



EPICUREAN *Butter*

**How Using Pre-Flavored
Ingredients Can Improve
Your Restaurant Operations**

Introduction

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From supply chain gaps and delays to staffing shortages to high ingredient costs, dining capacity limitations, and safety concerns, the restaurant industry has certainly taken a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic. This hit has since proven to be a daunting blow with a long recovery ahead. [A recent National Restaurant Association survey found](#) that 83% of respondents are understaffed, while 39% are operating with only four fifths of their needed workforce. This survey also found total food costs have risen 91% over the last two years, causing restaurants to have to raise prices and scale back the use of promotions in order to maintain profitability margins. In essence, the numbers signify it’s time to pivot, adapt, and take a fresh look at how to improve restaurant operations.





How to define “restaurant operations.”

All of the above factors play a critical role in creating and maintaining smooth restaurant operations, which touches all of ops from ingredients to invoices. Customer satisfaction, table turnover, inventory management and staff scheduling are all restaurant ops—essentially everything and the kitchen sink, pun intended. A clean dining area and kitchen, a calendar of shifts and time off, and a system for the functioning of the front and back of the restaurant from the time the doors open to when the last employee leaves for the night, all fall under the umbrella of restaurant operations. Even when everything is running smoothly, the process is full of constant and complex moving pieces.

While no magic wand exists that will suddenly answer the question of how to improve restaurant operations, there are some out-of-the-box adjustments you can make that have a bigger impact than you'd think.

One of these adjustments is switching to using some pre-flavored ingredients rather than manually flavoring every single element of a dish in the kitchen from scratch.

What counts as a “pre-flavored” ingredient?

A pre-flavored ingredient is exactly what it sounds like—an ingredient used in a dish that has already been enhanced with flavors like herbs and spices. Meat counters at grocery stores carry chicken breasts and pork loins that have already been marinated or rubbed in spices. Prepared cheese and cream cheese spreads can be purchased with garlic and chives or cinnamon and sugar already measured and folded into the blend. Sparkling and still water is often enhanced with lime or grape before it’s bottled.

To some chefs, reaching for pre-flavored instead of adding the flavor boost from scratch might feel like cheating; however:

- Many ingredients you might purchase already and use daily in your restaurant kitchen are technically pre-flavored, like pesto and salad dressing.
- It’s hard to make a flavored ingredient from scratch the exact same way, every time when you’re moving so quickly at a restaurant. Pre-flavored can create that consistency.
- Some pre-flavored ingredients, like Epicurean Butter’s flavored butter, are curated by chefs, so they know what they’re doing and aren’t cutting any corners on the recipe or the prep.

Now that we’re clear on what constitutes a pre-flavored ingredient, let’s break down five ways working them into your kitchen can help improve your restaurant operations.





5 Ways Using Pre-Flavored Ingredients Can Improve Your Restaurant Operations



1

Simplify your menu options.

A restaurant's menu is like a great billboard or an appealing party invitation. It's what draws people in and makes them want to walk in the door. The menu attracts the customers, and then the food quality, service, and ambience all have to work together to throw an incredible party people will want to attend again and again.

When it comes to your menu options, it's more important to create a cohesive flow and a selection of dishes that have superb flavor and can be made consistently and concisely than it is to provide a massive number of choices. If a customer has to sift through dozens of options, they might start their dining experience overwhelmed and insecure, which sets the tone for the rest of the meal. Not to mention if your restaurant has staff shortages, you need fewer recipes that are easy to train a chef to make and won't inflate your overall ingredient costs.

Take Epicurean Butter's roasted garlic herb butter as an example. You can use it to make [homemade croutons](#) for your salad course, [garlic bread](#) for the table, and to complement both your main [chicken](#) and [seafood](#) main courses.

Simplify and optimize your menu by reaching for flexible ingredients that can enhance multiple dishes, like flavored butter. Sometimes also referred to as "compound" or "finishing" butter, this ingredient can do much more than just finish dishes. Flavored butter is a multi-use menu item that levels up meat, fish, pasta, bread, and more—all without having to chop up those herbs and measure out those spices every time you want to add it to a dish. You can feature a certain flavor, like [black truffle](#) or [roasted garlic](#), throughout your menu to give it a signature flavor and flow while helping improve operations.



