

## Restaurant POS Systems



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Tired of dealing with undecipherable, grease-stained order slips? Would you like to know for sure how much cheese to order next week - instead of just going by a hunch? Then you're ready to invest in a restaurant POS system.

A point of sale (POS) system can give you a new level of control over your restaurant operations, helping you increase efficiency, boost profits, and fine-tune inventory management. Switching from a traditional cash register and paper-based orders to a restaurant computer system can be hard, but the return on investment can really make it worth your time and effort.

### Restaurant POS - Buying Tips

- Prepare for the worst. As with any computer system, backups are important. Talk to your vendor about automated backup schedules.
- Clean up. Preventative maintenance is important: vacuuming out the cases and cleaning printers can extend their lives considerably.
- If you can't stand the heat... When choosing printers, remember that the heat in the kitchen can be enough to ruin thermal paper. Impact (dot matrix) printers are a better choice.

What is a restaurant POS system?

In the most basic sense, a POS system is a glorified cash register. The typical restaurant POS station consists of a computer and cash drawer, a receipt printer, and a touch-screen monitor. Most restaurants have several such stations, with additional components depending on the type of restaurant.

For retail-style restaurants like sub shops, POS systems often include printers in the food preparation area, eliminating the errors that can happen when hastily-scrawled orders are passed back to the kitchen. For quick-service restaurants, POS systems are practically a requirement for living up to their name: orders taken on terminals in the front are displayed on monitors in the kitchen, ready to be quickly assembled and delivered to the customer.

POS systems for table-service restaurants and fine dining are somewhat different. These systems need to be set up with your menu and seating plan so they can communicate orders to the kitchen and bar, track reservations and seating, and handle transactions.

Fine dining POS systems typically include more stations: multiple server stations, a bar station, a hostess station, and printers in the kitchen than more basic POS

systems. They also have more functionality -- including the ability to create and store open checks, let servers send "fire" orders to the kitchen to start the next course, as well as track which server is responsible for which table.

#### Restaurant POS benefits

POS systems can greatly reduce the amount of time your staff spends in the kitchen and speed up the order process. The efficiency gains can be impressive. If a restaurant with 20 tables and an average check of \$45 can increase turnover by one party per table, that is an extra \$900 on a busy night. Additional savings come from reduced shrinkage: servers can't provide complimentary food to friends without entering them in the system.

In addition to the direct cost savings, restaurant POS systems offer detailed reports that can help you make more informed business decisions. Sales reports help you better predict volume and schedule employees appropriately. Inventory reports help you order the right ingredients week after week, cutting down on wastage. And order reports let you see which items are most popular, which items generate the most profit, and which items you should probably drop from your menu.

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