

# Maximizing Meal Kits for Takeout

Historically, the meal kit industry had been considered to be increasingly in direct competition with the restaurant industry. Today, with the COVID-19 crisis forcing the majority of restaurants to pivot from dine-in to off-premise, restaurants are now using the opportunity to capitalize on their brand and expertise in order to offer their own meal kits and reach customers in new and exciting ways.

## Why operators are adding meal kits to their menu

With the restaurant industry quickly establishing a “new normal,” the opportunity to create new streams of revenue through meal kits is a moment not to be missed. Meal kits are a safe, interactive way for customers to experience your restaurant’s brand in the convenience of their own home. These creative kits are also a great way to elevate your take-out experience and generate revenue if your dining room doors remain shuttered. There are many ways to deliver meal kits to your customers from prepared meals and take-and-bakes, to DIY.

## Prepared vs. DIY

### Prepared Meal Kit or “Family Meal”

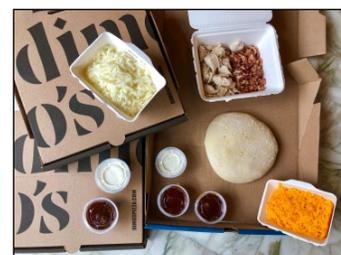
Prepared meal kits, or family meals, are spreads that are already prepared and only require re-heating, or quick assembly. They usually include an appetizer, main course, one to three side dishes, and desert. These meals are great for busy customers, or special occasions, such as holidays. When creating a prepared meal, consider items that easily reheat and travel well.

### DIY Meal Kit

DIY meal kits are recipes that include all the ingredients pre-measured and perfectly proportioned. These are great for customers who already love your brand and cooking, but want to advance their cooking skills, all while looking for something fun to do during shelter-in-place. When creating meal kits, choose dishes that are easy to recreate for various skill levels.



The Purple Pig’s prepared family meals.



Dimo’s Pizza is doing a pizza making class and selling DIY kits for it.



# Make Ordering Easy

Once you have decided the type of meal kit you would like to offer, let your customers know how they can order, and when.

## Start with Pre-orders

Many restaurants are offering meal kits on a pre-order basis only. Pre-ordering is a great way to limit waste and test the market by limiting the number of meal kits available, and easing the burden on your kitchen staff by accounting for the exact amount of meal kits you need to make. The biggest downside to pre-orders is that it requires your customers to think ahead of time. Because of this, heavily promote meal kit offerings on your digital menus, on your website, and via your restaurant's social media handles.

If your current online ordering platform doesn't support pre-orders, don't worry! You can also direct your customers to place orders via phone or email, and manually track the orders via Microsoft Excel. Get started with a service like [Tock](#), a digital online ordering platform dedicated to supporting pre-ordered meals.

## Clearly communicate when the meal kit will be ready for pick up and/or delivery.

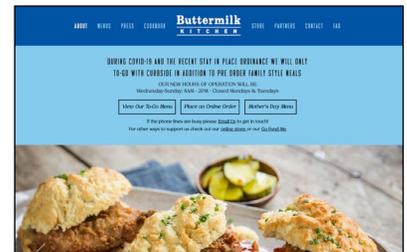
Let your customers know what date they can expect to receive their meal kit, if it's being delivered directly to their homes, or when and where they can pick it up. If you require customer pick-up, make sure to include social distancing protocols so that your customers continue to feel safe.

## Consider offering a subscription option

Take the thinking out of ordering by allowing customers to sign up for a weekly or monthly meal kit subscription. Offer options like once per week, or once per month, depending on your restaurant's capacity.

# Promoting Meal Kits to your Customers

For many customers, meal kits are a new experience. It's therefore important to let them know all of the details of your meal kit offerings, from what's included and where to buy them, to how they can pull it all together at home. Utilize your social media channels, email marketing, and your website to let customers know where and when they can place orders. **This is extra important if your meal kit requires pre-orders!**



[Buttermilk Kitchen accepts pre-orders via email](#)

**Pro tip:** Share pictures of your pick-up space and process on social media so customers know what to expect beforehand.

## Share your offerings on social media

Meet your customers where they are to showcase new offerings. Keep your restaurant top of mind by sharing photos of what's included in your meal kit, what the finished meal looks like, and where and when they can order in the description.

## Keep your website up-to-date

Your restaurant's website should be your main hub for all of the information your customers need to know about your services during shelter-in-place and beyond. Clearly communicate menu changes, promotions, and where and how customers can order from you. Bring your meal kits front and center with images and virtual cooking demonstrations in the form of Live Streams or videos. Don't forget to add a digital version of your recipe card in case customers lose or damage the copy included in the kit.

If you require pre-orders for your meal kits, ensure that your website clearly communicates when ordering is open and closed.

## Market around a specific holiday or event

Many restaurants offered holiday special meal kits for Easter, Cinco-de-Mayo, and Mother's Day. Keep an eye on the calendar for opportunities to create themed meal kits, and start promoting the kit on your social media channels at least one week ahead of time.

Don't forget about special occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, or graduations. Consider adding a "Birthday Box," a "TGIF kit," or "Anniversary Kit" to your menu. Remind your customers that it makes a great gift for loved ones when they can't be there in person.

## Host a Virtual Cooking Class

Promote your meal kit by pairing it with a virtual cooking class. Make these occasions exclusive by hosting a private zoom event for customers only, or open it up to everyone by going live on Facebook or Instagram. Check out Virtual Dining in Chicago for examples of Restaurants hosting cooking demos and classes, or our Guide on How to Host a Virtual Dining Experience.

**Pro tip:** Remind your customers to tag your restaurant in their posts and stories on Instagram. Re-share the customer photos after they've tagged you.



The Party Line introduces their family meal on Instagram



The Girl and the Goat's New Grocery Ordering Website



Bavette Mother's Day Menu