



How 'eating out' may change, post lockdownIllustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

Post Lockdown, Will Our 'Eating Out' Experience Change?

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[Food](#)

As we slowly ease up on the rules of isolation and lockdown, we are also preparing ourselves for an external world that is going to be very different from the pre-COVID world. Everything is changing - the way we work, the way kids attend school, how we travel and even, how we will eat out.

The restaurant & hospitality industry is one of the worst hit by the pandemic, and as cities and towns slowly re-open and limp towards normalcy, the restaurant business too will have to adapt and evolve, to a new normal



POST LOCKDOWN, WILL OUR ‘EATING OUT’ EXPERIENCE CHANGE?

Will our eating out experience change? Illustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

Even after lockdown is considerably eased, till a time that there is a vaccine and a cure for COVID-19, social distancing norms are likely to become a part of our everyday lives, and restaurants will have to work with that. The other major fear that restaurants and takeaway joints may have to actively work to quell would be the consumer’s fear of eating out. Globally, many restaurants have started experimenting with temporary solutions, in line with protocols issued to creating completely new, alternative experiences for diners. Tracking industry insights from India and around the world, **Thinking Hats Consumer Insights**, has predicted a range of new trends that are likely to emerge in the restaurant industry.



SOCIAL DISTANCING & EATING OUT

- Restaurants likely to follow social distancing for the foreseeable future
- They will also have to address consumer fear of eating out
- From temporary solutions to alternative experiences, our eating out experience may change altogether

Social Distancing and Eating Out Illustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

Ghost Kitchens

Many of these already exist, Ghost Kitchens or Cloud Kitchens, are basically restaurants that focus solely on takeaways. Currently, with restaurants not being allowed to open for seating and serving, most of them are focussing only on delivery, to sustain some form of business. Many may continue this model, perhaps partially, even after the lockdown eases, to be able to adhere to social distancing norms that may put a restriction on number of customers that maybe allowed in a restaurant at any given time.



GHOST KITCHENS

- Kitchens that focus exclusively on takeaways
- Order & pay online – keeping the experience virtually contactless
- Low investment costs, likely higher margins

Ghost Kitchens Illustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

DIY Meal Kits

Another trend, that may gain big, is DIY Meal Kits. These are kits, that are prepared by restaurants, measuring out the ingredients for their signature dishes, that can be put together by customers at home. This would allow the restaurants to use their existing inventory and allow the customers to have a unique experience of preparing gourmet meals at home with friends and family.



DIY MEAL KITS

- Use existing inventory to create customised meal kits
- Each ingredient is measured to proportion, customers put it together at home
- Local restaurants & chains have already started developing & delivering these kits

DIY Meal Kits Illustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

Together, But At a Distance

And when restaurants do open up, we may finally get to hang out with our friends and go on those dates, and do everything we normally would when we went out to eat, except through a barrier, and possibly sitting a bit further away than usual. Restaurants in many countries have already created barriers using plexiglass or plastic between diners on the same table. Viral images of a restaurant in Amsterdam that has created ‘Glasshouse’ like structures, to give diners privacy, while also helping maintain social distance from other tables, could be seen a lot more in the future.



TOGETHER,
BUT AT
A 1.5 METER
DISTANCE

- Plexiglass barriers between diners at the table
- Glasshouse like structures to maintain distancing regulation
- Plexiglass barriers at takeout & cash counters

Barriers at tables to maintain social distancingIllustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

Naked Kitchens

These are kitchens that operate in full view of the diners. Quite a few restaurants already have these kitchens integrated into their dining experience, but these may also become popular, as diners may be more worried about the hygiene standards being practiced at various restaurants. Quite a few restaurants have also started ‘live-streaming’ their kitchen, in order to assure customers of highest standards of cleanliness.



NAKED KITCHENS

- Kitchens in plain view of the diners
- To show that highest level of hygiene is maintained
- Some restaurants have also started ‘live-streaming’ their kitchens

Naked Kitchens Illustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

Contactless Dining

Expect more and more restaurants to insist on reservations, to avoid queuing at their doors and reduce overall wait time. QR-Code generated menus that you can access on your own phones, to avoid touching a physical copy of the menu that would have passed many hands and completely switching to non-cash payments, may be some of the practices that restaurants are likely to adopt.



- Designed to reduce waiting time & bare minimum human contact
- Online reservation, QR-code generated menus & non-cash payments

Contactless Dining Illustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

And finally, in line with what our Prime Minister also advocated, restaurants may opt to create more seasonal menus, using freshest, local produce to not just cut down on the cost of transportation, but also to help local farmers. Farm to Table experiences are also likely to increase.

The restaurant business, like all of us, will come to a new world and will have to navigate a landscape that has new demands and challenges. But mitigating these challenges may also lead to new, unique and creative ways in which we may get to experience how we eat at restaurants.



GO LOCAL

- Farm to table experience may increase
- Restaurants may use more seasonal, local products
- Will save restaurants transportation costs

Go Local Illustration: Aroop Mishra/The Quint

<https://www.thequint.com/lifestyle/food/covid-19-impact-will-our-eating-out-experience-change>