

**The following thoughts from - Chef Shayne Greenman
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Thoughts on and Embracing change Post Covid – 19

What does this look like for Hospitality professionals?

How can chefs prepare for a future in these days of uncertainty?

One thing is for certain - we won't be going back to business as usual.

I have been using this time reconnecting with professional chefs and alumni students , many of which I have taught from all around the world and hearing their views and observations of impacts and change mechanisms they have been trying in their businesses to alleviate the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions on their operations, so to summarise these-

- As trained professionals we can do several things, we can look on and wait for someone else to implement change – wait and learn from their mistakes.
- We can wait until government legislation makes changes we may not like.
- We can embrace the situation and use this valuable time to take stock of what's working and what hasn't been working in our businesses, evaluating, assessing and using this potential to move in a new direction, a once in a lifetime opportunity to design our own future as hospitality leaders.

So Why haven't we done this before?

- Because we have not had the time – our Hospitality sector is just so busy, and our professional careers have taken over our whole lives.

- People inherently do not like change.
- We have never had the time to really make changes, but we have all been drawn to a grinding halt with Covid, so how do we prepare for a future in these days of uncertainty?
- One thing we all realise – won't be going back to business as usual and that might not be a bad thing – but what might the implications be ongoing – short term and long term?
- Young chefs, young emerging restaurateurs – they hold grave fears they will even be able to sustain a business after this blow – will they even have a job at the end of this?
- We all know how important food is to us – the value of our customers, the value of our industry on tourism and economy – it is the massive commonality of all of our worldwide cultures, food is Hospitality at its true heart.
- Our global recovery from covid will require that we revisit our communications to food so that it can be restored and if you look at times of crisis throughout history then you will discover that people have gathered over dinners, luncheons and the sharing of food and conversation to bring about change food to celebrate – negotiate, discuss debate – we disagree - and we all congregate and share over a plate or several of food.
- One thing for sure, differences are pushed aside when we can share a commonality which is food – it offers trust and knowing into any conversation.
- We will get through Covid – we will recover -we will thrive by resilience again in some point of time; however, it will look totally different than it looked a few weeks ago.
- Restaurants have been known to live on a tight string.
We know we have employees living on a tight string living from pay check to pay check.
- Restaurants live from sale to sale. A day or two without customers trade we can get by, one week without customers it

gets tough but we can just get by. Two to three weeks it's difficult to survive and up to a month and we are closing our doors. That is the reality of it. Any other industry sectors can survive up to 6 months or more, we can't say we are that lucky living from fork to mouth.

- 5 – 7 % net profit just to survive. How do we do it? At the same time be profitable enough to pay our employees well and when a storm hits, we can wear it.
- Re-evaluating your concept. We cannot be open for seating but can do take away, it a trickle to tide some over but it is a model which will have traction in the future years. If we do that, we must upscale what that experience is - We don't just sell foods we sell experiences. That is the feel-good part about what we do and most of us really give our all for that to occur.
- Throwing food in a bag is not a great experience, how can we convert it into a feel-good experience whilst keeping our integrity? Have any of you ever visited a Parisian Patisserie? I am talking about the packaging modelling what it looks like and how it makes you feel – you feel valued and very special of course.
- Service will have to evolve. What is this going to look like?
- Critical to restaurants is loyalty - every customer is important
- Repeat customers are the most critical - how will we regain that loyalty through trust – through concept change through the way we package price and market things and Communicate with our guest and customer.
- If we cannot recreate that loyalty which has taken us so many years to develop – We are all going to have a really hard time of it.
- We will need to look at number of tables we have in a restaurant, separate the seating so there is safe distancing how do we continue to create that customer engagement when a

wait staff comes to your table fully kitted out with gloves and a mask?

