

# Huhtamaki

## 2021 Q2 Trends Report



Vending Machines | Virtual Brands | Hiring Spree



# I. Vending Machines

Even as restaurants continue to re-open, the need for safe, contactless and on-demand solutions for food is fierce in the restaurant world right now due to the pandemic. **Vending machines have proven to be helpful during a time when restrictions are in place on indoor dining and regular retail settings.** Co-owner of Stellina Pizzeria, Antonio Matarazzo, told *Food & Wine* magazine, “While vending machines in the States stock the basic snacks and soda, you can get wine, sandwiches, and all kinds of stuff in machines across Europe and Japan. **There’s definitely room for vending machines to grow in popularity here.**”

# Stellina Pizzeria

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Even before this Virginia restaurant opened in February, they gave their neighbors a sneak preview of their menu by offering a vending machine that included **pasta, jars of sauce and even dessert** to complete their meals.

# Luxury Food Lockers

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Alchemista, a foodservice solutions company, has partnered with Boston-based chefs to bring fine dining straight to the residents of upscale apartment buildings in the city **via convenient food lockers that keep food warm and bacteria free.** The customers use a unique QR code to open the lockers to pick up their food.



# New Breakfast Buffets at Hotels

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Marriott Hotels is testing vending machines at their Fairfield Inn chain that just **might replace their breakfast buffet for good**. These machines offer both hot and cold breakfast options, as well as a contactless way to get meals, **appealing to travelers who are more conscious of health and safety** as things return to normal.



# Piestro



This portable pizzeria lets customers place their orders on a touchscreen and watch their pizza being made and baked by robots in 2 minutes or less. Once the pizza is done, the customer picks it up from a smart food locker attached to the machine.



## II. Virtual Brands

**A virtual brand is one that exists live online only and uses the kitchens of other restaurants to produce their food for delivery and takeout.** The pandemic created a rise in popularity in takeout and delivery as well as in these **“ghost kitchens.”** As a result, some brick-and-mortar restaurant brands have started to expand their exposure to customers by creating virtual brands. Using their own kitchens and staff to complete the orders, **some of these restaurants have reported virtual brands account for half of their sales.**

# Dickey's Barbecue Pit



This restaurant chain created a virtual chicken wing brand called Wing Boss, which has allowed them to capitalize on the food delivery trend that exploded during the pandemic and remains strong with consumers. According to Dickey's, **units that are taking advantage of this virtual brand have seen a 1% increase in revenue.**



# Dog Haus



This gourmet hot dog restaurant was already successful with retail locations nationwide when they created a variety of virtual brands, such as Plant B and Huevos Dias. **Each brand focuses on its own food and is marketed along with Dog Haus** by using “Powered by Dog Haus” on all marketing materials.

# Smokey Bones Bar & Fire Grill

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The Burger Experience, a delivery arm of Smokey Bones Bar & Fire Grill, originally launched in 2019, then re-launched this year with the goal of filling a void in burger deliveries by offering a mid-range price point. The brand offers smaller burgers beginning at \$6 that are simpler and can get to customers faster.

# Baker Miller



As a way to keep going during pandemic restrictions on restaurants in Chicago, Baker Miller experimented with different concepts for a virtual brand until they found success in bagels.

The result was Miller Bagel. Its success even has the owner looking for physical locations for Miller Bagel post-pandemic.

# Red Robin



Much like Dog Haus, Red Robin has several virtual brands that focus on a specific food item. Getting in on the food delivery explosion has proved to be a wise decision. Their off-premise sales grew 131.8% in Q4 of 2020, and about 80% of those orders came through digital channels.





### III. Hiring Spree

Restaurants have gone on a hiring spree to find the staff they need as more begin to open nationwide and consumers return to some of their normal behaviors. **The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for both February and March 2021 confirmed this trend with 309,000 restaurant jobs added, along with 176,000 new bar jobs.** Many prominent brands have held mass hiring events in recent months, including:

# Taco Bell

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The Irvine, California-based chain held its fourth annual hiring party last month to fill 5,000 positions nationwide. These positions include everything from general managers to bellhops, which are their new drive-thru tablet order takers.



# Fire House Subs

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Fire House Subs, based in Jacksonville, Florida, also held a mass hiring event in April to fill 12,000 positions. The chain believes their brand is lucky to be in the position of expanding their teams and creating opportunities in their local communities during challenging times.



# McDonald's

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Also grateful for the chance to bring jobs to their local communities, McDonald's franchises in Ohio, Virginia, Tennessee and Pennsylvania held regional hiring events to fill 10,000 jobs.



## Ninety Nine Restaurant & Pub

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This regional restaurant and pub chain in New England and upstate New York hired 1,000 team members for a variety of positions. As COVID restrictions have continued to ease, the chain noted that they needed more employees to meet increased demand.



# Sonic

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Sonic hired some 20,000 new team members nationwide at their drive-ins. The positions range from carhops to multi-unit leaders, and the company is leveraging their drive-in concept to attract new employees. They are emphasizing their balance between being a great place to work as well as a great place to stay safe during the pandemic.



## IV. Take-Away

Whether you're looking to expand your brand through vending machines or virtual branding, or just expand your team, it's important that you, as a foodservice provider, stay on top of the trends that are important to your customers. Huhtamaki North America stays at the forefront of these trends to help your businesses navigate the ever-changing foodservice landscape.



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# Q2 2021 Trends Report Sources by Slide

Slides 2 & 3: <https://www.trendhunter.com/trends/pasta-vending-machine>

Slide 4: Toro chefs and Alchemista create automat of the future (nrn.com)

Slide 5: Marriott tests replacing the breakfast buffet with vending machines (restaurantbusinessonline.com)

Slide 6: Kitchen United founder launches AI-powered Piestro (nrn.com)

Slide 7 & 11: How a virtual brand turned a Chicago brunch spot into a bagel concept (restaurantbusinessonline.com)

Slide 8: Dickey's Barbecue Pit launches virtual smoked chicken with Wing Boss (nrn.com)

Slide 9: How 4 restaurants approach marketing virtual brands (restaurantbusinessonline.com)

Slide 10: Why Smokey Bones revamped its virtual burger brand (restaurantbusinessonline.com)

Slide 12: Red Robin is Launching Three Virtual Brands | FSR magazine

Slide 13: Restaurants are on a hiring spree as COVID-19 recovery continues (nrn.com)

Slide 14: Taco Bell US to hire 5K on 1 day | QSR Web

Slide 14: Firehouse Subs filling 12,000 jobs | Fast Casual

Slide 15: McDonald's Restaurants Seek to Add More Than 250 New Employees Locally – GantNews.com

Slide 15: Ninety Nine Restaurant to Hire More than 1,000 workers | FSR magazine

Slide 16: Sonic set to soup up its ranks with 20K hires | QSR Web