

KitchenBiz

Industry insights, equipment, and supplies
for foodservice professionals

Fifth Edition

What's in Store for the Restaurant Industry?

**Trends, Statistics,
and Forecasts**

Technology Integration in
Restaurants Making Huge
Advances in 2024

Electric vs. Gas
Appliances:
The Great Kitchen
Debate

Customer Expectations,
Quality Checking Your
Operation, Tips, Ideas,
And Solutions



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Trends, Statistics, and Forecasts



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The Heat is On As Customer Expectations Create Challenges, Insights, and Opportunities for Restaurant Owners

The grace many customers were giving restaurants as a result of COVID is lessening, but the challenges are still there.

With the return of a feeling of some normalcy, restaurants are facing several challenges heading into 2024. If you're feeling the heat, you're not alone. Here are few challenges still in play:

52%

STAFF
SHORTAGES

50%

EMPLOYEE
BURNOUT

45%

SUPPLY
CHAIN ISSUES

Expectations of diners are putting demands on restaurants to have already solved their supply chain, staffing, and training challenges. At the same time, 31% of consumers want to dine at restaurants more frequently than pre-COVID. Diners are craving new foods and cuisines and memorable dining experiences. Consumers are also increasing the demand for technology, with expectations of seamless pick-up and delivery options. The challenges are tough, but the potential opportunities are exciting.

Source: IPSOS Innovation & Knowledge

What are foodservice professionals doing to survive and thrive in this ever-changing, rapidly growing, and exciting industry?

This issue focuses on critical components for success as foodservice professionals thrive in 2024, including customer expectations, quality checking your operation to ensure that you are delivering a superior experience, and solution-driven technology integration. Also, watch for insights into industry forecast data, tips, and ideas to combat challenges and create new opportunities.

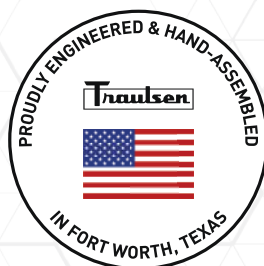
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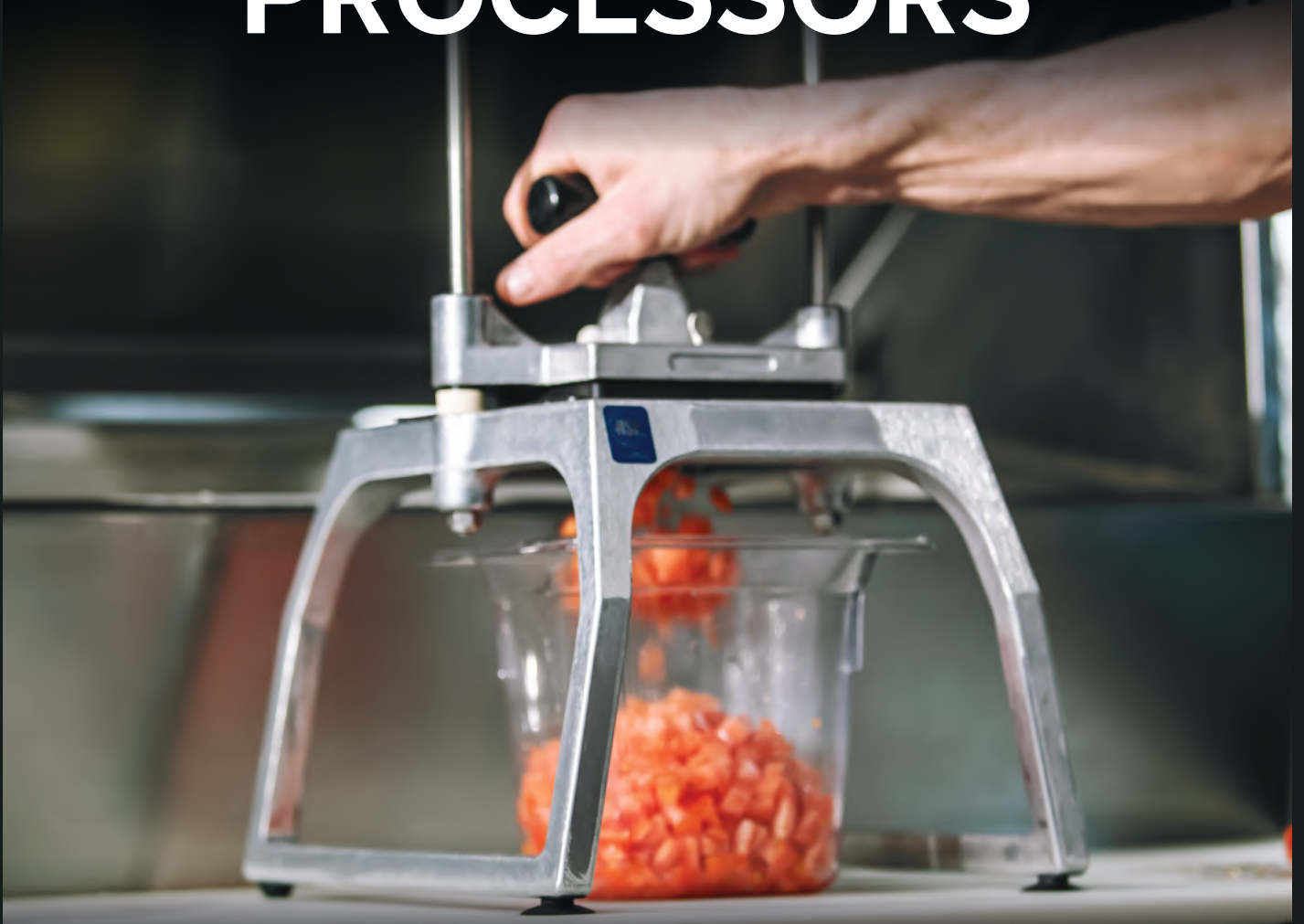