2

Streamline your kitchen and training.

As we mentioned above, using high quality pre-flavored ingredients avoids unpredictability and creates consistency during the food prep process. This is critical, particularly when staff turnovers and shortages are so high within the industry.

Pre-flavored ingredients can also improve efficiency and reduce errors that might arise during the process of training new line cooks and chefs. You won't have to worry about what mistakes might be caused by a learning curve. After all, if measurements might be slightly off or the dicing isn't done exactly the same way, it can impact the flavor of an entire dish. Epicurean Butter's roasted garlic herb butter contains fresh herbs, a garlic puree, and minced garlic. If the herbs aren't chopped, minced, and blended the exact same way every time, the taste is inconsistent and the timing of the prep can throw off both the front and the back of the house.

You don't need as much overall prep with pre-flavored ingredients, which can cut down on the time it takes to make a meal and improve table turn rates for customers. It's a win-win for helping your restaurant become a well-oiled (but still mouthwatering) machine.





3

Waste less food.

In order to keep up with ingredient inventory at a restaurant, you have to constantly strike a balance between carrying too much and wasting food that spoils and perishes, or not carrying enough and risking a shortage of ingredients that prevents customers from being able to order the food they want. To continue the analogy from earlier, if the invitation offers something the party doesn't deliver, the guests either won't stay or won't come back, which is bad for business.

According to [a study by the Food Waste Reduction Alliance](#) (FWRA), 84.3% of unused food in American restaurants ends up in a landfill. The domino effect of that causes [\\$2 billion worth of lost profits for restaurants](#). By making the switch to pre-flavored ingredients for some recipe components, you can minimize the one-off ingredients you have to purchase in bulk or only need a minimal amount that frequently expires before you can use it all.



If you want hard numbers to back up the theory that overbuying and under-utilizing the ingredients used to flavor components like butter are a significant factor in your food and cost waste, consider conducting an ongoing waste audit before and after you make the change. It's a dirty job, but it will give you data. Sort your restaurant's trash every day for a week into categories, like produce, meat, herbs, etc. Keep track of this for a couple weeks both before and after you switch things up, and then compare the numbers. Our guess is, you'll be surprised at the difference you see.



4

Improve the shelf life of your ingredients.

When you think about how to improve restaurant operations by making adjustments to your ingredients, there's more than one way to waste less food.

Using pre-flavored ingredients can not only free up space on your shelf by cutting down on the number of overall ingredients you need to keep on-hand to manually flavor dish components like butter, sauces, dressings, and meats. You can also lengthen the shelf life of some of your other ingredients, like bread, by using them for both added flavor and moisture retention. Garlic bread has never sounded so appealing, right?

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5

Save money long term.

You can track your own ingredient costs and track the profitability of your menu and prep process by implementing a [recipe costing card system](#) in your restaurant to track your inventory and ingredient prices over time and measure the impact of changes you make—like switching to pre-flavored ingredients.



Here's an example. To make roasted garlic spreadable butter from Epicurean Butter from scratch, you need 13 ingredients (and about 35 minutes) to yield five pounds butter. Those 13 ingredients will cost you about \$13 to make a batch of the same size. If you add in labor cost at \$20 per hour, it will cost your restaurant right around \$25 to make its own batch of butter with ingredients and labor together. Alternatively, a five-pound tub of Epicurean Butter currently costs \$21.66 per unit. Over time, those dollars add up.



Determining how to improve restaurant operations in a post COVID-19 industry requires innovation and experimentation with out-of-the-box approaches. Finding what works best for your restaurant will take time and is sure to be an ongoing process, but the benefits will pay off in customer satisfaction, employee retention, and your business's bottom line.

If you're ready to take a step toward incorporating pre-flavored ingredients into your restaurant operations, the chefs at Epicurean Butter are ready to help. [Contact us](#) to learn more about our gourmet flavored butters and request samples for you and your chefs to put to the ultimate taste test.



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