



E-BOOK · A HAPPYCHEF GUIDE

The Ultimate Guide to Restaurant Tech & Data

The goal of restaurant technology was never screens — it's giving the room its host back. Here's the stack that earns its keep.

Thibault Van de Sompele Founder of HappyChef
built with and for restaurant owners



E-BOOK

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A HAPPYCHEF GUIDE

The Ultimate Guide to Restaurant Tech & Data

Add up the hours: reservations retyped from voicemail, the same "do you have a table on Friday?" answered twenty times, opening hours updated in four different places. For most independent restaurants that is ten hours a week or more — a full shift, worked by the most expensive employee in the building: you. The frustrating part? Every one of those tasks was solved years ago.

This guide builds the stack that solves them — without gadget worship, and without losing the warmth that fills your room. A website that turns craving into a booking in under a minute. Guest data that works like a memory instead of a liability. Automation for everything repetitive, AI only where it genuinely helps, ordering channels that don't cheapen a fine-dining brand, and the five numbers that tell you the whole machine is running. One rule throughout: every tool pays rent or leaves. First up: the single page every guest checks before they trust you.



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THE SHORT VERSION

The short version

- 01** **Your website has one job — the booking** a button above the fold, the menu as text (not PDF), and three-second load on mobile.

- 02** **Guest data is your quietest asset** collected at booking, GDPR-clean, and turned into recognition and reactivation.

- 03** **Automate the repetitive 80%** confirmations, reminders, waitlists, review asks — and keep humans for hospitality.

- 04** **AI answers what doesn't need you** a phone and inbox assistant that books tables mid-service beats voicemail every night.

- 05** **Run the house on 5 numbers** occupancy, no-show rate, RevPASH, repeat share and prime cost — one dashboard, reviewed weekly.

1

FRONT DOOR

A website with one job: turn craving into booking

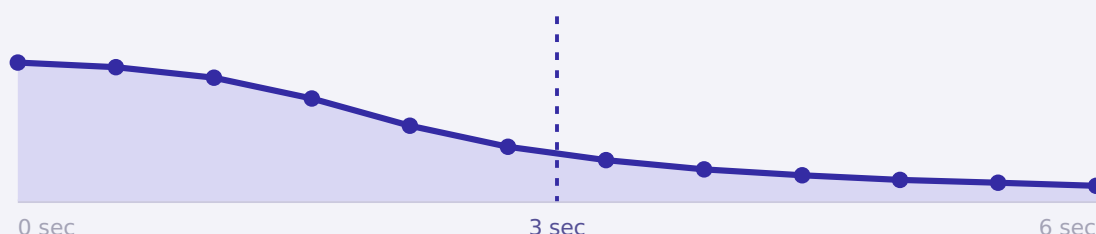
— KEY INSIGHT

A restaurant website converts when it answers four questions in seconds — what's the food like, can I book now, where are you, what does it cost — with a booking button above the fold, the menu as crawlable text, real photography and sub-3-second mobile load. Everything else is decoration.

FRONT DOOR

FIG. 01

A slow site loses the booking



< 3 sec every extra second of load time quietly drops bookings — aim for under three seconds

Your website has one moment to live: someone, probably on a phone, probably tonight-minded, deciding whether the craving becomes a booking. Most restaurant sites lose that moment to an autoplay video, a PDF menu pinching open, and a "contact" page where a booking button should be.

The conversion anatomy

- **Book, above the fold, on every page.** The visitor who must hunt for the button is a visitor your neighbour converts. Link it straight into your **reservation system** — never a contact form that promises a reply "within 48 hours".

- **Menu as text, not PDF.** Text menus load instantly, work on phones, update in minutes — and they're how Google learns you serve turbot, which is how "turbot restaurant near me" finds you.
- **Photography that tells the truth beautifully:** six excellent photos (room at golden hour, three signature plates, faces, the door) beat sixty mediocre ones — the craft is in [the marketing guide](#).
- **Speed and basics:** sub-3-second mobile load, hours and address in the footer of every page, no music, no splash screens. The full checklist is in [designing a restaurant website](#).

If maintaining this yourself sounds like a second job — it is; that's why a [managed restaurant website](#) tied to your booking and menu data exists as a product.

DO THIS TONIGHT

Open your site on your phone, on mobile data, and time three things: seconds to load, taps to a confirmed booking, and whether tonight's menu is readable without pinching. Each failure is bookings leaking — and each is fixable this week.

GOING DEEPER

A professional website is your restaurant's digital business card.

Potential guests often judge your business based on your website before they even step through the door. In this comprehensive guide we share everything you need to know about designing an effective **hospitality** website that turns visitors into bookings.