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Technology Integration in Restaurants Making Huge Advances in 2024

Innovations Will Bring New Features To Contactless Ordering

With mobile applications, QR codes, self-ordering kiosks, and hot and cold food holding lockers, restaurants are perfecting contactless ordering for their customers. We can expect more utilization of advances in equipment and concepts to create a more seamless system with more features, including increased ordering customization, preference saving, voice commands, facial recognition, and more.

More Virtual Kitchens Will Be Popping Up

Cloud kitchens, where chefs prepare meals that can be delivered to customers through third-party services, enable businesses to control multiple virtual food brands from the same kitchen, diversifying their offerings and expanding their customer base. Restaurants will use Virtual Kitchens to transition to food delivery-focused operations while reducing operating costs.

Delivery Robots Will Come Into Play

As the demand for food delivery increases and staff shortages remain a challenge, we will see more delivery robots in 2024. We can expect autonomous delivery robots/vehicles with GPS, cameras, sensors, and other technologies to navigate urban environments. The advantages will include reduced labor costs, more affordable on-demand food delivery for customers, and fewer vehicles on the road. Watch for new companies specializing in delivery robots to help restaurants quickly and cost-effectively put them on the street.

More Robotic Chefs In The Kitchen

By integrating robots into operations, restaurants can optimize workforce allocation by assigning human staff to roles demanding creativity, customer interaction, and supervision. Robots in commercial kitchens could help with labor shortages, reduce food waste by optimizing ingredient usage, provide increased food safety, increase speed and efficiency, and lower long-term operating costs.

Serving Robots

The growing demand for contactless services, personalized interactions, and streamlined operations makes food serving robots a contender. With precision and accuracy, serving robots navigate restaurant spaces to deliver orders directly to tables or designated pickup points. These robots can add a unique experience for your customers, address labor shortages, and take on time-consuming tasks that will allow your employees to focus on more value-added tasks, like engaging with customers and ensuring the overall quality of the dining experience.



Utilizing Technology for Food Waste Management

With the cost of food today and the amount of food discarded, restaurants have no choice but to take an aggressive approach to food waste. There's also the concern of contributing to environmental issues that brings extra motivation. Data-driven and innovative waste management strategies will be a huge focus. Technologies that we will see more of include the Internet of Things (IoT), advanced analytics, AI, robotics, chemical recycling, and more. Machine learning and predictive analytics will enable restaurants to streamline resource utilization by accurately tracking inventory and predicting varying customer demands. In addition to minimizing over-purchasing, foodservice operations can deploy sensors to track food waste, which aids them in identifying patterns and controlling food waste at the source.

