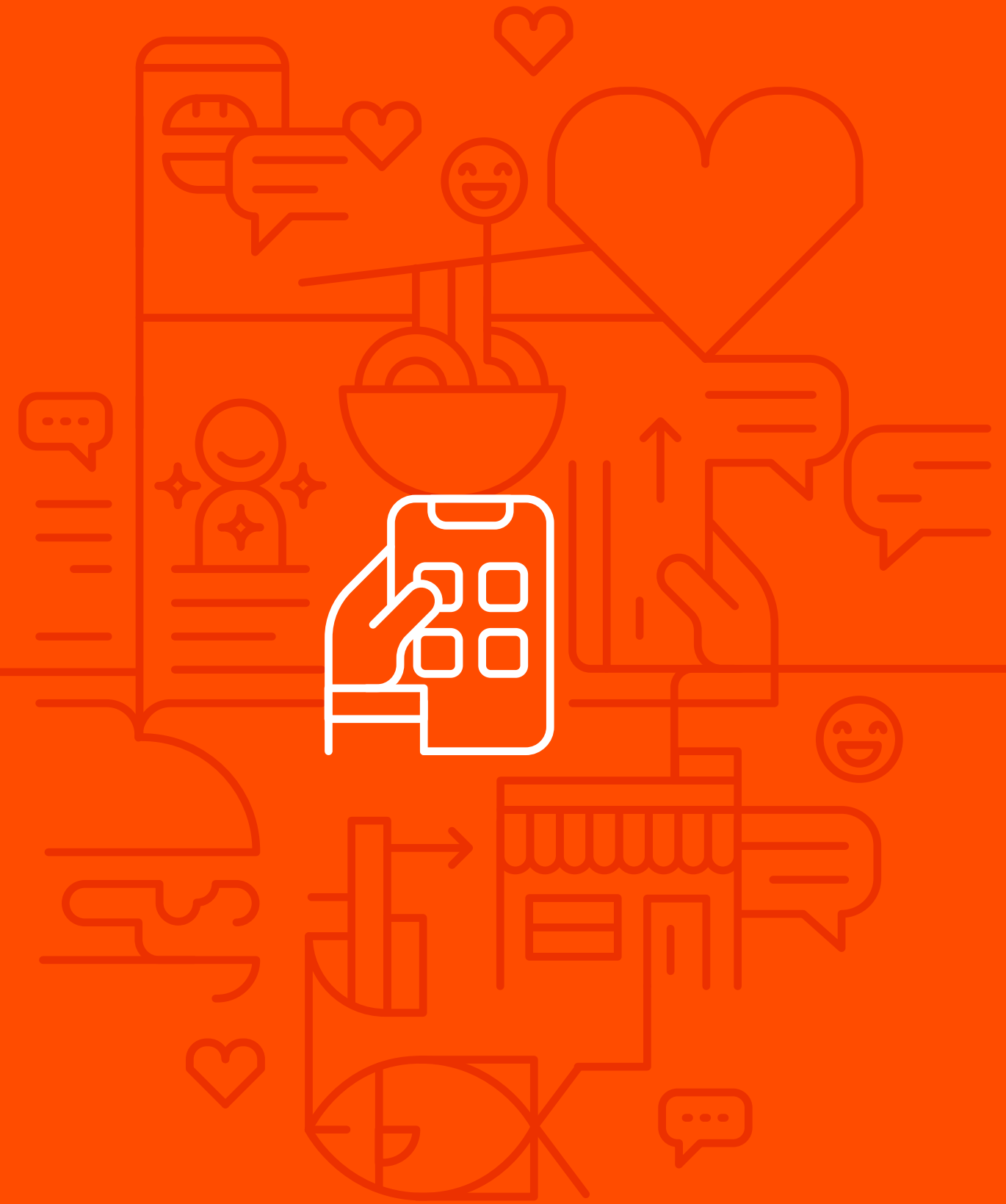




# Your Guide to Restaurant Branding

How to create a restaurant that stands out,  
attracts customers, and drives repeat visits



# Introduction

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Every restaurant owner wants their customers to fall in love with more than just their entrees. They want them to fall in love with their brand, too. A unique concept, striking color schemes and designs, and a strong mission can go a long way in getting valuable brand loyalty from guests — and keep them coming back again and again.

But restaurant branding is so much more than a sticker on your to-go box. Your brand is how the world sees your business, and your branding defines all of the elements that go into it.



## **What is a restaurant brand?**

Your restaurant brand is essentially how your guests perceive your business and feel during their dining experience. Your brand should be on display before your customers actually step foot into your restaurant, through marketing channels like your website, social media, and advertising.

## **Why is it important?**

No matter what type of restaurant business you own, your brand matters because it represents a commitment to your customers. Internally, establishing a strong brand gives you a guiding light when it comes to making decisions about your restaurant, whether you're wondering how to decorate your establishment or what to write for an Instagram caption.

Your brand is made up of decisions you make early on, but it is also something you're constantly working to improve and promote.