In an era where guests search online before deciding where to eat, your website is no longer an optional extra. It's an essential part of running your business that directly affects your revenue and image. A well-designed website can make the difference between a full house and empty tables.

Why is a good website so important?

The numbers don't lie and show the importance of a strong online presence:

- **70-80%** of guests check your website first before booking
- A visitor forms a first impression of your website within **0.05 seconds**
- **38%** leave a website if the design is unappealing or outdated
- Mobile users abandon a site if it takes longer than **3 seconds** to load
- **57%** of consumers won't recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile website

A bad website literally means lost customers. Every visitor who drops off because your site is too slow or doesn't look professional is a potential guest going to the competition. A good website, on the other hand, offers countless benefits:

- Immediately builds trust and conveys professionalism
- Attracts new guests via Google search results
- Makes **online** booking effortless and lowers the barrier
- Answers questions before guests need to call, which saves time
- Sets you apart from competitors in a competitive market
- Works 24/7 as your digital host that never sleeps

The 8 essential elements of a hospitality website

1. A prominent booking button

The most important action on your website is making a booking. This is what everything revolves around. Make sure this process is as easy and intuitive as possible:

- Place an eye-catching button in the navigation that stays visible while scrolling
- Use a contrasting colour that immediately draws attention
- Make the text action-oriented: "Book now", "Reserve a table" or "Book directly"
- Link directly to your **online reservation system** without unnecessary intermediate steps
- Repeat the button on every page and at the bottom of the content
- Also add a booking button in the mobile navigation

Every extra click between visitor and booking costs you conversions. Research shows that each additional step in the booking process can lead to up to 20% fewer conversions. Make it as simple as possible.

Pro tip: Test your booking process yourself regularly. Also ask friends or family to try it and give feedback on where they got stuck or hesitated.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the absolute must-haves on a restaurant website?

Menu with prices, an online booking button, opening hours, address with directions, contact details, and photos of the interior and dishes. Everything a guest needs to decide and book.

How do I make my restaurant website rank well in Google?

Use your business name, location and cuisine type consistently throughout the site. Add structured data (LocalBusiness schema), ensure fast loading times, and collect fresh Google reviews regularly.

How fast should my restaurant website load?

Under 3 seconds. Google penalises slow sites in search results. Use optimised images (WebP format), fast hosting, and avoid heavy plugins that increase load time.

2

THE ASSET

Guest data: the asset hiding in your reservation list

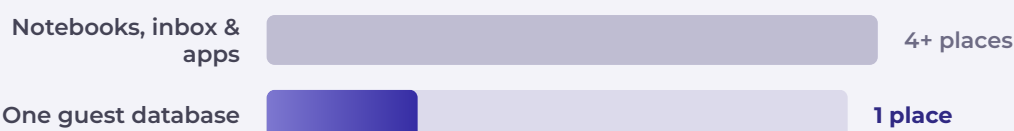
— KEY INSIGHT

Every booking already captures name, contact, party size, dates and preferences. Structured into guest profiles — with GDPR-clean consent, purpose and retention rules — that data becomes recognition, reactivation and smarter forecasting. Scattered across notebooks and inboxes, it's a liability instead.

THE ASSET

FIG. 02

One guest record beats scattered tools



1 pull bookings, notes and contacts into one privacy-clean profile per guest

Big platforms spend fortunes to learn what you learn free every night: who dines, with how many, drinking what, celebrating what. The difference is they structure it. Most restaurants leave the same gold scattered across a reservation book, a WhatsApp thread and the maître d's memory — unusable, and one inspection away from a problem.

From data to advantage

- **Recognition:** **guest profiles** surface preferences and history at the next booking — the loyalty engine of **the guest experience guide**.
- **Reactivation:** "guests not seen in 90 days" becomes a monthly list and a personal note — consistently the highest-ROI message a restaurant sends.

- **Forecasting:** booking curves predict covers, covers predict prep and rosters — chapter 3 of the **staffing guide** runs on this.

GDPR as craft, not fear

The European rules, mapped for restaurants in **guest data & GDPR**, reduce to four habits: **collect** only what serves the guest (a birthday helps; a passport number doesn't), **ask** consent properly at booking (pre-ticked boxes are illegal; a clear marketing opt-in is fine), **protect** access (one system with logins, not an exported spreadsheet on three laptops), and **honour** deletion requests within a month. Done right, privacy is hospitality: "we remember your allergies, and only what you'd want us to" is a trust sentence, not a compliance cost.