Increasing Food Safety with Technology

Foodservice operators are utilizing technology to strengthen their food safety programs and minimize the significant risk factors, including food-holding temperatures, inadequate cooking, contaminated equipment, food from unsafe sources, and poor personal hygiene. Technology assistance has been and continues to be a resource for real-time monitoring and tracking of food temperatures, humidity, and other essential factors, allowing food chains to detect issues and be more proactive.



Let's talk about AI-powered Solutions. Below are three examples of how Artificial Intelligence is impacting foodservice operations.



Customer Engagement

Artificial intelligence can help provide more personalized service for restaurant guests by using data collected from a customer's purchase history and social media profiles to understand them better and provide them with customized menus and promotional recommendations based on their online history. Chatbots and virtual assistants interact with customers 24/7 through websites, apps, and messaging platforms. It allows restaurants to engage and cater directly to their customers. By automating these interactions, restaurants improve efficiency and allow staff to focus on other areas. Meanwhile, customers get immediate responses and more personalized services and offerings from your operation, increasing loyalty.

Supply Chain Management

AI-powered systems can help restaurant operators monitor their inventory levels and track incoming supplies from the manufacturer to the restaurant, significantly reducing waste and making inventory management more efficient by enabling more accurate demand predictions.

Transparency

AI caters to customers' growing desire for full transparency of ingredients and sources by giving restaurants the means to provide customers with an accurate report of the source and ingredients of their meals from production to plate. This level of transparency also allows restaurant operators to quickly check the quality of ingredients and ensure their suppliers provide the products and quantities ordered.

Technology, including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR) are innovative opportunities for restaurants to elevate their offerings and engage customers in unique ways. They can be used to strengthen your brand, for the creation of new menu items, the sky is the limit.

Source: StartUs Insights Trend Report

From ChatBots to AI-powered Solutions

2024 will be another big year for changes that map the future of foodservice operations.

Watch for innovative technology solutions in foodservice equipment from the top manufacturers in the industry.

Keep your eye out for new start-up companies providing apps, advanced AI, and ghost kitchen platforms customized for foodservice operations.

Technology in restaurants will no longer be a some day, maybe proposition. It can provide solutions and opportunities in a variety of different capacities.



According to a report by The National Restaurant Association, in partnership with American Express and Nestlé Professional, Drive-thrus could need to accommodate interactions with self-driving vehicles by 2030.

Electric vs. Gas Appliances: The Great Kitchen Debate

By Helen Applewhite, Group Marketing Manager at Lincat, a Middleby Company

In the bustling world of commercial kitchens, a pivotal debate is simmering: electric versus gas appliances. As a business owner, this choice is central to your kitchen's heartbeat, influencing not just your utility bills but the culinary masterpieces you create. Let's navigate the pros and cons of both to help you make a choice that marries efficiency with excellence.

Installation and Initial Investments: Electric is The Straightforward Choice

In the realm of electric appliances, ease of installation is a significant advantage. Generally, a power outlet is all you need to get started, eliminating the need for complex setups and potentially saving you a substantial amount in initial costs. This simplicity spares you from installation headaches and allows for more flexibility in kitchen layout and design. Take, for instance, the CiBO+, a compact and powerful high speed oven that embodies this ease of use. Manufactured by Lincat, a Middleby company, this innovative and award-winning ventless high-speed oven requires no intricate installation processes or lengthy setup times. Simply plug it in, and you're ready to cook, exemplifying the straight-forward and user-friendly nature of electric appliances. This ease of installation allows you to focus more on crafting culinary masterpieces and less on dealing with installation hassles, making electric appliances like the CiBO+ a practical choice for modern commercial kitchens.



Gas Appliances: The Traditional Route

Gas appliances, on the other hand, require a more detailed setup, including gas lines and ventilation systems. While this means a higher initial investment, many appreciate the traditional feel and control that gas appliances offer.

Energy Efficiency: Electric Appliances Take the Lead

Electric appliances are generally more energy-efficient, a trait that not only keeps the kitchen cooler but also reduces cooling costs. Moreover, when outfitting your entire kitchen with appliances, be they gas or electric, opting for those with efficiency certifications like Energy Star ratings can be a wise choice. It not only aligns with potential regulatory requirements but also promises substantial savings, potentially reducing costs by an estimated \$5,300 annually for the entire kitchen.



Maintenance and Repair: A Balanced View

Electric appliances house a complex network of components, which, while ensuring top-notch performance, can mean more intricate and costlier repairs compared to gas appliances.