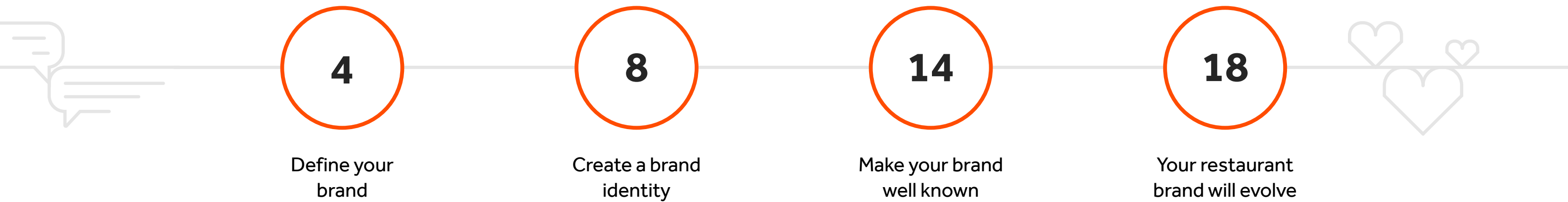
## **What will you find in this guide?**

In this guide, you'll learn how to create a restaurant that stands out, attracts customers, and drives repeat visits. Specifically:

- How to define your brand through your mission and vision, restaurant concept, and target market
- Ways to create a brand identity such as unique selling points, design elements, and a brand book
- Specific methods to make your brand well known through social media, your website, and marketing
- Examples of real restaurants with strong brands and why they're successful throughout

**Ready? Let's jump in.**

# Table of Contents





# 1

## Define your brand

### Your mission, vision, and values

The first step in defining your brand is establishing your mission, vision, and values. Your mission statement proclaims what your restaurant does daily to meet its overarching purpose. It focuses on the now and what you can do today.

It answers the big “why” question: why does this restaurant exist? In the chaos of day-to-day operations, it’s important to have a mission to help you and your team focus on the bigger picture and long-term goals.

There isn’t a formal set of rules for creating a mission statement, but, generally, it should be kept short and sweet. It also shouldn’t be too specific or limit your restaurant to any degree. An example of a restaurant business with a great mission statement is **Sweetgreen**, an American fast-casual restaurant chain.. Sweetgreen’s mission is, “Building healthier communities by connecting people to real food”. This is short, to the point, and doesn’t limit them to anything too specific. If Sweetgreen wanted to start making smoothies, their mission could remain the same as they didn’t include specific details under “healthier.”

On the flip side, a vision statement focuses on tomorrow. Your restaurant vision includes your future goals, whereas your mission helps to define how you'll get there. A vision statement answers the big “what” question: what is your restaurant aspiring to do? What inspired you to open your restaurant in the first place? Your vision isn't something that needs to be made public. It can be discussed internally to help you and your team think about long-term goals.

A great vision statement uses clear words to describe an understandable goal. It's straightforward and achievable through your mission. An example of a restaurant business with an excellent vision statement is **DQ**, the soft-serve and fast food restaurant chain. DQ's vision is “to be the world's favorite quick-service restaurant.” It's a big goal, but it's something the business can work towards every day.



Your restaurant's mission and vision are brought to life by your core values. These values should be evident in your brand but also in your restaurant's culture. These values need to be established early on to guide your restaurant as you grow because they'll help you define the business's priorities. For example, if a restaurant has product quality as a core value, it needs to make food quality a top priority and avoid substituting ingredients for lower quality but cheaper options.

**Your mission, vision, and values all come together to help cohesively define your brand.**

**A VISION STATEMENT ANSWERS THE BIG “WHAT” QUESTIONS:**

**What is your restaurant aspiring to do?**

**What inspired you to open your restaurant?**





## Restaurant concept

Another important thing you have to decide early on when developing your **restaurant business plan** is your restaurant concept. Your restaurant concept includes your overall idea or theme, aesthetic, and style of food. Because there's such an immense amount of competition in the industry, your restaurant concept should answer the question, "How can I make my restaurant stand out from others?" Your concept differentiates you from your competition. Restaurant concepts include your overall idea or theme, aesthetic, and style of food.



**To establish your restaurant concept, consider the following:**

- Ambiance
- Target Market
- Location
- Mission, vision, and values
- Cuisine

Once you've narrowed down these ideas, focus on what excites you the most and your customers will feed off of it. If you're unsure of your concept, consider starting with either a pop-up or a soft opening. This way, you have the ability to subtly make changes to perfect your concept. Think about your favorite restaurants: what is it you like most about them? What matters to you matters to other customers.

An example of a unique restaurant concept is **Boozehounds**, "where dogs bring their humans." Boozehounds is a contemporary, multifaceted space where people can socialize with their pups. Their concept has a modern design and is dog-friendly, marketing to millennials to have cocktails and Japanese food while donating to animal-related causes.



