Cultivating Community & Well-Being

A detailed playbook of strategies for cultivating community and well-being within our stakeholder ecosystems to capture greater value for our organizations

Created in partnership with

[Logos of Galley, Culinarecovery, 7:47, San Diego Food System Alliance, Menu Analytics]
we are all unwell. As humans, we are naturally empathetic, and it takes a mental health toll on us when we feel we are not helping improve our community’s well-being. When we’re working in an organization that is helping, our own well-being benefits and we enter into a positive feedback loop that amplifies the cultivation of well-being (access the recording of Mark Brand’s talk here).

We’ve collaborated with Resilient Food Business Summit partners—7:47, Culinarecovery, the San Diego Food System Alliance and Menu Analytics—to compile the resources shared in the following pages.

This playbook is one volume within a three-part series. The first volume showcased resources on food waste management (check out the Food Waste Management Playbook), and the third volume will showcase technology solutions.

As highlighted on the following pages, there are multiple practices that businesses can pursue to cultivate well-being in our stakeholder ecosystems:

- **Prioritize employee wellness** to heighten team morale
- **Support your local food economy** to enhance the resilience of the surrounding community
- **Encourage peer support systems** to make colleagues feel comfortable and supported as they address issues
- **Focus on gratitude** to become more resilient as an individual and organization

Introduction

**Cultivating Community & Well-being as a Key Strategy for Resilience**

At the 2020 Resilient Food Business Summit, we heard about how it is now more critical than ever for foodservice organizations to cultivate well-being for our ecosystem of stakeholders. That ecosystem includes stakeholders such as employees, customers, partners and suppliers, and extends more broadly to our local communities.

This playbook takes a deeper dive into community & well-being, and other related themes—health & wellness, gratitude, mental health, peer support—that were discussed at the Summit. As we heard from Mark Brand, putting well-being at the heart of a foodservice organization is so critical because if the community is unwell,
This resource shares steps that your business can take to prioritize employee wellness and well-being, a business practice that heightens team morale and has a positive impact on the bottom line.

**Five Steps to Prioritize Wellness & Well-being**

The foodservice industry has wellness challenges—the highest rate of substance abuse of any profession, 75% turnover, smoking, less than optimum diet, and a stressful work environment. According to the 2020 Stress in America Study conducted by the American Psychological Association, 7 in 10 employed adults cite work as a culprit of stress.

We know that healthier employees are better employees. It’s obvious that healthier and happier employees make good business sense.

1. **Invite senior leadership to role model**
   Make sure senior leadership model healthier behaviors and communicate the importance to the team. Create programs that leadership is invested in.
   
   Talk to your team about MyFitnessPal or other free apps they could use to track their food and exercise. This increases discussion between team members on how they are making their lives healthier.

2. **Support employees by sharing resources**
   Help employees feel comfortable and inform them of resources to help them deal with stress and any substance abuse or mental health issues. Two prominent options are:
   - Chefs With Issues
   - Ben’s Friends
   
   You can also encourage your team to share resources internally (e.g., have a staff dietitian that understands the culinary side present about easy swaps to make a meal healthier).

3. **Incorporate stress reduction into your schedule**
   Pre-shift meetings should include some mindfulness time or wellness tips. It’s easy to incorporate a short meditation, deep breathing, or other stress reduction activity.
   
   A tip from Brené Brown:
   "We start every meeting with a two-word check-in. We take turns sharing two words that describe how we’re feeling that day. We all have the human need to see others and to be seen. The warmth connects us."

4. **Plan staff meals and snacks to be healthier**
   Make your “family” or pre-shift meals healthier. Add salads, vegetables, and fruit. Having hand fruit around as a snack for employees is a way to start.
   
   Look at your menu and assess the number of healthier options. This is a great way to get employee input on how you could make the menu healthier while keeping it delicious. As a fun team building activity have teams of chefs and cooks rework an existing menu item to improve health and even flavor.

5. **Build community through a team challenge**
   Try a challenge like the couch to 5K (free online) and have teams compete. This builds physical activity and community. Team walking challenges are easy and cost nothing! Here are a couple of resources for team challenges:
   - 7 Simple, Fun Wellness Challenges to Start At Work
   - The C25K App

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**How Galley Helps**

Reducing stress in the foodservice environment is core to Galley’s mission. The Galley product is a solution that grew out of the stress and chaos experienced without it.

Visit the Galley website

**How Menu Analytics helps**

Helping food service operators achieve better menu experiences for customers and workplace wellness is the heart of what we do. Whether you need nutrition or allergen information for labeling compliance, recipe development support, or good advice, Menu Analytics can help.

Visit the Menu Analytics website
A strong community benefits all of the individuals and organizations operating in that community. San Diego Food System Alliance gives us 7 ideas for how we can support local food economies, which simultaneously cultivates community.

