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**2nd Mile Service:
Keeping Service Fresh**

**Emotional
Connections
Marketing:
Perfectly Personal**

Operational Excellence:

**LEAN, MEAN
COOKING
MACHINE**



LEAN, MEAN COOKING MACHINE

The Lean Chicken Entrées system has helped Operators improve Operational Excellence by leveraging new technology and time-honored traditions.

IN THE EARLY DAYS at the Dwarf House, Truett's best tools were his ears. When he heard the crunch of tires in the restaurant's gravel parking lot, he knew it was time to start cooking. The more crunching he heard outside, the more food he planned to serve inside. By the time guests got to the front counter, their food was already being prepared—hot, fresh and fast.

Today, innovative systems are being developed to help Operators deliver food that is as perfectly timed and perfectly cooked as when Truett got his start in the restaurant business.

Lean Into Success

The Lean Chicken Entrées system is one such system. At Bradley Park Drive FSR in Columbus, Georgia, it's helped Operator Todd Kalish turn "cook less, more often" from a passionate mantra into a practical method.

"'Cook less, more often' has always been a big focus for us because we've always wanted to serve really good food," Todd says. "The problem was, we didn't have great tools for forecasting. We knew we had to cook less, more often, but we didn't know what that magic number was."

Lean Chicken Entrées eliminates the guesswork by leveraging historical sales data, in-Restaurant iPads, color-coding and a special two-pan system to help Team Members cook exactly the right amount of chicken at exactly the right time.

"Before, we knew that between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., we needed a lot of food, so we were constantly dropping a lot of Nuggets and filets," Todd says. "Now, we know every few minutes precisely how many filets and Nuggets to cook and have ready."

Todd credits Lean Chicken Entrées with decreasing food waste, increasing sales and improving Operational Excellence at his Restaurant. The key is knowing when to trust the system—and when to listen for the sound of crunching gravel.

Look to Leaders

Since implementing Lean Chicken Entrées, Bradley Park Drive FSR's sales and CEM scores have increased—improvements that Todd attributes to fresher food.

"When we didn't have any data to tell us how much to cook, customers might end up getting chicken that was at or beyond its hold time," he says. "Now, I

feel more confident chicken is fresh when it's served."

Still, having too little chicken can be just as problematic as having too much. "Lean Chicken Entrées is helping our taste scores, but it's also helping our speed of service," says Todd, whose Team Members previously relied on verbal communication to determine when to drop chicken.

If the designated Team Member didn't ask soon enough or loud enough for more chicken when they needed it, guests ended up waiting. "With the two-pan system, we've eliminated all that verbal communication," he says. "There's a constant rotation of chicken, so we're never running out."

At his Restaurant, Todd's found that Lean Chicken Entrées works best when leaders are present to decide when to follow those guidelines or make adjustments. "We always have two leaders in the kitchen: one around the chutes and one around the breading table," he says. "Say a bus full of people pulls up randomly. The leader at the chutes has to call back and say, 'We've got a big crowd coming in,' and the leader at the breading table has



Team Member Lakira Campbell makes fresh salads to fill the kanbans.



Team Member Quintin Johnson at Bradley Park Drive FSR assembles product in the kanban with the appropriate kanban band.

to decide whether to follow the iPad's recommendation of dropping five filets or to bump it up to 10."

When the right balance is struck, the result is quality, not chaos. "Lean Chicken Entrées allows you to work in peace—avoiding the back and forth that can go on in a kitchen—which lets you focus more on Operational Excellence," Todd says. "It's a beautiful thing."

Train Toward Excellence

Operator Dan Curran began implementing LEAN practices in 2010, long before Lean Chicken Entrées' official rollout.

"If a restaurant's food isn't great and crave-able, people aren't going to eat there," says Dan, who operates Harbour View FSR in Suffolk, Virginia. "So our goal from the very beginning of our Restaurant was to serve hot, fresh food to everybody, and that required us to be very LEAN."

It all started with Chick-fil-A® Nuggets. "We had what I considered an unacceptable Nugget gap," Dan says. "I challenged my leadership team to fix it, and the way they approached it was to be very, very conservative in the amount of chicken we were cooking at any given time so they could get a pulse on exactly how much chicken we needed. ... We saw our food gaps fall to the floor. It was phenomenal."

Thanks to their experience closing the Nugget gap, Dan's Team Members already thought LEAN. When Lean Chicken Entrées arrived, they were prepared to act LEAN as well.

"It gave us a better system," Dan says. "You can have a very sharp individual working in the kitchen who always catches the drops and always knows how many filets you need. But what if that person is gone one day and you no longer have their expertise? Lean Chicken Entrées systematizes that knowledge."

The system doesn't replace the human element but enhances it, says Dan, adding that the greatest advantage of Lean Chicken Entrées is its utility as a training tool. "It's a very trainable system, so it allows us to get new people up to speed very, very quickly."

As in Todd's Restaurant, Dan's kitchen leaders decide when to obey the technology and when to overrule it. Dan predicts that having Lean Chicken Entrées as a baseline system will help Operators deliver on Truett's promise of Operational Excellence.

"It's going to help with consistency of the product across the chain," he says, "and consistency is the promise of the brand."

Build Buy-In

At Sawmill Road FSR in Dublin, Ohio, Operator Brian Siktberg immediately understood the value of Lean Chicken Entrées. It took his Team Members a bit longer to see the system's benefits; however, once they got on board, there was no looking back.

"Getting our Team Members to trust the numbers was probably the most difficult part," Brian says. "When the system told them to only cook three

grilled filets at one time, that made them really nervous."

But when his Restaurant's taste of food scores rose significantly within the first week of using Lean Chicken Entrées, there was no denying the reason why.

"Team Members saw a direct connection, and that made them excited," Brian says. "They wanted to keep going because they wanted to keep producing those kinds of numbers."

Although his taste of food scores skyrocketed, speed of service scores dipped somewhat. In the spirit of LEAN operations, Team Members had stopped preparing food in large quantities—which had previously lightened their load during rushes.

"We had to figure out not only how to produce quality food, but also how to do so in a timely manner," says Brian, who realized that having his breader's attention divided between breading and cleaning created a bottleneck effect in the kitchen. "I added a person in the kitchen to specifically help with the machines and the number system so our breader could focus only on breading. That's an investment I believe has paid off because I can see the results in our numbers."

Results like these prove that new innovations won't distract from Truett's legacy of Operational Excellence—they'll ensure it. "As we continue to grow, we need to think about how we can continue to serve quality food on a larger scale," Brian says. "Resources like Lean Chicken Entrées are helping us do that." **CRF**