- How does that feel and what does that look like? Will we have more counter service? Maybe there is less of that technical wait staff involved and the customer picks up their own food from a counter in a wall.
- How after this can we return to a Hostess at front door and reservation through open table, we will need to consider safe spaces for our customers and staff.
- Here in Australia we have a huge percentage of restaurants and cafes that are privately owned. They do not have the endless financial resources to survive this challenging time.
- And it is from this recent pool of restauranteurs we are seeing the new energy of our culinary industry – what I mean by that is they're the chefs experimenting with techniques and ingredients and evolving our direction in food here. Pushing us to improve and do things differently. So, will that impetus be lost? They have invested their life, heart, and soul in some instances into their small busy business models.
- Will we just cross our finger and hope for the best? And go back to how it was – which is going to be highly unlikely anyway.
- Or we need to start thinking about change. Good – Better - Different. Like I said in my last address – this is a war and if we don't have strategies, we won't win it.
- Our future as chefs and cooks begins with the decisions we make today, the initiatives and strategies we start to implement and we don't have time to delay or wait for our governments to make these decisions for us – name an instance where they have offered help to us chefs before?

What can we do immediately?

- The first over riding issue is our relationship of fear and trust with our customers- for decades our industry has strived to form a level of trust between an establishment and their customer, these days there are very few guests walking through our doors fearful that they are not going to be looked after and treated in a safe manner the food they eat and the relationships they make with the staff wont make them sick.
- We've developed this high level of trust so people from all walks of life have an assurance that they are going to have a high level of hospitality, this has come from Chefs high level of training and understanding of implementation of high skill set process.
- That may not be the case in our immediate future – our perception that we will just be able to reopen our doors and things will get back to normal – is ill founded. Its going to be another process of taking time to build up that trust.

Thoughts on solutions –

- The overwhelming feedback from global culinary educators viewpoint – we have a highly regulated well developed primary food safety legislation- at its core The objectives of the Act are to: ensure food for sale is safe and suitable for human consumption, to prevent misleading conduct in relation to the sale of food.
- I am currently a practicing chef in Queensland and I have observed We have relatively random food safety inspections – in one year 4 inspections, the next just 1.
- Were going to see far more stringent food safety and sanitation requirements and regulation soon on a global scale.

- The assumption will be that this will be legislated through government and flow on down to us practitioners.
- They will demand a lot more from us – so will we need to retrain or upskill?
- Operators will need to be very proactive – it is needed, and it is good for us.
- We can all agree those things should happen.

What does it look like?

- It is a good position to be in as a professional chef to be able to say we need to implement this now – we will implement this even if it is not mandated. It gets back to the customer trust thing we are proving that we have the customers best interest at heart = Hospitality.

What it could mean?

- A higher level of cleanliness , sanitation practices – for instance washing and sanitising, dealing with everything that comes through the delivery door, that is produce, recycling cardboard and storing it well away from our preparation areas preventing any cross contamination and plastic cartons, removing and then storing product in our own sanitized containers, really looking at cross contamination clinically, we have all been highly trained to identify hazards and the covid – 19 virus as we now know can settle on surfaces and be introduced via contact so that is another consideration.
- Do we have a separate receptions area with a sink and treatment area as further infrastructure we need to consider when designing our restaurants?
- Face masks for all staff, a greater use of hand wash and sanitation stations with a greater need for disposable gloves for

kitchen staff and service personnel also. Can we implement some of these things before it is mandated and implemented? Before the cost is even greater?

