

**Since restaurants thrive on repeat business, e-mail marketing is an effective way to bring customers back, attract new customers and develop stronger relationships with existing customers. The benefits and advantages of e-mail marketing have driven its explosive growth.**

### Choose a Provider

You have two options in managing your e-newsletter. Both options handle all the legal issues associated with e-mail marketing and allow you to customize and personalize messages.

#### Self Managed Program

- Administered by you or a designated staff member.
- Generally, more affordable; however, you are responsible for the technical aspects, including the execution, design and data input.
- Self managed programs start as low as \$29 per month for an e-newsletter service. This includes hosting of your mailing list newsletter and access to templates and reporting.

#### Out-Sourced Program

- Turning the responsibilities and data input over to a vendor that specializes in this area.
- Managed programs start at \$100 per month and go as high as several hundred dollars per month, based on the features you require or how many e-mail addresses you have on your list. You may also incur fees for custom work and special changes/additions after completion. These will all be explained to you when you consult with the vendor.

### Build a Customer Database

Your customer database is the most valuable marketing tool you can have. Whether you decide to start an e-mail program, or direct mail, increasing frequency of current customers is always more cost-efficient and effective than gaining new customers.

#### Collect information for your database from

- Comment Cards
- Your Website
- VIP Clubs
- Birthday or Anniversary Clubs
- Coupons or Gift Certificates
- Events

#### Storing Information for your Database

- Microsoft Excel
- Managed Programs
- Contact Management Software

### E-Mail Marketing

#### Ask First

Ask for permission. The simplest way to encourage customers to receive your e-mails is to ask them for their e-mail address at practically every touch point you have with them.

#### Avoid Over Communicating

Once you have permission from your customers to send your promotional e-mails, regard the relationship as sacred.

#### Be Timely, or Don't Show Up At All

Inform prospective guests as far out as a month or more before holidays, as people tend to schedule dinners for these types of occasions, well in advance.

#### Dump the Fluff and Build Value

If your information or offer doesn't bring real value to your customers, it just doesn't matter.

#### Enable an Easy Opt-out

Give your customer an easy way to discontinue or opt-out of your newsletter or message. Most e-mail marketing programs will handle this for you.

#### Make it Personal

The e-mail should be addressed to a person's name, not "Dear Valued Customer". Offer something relevant in the subject line to catch their attention.

#### Rivet Your Audience

How can you make it nearly impossible to avoid reading this email? This question applies to many elements of the e-mail: the subject line, the written copy, the visual content, the offer and the call to action. Optimizing each of these elements will result in a greater response rate.

### Newsletter Ideas

- Menu changes and seasonal specialties
- Specials and featured items
- Take-out and catering
- Gift cards / certificates sales
- Introduce new chef or manager
- Birthdays and Anniversaries
- Recipe ideas and wine suggestions