



Restaurant Social Media Guide: A Beginner's Handbook for Owners and Operators



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Introduction

Why Social Media Matters for Restaurants

Social media is a powerful tool for restaurants to generate brand awareness, encourage customer engagement, and drive sales. But if your restaurant doesn't have the resources to maintain an active presence on multiple social media platforms, it can be better to focus on a few core channels instead. Posting consistently on a few core channels is often better than spreading yourself too thin across every platform and struggling to maintain quality, relevance, and momentum.

Our Beginner's Guide to Social Media Marketing for Restaurants is for owners, operators, and managers who want to ramp up their social media marketing efforts but need more guidance on where (and how) to start.

This Guide is Here to Help You With:

- The basics of social media marketing for restaurants
- High-level strategies to guide your social media marketing
- Best practices to follow with your restaurant's social media marketing
- How to engage your audience and build community through social media marketing

Let's Get Started! →



Section 1: Getting Started — The Basics

Should Every Restaurant Be on Social Media?

Yes, every restaurant should be on social media — as long as they've got a clear purpose. Social media helps build awareness, foster engagement, and drive revenue. But quality trumps quantity.

Choose platforms you can commit to consistently.

Who Should Manage It?

- **In-House:** Great for independents with time and brand knowledge.
- **Agency:** Ideal for multi-location chains needing scale and strategy.
- **Hybrid:** Internal team handles content; agency manages ads and analytics.

First 3 Steps to Take:

- **Start with One Platform:** Focus efforts where your audience lives (Instagram, Facebook, etc.).
- **Develop a Strategy:** Build a plan before posting across channels.
- **Optimize with Scheduling Tools:** Try Meta Business Suite or Later to schedule posts in advance.



Section 2: What Makes a Strong Strategy

6 Key Elements of a Successful Social Media Strategy:

1. **Clear Brand Positioning:** Define your social media "why."
2. **Consistent Voice & Visuals:** Keep everything on-brand.
3. **Engaging Content Mix:** Include promotions, behind-the-scenes, and more.
4. **Regular Posting Schedule:** Follow platform-specific posting best practices.
5. **Proactive Engagement:** Start conversations — don't just post and ghost.
6. **Performance Tracking:** Measure results and adjust your strategy accordingly.

What Each Platform is Best For

Instagram & TikTok

- Visuals and photos
- Influencer collaborations
- Short-form video content

Facebook

- Local promotions
- Event promotions
- Customer engagement

X (Twitter)

- Real-time updates
- Customer service



Section 2: What Makes a Strong Strategy

How Your Restaurant Can Define Its Brand Voice & Identity on Social Media

Your restaurant's brand voice isn't just what you say on social media — it's how you say it.

A strong brand voice helps your business stand out, builds trust with customers, and creates consistency across every post, comment, or campaign. A clear, consistent voice helps your restaurant feel more human, more memorable, and more trustworthy online.

Here's how to create yours:

1 — Clear brand positioning

Get super clear on the “why” behind your restaurant's social media. What kind of things will you post about? What “vibe” will you give off? What do you want people to gain from your content?

2 — Consistent brand voice and visuals

Once you understand your “why,” determine how you'll execute it through brand voice and visuals. There's no right or wrong way to do this. Just make sure it's authentically you!

3 — Engaging content mix

Keep your audience engaged by posting a range of different content. Share product promotions, behind-the-scenes looks, opportunities for community engagement... variety is key!

4 — Regular posting schedule

Posting on random channels once in a blue moon won't do anything for your restaurant's online presence. Follow posting recommendations for the channel you're using (more on that later).

5 — Proactive engagement with followers

Don't just wait around for likes and comments. Proactively engage with your followers by asking questions, commenting on their posts, and prompting conversations in Stories.

6 — Tracking key performance metrics

The only way to grow your restaurant's social media? Try things out, check your performance metrics, then use what you've learned to adjust and try again. (More on this later, too!)

Section 3: Social Media Best Practices

Post Frequency

Instagram & TikTok:

3–5x/week

Facebook:

3–4x/week

Stories/Reels:

Daily

Content Types

Seasonal Promos

Behind-the-Scenes

User-Generated
(UGC)

Menu Spotlights

Community Events

Top-Performing Formats

- Short-Form Videos
- High-Quality Food Photography
- Polls/Q&As
- UGC Reposts
- Long-Form Blog-Style Posts

→ **Pro Tip:** If you can't keep up with daily Stories or Reels, try to post at least 3 to 4 a week. You can film multiple Stories or Reels at once (called "batching content") to make things easier!



Section 4: Engagement & Community Building

Using social media is a great way to foster genuine connections and relationships with your restaurant's audience. Here are a few ideas to take your social media connection-building to the next level.

- Respond to DMs and comments
- Share real customer stories
- Partner with local influencers
- Run exclusive giveaways

What strategies encourage UGC?

1. Branded hashtags
2. Social media contests
3. Featuring customer content on restaurant pages

How can restaurants repurpose content across social media platforms without losing authenticity?

1. Turn a blog post into an Instagram carousel
2. Post TikToks on Instagram Reels (or vice versa)
3. Convert customer testimonials into a Facebook post

→ **Pro tip:** ChatGPT is a great tool for quickly repurposing content, especially if you're running your restaurant's social media solo!

How should restaurants handle negative reviews or criticism?