### Practice: Support your local food economy

**Partner contributor:** San Diego Food System Alliance

Things may feel out of our control at the moment, but there are several actions we can take as consumers and businesses to support our local farm and food economy through COVID-19, and get a head start on building resilience.

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<td><strong>Buy direct from local farmers and fishermen</strong></td>
<td><strong>Support local, independently owned food businesses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Donate to or partner with relief funds</strong></td>
<td><strong>Volunteer to support food assistance</strong></td>
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<td>Small farms and fisheries have lost vital avenues of income during COVID-19. Open-air farm stands, farmers markets, and fishermen’s markets observe social distancing measures to ensure that shopping is safe. Online ordering, CSA, delivery, and curbside pickup are all convenient, no-touch ways to support these businesses. See our list of resources for finding a farm or fisherman near you</td>
<td>It only takes a quick walk or ride down your usual restaurant row to see the heartbreaking decline in business. Continue to support your local eateries by ordering take-out and delivery. Contribute to fundraisers. Buy gift cards. Spread the word in your community and on social media to encourage others to do the same. See our list of resources for supporting restaurants</td>
<td>Federal relief hasn’t gone far enough to protect small- and mid-scale farmers, food workers, or local food businesses hit hard by this crisis. Flexible financial relief is urgently needed to cover a range of unique emergency expenses, ranging from rent relief to increased community resources where federal relief falls short. See our list of relief funds that are serving our local food system</td>
<td>Food banks and pantries are in desperate need of dependable volunteers as the demand for food assistance dramatically increases. With unemployment higher than ever and schools closed off and on across the country, more and more are finding themselves food insecure, many for the first time. See our list of ways to volunteer for food assistance</td>
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| **05** | **06** | **07** |
| **Learn about the root causes of our food system issues** | **Use your vote and your voice to advocate for lasting change** | **Commit to take action beyond the pandemic** |
| Many issues plaguing our food system have been further exposed and exacerbated by COVID-19. For those in the position of having extra time during ‘Stay at Home’ orders, or for those businesses in a transition mode, this is a perfect time to reflect. “How does the food system actually work? Who does it work for, who does it leave behind?” | The actions we take as consumers and businesses—opting to buy direct, supporting local food businesses, and learning about our systems—do make incremental change in our food economy. Use your vote and your voice to bring attention to the issues you care about, and to defend those who are most vulnerable in our current food system and economy. Visit our Advocacy page for an introduction to Food Policy | Taking all of these actions now unfortunately won’t mean much if we don’t continue to do so after the pandemic ends.  
- We need to support our local food businesses all the time, not just in emergencies  
- We need to care about our interconnectedness  
- We need to participate in conversations and decision-making spaces |

### Learn more about the San Diego Food System Alliance’s work in the community

This resource was originally shared as a blog post and prepared with the San Diego local food system in mind, however many of these tips can be applied in other contexts.

[Read SDFSA’s original blog post with links to San Diego resources, or visit our website to learn more about our work.](#)
Peer Support for the Hospitality Industry

We know that kitchen culture often does more to fuel mental health issues than it does to reduce or prevent them. However, it’s also an environment where strong bonds are formed, within which people can overcome obstacles and grow beyond their barriers. When hospitality professionals are equipped with a greater understanding of how to create safe spaces and share the weight of daily stress, they can preempt the more devastating side-effects of kitchen culture.

Chef with Issues

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<td>84% suffered from depression</td>
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<td>73% suffered from anxiety</td>
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<td>57% didn’t feel comfortable talking to colleagues</td>
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Fair Kitchens

IN 2017

74% of chefs were sleep deprived to the point of exhaustion, and MORE THAN HALF felt pushed to the breaking point

Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

1 IN 10 Americans worked in the hospitality industry prior to COVID. That’s 14 million workers. There are roughly 377,000 mental health professionals. Hospitality industry workers outnumber mental health professionals 25X!

Examples of Peer Support Groups for Industry Workers include:

CHOW
Culinary, Hospitality, Outreach, and Wellness develop workplace morale, thereby increasing loyalty/reducing turnover

The Burnt Chef Project
Non-profit campaign and clothing brand operating within hospitality to challenge mental health stigma through online training, open conversations and sales of branded custom merchandise

Ben’s Friends
a support group with 21 virtual meetings weekly that offer hope, fellowship, and a path forward for professionals who struggle with substance abuse and addiction

Peer Support is a non-clinical, non-professional way of providing support to someone struggling with issues that arise as a result of working in the hospitality industry.