DO THIS TONIGHT

Count where guest data lives in your house right now — book, inbox, phone, memory, spreadsheet. Each location past "one system" is both leaked value and GDPR exposure. Pick the system that becomes the single home, and set a migration date.

CHEF'S SECRET

The 90-day list that out-earns every ad

Run one query monthly: guests with 2+ visits whose last visit is 90+ days ago. These are people who chose you twice and drifted — not rejected you. A personal two-line note ("the new season's menu landed, and the venison reminded us of your table") reactivates a remarkable share, at a cost of zero. Ad platforms charge fortunes for audiences a tenth this warm; your reservation history builds it free, forever.

GOING DEEPER

A restaurant's most valuable asset is not the kitchen equipment or the interior. It's the database of loyal guests. Yet most UK restaurants collect almost no customer data — and when they do, they barely use it.

Guests who feel an emotional bond with a restaurant spend 30% more per visit (Deloitte research). Personalised emails are opened 14% more often (Mailchimp data). A restaurant with 1,000 loyal guests = 1,000 email addresses, each representing £20-50 in annual recurring revenue.

The challenge is to collect data in a GDPR-compliant way — and that's a lot simpler than most restaurateurs think. In this article we unpack the legal basis and show how you turn customer data into returning guests.

Why customer data is the most undervalued asset in hospitality

Imagine: you sell your restaurant. What does the buyer take on? Your kitchen, your location, your supplier contracts — but also your customer base. Restaurant buyers pay extra for a large, active guest database.

So why don't most restaurateurs invest in this asset? Three reasons:

1. **GDPR fear:** "surely we're not allowed to keep data?" — a mistaken assumption
2. **No system:** without a reservation system with CRM functionality, keeping data is difficult
3. **No time:** using data seems complex and time-consuming

The reality: with the right system (like HappyChef) and the right legal basis, collecting and using customer data is both legal and relatively easy for fine dining restaurateurs. The result? A steadily growing goldmine of returning guests.

Which data is genuinely valuable (and which isn't)

Not all customer data is equal. What's genuinely valuable for restaurants:

Tier 1 — Essential:

- First and last name
- Email address
- Visit frequency (how often, when)
- Average party size

Tier 2 — Valuable:

- Birthday (not age)
- Dietary restrictions and allergies
- Preferred tables
- Special occasions (anniversaries, children's birthdays)

Tier 3 — Gold:

- Wine preferences
- Order history and average spend
- Visit notes (special requests, compliments, complaints)
- Social occasions (a regular "business dinner group", a regular "birthday group")

The data-minimisation principle: collect only what you actually use. A huge database with poor data quality is worthless — a small, rich database is gold. Use [HappyChef guest profiles](#) to keep this structured.

GDPR in hospitality: what's allowed and what's required?

The UK GDPR (together with the Data Protection Act 2018) is less restrictive for restaurants than most think. The key lies in the **lawful basis** you use for processing data:

Operational use (performance of a contract): entirely legal without consent

- Storing a name for the reservation ✓
- Sending an email to confirm ✓
- Recording allergies for food safety ✓
- Sending a reminder for the reservation ✓

Marketing use: requires explicit consent OR legitimate interest

- Sending a newsletter → consent needed ✗ (without agreement)
- Follow-up email after a visit → legitimate interest ✓ (with opt-out)
- Birthday email → legitimate interest ✓ (with opt-out)
- Selling data to third parties → NEVER allowed ✗

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What customer data am I allowed to keep as a restaurant owner?

You may store names, contact details, reservation history, dietary preferences and allergies, provided you inform guests. Never process more data than is necessary for the stated purpose.

Do I need a privacy policy on my restaurant website?

Yes, it is legally required under GDPR. The privacy policy must explain what data you collect, why, how long you retain it, and how guests can exercise their rights.

May I use customer data for marketing emails?

Only if the guest has given explicit consent. Always include an easy unsubscribe option in every marketing email.

3

AUTOPILOT

Automate the repetitive 80% — keep humans for hospitality

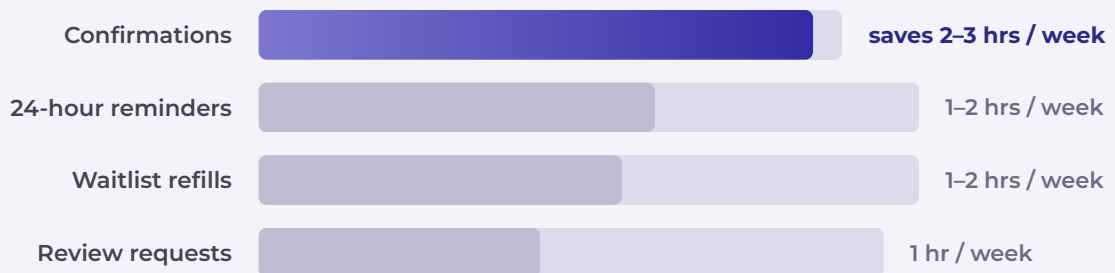
— KEY INSIGHT

Confirmations, reminders, waitlist refills, review requests, no-show follow-ups: rule-based and repetitive, they consume 10+ staff-hours a week done manually. Automating them is the highest-ROI move in restaurant tech — and it makes service better, because messages never forget and never get busy.