1. Respond professionally and promptly
2. Offer a solution when possible
3. Take the conversation offline for conflict resolution



Section 5: Tracking & Measuring Success

Key Metrics to Watch:

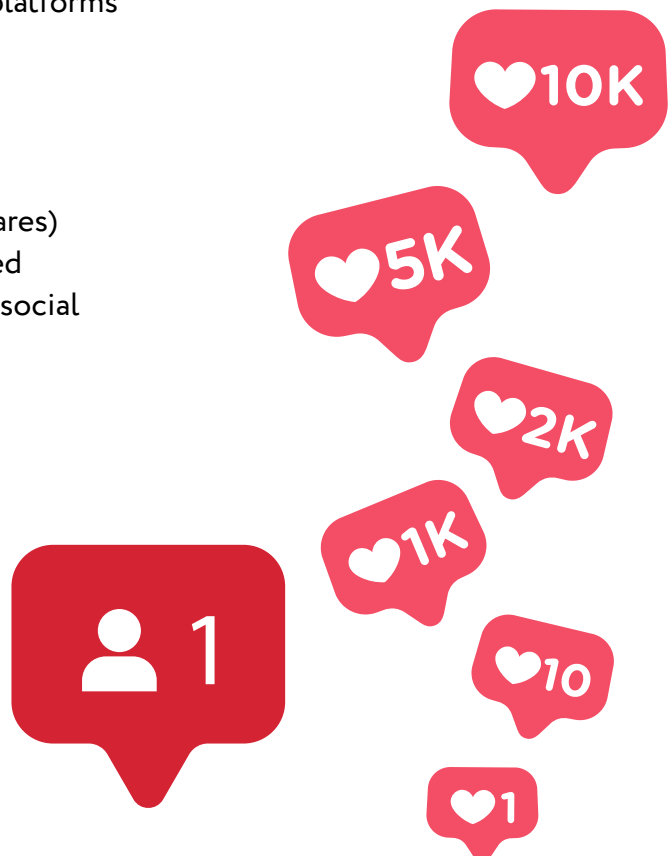
- **Conversion Rate:** the number of people who completed the desired action from your content
- **Sentiment Analysis:** a process that helps you understand how your audience perceives your restaurant
- **Customer Retention:** your restaurant's ability to keep customers around for an extended period of time
- **Repeat Engagement:** your restaurant's ability to get customers who engage consistently/more than just once

Helpful Tracking Tools:

- **Craver** tracks social media-driven mobile app sign-ups
- **Google Analytics** tracks website and campaign tracking
- **Meta Business Suite** shows Facebook and Instagram analytics
- **QR Code** opens from posts and Stories
- **UTM** tracking links in your social media bio
- **Promo code** use from specific social platforms

Proof of Impact:



- Growing engagement (likes, saves, shares)
- Promo codes and QR codes being used
- Increase in mobile/app orders tied to social







Section 6: Common Mistakes & Pro Tips



Mistakes & Solutions

These are the top four mistakes restaurants make when posting on social media (with solutions to help you avoid the mistakes in the first place!).

-  **Mistake:** Posting without a strategy or consistency
-  **Solution:** Prep your social media strategy before you start posting so you can hit the ground running. Pay attention to the suggested post cadences for each social media platform too, because “consistency” means different things on different platforms!

-  **Mistake:** Ignoring comments and messages
-  **Solution:** Responding to comments and messages is part of being on social media. Set up a process to make sure every comment and message gets responded to ASAP. Auto-replies can help with this, but make sure you actually respond, too.

-  **Mistake:** Focusing only on promotions and sales
-  **Solution:** Keep your content varied to maximize your audience’s interest. Sprinkle promotions and sales throughout other content like behind-the-scenes looks, seasonal updates, and UGC. Discounts shouldn’t be all you post about!

-  **Mistake:** Using low-quality visuals
-  **Solution:** If you’ve got the budget for it, you can hire a food photographer to take high-quality photos of your menu items. If you don’t, that’s okay! Follow these DIY food photography tips to take your own high-quality food photos.

Final Thoughts & Tips

Social media success doesn't happen overnight — but with a strong strategy and a little consistency, your restaurant can build a thriving, loyal following.

Here are a few final tips to incorporate into your restaurant social media marketing strategy:

1. Stay agile and adjust to trends without losing brand identity

Social media is a great tool, but it's not a consistent one. Things change on social media *daily*, so be prepared to pivot and adjust to trends as they pop up — because they *will*. Stick to your brand identity and you'll be just fine!

2. Test different content formats to see what resonates most

You wouldn't put a new dish on your menu without testing it out first, right? The same thing applies to your restaurant's social media content. Test things out, see how they perform, then adjust your strategy accordingly.

3. Encourage engagement with questions and interactive content

Most of your restaurant's social media posts will be about your restaurant (*of course*), but don't forget to loop in your audience, too. Encourage engagement with questions and interactive content like Q&As or polls.

4. Use Craver to streamline mobile ordering and track social media-driven sales

Whether your goal is to ramp up mobile ordering or track sales from social media posts, Craver can help you do both. Stay on top of social media analytics with Craver's admin panel to make sure your content always delivers.

About The Author

About Deena McKinley

With over 20 years working with leading QSR and Fast Casual brands, Deena McKinley helps restaurants create data-driven marketing and digital strategies to increase customer engagement and improve financial performance.

Most recently, Deena was Chief Experience Officer for Papa Gino's Pizzeria and D'Angelo Grilled Sandwiches, two iconic New England brands with a combined 150 locations in the Northeast. In her role, she oversaw the digital, strategic marketing, technology, catering, and guest experience teams, leading the digital transformation of these legacy brands through the implementation of a new online ordering platform, app, and loyalty experience.

Previously, Deena was Chief Experience Officer at Mobivity, providing multi-unit restaurants like Subway, Sonic, and Dairy Queen a platform to increase retention, guest engagement, frequency and spend. Deena was also Chief Client Officer at Zimmerman Advertising, working with restaurant clients such as Papa John's Pizza, Boston Market, and Firehouse Subs.

Where to connect with Deena:

- [Website](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Email](#)





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