Portability and Flexibility: Electric Appliances Shine

Electric appliances offer the benefit of easy relocation and the option to stack some appliances, helping you make the most of your kitchen space — a feature often absent in gas appliances.

Operational Costs: A Close Call

Gas appliances, despite their higher acquisition costs, often boast lower daily operational costs. However, a true assessment of cost-effectiveness should factor in local utility rates and the specific power output required for your equipment.

Food Quality: A Matter of Preference

When it comes to the culinary outcome, it's a tie. Most electric appliances offer uniform cooking, while gas appliances provide a more precise control, letting you fine-tune your culinary creations to perfection.

Safety: Electric Appliances Lead

Electric appliances edge out with a safer operation, eliminating the risk of gas leaks, which can be a serious safety concern with gas appliances.

Purchasing Considerations for Electric Appliances

As you venture into the electric appliance market, here are some key aspects to keep in mind:

- Space: Ensure the appliance harmonizes with your kitchen layout.
- Power: Ascertain that your kitchen's electrical infrastructure can support the new addition.
- Usage: Choose appliances that cater to your menu and customer volume.
- Budget: Factor in both the upfront and the long-term costs, including potential repairs and energy consumption.

Expert Guidance at Your Service:

Remember, your trusted foodservice equipment dealer is always ready to assist you in finding the perfect fit for your kitchen, steering you towards a choice that is not just smart, but potentially mandatory.

In the great kitchen debate between electric and gas appliances, electric options emerge as strong contenders, offering a blend of efficiency, safety, and adaptability. As you stand at this crossroads, armed with insights, may you choose the path that leads to culinary excellence and operational efficiency.

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Hot Blox

Hold **crispy or **moist**.**



What's in Store for the Restaurant Industry?

The National Restaurant Association, in partnership with American Express and Nestlé Professional, took a deep dive into the Future of the restaurant industry. They released their report, Restaurant Industry 2030: Actionable Insights for the Future, which examines the industry's current state and key indicators shaping the next several years. The findings in this report reflect input from various restaurant sector experts, futurists, and government statistics.

Below are a few highlights from the report.

Off-premise dining continues to grow, and customer expectations increasingly reflect demands for a seamless experience with complete transparency. Restaurants will be turning to technology and data solutions more than ever as they adapt to growing consumer expectations in the on-demand world.

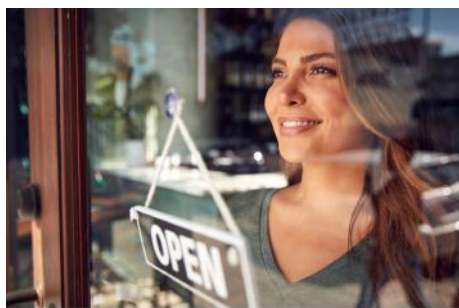
A factor in the off-premise growth is the consistent decrease in meals being cooked at home, lending to the continued rise in delivery, virtual restaurants, subscription services, and grab-and-go at retail locations.

Consumers may grow increasingly loyal to third-party delivery apps. On the same note, governments are likely to impose further regulations on third-party delivery.

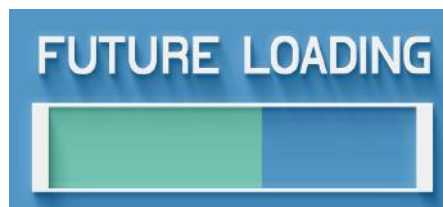
On-premise dining is increasing, while consumers place a heightened importance on experiential dining for on-premises occasions. Live music, seating around a fire, and new creative concepts and events are just a few things attracting attention.

Restaurant kitchens are getting smaller, leading to more purchases of ventless equipment, automated and multi-functional equipment, stackable equipment, mobile equipment, and vertical kitchen layouts.

As restaurants open or expand to new locations, they will use data analytics to determine the area's best menu items and price points. It's essential to know the local demographics, financial averages, and personality to determine the best strategies for the restaurant.



Restaurants will utilize AI and data solutions to improve profits, increase operational efficiencies, and reduce overall costs.



Restaurants will continue to compete against other industries for talent, making recruitment and retention vital to success in the coming decade. Restaurant employers will adopt career-focused mentalities as operators enhance retention by offering benefits and long-term career paths to success. With more technology entering the restaurant space, a need for technologically advanced team members will become increasingly essential.