## Finding your target market

Something to think about when establishing your brand are your target customers, the people who will visit your restaurant regularly. Identifying your target market includes figuring out who they are, how large the market is, and how to best reach them.

To start, consider your restaurant location, concept, hours of operation, and how they may affect your target audience. Of course, one of the best things about restaurants is how all different types of people visit them. But your location determines who your regulars are, and repeat customers are a direct reflection of a successful restaurant brand. Your concept can help determine which kinds of people will frequent your restaurant. For example, millennials and generation z both tend to enjoy healthier restaurants that give back to the community.

Finally, your hours of operation will be dependent on what time your target customer prefers to visit your restaurant. Is your ideal diner someone who will be at your door for breakfast at 9am, or do they prefer to come in later in the day? Consider this when defining your hours of operation.

## Refer back to the 4 P's

When in doubt, refer back to the 4 P's. There are 4 P's in marketing to keep in mind when building your brand:



### Place:

Location is essential to retaining loyal customers.



### Price:

Price determines where your restaurant stands against competitors and how potential patrons will view you.



### Product:

You're selling both a menu and a dining experience to your customers.



### Promotion:

Get the word out about your brand with social media, ads, partnerships, and more.



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# Create a brand identity

## What is brand identity?

Brand identity is made up of all the physical elements that reflect your restaurant back to consumers. Brand identity includes colors, logos, design elements, and much more. All of these details come together to create a cohesive brand identity.

## Unique selling points and competitors

To create a restaurant brand that stands out, you need unique selling points that give you the upper hand over your competitors. Find your niche by considering the following characteristics:

- Signature dishes
- Sustainability
- Service
- Ambiance

## Which of those can you hone in on to help differentiate your restaurant?

Once you've established your niche and figured out what makes your restaurant special, promoting it is essential. Keep your promotions short and to the point, but bonus points for creativity. Finally, make sure to follow through with your promise. For example, if your selling point is having phenomenal service, consider making your sections smaller to guarantee optimal service.





## Design elements

Your brand image is brought to life by how your restaurant physically meets the eye. There are many factors to consider in restaurant design, and the opportunities for your brand are endless.

One element, your color scheme, makes your brand recognizable, as color impression is associated with **80%** of brand recognition. As an example, doesn't your brain automatically perceive orange and pink as the Dunkin' brand? Beyond color, your design sets the tone for your atmosphere. The ambiance you choose to create through the use of elements such as lighting, decor, and furniture conveys your brand.

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**Can you name this brand based on color alone?**



### **Some important design elements to consider are:**

#### **Your entrance:**

Consider what your customers see when they first walk into your restaurant and make sure it's eye-catching.

#### **Aesthetic:**

Achieving the right aesthetic for your restaurant can leave a positive and lasting impression on your customers.

#### **Unique design pieces:**

Guests love to take pictures of one-of-a-kind experiences and post them on social media.

#### **Different materials:**

The use of different materials and textures in your interior design is a simple yet effective way to decorate.

#### **Statement walls and furniture:**

The restaurant industry may be incredibly saturated, but you can still stand out.

#### **Visible kitchens:**

A visible, well-kept kitchen is not only easy on the eyes but also excites guests to watch their food being prepared in front of them.



# Menu design

Your menu should be viewed as an exciting opportunity. It's one element of your restaurant brand that each of your guests will give their attention to and read. There are three essentials to consider when **designing your menu**:

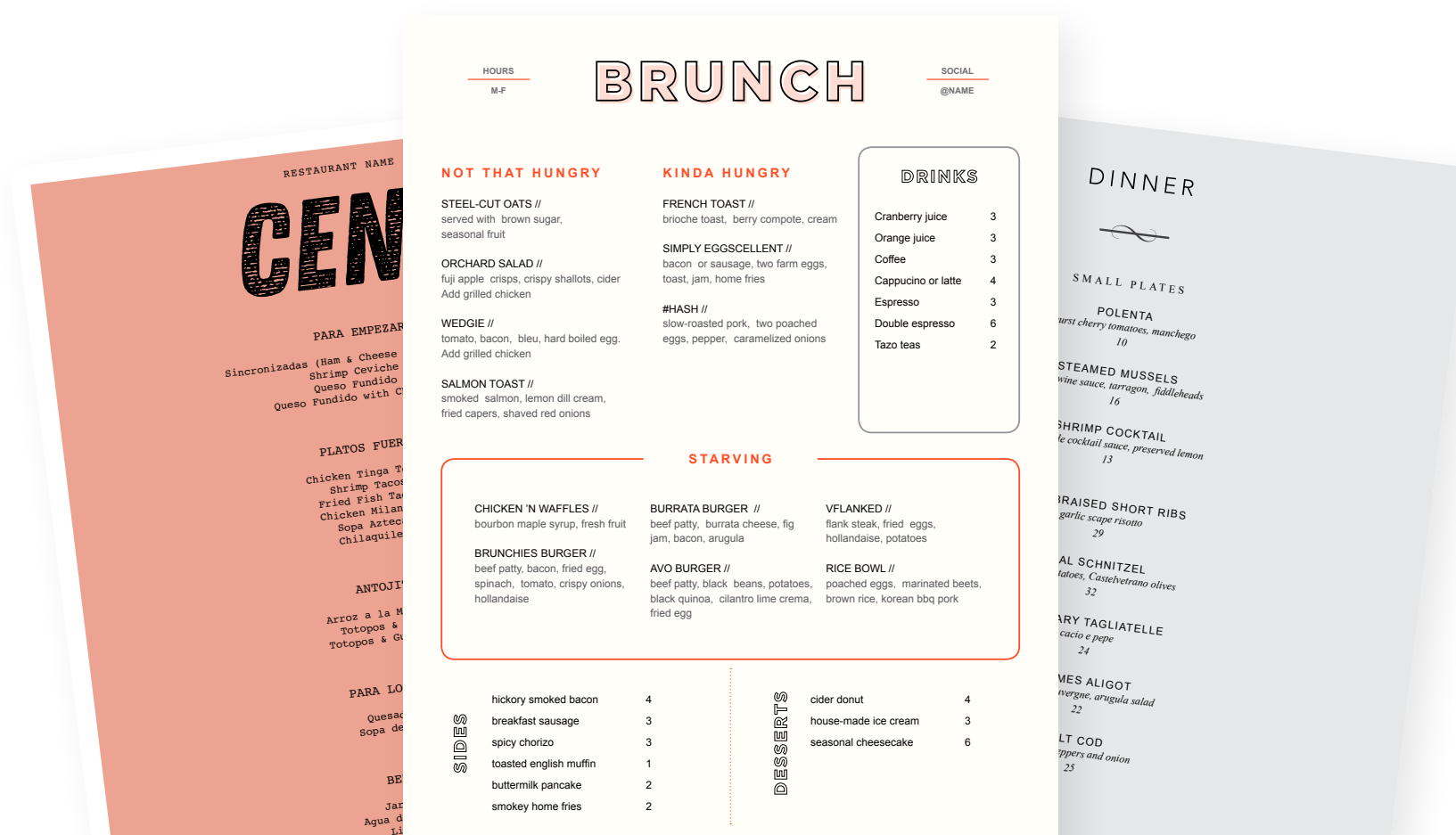
- 1 Readability
- 2 Profitability-forward design
- 3 Acknowledgment of your brand's personality

First and foremost, your menu should be easy to read. It should be organized in a way that's easy to follow, and the font should be legible. The font should also fall under your brand guidelines, which we'll go over later in this guide. Essentially, your fonts should be consistent throughout your menu, social media graphics, and promotional ads in order to keep your brand identity consistent.

Next up: Pricing your menu items in order to profit is an obvious part of the business. But building out your menu to increase profitability is a different skill altogether. You want your pricier entrees to be strategically placed in the most desirable location on your menu: Make them the main character. Also, make sure the add-on options (e.g. choose a protein, substitute for sweet potato fries, add guacamole, etc.) are listed so your staff can easily upsell customers. To learn more about designing your menu for profitability, [read this article](#).

Finally, bring your brand's personality to life in your menu. Menu design is an important part of your brand identity because it's a physical element every one of your guests sees. When designing your menu, consider the concept you've already established. If your restaurant concept is all about sustainability, make sure your menus are reusable or digital. What's your aesthetic? Is your restaurant modern and sleek, which would call for a clean, simple menu design? Or maybe your restaurant is vintage-chic, so your menu is a bit more extravagant.

**If you follow these three core menu design guidelines, you'll create a beautifully designed yet informational menu that your guests will enjoy.**





**Don't let the world of never-ending design elements overwhelm you. To create an outstanding logo, follow these steps:**

- Consider who your target market is
- Think about your brand
- Decide if you want to DIY your logo or hire a designer (a matter of time and budget)



## Logo

People are visually oriented, and logos help your guests spot your brand out of the crowd. Restaurant logos are one of the first elements of your brand and overall marketing strategy that a potential customer experiences, and they help tie all of your branding elements together. Having a unique logo can help you stand out from your competitors as long as you keep your target market in mind when creating it.

An example of a restaurant business with a great logo is **Snooze**. It uses a 1950s typography that matches the aesthetic of their restaurants perfectly, with their interiors decorated with bright 1950s furniture and decor. It sticks with this vintage theme through the small design in the upper-righthand corner, as well as the font used beneath the restaurant name. This is a simple yet effective example of a logo that clearly displays a restaurant's brand.

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If you do decide to create your logo yourself, some easy-to-use design tools are **Canva**, **DesignWizard**, and **Stencil**.



## Brand voice

Your brand voice refers to how you'll communicate with the public. Therefore, it's an essential part of what makes your brand stand out, by showcasing your brand's personality and how you interact with your guests.