AUTOPILOT

FIG. 03

Automate the repetitive 80%



10+ hrs rule-based messages save 10+ staff-hours a week — about 80% of the busywork

List everything your team did yesterday that a rule could describe: "when a booking lands, send confirmation", "24h before, send reminder", "when a table frees, message the waitlist", "day after a visit, ask for the review". None of it needs judgement, warmth or memory of last season's menu. All of it needs to happen every single time — which is precisely what humans under pressure can't guarantee and **automation** exists for.

The automation map

WHAT RUNS ITSELF IN A WELL-SET-UP HOUSE

Flow	Trigger → action	Weekly hours back
Confirmations	Booking → instant WhatsApp/email confirm	2–3
Reminders	24h before → one-tap confirm/cancel	1–2 (plus the no-shows it kills)
Waitlist	Cancellation → next match messaged	1–2, mid-service
Review ask	Day after → one warm message with link	1
Reactivation	90 days quiet → personal-feeling note	1, plus the revenue
Occasions	Anniversary near → invitation	—, pure delight

The one rule of tone

Automated must never feel automated. Write every template the way your best maître d' speaks — by name, in your house's voice, one purpose per message. Guests don't resent automation; they resent cold. (And they never see the difference between a warm template and a warm typist — except the template never sends at 1 AM with a typo.)

DO THIS TONIGHT

Tally yesterday's repetitive messages — confirmations sent, reminders typed, waitlist calls made. Multiply by 360 days. That's the annual hour-cost of not automating, and your business case is now written.

GOING DEEPER

In a sector where margins are tight and staff shortages are a daily reality, restaurant automation is no longer a luxury but a necessity.

Smart technology can take over repetitive tasks, reduce human error, and free up your team for what really counts: authentic hospitality and creating memorable moments. In this comprehensive article we explore all the possibilities of automation in hospitality and how to get started with it.

What exactly is restaurant automation?

Restaurant automation encompasses all the technological solutions that streamline or fully take over manual processes in your business. This ranges from an **online reservation system** that automatically sends confirmations, to automated inventory management that generates orders on its own, and even robotics in the kitchen for repetitive tasks.

The aim of automation isn't to replace people, but to support them. Technology takes over dull, repetitive and error-prone tasks so your team can focus on tasks that require human creativity, empathy and judgement, namely interacting with guests.

The key areas for automation in restaurants

Automation can be applied to virtually every area of your restaurant operation. Here are the key areas with the greatest impact:

1. Bookings and guest management

A modern **reservation system** does far more than just take bookings. It forms the heart of your guest relationship management:

- **Automatic confirmations:** As soon as a booking comes in, the guest automatically receives a confirmation by email or **WhatsApp**.
- **Reminders:** 24 hours before the booking, a reminder is sent automatically, which significantly reduces **no-shows**.
- **Waitlist management:** When fully booked, guests are automatically placed on a **waitlist** and informed when a spot opens up.
- **Guest profiles:** The system automatically builds **guest profiles** with preferences, allergens and visit history for personalised service.
- **Table optimisation:** Smart algorithms assign tables optimally for maximum occupancy and guest satisfaction.

A good reservation system saves hours of phone work per week and reduces double bookings and administrative errors to virtually zero.

2. Ordering and payment: speed and convenience

The ordering and payment process offers enormous scope for automation:

- **QR menus:** Guests scan a code and view the menu on their own phone. Always up to date, no more printed menus needed.
- **Digital ordering:** Guests can order directly via their phone or tablets at the table, which eliminates waiting times.
- **Contactless payment:** Card, mobile payments, and QR payments are faster and safer than cash.
- **Split payments:** Systems can automatically split the bill per person or per item.
- **Automatic tipping:** With digital payments, guests can easily add a tip.

Read more about the possibilities of **digital ordering and QR menus** in our in-depth article.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the best first step in restaurant automation?

Start with your reservation and confirmation process. Automatic reservation reminders via WhatsApp or SMS reduce no-shows by an average of 30–50% and deliver an immediate return.

Does automation reduce the personal touch in my restaurant?