More Trend Favorites



Charcuterie boards are listed as the top-ranked appetizer of the year, according to the National Restaurant Association 2023 culinary trends report.

Specialty salts gained popularity with chefs. The gourmet salt market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 6.17% over the next five years to reach a total valuation of more than \$477 million.

Global cuisines are still at the top of the favorites list for adults, and international cuisine options will also be appearing on more kids' menus.

Source: National Restaurant Association

Restaurant industry sales are expected to reach **\$1.2 trillion by 2030.**

The industry workforce will likely exceed **17 million by 2030.**

Total U.S. employment is projected to increase at an annual rate of 0.5% during the next decade.

Plant-based menu options continue to top the list of consumer cravings, with high growth projections.

Locally-sourced, fresh ingredients and sustainability continues to grow in importance for consumers.

Food that offers specific health benefits will be a high-demand option.

Vertical Farming will have a projected **\$19.86 billion market valuation by 2026.**

The global market for functional beverages are expected to reach **\$173.23 billion in 2025 at a CAGR of 7%**

Popular beverages with health benefits include Turmeric latte, kombucha, adaptogen infused drinks, and more.

Plant-based milk varieties like almond, oat, and pea are also on the rise.

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Recruitment, Retention, and Training

Things to Consider

Flexible and secure shifts are more important than wages to some employees. Avoid last-minute shift changes as much as possible.

The opportunity to attract people wanting to get on the cutting edge of restaurant technology will appear. Restaurants are beginning to recruit staff with a technology background and skillset as technology becomes more prominent in restaurants.

New technology-based training opportunities for your restaurant staff will provide an exciting new outlook and increased job satisfaction.

Increased automation and AI solutions will free up staff for more creative, personal touch tasks. Equipment and technology will continue relieving kitchen staff of some more tedious work.

Demographic Workforce Changes

The number of adults in the labor force 65 and older is expected to reach a record high of 16.1 million by 2028.

The number of teenagers in the labor force is expected to decline to 5.1 million by 2028, its lowest level in 65 years.



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Getting Customers In The Door

Restaurants are tapping into Influencer Marketing to get their brand out there.

Creative Social Media Strategies and collaboration with local foodie influencers are spreading brand awareness for many restaurants.

Reviews are Driving Traffic For Restaurants

Managing online reviews is critical to your business. Make sure someone in your operation is reading and responding to all reviews. Consider incentivizing your happy customers to leave a review.

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What Do Your Customers See When They Choose You?

It's a good idea to run a quality check by regularly walking through your operation as if you were the customer.

What is your customer's first impression as they walk toward the door of your restaurant?

As your customers approach your restaurant, they begin their overall dining experience. Does the landscaping and lighting outside ignite positive anticipation? Is it inviting?

What does your customer see when they walk in the door and start taking it all in?

When they enter your restaurant, they immediately take everything in as they look forward to their dining experience. Does everything look clean and freshly painted? Look at the ceiling, floors, vents, tables, bars, and especially bathrooms. Is the temperature comfortable at all tables? Does your restaurant concept come through to your customers?

How does your customer feel about the service, hospitality, and the overall experience?

Your team significantly impacts your customer's experience, how they feel about the experience and the lasting impression they will take away from it. Are your customers always greeted and cared for by friendly, polite, and trained servers, hosts, and hostesses? Does your team know the menu and the goals of the experience you want to give your customers? Does your staff appear to be happy to be there? Do they regularly check on customers to ensure they're happy, keep drinks filled, ask if they want anything else, and notice when it's time to bring the check? Service is one of the highest motivators for customer reviews, good and bad.

Will your customer be equally impressed with the picture-perfect presentation of the food as they are with the fantastic taste?

Today's diners are impressed by your culinary talent and the creative way the food is presented in front of them. They love to take pictures of their menu choices and share them with everyone on their social channels. Is everything coming out consistently at the highest quality, even at peak busy times? Are food safety measures and quality checks being implemented? Is your equipment in good shape, and are you fully stocked with all the ingredients needed? Do you have the proper utensils, serving pieces, and flatware? Make sure your kitchen team has everything they need.

Are you keeping up with changing times?

Restaurants must keep up with current and upcoming trends around sustainability, technology, customization, and experiential dining. Restaurants can thrive in the coming years by embracing industry advancements and paying close attention to changing demands and new generations entering the scene.

