



Navigating Relief & Current Realities

A Strategic Guide for Minnesota Restaurants

Prepared in partnership with Performance Foodservice Minnesota and Hospitality Minnesota

Spring Into Revenue: Trends & Strategies for Minnesota Operators

Spring in Minnesota is a feeling like no other. After months of cold, our guests are ready to come out — and that means real opportunity for restaurants, bars, resorts, and everyone in between. April and May historically mark the rebound quarter for our industry, and this year we have every reason to lean into that momentum.

This edition of Around the Table is dedicated entirely to you — the operators who are already thinking ahead, asking the right questions, and finding creative ways to bring guests back through the door. Inside, you'll find the season's top trends, practical revenue ideas, and a few things worth keeping on your radar as you head into your busiest stretch.

Let's make this spring one to remember.



What's trending: Spring 2026 Dining

- 1. The Return of the Experience Meal:** Guests are increasingly choosing dining occasions that feel like events. From chef's table dinners to prix-fixe spring menus, people are willing to spend more when the evening feels intentional. Think wine pairings, farm-to-table sourcing stories, or themed tasting nights — anything that turns a Tuesday into a reservation.
- 2. Local & Seasonal Ingredients in the Spotlight:** Minnesota diners have a genuine appetite for local. Spring is the perfect time to build around what's emerging at Minnesota farms — ramps, fiddlehead ferns, morel mushrooms, spring greens, and fresh dairy. Feature your sourcing on the menu and on social media. Guests want to know where their food comes from, and local sourcing is a competitive differentiator operators should use loudly and proudly.
- 3. Non-Alcoholic Beverage Programs Are Growing Up:** The 'sober curious' trend has moved from fringe to mainstream. Investing in a thoughtful NA beverage program — house-made sodas, botanical mocktails, premium sparkling options — can meaningfully boost per-cover revenue while welcoming a broader guest base. This is low-cost, high-return, and surprisingly underutilized in our market.
- 4. Brunch Is Booming:** Weekend brunch continues to outperform other dayparts across the country, and Minnesota is no exception. If you haven't built a brunch program — or refreshed yours — spring is the moment. Extended brunch hours, creative cocktail add-ons, and shareable plates are driving check averages well above the lunch standard.
- 5. Outdoor Dining Is Back — and Guests Expect It:** Patio season is sacred in Minnesota. Guests plan around it. This year, consider investing in minor upgrades that pay dividends: string lighting, portable heaters for shoulder-season warmth, branded outdoor touches, or a streamlined QR menu built for the patio experience. First impressions on your patio are marketing.

Revenue Boosters for Spring

Here are two categories of tactics — quick wins for right now, and builds worth starting this month for bigger summer returns.

Quick Wins (This Week)

- Add a seasonal prix-fixe or chef's special to upsell covers
- Launch a spring cocktail/mocktail menu with 2-3 new items
- Promote a 'Patio Opening Night' event on social media
- Email your loyalty list about a spring offer or members-only preview
- Feature a local ingredient story on your menu and Instagram
- Add a dessert pairing suggestion to your server prompts

Build This Month (May Payoff)

- Mother's Day package — brunch, dinner, or gift card bundle
- Book at least two private dining or buyout events for May/June
- Partner with a local brewery or winery on a tasting event
- Launch or refresh your loyalty/email program before summer
- Build a catering or offsite menu for graduation season (May–June)
- Train staff on upselling spring LTOs to drive check average



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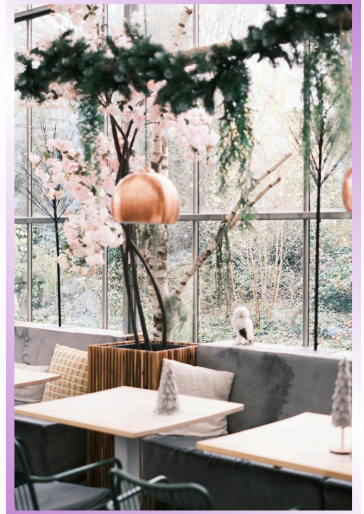
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Spring Marketing Moments Worth Planning For

Your social calendar for the next 60 days is packed with built-in reasons to connect with guests. Don't leave these on the table:

April & May Dates to Build Around

- **Earth Day (April 22)** — Highlight sustainability practices, local sourcing, or a giveback promotion
- **Cinco de Mayo (May 5)** — A natural LTO event, especially for beverage programs
- **Mother's Day (May 10)** — Historically one of the highest-volume dining days of the year; book early, plan staffing now
- **Memorial Day Weekend (May 23–26)** — The unofficial launch of summer; consider preview menus, patio parties, or resort packages
- **Graduation Season (May–June)** — Private dining, catering, and group reservations; proactively market to local schools and families



Workforce: Setting Up Summer Hiring Now

Spring is also the moment to get ahead of summer staffing. Minnesota's hospitality workforce is competitive, and the operators who hire early — and hire with intention — are the ones running at full capacity when July arrives.

- Post positions now, before the summer rush of job seekers arrives
- Connect with local high schools running ProStart programs — Hospitality Minnesota's Education Foundation works with programs across the state, and many of those students are ready for their first industry jobs
- Consider offering seasonal packages that include scheduling flexibility, which is often more important to younger workers than wage alone
- Tap into Hospitality Minnesota's workforce resources and job board for support

On the Legislative Front

Spring isn't just busy season in our restaurants — it's busy season at the Capitol. Hospitality Minnesota is actively engaged in the 2026 legislative session on issues that directly affect your bottom line: swipe fee reform, liquor pricing transparency, seasonal employee definitions under PFML, and more.

If you want to add your voice, there is no better time. When operators show up at the Capitol and tell their stories, it matters. Watch for updates from our Government Relations team on how to engage — and thank you to everyone who has already taken the time to contact your legislator this session.

The Bottom Line

Spring is the industry's reset button — and Minnesota operators are ready. Here's to a strong season ahead. As always, we're in your corner.



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