robin is offering, incorporating crave-worthy LTO items such as **BBQ Bacon Wrapped Ribeez**,⁸ **Breakfast Korean Corn Dogs** and sausage-filled **empanadas** as game day menu options could help drive both individual and group-focused sales—particularly at the close of the football season.

Leverage Loyalty Programs and Rewards

Loyalty programs are another way operators can address

consumers' desire for value; 96% of restaurant customers who participate in them feel the programs give them more “bang for their buck.”¹⁰

Loyalty and reward programs offer a notable benefit for operators—the ability to capture ordering preferences and other data that can help them customize guests' experience.

They may also be able to help restaurants gain repeat customers. Nearly half (47%) of program participants use their memberships several times a month; about 32% utilize them several times a week.^{10, 11}

Operators can possibly capitalize on consumers' affection for the programs by designing a season pass-type offering that awards football fans points if they visit the restaurant frequently during fall. Program members may also enjoy getting exclusive deals or early access to upcoming food and drink specials.

Craft Well-Received Social Media Campaigns

To capture football fans' attention on TikTok, Instagram and other platforms, your content needs to be creative and engaging.

Images of servers decked out in team gear shows you share fans'

excitement; vivid photos of mouthwatering game day specials—highlighting flavorful ingredients such as the [Hatfield® Sweet Italian Sausage](#) links in this [Grilled Sausage Tuscan Sandwich](#)—can help build excitement about your menu.

Videos that convey your eatery's ambiance can also be compelling. In a recent survey, 19% of adults said they enjoy getting a behind-the-scenes view of how food is prepared; 38% prefer to see footage that shows what dining there looks like.¹²

When creating content for social media or store signage, include hashtag suggestions (like [#FootballSundays](#) or [#CollegeGameDay](#)) to encourage customers to post about their meal or other elements—which can be an especially effective way to connect with new Gen Z customers. More than half (52%) have decided to try a new restaurant solely because of positive feedback they saw about it on social media.¹³

Decades ago, football may have primarily been a weekend event; however, with pro and college games now spanning Thursday, Monday and even some Friday nights, restaurants have additional opportunities to support fans' interest in the sport.

Operators might find special elements such as menu discounts and reward programs that span the duration of the football season could help facilitate sales—and at the same time, provide

customers with a truly memorable experience, whether they're watching their favorite team play from a table inside the restaurant or at home.

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