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Spooky Sales

Scare up increased revenue with a recipe for Halloween promotions.

Halloween has shifted from a one-night observance by kids and young-adult partiers into a seasonal celebration celebrated by everyone, with decorations inside and out observing the holiday. But grown-ups are not only dressing up and embellishing their houses with the latest lights, door greeters and shrieking door mats—they're spending more money on Halloween than ever. The business of boo, costumes and candy is booming, with adults and children increasing their Halloween purchases each year. That's been good news for retailers, who have embraced the holiday as a merchandising opportunity to capture sales. Tap into this lucrative time of year to garner a bigger share of these consumer dollars being spent.

Halloween also begins the important holiday sales season. From October 31 until January 2, holidays are at the top of consumers' minds. As they start to dig out of the recent economic woes, their attitude is expected to be "let's have a good time and live for today," so making the most out of Halloween can be a great way to begin a lucrative holiday season.

RECIPE:

Halloween is a great holiday for restaurants and for families, especially those with kids. It's a good idea to offer those who dress up free food, or have a special promotion that gives kids a free meal for coming in on Halloween night with their families. This program allows for many different options for creativity, from decorating the store to having your crew dress up in Halloween attire.

INGREDIENTS:

- Halloween-themed goods from your local party store
- Items for the promotion that you decide on
- Flyers and posters printed by your local print shop to pass out to guests and local businesses

DIRECTIONS:

1. First determine how you wish to structure your Halloween promotion. Here are a few ideas:
 - Decorate the pizzeria for the week of Halloween and have a bowl of candy at the register (this is a good idea no matter what promotion you choose).
 - On Halloween (or the day before, due to the fact that many families are busy the day of), have a costume contest party. Give the winners prizes such as free food, candy or toys.
 - Have a "kids eat free" night on Halloween at your pizzeria, with the purchase of an adult entree. Have your staff dress up.
 - Have a "Spooky Menu," in which you offer Halloween-themed cocktails, entrees and/ or desserts for the month of October.



- If you are able, have a Halloween movie night the weekend before Halloween. Play "kid-friendly" movies such as *Casper*, *Monsters, Inc.* or *Beetlejuice*. Pass out free Halloween-themed desserts, such as ice cream with black and orange syrups.
 - Have an adult cocktail party where you offer free Halloween-themed cocktails. Invite VIPs, media and community members to join you.
2. Ideas for Halloween promotions are endless and not limited to the list above. Choose the idea that works the best for your pizzeria's budget or concept. Once you have chosen how to celebrate Halloween at your restaurant, you need to inform the public about what's going to be happening at your store; it's a great idea to have posters in the windows and to pass out flyers to customers and local area homes. Ask the businesses in your local three- to four-mile radius if they will help you by letting you put posters in their windows, or flyers at their registers to pass out to customers who come into their stores. Another great way to approach promoting for the event: Bring gift certificates or free lunches to local radio disc jockeys and ask them to announce your event on the radio.
 3. No matter what idea you choose to pursue, it makes your restaurant seem fun and festive if you decorate. Go to your local party store and get items such as fake spiderwebs to put in the windows, plastic pumpkins to put candy in, candy to pass out, and black, orange and white balloons to give to kids during the week of Halloween.
 4. Once you have decided on the day of your promotion, either Halloween or before, inform your staff about the event, and have your most outgoing and reliable employees working. A week before the event, collect the ingredients that you will need for your event to be successful. Have promotional flyers and handouts printed two weeks before the event and begin passing them out about a week and a half before the chosen date.

Helpful Tips

Decor: Mix and match orange and black tablecloths, napkins, balloons, Halloween candy trays and spooky cutouts. For candles at the tables, if this is an option for your restaurant, carve little pumpkins to be used as candle holders.

Outdoors: Decorate to create a graveyard, cobwebs, lanterns, and ghost and goblin cutouts. Try using some string lights on outdoor walkways and patios to add a scary theme.

Pumpkin carving: New tools make carving unique faces easy. Try creating a spooky entrance using lit carved pumpkins. Host a carving contest, or use them as decor in your restaurant and on the patio.

Orange drinks: Serve orange soda or milk with orange syrup for kids. Try an orange Italian soda using orange flavorings and carbonated water; for adults, add vodka or other spirits and black jelly beans on a skewer on the glass as garnish.

Pumpkin tossing: This is similar in concept to a game of horseshoes, with participants aiming small pumpkins toward a target. Prizes can include a gift card, candy, and free beverages or desserts.

Bobbing for apples: A washtub, swim goggles, apples and water make this a Halloween splash. Compete to see who can get the apple in his mouth the fastest (time competitors) with both arms behind his back. Winner gets dessert, candy, a gift card, etc.

Pumpkin seed cooking: Everyone loves to eat the crunchy pumpkin seeds after carving a pumpkin. Cooked on a baking sheet at 400° for seven to 10 minutes, and lightly salted, the seeds are perfect for a Halloween snack. 🍂



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