Not if you implement it correctly. Automation takes over routine work so your team has more time for what really matters: welcoming guests, making recommendations, and creating an unforgettable experience.

How do I bring my staff along in the transition to more automation?

Communicate early about why you are automating and what it means for them. Involve them in choosing tools, provide sufficient training, and emphasise that automation makes their work more enjoyable, not redundant.

4

THE ASSISTANT

AI: the host that answers when you can't

— KEY INSIGHT

Restaurant AI earns its place where unanswered demand dies: a phone assistant that books tables during service and after close, an inbox assistant drafting replies to routine questions, and campaign drafting for marketing. It handles the 80% that's routine and hands the 20% that's human to humans.

THE ASSISTANT

FIG. 04

Answer the calls you're missing

50% an AI host captures the roughly half of calls that go unanswered during service

Count the calls your restaurant misses in one week: mid-service rushes, Sunday mornings, 22:40 after a date-night decision. Each unanswered ring is usually a booking attempting to happen — and a voicemail is where booking attempts go to die. This, not science fiction, is where **AI in hospitality** pays: the work was never about replacing your maître d'; it's about existing in the hours your maître d' doesn't.

Where AI earns its keep today

- **The phone:** an **AI receptionist** answers every call, checks live availability, books the table, answers "do you have vegetarian options?" — and hands anything unusual to a human with a summary. Restaurants switching one on discover how many bookings the busy tone was eating.

- **The inbox:** an **AI inbox** drafts replies to the twenty daily routine emails — allergies, group requests, parking — in your tone, for one-click human approval.
- **The marketing desk:** **AI marketing** drafts the monthly newsletter and campaign copy from your menu changes; you edit the warmth in, in minutes instead of evenings.

The boundary that keeps it hospitality

One principle decides every AI deployment: **AI handles requests; humans handle relationships.** The anniversary table's special wishes, the complaint, the regular who calls to chat — routed to people, always. Guests forgive a machine for being a machine; they never forgive a restaurant for making them feel processed. Drawn this way, the line means AI gives your floor more human minutes, not fewer.

DO THIS TONIGHT

Check this week's missed-call count on your phone system (or count tomorrow's unanswered rings honestly). Multiply by your average ticket and a 50% booking intent. That's the monthly revenue sitting in your busy tone.

GOING DEEPER

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer science fiction.

From smart reservation systems to personalized menu recommendations: AI is transforming hospitality at breakneck speed. What was once exclusive to large chains with deep pockets is now within reach of every restaurant willing to take the step. In this in-depth article, you'll discover how you as a restaurant owner can benefit from this technological revolution, and how to put AI to concrete use to work smarter, more efficiently and more profitably.

What is AI and why is it relevant for restaurants?

AI is technology that enables computers to learn from data and make decisions without being explicitly programmed for every situation. The system recognizes patterns, draws conclusions and improves itself as it processes more data. For **restaurants**, this means systems that recognize patterns in guest behavior, make predictions about busy periods and orders, and automate processes that previously had to be done by hand.

The benefits are concrete and measurable:

- **Time savings:** Routine tasks such as booking confirmations, reminders and basic customer service are automated. This saves hours every week.
- **Better decisions:** Data-driven insights replace gut feelings. You make decisions based on facts, not assumptions.
- **Personalized service:** Every guest gets an experience tailored to their preferences, history and wishes.

- **Cost reduction:** Working more efficiently with less waste, better staff planning and optimal purchasing.
- **Competitive advantage:** Restaurants that embrace AI set themselves apart from the rest.

7 ways AI transforms your restaurant

Let's explore the seven most important applications of AI in hospitality, with practical examples of how you can implement them.

1. Smart reservation systems

Modern **reservation systems** use AI to go far beyond simple bookings. The system learns from every booking, every visit and every no-show, and becomes ever smarter at optimizing your capacity.

Specifically, AI predicts and optimizes:

- **Length of stay:** How long guests stay on average per time of day, per type of booking (romantic dinner vs. business lunch), per table size. This lets you plan more accurately.
- **Table popularity:** Which tables are most popular and why. The window table everyone wants automatically gets a premium.
- **No-show prediction:** When **no-shows** occur most often and which bookings carry the highest risk. The system can automatically send extra confirmations to risky bookings.
- **Optimal overbooking:** How much overbooking per day is justifiable based on historical data, without the risk of disappointed guests.
- **Waitlist management:** Smart **waitlists** that automatically reach out to guests when a spot opens up.

The result? More guests per evening without chaos, fewer empty tables, and a smoother operation for your team.

