



**COVID-19  
RESOURCES**



## **Using Instagram to stay connected during COVID-19**

If you're not on Instagram, you don't exist. That's the hard truth. The social media landscape has quickly become the dominant marketing tool for restaurants to connect globally and directly with existing and potential customers. No biggie, there are just around 1 billion of them.

The "gram" user, combined with Instagram algorithms, continues to challenge restaurants to push creative limits, in order to achieve Follows, LIKES and Comments.

What are some social media tactics your restaurant can employ to develop impactful social campaigns?

## **START WITH A MONTHLY PLAN**

Take the time to plan out your key messages and posts for the upcoming month by developing a social media content calendar. Your goal should be to support and highlight initiatives within your restaurant operation that set your brand apart, while reinforcing key brand messages.

## **PUT YOUR BEST POST FORWARD**

During COVID-19, Instagram can be a powerful tool to stay in touch with your loyal customers, to let them know what you're doing:

- how you've changed your menu for takeout and delivery
  - strategies you've put in place to retain staff
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- gift cards and other loyalty promotions to keep customers engaged while your restaurant is closed to eat-in dining

## TIMES TO POST

Social media reporting suggests that the social guest is most engaged in the early mornings, lunch and dinner hours, and later in the evening. These moments tend to be when we are taking a "break," which results in spikes in social media activity. Instagram for businesses also provides effective reporting on your social guests' most engaged days and times per day. Utilize this data to identify the optimal days and times of when to post.

## #HASHTAG IT!

Hashtags can make or break the effectiveness of your content strategy by how relevant they are to the content you are posting. Digital users can follow hashtags to collect content on their feed that is of interest to them. The goal is to use hashtags that will place your content on the feeds of your target guests. Popular hashtags are identified in the "TAGS" search bar on Instagram by the number of times they have been used in a post.

Follow these five top tips to develop a list of hashtags relevant to your brand content:

1. **Research what competitors and the foodie community are using as popular hashtags.**
2. **Identify 30-50 hashtags that align with your menu offerings and location, and are popular, and reference them selectively within your content calendar.**
3. **Post hashtags that match the photography or video content you are sharing.**
4. **Post the hashtags as a "comment" to your post, versus within the post.**
5. **Post between 15 and 30 hashtags from your list per post.**

As you monitor the effectiveness of your social campaign, be aware of spikes in your engagement when certain hashtags are used in your posted content, to identify your top-performing hashtags.

## UTILIZE APPS

Developers are launching innovative useful social media content editing, organizing and publishing apps on a monthly basis to support small businesses in managing digital campaigns. We recommend downloading a few different apps to test them out and understand which will be most effective in supporting your social media goals.

Using Instagram and Facebook to build a community of engaged brand advocates can seem intimidating, until you realize what makes them work. Implement these tactics to see what a powerful tool social media campaigns can be for your restaurant business.

*By Kate Engineer*

*Kate Engineer's agency, Fervid Communications, was recently acquired by The Fifteen Group Inc., a restaurant consulting company with offices in Toronto and Vancouver.*

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