- Temperature Checks and body checks for all staff? this is happening with my students working in hospitals and institutions within the state now, and that's for all staff including kitchen staff, perhaps a more regulated health check of all staff with documentation – a statement of wellness doctors' certificate
- We are implementing this in our Educational Campuses all over Queensland at the beginning of each term.
- If we have the capacity to implement these things now it is a proactive approach we can implement. With a guarantee of trust for all.
- And then tell the public about it – tell our customers we are ensuring their trust – their safety. We can do that, most of us have twitter – Facebook and Instagram, most of the restaurants with my students are all very proactive on these social media engagement platforms. They're one of the best Low-cost ways to advertise.
- We need to minimise the fear that people have, it is going to be in our hands to do that.
- We are all in this together – we need to return to realignment with all the stakeholders in the system.
- From our discussions - one of the critical areas taking a direct hit now is our distribution system.
 - Farmer – processor
 - Processor – wholesaler
 - Wholesaler – delivery company

- All throughout the system there needs to be a new alignment in eliminating the fear, a flow on further up the line - not just for chefs to look at.
- Restauranteurs have been known to come into an area a grungy lower socio economic suburb– gentrify the area with their business then Landlords and stakeholders are known to pump cash out of a business but not very good at investing back into the business, they are known to jack up the rent and so how they treat their long standing tenants for restaurants and cafes – will need to be reassessed. they see business growth as a chance to hike their prices right up that needs negotiation for change in thinking.
- Agriculture farmers. Product needed – product demand how do they manage it and get it to the market?
- Food processors – wholesalers - Distributors will have to reassess their food safety handling and sanitation practices. They will need to be more stringent in their control systems. But simplifying expensive distribution channels
- We've been spoilt – we've been able to get anything we want any time of the year as long as we were willing to pay hiked up prices- that creates a huge strain on distribution. If the products I want come from Europe – then think of the steps involved from getting that product to my storeroom? But if I'm purchasing locally then I'm circumventing the need for pressure in that distribution service
- Media, Restaurants and employees need to be onboard to make a change
- Chefs will need to Design new menus- learn to do more with less. Educated in what are we Selling? How was it grown how was it handled – does it have a safe story?

- What is the concept of our restaurant?
 - How many steps are involved?
 - How many ingredients are involved?
 - How much handling is involved-
 - Before it gets on the plate?
- There are a lot of drivers for change here – one being
- We have had an extremely difficult time of getting employees in the beginning so how are we going to get them back?
- If you are a chef now and your career has been paused– no income etc, you would be thinking -is this a business – a profession I really want to return to? Fear is not only from customers – it's your staff too, ensuring trust with your employees has been a big issue in our industry and it can make or break a business as we have seen in more recent times several accounts of staff wage theft and gross neglect. How can we bang on about how good our industry is when we turn a blind eye and don't offer some reform of how our staff are treated?
- An eyeopener ! and how do we attract skilled staff, newcomers, and cooks to our industry in this current situation? - I ask you to Look at it through the eyes of an employee?.
- From my generation we accepted that things were normal , this was the way things were done – we accepted we needed to go through an apprenticeship or a traineeship – it would take a considerable amount of time to garner an acceptable income, shut up and work our way up the ranks from almost what seemed just pennies when we began to an income which can sustain us. No great benefits were even considered early on in our careers we had to earn it. 12 – 14-hour days were the norm.

- We accepted all those things. It was not necessarily right – it was just the way it was and still is in most cases.
- The current generation is a lot less to want to agree to that and they are correct in doing that.
- This happens to be our one great opportunity to reimagine how we are going to approach that employee and others that follow.
- Maybe its simply a case of where our menus reflect a lot less steps, not to take away from the quality but the Less steps – a little bit less staffing required. And the staff that we do have – we treat better. We respect their skill set – we invest in them; we pay them well. We give them reasonable benefit and so on. Incentivise their career and better place our business to survive and evolve and stabilise. Should we ever encounter some similar circumstance in the future – we ensure resilience because we know what works and what doesn't.

'I am Chef ! – I am willing and able to adjust'

Some helpful resources and reading available:

World chefs Blog:

Podcasts:

World Chefs TV:

E – Events:

Website: <https://www.worldchefs.org/world-news/df5caeaa5374f5df630399ec5d15f2eec0f54ceb>

**The content of this document are thoughts - Others may agree or disagree with statements of thought and opinions here in , the content is taken from many discussions from Professional chefs around the World.*

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