A peer is someone who has had similar issues from working in the hospitality industry and has been trained to help another seek healthy solutions. Peer Support Training can:

- Develop workplace morale, thereby increasing loyalty/reducing turnover
- Improve communication in relationships both inside and outside of the workplace
- Identify and address the problematic use of substances or other behaviors
- Reduce unhealthy conflicts which otherwise consume time and energy
- Increase motivation for positive change in lifestyle/decrease hopelessness
- Boost confidence and self-empowerment for better decision making
- Provide resources for additional community based support

Besides the lateral peer to peer, one on one, daily support from coworkers, people in leadership roles can encourage the formation of, or attendance at, a peer led support group. A peer support group is a regular gathering of restaurant and hospitality professionals who have lived (or have lived) with the effects of working in the restaurant industry. Such support groups remind us that we are not alone.

Note:
Organization based out of Toronto, Canada that has designed an interactive online course, including video testimony, which offers a self-paced study of issues such as anxiety, depression, substance use, burnout, and trauma

Giving Kitchen
Emergency support to food service workers through financial assistance and a network of community resources, including a grant opportunity for industry professionals to take a suicide prevention course

Facebook Groups: CulinaRecovery, Chefs with Issues, Restaurant After Hours, Support Staff
Gratitude has been discussed heavily in the context of business in recent years, but this resource from 7:47 presents a unique angle on how gratitude contributes to individual and organizational resilience.

**Practice:** Focus on gratitude

**Partner contributor:** 7:47

Resilience is the capacity to bounce back from difficult events. And if there’s one group that needs that ability, especially in the devastating time of the 2020 pandemic, it’s entrepreneurs in the foodservice and hospitality sector. Without resilience, every obstacle and failure can feel like a catastrophe. Failure seems like a point of no return, despite being a normal, if unpleasant, outcome of doing business and living in an uncertain world. Resilience, however, is not all or none.

Some entrepreneurs are better at picking themselves up and pivoting than others. So what distinguishes these resilient people? Research suggests that resilient people experience positive emotions more frequently. Although positive emotions come in many colors — joy, hope, inspiration and awe, among others — only one can be conjured in any context: gratitude. In foodservice and hospitality, expressing gratitude is key.

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**Gratitude…**

...builds enduring personal resources

When we express gratitude, we broaden our thoughts and actions and we are able to take in, consider and act in flexible ways that accommodate the bigger picture. Over time, the effects of gratitude accumulate and compound. The result is that we can see an ever-increasing number of ways to solve and bounce back from problems. And by solving problems more effectively in the first place, we don’t need to tap into our personal reserves as much. This occurs over time, so it’s important to establish a daily gratitude practice.

*Why Attitude Is More Important Than Intelligence*

...helps you form and maintain social relationships

In expressing gratitude, we reflect kindness back to the person who ignited feelings of gratitude in us. This act of appreciation increases the chance that both parties will behave altruistically in the future. Gratitude and altruism are cyclical and self-reinforcing. Interaction by interaction, person by person, gratitude builds a resilient community that will support you when you’re at your worst. The key is continuing to invest in those relationships, rather than assuming that they’ll always be there when you need them.

*Why Building a Community Is More Important Than Networking*

...rewires your brain away from negativity towards positivity

Practicing gratitude rewire the brain to shift your focus away from negative events and toward positive ones. Being grateful activates your hypothalamus, the area of the brain associated with energy maintenance and stress control. Practicing gratitude also makes your mind more sensitive to the effects of dopamine and serotonin. These feel-good neurotransmitters reduce your susceptibility to anxiety and help you muster the motivation to push through tough times. In summary, gratitude changes the brain to better handle adversity.

*How Gratitude Actually Changes Your Brain and is Good for Business*

...reminds you that we’ll get through this, too

It can be difficult to be grateful for negative experiences. But by shifting your focus to the positive outcomes of these experiences, you take power away from the bad and put it in the hands of the good. Gratitude is all about recognizing that good things can come from bad times. Doing so helps you see that you’re able to weather any storm. This may be why gratitude has been shown to build self-esteem in athletes. In both sports and business, gratitude gives us the self-confidence to get back up when we fall.

*Why Entrepreneurs Should Always Express Gratitude*
This playbook has shared multiple practices that organizations can pursue to cultivate community and well-being.

- **Prioritize employee wellness** to heighten team morale
- **Support your local food economy** to enhance the resilience of the surrounding community
- **Encourage peer support systems** to make colleagues feel comfortable and supported as they address challenges
- **Focus on gratitude** to become more resilient as an individual and organization

There is a clear business case for an organization to focus in on cultivating community and well-being. When we feel we are having a positive impact on our broader communities and the environment, we are more invested in the work we are doing. We also feel better about the work we are doing, our own well-being benefits, and we enter into a positive feedback loop that amplifies the creation of well-being for our broader stakeholder ecosystems. All of these positive exchanges of value in the form of well-being, health, and gratitude set us up to be more resilient as individuals and organizations.