Be sure to stay on top of your focus and passion to create the ultimate dining experience for your customers. Be consistent about looking for ways to improve in every area of your operation. Get your entire team involved and encourage feedback. Build loyalty with your customers, ignite recommendations, and make sure your customers know they made the right choice when they chose you.





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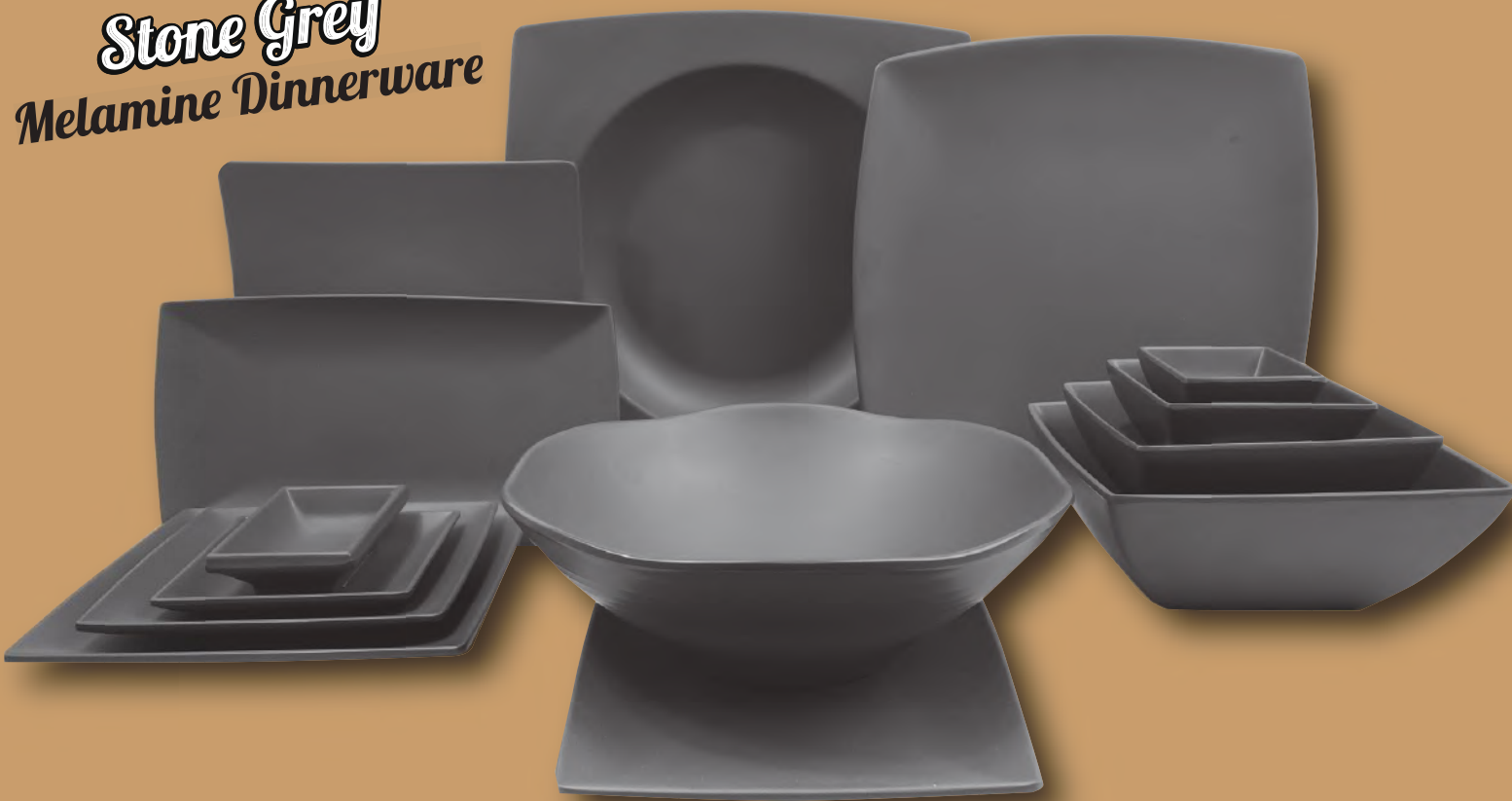




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