2. Predictive analytics

With AI, **restaurant analytics** go beyond simple reports about what happened yesterday. Predictive models look ahead and help you act proactively:

- **Forecasting revenue:** Based on weather (rain means more delivery, sun means a full terrace), local events (a nearby concert, a football match), season and historical data. You know weeks in advance what to expect.
- **Estimating demand:** For optimal **staff planning**. Never again too few or too many staff scheduled.
- **Optimizing inventory:** The system predicts how much of each ingredient you need, so you have less food waste and better **food costs**.
- **Spotting trends:** Respond early to changing preferences. If vegetarian dishes are becoming more popular with your guests, you'll know before it becomes a problem.
- **Identifying peak hours:** When exactly does it get busy? Not "around 7 p.m." but "between 7:15 and 7:45 p.m. on Fridays".

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is AI affordable for small restaurants?

Yes. Many AI tools are modular and start from as little as €30–€50 per month. You choose only the features you need — such as smart reservations or automatic reminders — and pay for what you use.

Does AI replace my staff?

No. AI takes over routine tasks so your team can focus on hospitality and human connection. It strengthens your staff rather than replacing them.

How quickly will I see results after implementing AI?

The first results are often visible within a few weeks: fewer no-shows thanks to automatic reminders, better occupancy through smart table optimisation, and time savings on administration.

5

CHANNELS

Ordering channels: digital where it serves the concept

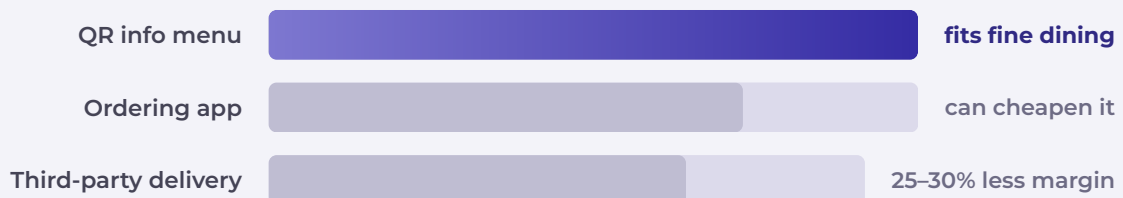
— KEY INSIGHT

For fine dining, ordering tech must pass one test: does it deepen or cheapen the experience? QR menus work as living information (wine lists, allergens, translations), not as waiter replacements; direct online ordering suits structured products like tasting boxes and gift cards; delivery platforms deserve hard margin math before any yes.

CHANNELS

FIG. 05

Choose channels that fit the concept



25-30% QR menus inform; the wrong ordering tech can cut your margin by 25-30%

Hospitality tech debates get religious — "QR codes killed service!" — when the question is operational: which channel serves your concept's promise? A three-star tasting room and a bistro answer differently, and both can be right. The decision framework lives in **digital ordering & QR** and **online ordering**; here is the fine-dining read.

The channel test, applied

- **QR as a living document, not a waiter:** in fine dining, ordering stays human — but a QR wine list with tasting notes in four languages, live allergen filters, and the story behind tonight's menu adds theatre. Information digitises beautifully; hospitality doesn't.

- **Direct online sales for structured products: gift cards**, the chef's tasting box for home, wine from your cellar, prepaid event seats — products with fixed grammar sell perfectly online, fund **cash flow**, and carry zero service risk.
- **Delivery platforms — do the math first:** 25–30% commission on a concept built on plating and room is usually margin theatre. If takeaway fits at all, a focused own-channel product (Sunday roast boxes, the bistro line) at full margin beats renting your brand to an app. Your **own app** keeps regulars one tap away without the commission.

Whatever channels you choose, they must feed one system — the same guest profiles, the same availability, the same numbers (chapter 6). Channel sprawl with disconnected data is how houses end up managed by their tools.

DO THIS TONIGHT

Apply the test to every digital channel you run: deepen or cheapen? One column each. Anything in the 'cheapen' column either gets redesigned to serve the concept — or retired before it quietly erodes what guests pay you for.

GOING DEEPER

The pandemic accelerated the adoption of QR menus and digital ordering by years.

Now that the world is returning to normal, many of these innovations turn out not only to be here to stay, but genuinely valuable for restaurateurs and guests alike. But do they fit your specific restaurant and concept? In this in-depth article, we discuss all the options, the concrete benefits, the pitfalls to avoid, and how to make the right choice for your situation.

What exactly is digital ordering?

