



# How Retailers Can Rival Restaurants for Delivery



**Grocery stores claim their piece of the off-premise pie**  
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Off-premise dining continues to be a big trend right now. According to Technomic's 2018 *Takeout & Off-Premise Consumer Trend Report*, about one-third of consumers are ordering carryout more often than they did in 2016, and 21% are ordering delivery more often. More recently, retailers—much like restaurants—are learning that many of their customers prefer to stay at home and order in rather than go out to a restaurant or cook a meal themselves. In fact, 18% of consumers say they're ordering delivery from convenience stores more often, and 30% say they're ordering grocery store-prepared foods for delivery more.

To better capitalize on that desire, retailers have been working hard to ensure they're offering delivery, too—and not just delivered groceries but full meal delivery from the deli department.

For some retailers, this can feel daunting because offering meal delivery without the right equipment to meet demand can cause backups in order production, long wait times and an overwhelmed kitchen staff. But all of these are issues that can be easily mitigated by properly outfitting the kitchen. To be best prepared, retailers should have a delivery menu and strategy set in place so kitchens can accurately plan for the new kitchen operation.



**77%**  
of consumers say they order carryout or delivery for dinner



## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OFF-PREMISE?

Technomic's report notes that 60% of restaurant operators say they are receiving more takeout orders than they did in 2016. But it's not just restaurants who have seen an uptick in delivery and carryout orders—grocery delivery is up too. According to data from Statista, the Instacart app grew 218% from February to mid-March in 2020. Additionally, Technomic finds that delivery is increasingly popular compared to carryout, with 38% of consumers saying it's more convenient to order food for delivery than for carryout.

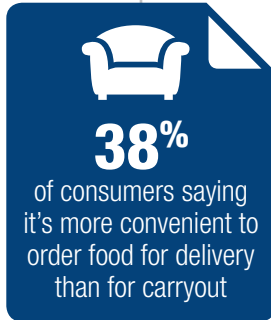
Lunch and dinner are the most popular meals consumers order for delivery or takeout. Seventy-seven percent of consumers say they order carryout or delivery for dinner, while 71% order it for lunch and 50% for breakfast or brunch. Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack occasions, as well as late-night meal/snack orders, also are significant, with about one-third of consumers saying they order food for those times at least once a month. Successful off-premise operators plan for this increased demand by knowing when the big rushes occur and establishing a set menu.



## CONSUMER INTEREST IN DELIVERY FROM GROCERY

According to Technomic, about a quarter of consumers say they regularly use grocery delivery services (at least once every three months). Of those, 71% say they would add a ready-to-eat, prepared food meal to their order at least occasionally. This means that consumers have confidence in grocery stores to provide great-tasting food and are open to delivery of items they already purchase in-store. By expanding delivery options, retailers would likely see an increase in delivery orders.

Beyond ordering meals for themselves, consumers also turn to grocery stores for delivered catering orders. If they'd feel comfortable picking up a tray of sandwiches and a few sides to go along with it, it stands to reason that they'd be willing and likely to order hot foods, such as fried chicken, pizzas and paninis as well. These items can be easily prepared for delivery orders. For stores, there's a significant opportunity in expanding the types of foods offered for delivery—yet expansion also calls for using the right equipment to ensure great service.



## USING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Grocery stores that sell hot foods to in-store shoppers may not have the capacity for production, which makes expanding to delivery offerings difficult. However, with combi ovens, which take up little floor space and can produce a lot of food quickly, retailers can feel confident about expansion.

Combi ovens have a small footprint and provide a wide range of cooking capabilities, allowing retailers to replace traditional cooking equipment that can clutter a modestly sized kitchen. The intelligent cooking functionalities let retailers prepare for their bakery, hot bars, delis and delivery efficiently.

With the RATIONAL combi technology, retailers can prepare an array of foods simultaneously with the combi oven's intelligent cooking functions. For example, the combi oven's intelligence allows a kitchen team to prepare a variety of items at the same time. The iCombi Pro will show which items can be prepared in the same cooking environment. When an item is done, the buzzer will go off, the level will light up in the iCombi Pro and flash on the display panel. Once opening the door, times will adjust for the remaining food items to ensure the very best outcome for the food. This feature also allows for "rolling" items, meaning once one batch of cookies is done, you can prepare another batch of cookies and receive the same results. This functionality nearly eliminates the potential for user error and ensures perfectly cooked food every time. Better yet, kitchen staff can work on other items or assist customers without constantly monitoring the food.

Employees can also get a head start on tomorrow's items, even after they close-up shop. Because the combi oven has overnight cooking capability, the kitchen staff can prepare longer-cooking food items like hams, roasts, black beans and more without monitoring. The slow cooking process ensure that meat becomes succulently tender and beautifully juicy. Once the meat is ready, it can be held for many hours without any loss in quality.



## PLANNING THE LABOR FOR DELIVERY

While traditional cooking methods may involve extensive training, combi ovens don't require lengthy training and onboarding programs. Employees with any skill set can successfully and confidently operate these ovens. With reduced training time, retailers can worry less about staff turnover. New employees can learn the processes quickly, so the high levels of customer service and sales volumes continue.

As far as who should deliver the food to customers once they order it, there are benefits and drawbacks of both using third-party delivery providers and designating on-site staff for the job. There are third-party options that can help if a store doesn't want to hire dedicated delivery drivers. Delivery providers—DoorDash and Postmates—currently deliver for large grocery retailers such as Jewel and Trader Joe's. Other stores, such as H-E-B, offer delivery from store employees. It comes down to whether a store wants to outsource the driving or not. If outsourcing, retailers should establish appropriate expectations and protocols to preserve food quality and safety and their brand.



## ALERTING SHOPPERS DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE

Once stores are ready to go with delivery, it's time to spread the word. Retailers can showcase their meal delivery options on third-party delivery apps as well as their store app. They can also post signage in-store, which can lead to word-of-mouth advertising, and send out direct mail or feature the service in the store's weekly ad. No matter how a store promotes delivery, the combi oven is ready to help with the increased workload. Its large capacity and quick cook times mean that even if stores get a rush of new business from delivery—and it's likely they will—staff won't scramble to fulfill orders. To learn more about combi ovens and how they can help stores take advantage of the boom in off-premise dining, [visit rational-online.com](http://visit.rational-online.com).

