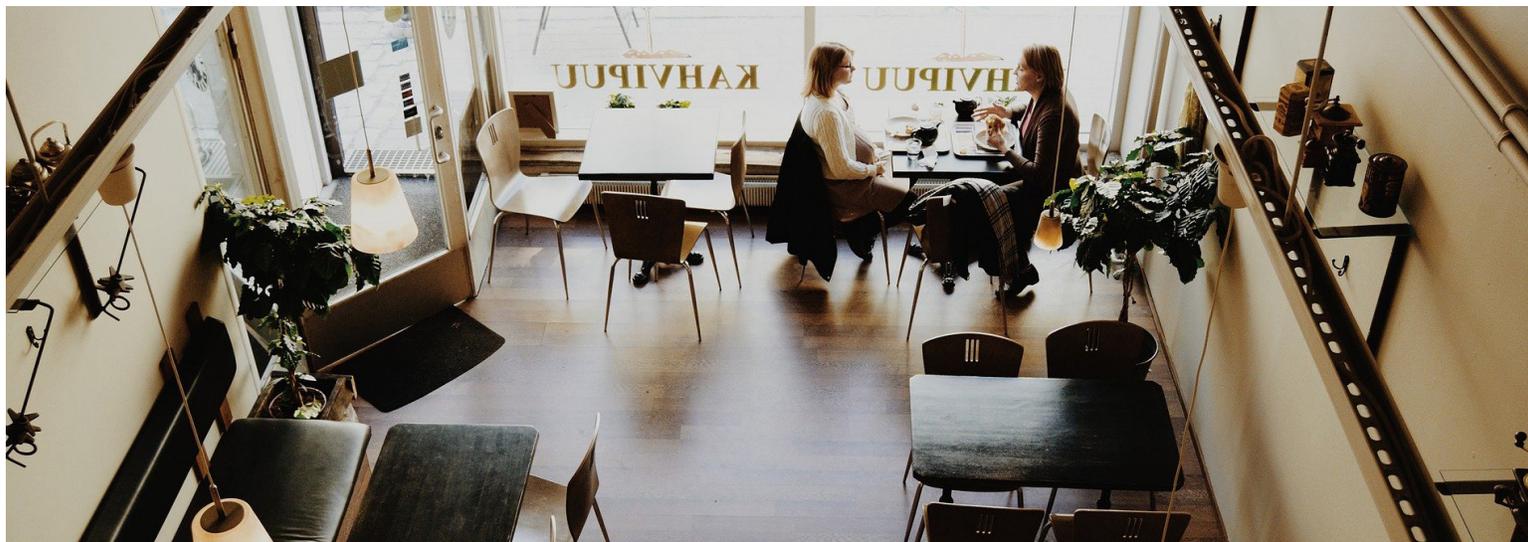


## Dining in a Post COVID-19 World



While restaurants are slowly re-opening, this industry has a lot of work to do before they're fully ready to welcome guests.

The virus has impacted the global restaurant scene unlike any other.

While many are concerned about small businesses, local eateries around the country have been hit with an unprecedented onslaught of issues. Food supply delays, serving restrictions, mandatory closures, and a widespread avoidance of restaurants have hit the food service industry with curve ball after curve ball.

Depending on location, some restaurants have managed to stay open by operating solely on take-out or pick-up orders. But, one thing is certain regardless of where you are - restaurants need to rethink the norms of operation that won't stand in the post-COVID atmosphere.

How will restaurants need to change based on what we've learned during COVID? It will take effort, dedication, and some updates to the physical space... and that's where CRE comes in.

Here's what re-entry looks like for the restaurant scene:

### Rebuilding Trust: Adapting to New Consumer Trends

As a result of the virus, everyone's mind is filled with microscopic concerns. While we might not have thought much about bacterias and microbes in our environment, we all are now.

This puts a lot of pressure on restaurants. They need to gain the public's trust back if they want to stay afloat once their doors can open back up again.

According to recent data, consumers say that they want more hand sanitizer dispensers. Consumers also want to 'visibly see' staff cleaning high-contact areas often. Employees are expected to wear gloves and masks at all times and single-use condiments and utensils are a must. Even menus should be disposed of after they've been used by a guest.

These are just a few of the expectations being placed on restaurants if they hope to regain public trust after COVID.

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### Hybrid Models: Blending Dining and Retail

Any industry pro has heard the buzz about an upcoming surge in CRE sector blends.

Hospitality and office, retail and entertainment, and even industrial and dining are all possibilities on the horizons of commercial real estate as businesses strive to keep it creative amid changing consumer preferences on brick and mortar.

But, something new is happening during COVID - and it's a trend that will probably stick around once the virus blows over.

In order to overcome the business stressors related to the country-wide shutdown, many restaurants are adopting new retail-alternatives to stay relevant and keep the profits flowing.

We're seeing specialty restaurants embarking on pantry sales, local vendors setting up shop in dining areas, and even restaurants transitioning into retail stores to ride out the pandemic.

Even after COVID, these infrastructural safeguards will help prevent restaurants from taking as hard of a hit in future scenarios.

### Impact on Physical Space Requirements

Of course, restaurant tenants will have some updated demands for the CRE industry. Many establishments are including a total redesign of dining rooms as a part of their 'things to do before we reopen' lists.

The open kitchen concept will be key in regaining consumer trust as public scrutiny is higher than ever.

Restaurants will want to increase the separation between tables post-COVID. This means more space will be required to accommodate the business volume eateries were achieving before the pandemic, so expect to see larger square-footage requirements on commercial properties.

Once the virus is at bay, CRE needs to be prepared to make these 'new normals' of dining a reality.