Your customers should hear your brand voice and tone when they read the messaging on your menu, social media posts, and in your email campaigns. Your brand voice and tone are valuable because they help you better connect with your guests. Most restaurants choose to use a semi-formal tone but don't underestimate the power of keeping things casual. A more casual voice and tone can help your brand stand out by adding familiarity and humor.

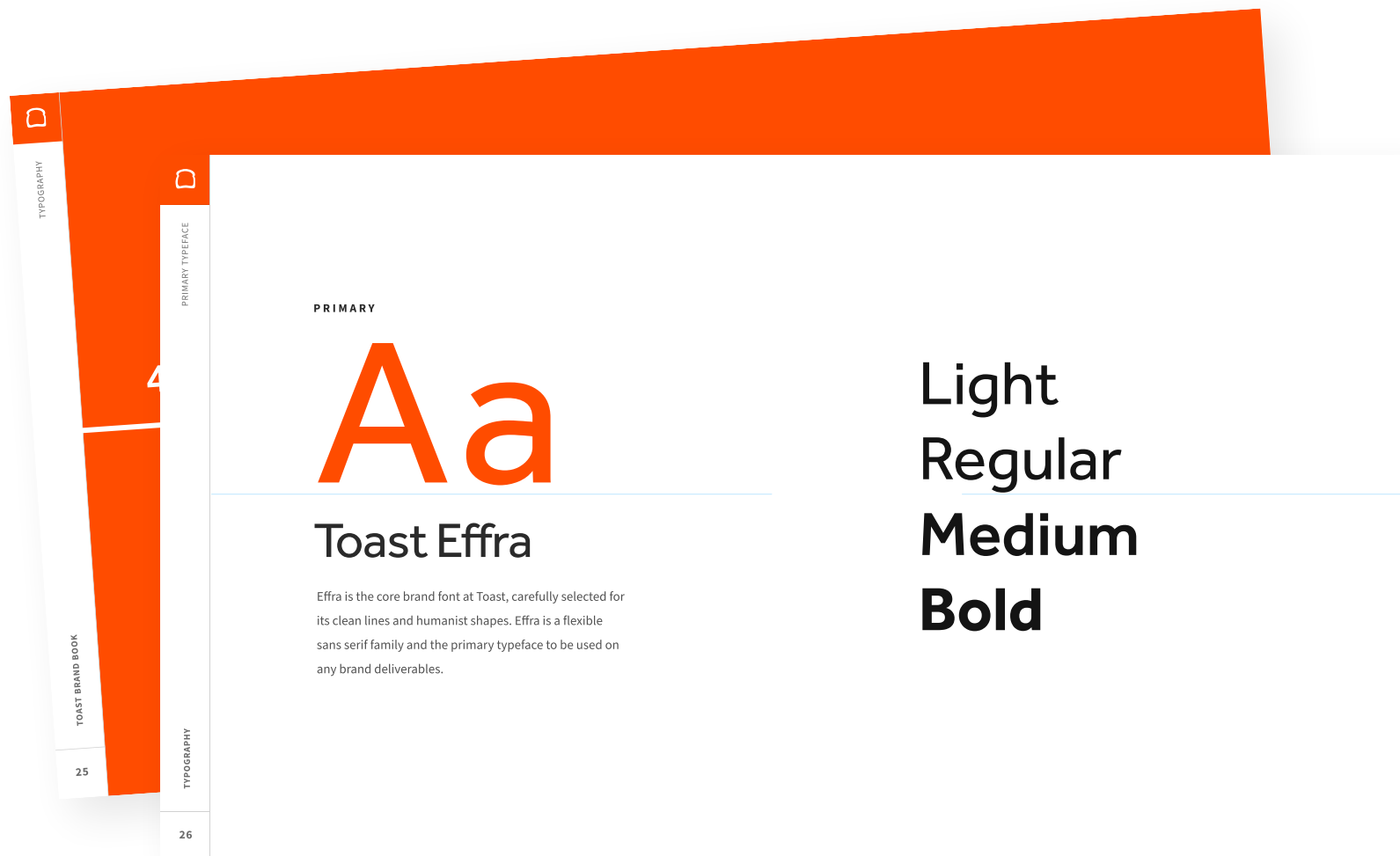
Creating a brand voice that aligns with your brand identity can be difficult. But a great way to develop it is to describe your brand with three words (e.g. elegant, authentic, lively) and then elaborate on each word. Once you know why you chose each adjective, you should have an understanding of what your brand voice is and how to use it going forward.





## Brand books

One of the best ways to keep your brand consistent, also known as “staying on brand,” is to create a brand book. A brand book, which could also be referred to as your brand guidelines or style guide, is a set of rules that explain your specific brand elements like voice, tone, colors, and positioning. The purpose of a brand book is to get your team aligned on what exactly your restaurant brand is.