Digital ordering is an umbrella term for various technological solutions that modernize the traditional ordering process in restaurants. Depending on your concept and audience, several options are available:

- **QR menu (digital menu):** Guests scan a QR code at the table and view the full menu on their own phone. They can take their time choosing and call the server when they're ready to order.
- **QR ordering (scan and order):** Guests scan, browse the menu, and can order and pay directly via their phone. The order arrives automatically in the kitchen.
- **Tablet tables:** Tablets are permanently mounted on every table for guests to order themselves. Popular in Asia and increasingly in Europe.
- **Ordering kiosks:** Free-standing ordering terminals where guests enter their order, popular at fast-casual and fast-food restaurants.
- **Restaurant app:** Your own app for ordering, paying and **loyalty programmes**. Especially interesting for chains or restaurants with many returning guests.

- **Hybrid systems:** Combinations of the above, where guests can choose how they want to order.

The concrete benefits of QR menus and digital ordering

The benefits of digital ordering are measurable and significant. Here are the most important ones:

1. Lower labour costs without loss of quality

Digital ordering drastically reduces the time needed for repetitive tasks such as bringing menus, taking orders, processing changes and handling bills. Your **staff** can therefore focus on what really matters: hospitality, problem-solving and creating memorable moments.

This doesn't mean you need fewer staff, but rather that your staff can work more effectively. Instead of walking back and forth to take orders, they can give more attention to the guests who need it.

2. Measurably higher revenue per table

Research consistently shows that digital ordering increases average spend per guest by 12-22%. There are several reasons for this phenomenon:

- Guests see the whole menu with **appealing photos**, which tempts them more.
- They take more time to choose without the pressure of a waiting server.
- Upselling suggestions are shown consistently with every dish.
- Ordering more is easier because guests don't have to wait for staff.
- The threshold to order another drink or dessert is lower.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does digital ordering via QR increase average spend per table?

Yes, by an average of 15–30%. Guests browse the menu at their own pace, see photos and suggestions, and more often order extra drinks or desserts than when ordering verbally.

What if guests don't have a smartphone or can't scan QR codes?

Always offer an alternative: a paper menu or a tablet at the table. QR is a supplement, not a replacement. This way no guest is excluded.

Can I quickly update my QR menu when something sells out?

Yes, and that is one of the biggest advantages. You update the digital menu in real time, so guests never order a dish that isn't available.

6

THE COCKPIT

The five-number dashboard that runs the house

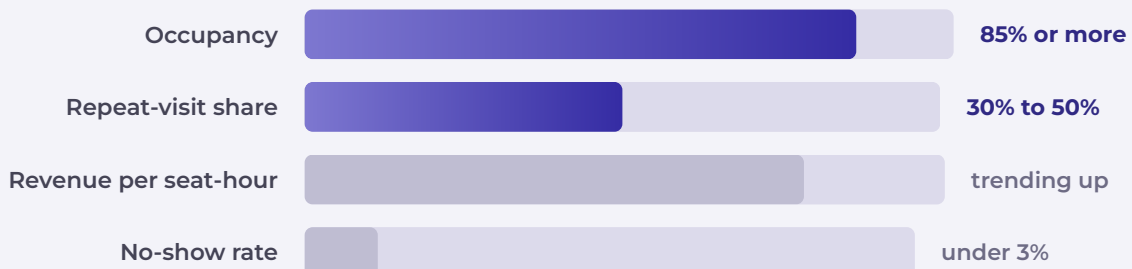
— KEY INSIGHT

All restaurant data reduces to five weekly numbers: occupancy per service, no-show rate, RevPASH, repeat-visit share and prime cost. One dashboard, fifteen Monday minutes, each number owned by a system from these guides — that's data-driven without drowning in dashboards.

THE COCKPIT

FIG. 06

The five-number weekly dashboard



5 five numbers, fifteen minutes every Monday — the whole house on one screen

The promise of "restaurant analytics" usually arrives as forty charts nobody opens after week two. The houses that actually run on data do the opposite: brutally few numbers, looked at without fail, each wired to an action. **Restaurant analytics** done right is a cockpit, not a museum.

THE MONDAY COCKPIT — FIVE NUMBERS, FIVE OWNERS

Number	Healthy	It's the report card of...
Occupancy per service	85%+ weekend / 60%+ midweek	Reservations & demand shaping
No-show + late-cancel rate	< 3%	Confirmation chain & deposits
RevPASH	Trending up	Pacing, pricing, turns (finance guide)
Repeat-visit share	30%+, growing to 50%	Experience & retention marketing
Prime cost	≤ 60–65%	Menu & labour systems

Notice what happened: the five numbers are the five other guides. The dashboard isn't another project — it's the nervous system connecting everything you've built, automated by your **analytics** so Monday's fifteen minutes are reading, not collecting.

