



Celebrating Summer: Optimizing August

A Strategic Guide for Minnesota Restaurants

Prepared in partnership with Performance Foodservice Minnesota and Hospitality Minnesota

Labor Day weekend is the last big push. After that, the light changes, the buses roll back to school, and the year starts to feel different. Before we get there, here's a few things worth your time this month.



Run Labor Day like the finish line it is.

Build the schedule now, not Thursday. Your student staff go back to class the week after the holiday, and plenty of them drop from 30 hours to 12 overnight. Know which shifts break first and fill them before they do.

Have the honest conversation with your seasonal team about their actual last day. Written down, not assumed. Same with your closing checklist up north — winterization, storage, what stays open shoulder season and what doesn't.

And take stock of what this summer told you. Covers, occupancy, average check, labor as a percent of sales. Write it down while it's fresh. In February you will not remember what August felt like.

Our Neighbors in the Northeast

July was hard on the Arrowhead. Fires drew national coverage, and operators in towns that were never in danger watched their bookings fall off a cliff anyway. That's the part that stings — the losses came from perception, not flames.

The best thing any of us can do is go. Fall color season in northeastern Minnesota is as good as travel gets in this country, and those resorts, restaurants, campgrounds and outfitters need the room nights. Book the trip. Tell your friends to book the trip. We're also working the funding and recovery side at both the state and federal level, and I'll keep you posted on where that lands.



ON THE CALENDAR

Hospitality Minnesota Golf Tournament

September 14 | Legends Golf Club

- Bring a foursome. Bring a candidate.

2026 Hospitality Conference

September 27–29 | Hilton Minneapolis Downtown

- Opening reception at Clubhouse Social, hosted by TPI. Offsite Dinner at Brit's Pub.

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OUR UPCOMING
EVENTS HERE.**





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The Part I Really Want You to Read

The primary was Tuesday, August 11. The ballot is now set for November 3.

Here's what's on it: Every seat in the Minnesota House. Every seat in the Minnesota Senate. An open governor's race. An open U.S. Senate seat. That's 201 legislative seats and two open statewide offices in a single cycle. The House sits at a 67-67 tie right now and the Senate margin is a single vote. Whatever happens in November, the 2027 Legislature is going to look meaningfully different than the one we just worked with.

Which means a lot of people are going to walk into that building in January with strong opinions about your business and very little firsthand knowledge of it.

That's fixable, and you're the one who fixes it. Between now and November, candidates in your district will knock on doors, work parades and take almost any meeting offered. They are more available right now than they will be for the next four years. Use it.

My ask is one thing: Invite the candidates in your district into your business.

Not a fundraiser. Not a position paper. A tour.

Walk them through the back of house. Introduce them to your team.

Then give them three numbers: what you paid in credit card swipe fees last year, how many people you employ, and what your margin actually is. Most candidates guess high on that last one. Every single time.

Do this with candidates from both parties. This is not about who wins. Hospitality Minnesota represents members in every corner of this state and across the political spectrum, and our job is to make sure that whoever is sworn in understands what a 3 percent margin means when a new mandate lands. A legislator who has stood in your kitchen makes different decisions than one who hasn't. I've watched it happen for twenty years.

If you want help — talking points, the current numbers, or a hand setting up the visit — call us. That's what we're here for. Ryan and the public policy team have a packet ready, and after seven stops across northern Minnesota and four in the south this summer, we have a pretty clear picture of what operators want said.

— Angie Whitcomb, IOM
President & CEO, Hospitality Minnesota



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MINNESOTA



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