### Some things to include in your brand book are:

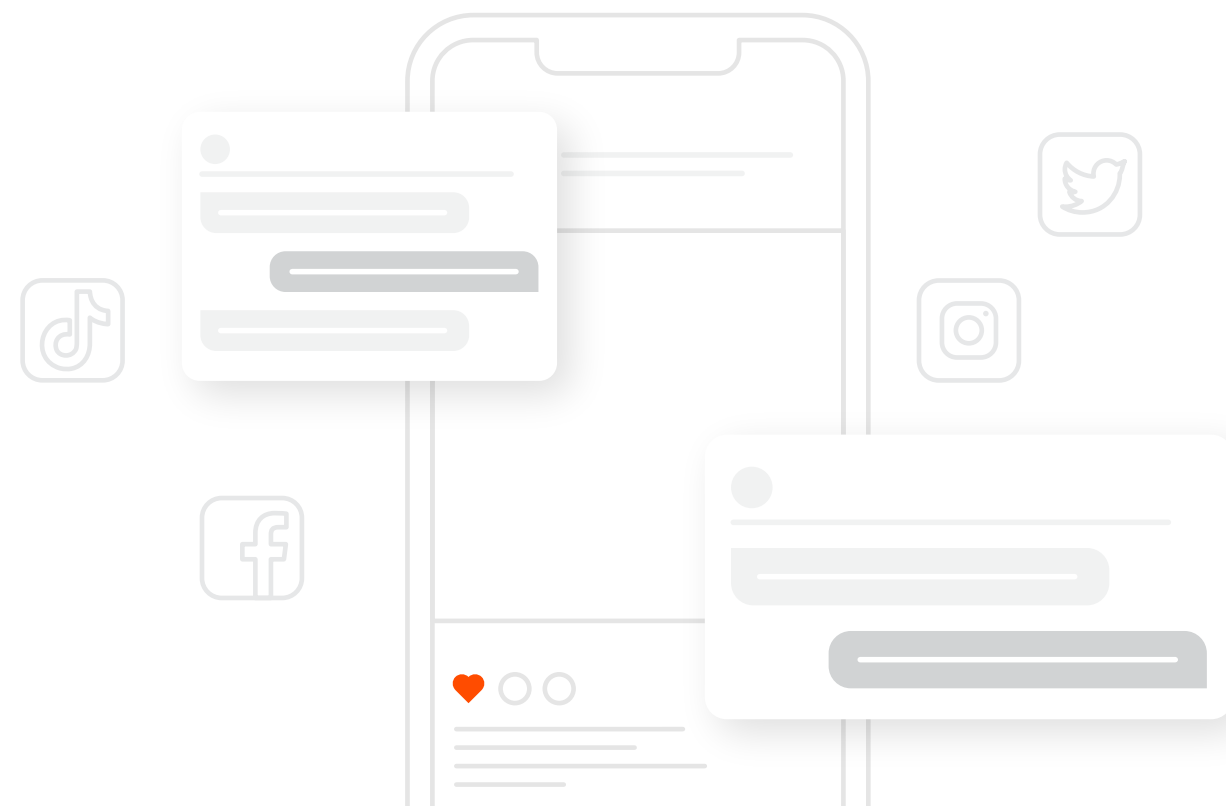
- A general introduction to your brand addressing its personality, promise, and vision
- Your brand logo and any variations
- Any brand taglines
- The fonts and typefaces that you use on your menu, for your logo, and in all of your designs
- The color palette your brand uses for all design elements
- The photos and designs that are acceptable to use in design elements and in all promotional materials for your restaurant
- The Do's and Don'ts of talking to the media, alongside an explanation of how to talk about your positioning externally
- All illustrations and icons

# 3

## Make your brand well known

### Promoting your brand

Now that you've built a strong brand that has differentiated you from your competitors, it's time to show it off. In the digital space, you have to sell your restaurant to entice customers that haven't had the chance to experience it yet. Your brand is perceived by guests well before they step foot in your restaurant through channels like social media, your website, and any marketing efforts.





## Social media

By the end of 2022, there are expected to be about **3.96 billion** users on social media. Wouldn't it be nice if you could capture even a small chunk of that market?

Your guests are using social media, and you should be, too. Any modern business needs social media to reach new and existing customers. It's also one of the most effective ways to turn newcomers into repeat customers. In addition, millennials and generation z both tend to actively avoid restaurants with weak Instagram presences. So, how should you be promoting your restaurant brand on social media?



