

# BOOST OFF-PREMISE CONVENIENCE STORE FOODSERVICE SALES

WITH EQUIPMENT UPGRADES

**I**n many markets, convenience stores are competing with and winning share from quick service restaurants and supermarkets. Some, such as Bu-gee's, Wawa and Parker's, have a loyal fan base hooked on specific, and often regional, prepared food offerings. In fact, some customers visit c-stores specifically to buy certain food items, even if they're not stopping to fill up their tanks.

It's not surprising that the roadside competition for share of stomach is heating up. America is obsessed with convenience stores, and they are becoming bigger,

brighter and nicer. Food & Wine magazine recently published a list of America's Best Convenience Stores that ranked c-store cuisine. It can be easy to forget that you're eating at a gas station, or food that came from one.

Like their competitors, c-stores have struggled against and benefited from COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. As consumers seek safety, they are prioritizing pick-up, take out, and delivery, and including their favorite c-store in the mix. However, with all the options available, providing excellent food and efficient service

is the only way to entice customers to keep coming back for more.

Still, c-store retailers need to find ways to provide high-quality food while keeping back-of-house work fast and efficient. As they navigate the fluctuating foodservice landscape, retailers need solutions that are easy to execute, while enabling them to provide the great food their customers expect.



## DELIVERING ON QUALITY

Consumer expectations for c-store foodservice quality were already high pre-pandemic. Many retailers rose to the occasion with fresh, made-to-order items that consumers loved. No matter how the consumer orders—in-store or online—quality is critically important. High-quality food gives consumers an incentive to order from the c-store amid the myriad eateries from which they have to choose. In addition, with more consumers working from home and looking for quick meals, retailers can take advantage of the rising demand for off-premise service.

Many retailers identify both off-premise service and food quality as two of the most significant factors determining future growth for a c-store foodservice program.

Delivering on fresh, fast c-store foodservice sometimes is easier said than done. As retailers face challenges in navigating the unpredictable foodservice landscape, many are seeking profit-generating, future-proofed solutions. Upgrading kitchen equipment can quickly address this need, and prepare a retailer for future growth.



# 53%

of operators expect the increases in delivery, pickup and mobile ordering to be a long-term effect of the pandemic. According to the results from CSP's COVID-19 Operator Survey

## CHALLENGES SPARK INNOVATION

While some c-stores already established off-premise sales pre-pandemic, more retailers are looking to join this lucrative option or improve upon their execution.

Off-premise service is not merely a passing trend: Increased demand for fresh, made-to-order meals through these channels will likely maintain momentum as pandemic-related restrictions are relaxed.

To accommodate this growing consumer preference, improving and streamlining operations is a worthwhile investment—for both short-term and long-term increases in profits. The key doesn't lie in offering off-premise service; the quality of a c-store's freshly prepared food selection is essential to success. Consumer ratings in delivery apps and commentary on social media both drive and deflate off-premise sales.





## UPGRADING EQUIPMENT

Incorporating state-of-the-art technology into c-store kitchen operations can solve the foodservice puzzle. Technology can help increase sales volume, serve new and growing channels and improve food quality—all without adding complexity and labor for the back of house operations.

Ease of use remains a priority, too. To truly streamline prep work in the kitchen, upgraded equipment should be easy to operate, program and install into existing store layouts. Additionally, the staff must immediately feel comfortable cooking with the new equipment and require minimal training. If there's a button to push with a picture of the food to be made on it, that's the best way to reduce user error.

In short, c-store foodservice equipment ought to be as intuitive as it is functional. That's where RATIONAL comes in.

# 43%

of c-store foodservice operators say that made-to-order items are incredibly likely to play a role in their future foodservice operations, and ...

# 42%

say the same of carryout. Many also expect to offer mobile ordering and delivery—either in-house or through a third-party service, according to CSP's 2020 State of C-Store Foodservice Survey.

## SOLUTIONS FROM RATIONAL

RATIONAL products, including the iCombi Pro®, are the ultimate kitchen multitaskers.

The iCombi Pro offers one of the most flexible, most cost-effective cooking solutions available for commercial kitchens today, with capabilities for grilling, frying, roasting, baking and so much more. From dependable breakfast sandwiches, chicken, bread, buns and bakery goods to craveable pizza, chicken, hot dogs, brisket and even store-made beef jerky, the iCombi Pro quickly and consistently prepares high-quality food.

The self-monitoring cooking processes, exceptional ease of use and self-cleaning capabilities allow employees to focus their time and energy on providing excellent service. Despite fluctuations throughout the market and unprecedented growth among new channels, consumers' expectations remain the same. They want great food and great service at a great price. Solutions from RATIONAL help make it possible while increasing gross and net profits.

To learn more about how RATIONAL products can boost sales and improve off-premise c-store foodservice—both now and post-pandemic—visit [rational-online.com](https://www.rational-online.com)