Data with a conscience

Two closing disciplines. First, **act on one number a week** — the dashboard exists to start projects, not to be admired. Second, let the same data serve more than margin: portion forecasts that cut waste and energy insights from quieter services feed the **sustainability** ledger too — the rare project where the planet and the P&L agree.

DO THIS TONIGHT

Draw the five-number table on paper and fill in what you know today. Every blank cell is a system from one of these guides waiting to be switched on — and now you know exactly which guide to open next.

CHEF'S SECRET

The metric that predicts next month before it happens

Add a sixth number when you're ready: **booking pace** — covers already on the books for each of the next four weeks, compared to the same point last cycle. It's the only restaurant metric that looks forward: pace down 20% three weeks out means the quiet fortnight is preventable (a campaign, a waitlist nudge, an event) instead of survivable. Hotels have run on pace for decades; restaurants with reservation data have it sitting unused.

Many restaurant owners make decisions on instinct.

Years of experience and well-developed intuition are valuable, and that works up to a point. But in today's competitive hospitality market, **data and analytics** make the difference between restaurants that survive and restaurants that excel. With the right data, you can see patterns you'd otherwise miss, and make decisions that demonstrably work. In this comprehensive guide you'll discover which numbers to track, how to collect data, and above all how to translate that data into concrete improvements in your restaurant.

Why data matters for your restaurant

Data-driven management doesn't mean replacing your intuition, but supporting and validating it with hard facts. The benefits of a data-driven approach are significant and measurable:

- **Objective insights:** You see what really works in your restaurant, not what you think works. This prevents the blind spots that arise when you're too close to your own business.
- **Predictability:** Accurately anticipate busy and quiet periods so you can plan and prepare better.
- **Cost savings:** Identify waste and inefficiencies you'd otherwise miss. Every percentage point saved on food costs goes straight to your profit margin.
- **A better guest experience:** Personalise your service based on your guests' actual behaviour and preferences.
- **Competitive advantage:** Make faster, smarter decisions than competitors still going on gut feel.
- **Well-founded investments:** Justify major outlays with figures rather than hunches.

A common objection is that data takes the human factor out of hospitality. But the opposite is true: by optimising operational matters with data, your team gets more time and energy for what really counts - personal attention for the guest.

The key KPIs for restaurants

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are the numbers that make the difference. It's tempting to measure everything, but focus is crucial. Divide your KPIs into these four categories and pick the 2-3 most important per category for your situation:

Financial KPIs: the health of your business

These figures ultimately determine whether your restaurant is and stays profitable:

- **Revenue per table/seat:** How much do you earn per seat per service? This is crucial for capacity planning and shows whether you're using your space optimally. Low revenue per seat can point to inefficient table occupancy or prices that are too low.
- **Average guest check:** Increasing this figure directly impacts your profitability. Analyse which combinations guests order and train your staff in targeted upselling.

- **Food cost percentage:** How much of your revenue goes to ingredients? Ideally 28-35%, depending on your concept. A fine dining restaurant may have higher food costs than a bistro. Read more about [controlling food costs](#).
- **Labour cost percentage:** Staff costs as a percentage of revenue. Ideally 25-35% for a full-service restaurant, lower for quick-service concepts.
- **Prime cost:** Food cost plus labour cost combined should stay under 65%. This is the most important indicator of operational efficiency.
- **Break-even point:** How much revenue do you need to break even? Know this figure by heart and know the minimum number of covers you need each day.
- **Gross profit margin:** Your gross profit as a percentage of revenue. This shows the health of your pricing.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What data is most important to track as a restaurant owner?

Occupancy rate per time slot, average spend per cover, table turnover speed, most popular dishes, and no-show percentage. These five KPIs give you the biggest insights for the least effort.

How do I use data to improve my staff scheduling?

Analyse your occupancy history per day and time slot and compare it with staff deployment. This lets you schedule more staff during busy periods and avoid overcapacity during quiet ones.

Can I use analytics to predict when it will be busy?

Yes. With sufficient historical data you can identify patterns per day, week, season, and around external factors such as events or bad weather. Modern reservation systems do this automatically.

E-BOOK

How hard does your tech actually work?

Our website books a table in under three taps, menu as text

All guest data lives in one GDPR-clean system

Confirmations and reminders send themselves

A waitlist refills cancellations automatically

Calls outside opening hours still become bookings

Routine emails get AI-drafted, human-approved replies

READY TO BEGIN

One system instead of seven tools?

HappyChef is the hub this guide describes — reservations, guest profiles, automations, AI receptionist and the five-number dashboard, in one quiet machine.

[Book a demo](#)

Free, 30 minutes, no strings attached