### Here are some tips:



Post high-quality photographs of your menu items



Share customer-generated content, and respond to comments and questions



Highlight employees to make your restaurant feel more personable



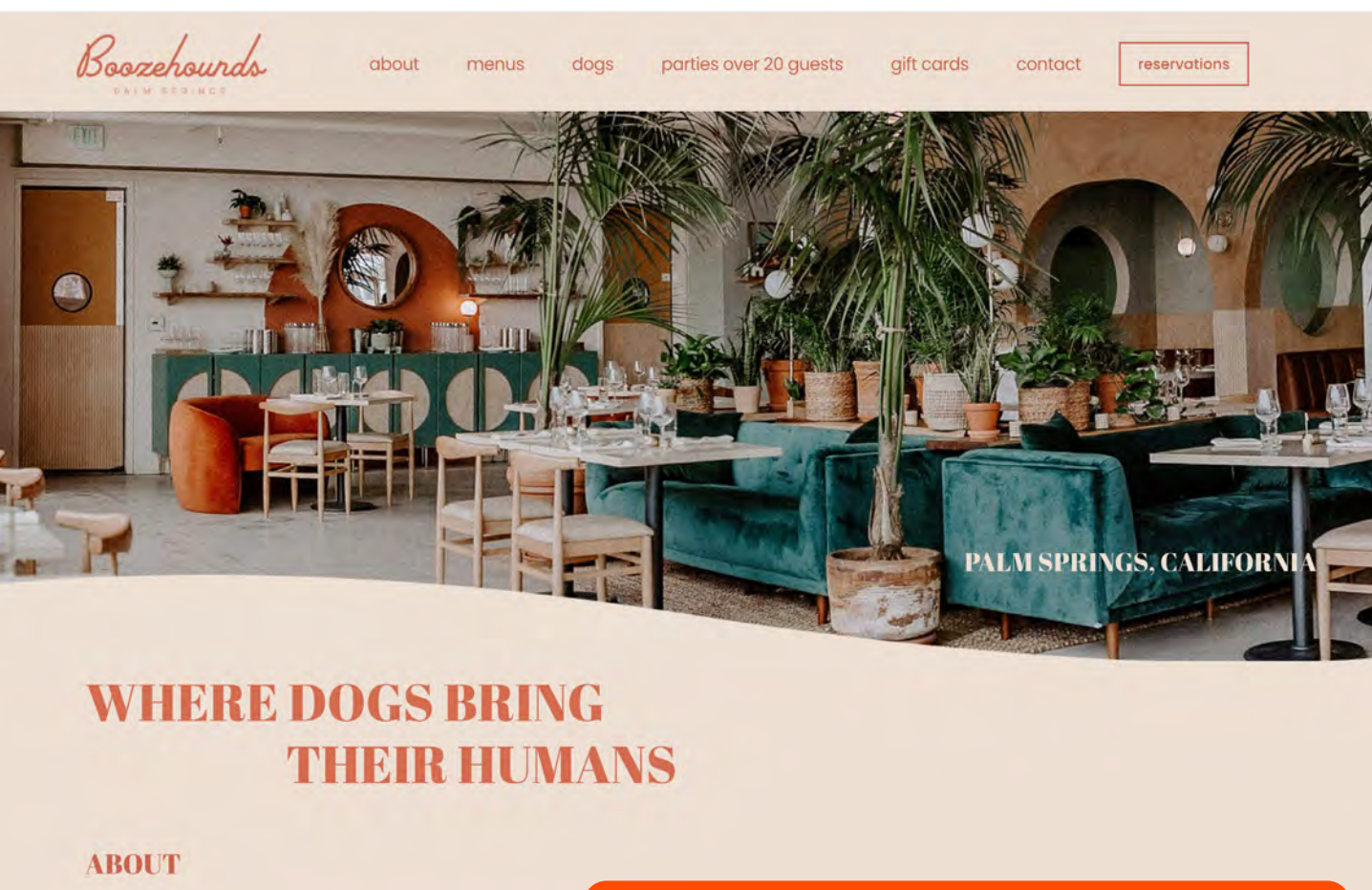
Keep your profile updated with any menu and hours of operations changes



Use your restaurant logo and colors on all of your social media profiles



**Pro tip:** Have one staff member be in charge of your social media accounts to guarantee consistency across all social media platforms. To get an in-depth overview of how to best showcase your restaurant on the most popular social media sites, download the **Guide to Restaurant Social Media Marketing**.



**Add some personal touches about your restaurant to make your website stand out. Some things to consider are your story, information on how your food is made and where you source your ingredients from, and links to any recent press.**



## Your website

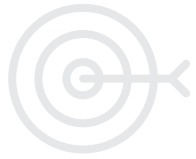
With takeout, delivery, and online ordering becoming critical to success, it's more important than ever that your restaurant website is well optimized and in accordance with your brand guidelines. Your website needs to include important info like your hours, location, and menu, but the elements of your site that show off your brand identity are your website design and any additional content.

Fortunately, it's not as difficult to create a website as it once was, with website builders like [BentoBox](#) and [Squarespace](#) that have easy-to-use templates. But your website is still something you should give yourself plenty of time to create. Upload your color scheme, logo, and fonts to make sure it screams your brand. Add links to your social media profiles and upload pictures of your restaurant to give users an idea of what it looks like. Double-check that your website reflects your aesthetic and is easy to navigate.

Add some personal touches about your restaurant, too, to make your website stand out. Some things to consider are your story, information on how your food is made and where you source your ingredients from, and links to any recent press. Give yourself plenty of opportunities to showcase your brand voice and to make your restaurant come across as authentic as possible. No secrets here.

