



## Give a Little, Get a Lot: Boost Sales—and Goodwill!—This Holiday Season

Yes, you're going to be busy this season. Employees will be maxed out, customers stressed out and many shifts will feel like a drive-by attack, instead of an opportunity to thank guests for their support. But there are ways that you can offer guests extra perks while building sales and improving service. Gift cards—with promotions that pamper guests—can bring you additional sales when you need them (after the holidays). Here are a few ideas to maximize gift card sales this season:

- **Free appetizer right now** – Offer guests a free appetizer or a dessert with their purchase of a gift card. Use signage in your operation and on your web site and coach your sales team to remind guests of this promotion as they're taking orders. (See role-playing on page 5 for training ideas.)


- **Party perks** – Large groups are captive audiences and if you offer 5 or 10 percent off an entire order (with the purchase of gift cards that can only be used at a future date), you'll motivate them to buy cards that at least equal your discounts. Before you call it a "wash," consider your absence of advertising costs and the opportunity to reach additional (even new)

customers and the fact that gift card users are more likely to purchase additions (appetizers, sides, desserts, premium drinks, etc.) than those who aren't using gift cards.

Other ways to show appreciation and boost sales include:

- **Free coffee all month** – Your shoppers will appreciate the sentiment and you'll provide servers with the sales opportunity to suggestively sell desserts.

- **Wine while you wait** – As the line grows, your tired customers may opt to skip the 45 minutes of standing and head home (or somewhere else). A bottle of house wine (or even a jug) can make the wait seem worthwhile. A tray of appetizers that you pass around also spreads good cheer, while boosting sales when guests are seated.

- **"Our gift to you"** – Be sure to acknowledge regular guests with freebies when you see them (desserts to take home, gift cards to use later, free appetizers tonight). It's a great way to reward their loyalty, boost their word-of-mouth advertising and, hey, it is the season for giving, right? 


## Seasonal Sales: How to Make Your Servers Care

During the holidays, you and your team have countless opportunities to maximize sales. With the steady stream of diners and the feeling of goodwill and gluttony (it's no surprise that most Americans gain at least five pounds during the season), it's the perfect time to motivate your team members to sharpen their sales skills. Here are a few incentives to get them started:

- **Offer "most sold" prizes for categories:** Select categories—gift cards, appetizers, special entrées, etc.—and offer awards for the most sold throughout the shift. Prizes can include iTunes gift cards, CDs, movie passes, etc. Then, the winners of each night are thrown into a drawing for a grand prize (an iPod, cell phone, even a TV) and then have the drawing during your holiday party for

added excitement.

- **Create holiday splurges:** Work with your chef to create combinations that can be positioned as special, seasonal dishes or pairings. Appetizer sampler plates, tri-martini fleets, slice-of-heaven dessert tastings are all ways to make the holidays seem more celebratory while increasing sales.


- **Spread the love (or at least, the prizes):** Offer sales incentives to everyone who sells a gift card. Remind your team that we're all in the sales business. Those who answer the phone, pack the to-go boxes, and deliver are all employees who can suggest and sell gift cards. Even the people who don't have direct contact with guests can sell to family, friends, neighbors, their kids' schools, etc. And when those salespeople receive "commissions," it's a happier season for everyone! 

## Marketing Tip: Target Small Businesses for Gift Ideas

This holiday season, small businesses near you will be looking for ways to thank their customers for their support. According to International Communications Research, the most popular holiday gesture for small businesses is still sending cards and calendars (18 percent), followed by a food or fruit basket (8 percent). The number who planned to give retail or restaurant gift certificates to key clients is also about 8 percent. How can you market to these small businesses near you?

- **Create packages.** Put together packages specifically designed as gifts. Packages could include dessert trays (for delivery after 3 p.m.), lunch trays or gift cards.

- **Customize materials.** Position your restaurant as a vehicle for marketing your customer's business, instead of your own. Design and include materials that say "compliments of..." or "specifically created for you by..." and include cards that can be personalized by the businesses giving the gifts.

- **Make it easy.** It's a busy time for everyone. Make sure that it's easy for small businesses to order, customize, and distribute packages or gift cards from your restaurant. 

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