To learn more about building and managing a restaurant website, [check out this article](#).





## Marketing

When it comes to marketing, the opportunities for your restaurant are endless. Beyond social media and website marketing, some ways to promote your brand are through email marketing campaigns or newsletters and ads.

The average return on investment (ROI) for **email marketing** is **\$42 for every \$1 spent**. **Email marketing tools** offer ways for restaurants to send marketing or informational emails out regularly to large groups of recipients, along with analytics and design features to help you level up your efforts.

The goal of these emails is to provide true value; you should not be spamming your subscribers and customers. Instead, inform them about promotions, loyalty rewards updates, and events. A newsletter is a great option to talk about menu changes, tell your restaurant's story, spotlight employees, and make big announcements.

As for advertising, there are a variety of digital ad platforms you can choose to run campaigns on: Google, Facebook, Instagram... The list goes on. Restaurant marketing through targeted advertisements can help you bring in new guests — with the ultimate goal being to win their recurring business and long-term loyalty. The messaging in these targeted ads should be brief, to the point, and written in your brand voice.

To learn how to create an email marketing strategy, **check out this article**, and to get inspired, here are **10 creative ideas** for your restaurant ads.

**\$42 for every  
\$1 spent**

Average ROI on email marketing



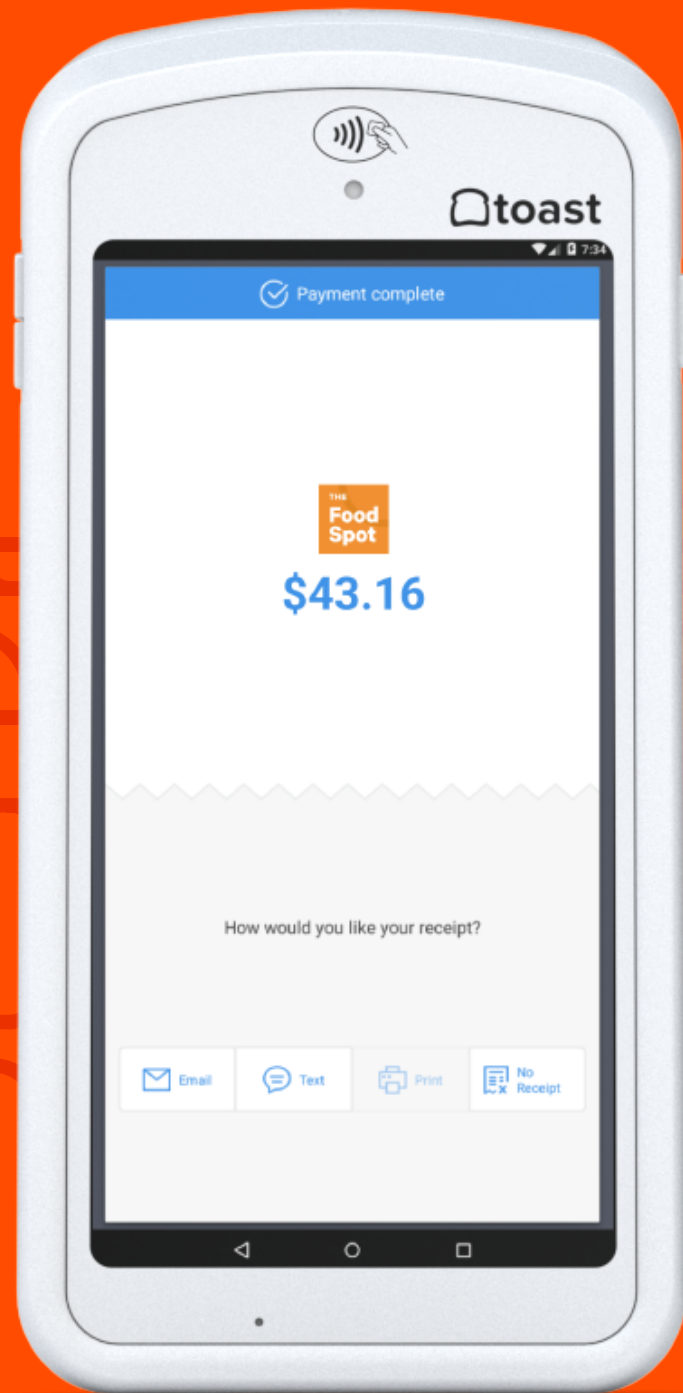
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## Your restaurant brand will evolve

We hope that by reading this guide and applying its tips and best practices, you'll create a strong brand that will help you outshine the competition.

**Build a restaurant brand that you're proud of, and your customers will sense your authenticity and appreciate it.** It's part of the job to understand that your brand stretches far beyond the walls of your establishment: It's often in the hands of your customers. So take control and don't be afraid to do something unique to stand out.

Remember that your brand is meant to change over time. As your relationship with your customers shifts, so should your branding. And as long as you stick to your mission and values, what truly matters will always remain the same.



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