



FOOD INFLUENCER MARKETING FOR RESTAURANTS

A quick-start guide



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A GUIDE TO FOOD INFLUENCER MARKETING FOR RESTAURANTS

As a restaurant owner or marketer, understanding how to effectively collaborate with food influencers can offer the competitive advantage you may need to really stand out in your market.

Food influencer marketing leverages the credibility of individuals with significant followings on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These influencers drive trending topics and create lasting impressions that can translate to real-world sales.

Collaborating with food influencers can lead to enhanced brand recognition, an expanded customer base, and an authentic connection with audiences that supplements traditional advertising channels. This guide demystifies the process of influencer marketing for restaurants, and offers strategies to harness the power of social media personalities.



TYPES OF INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond the types of content they produce, the main way to distinguish creators is by the size of their followings – which in turn impacts how much they can charge for brand partnerships¹.

Nano-influencers

0-10K followers

\$0 - \$100 per post

Nano-influencers are a cost-effective option who may be open to posting in exchange for a comped meal. Despite their smaller number of followers, the best nano-influencers have highly engaged communities who see their recommendations as more trustworthy and personalized.

Micro-influencers

10-100K followers

\$100+ per post

Micro-influencers are likely to have a growing authority in their niche, and a strong understanding of what's expected in executing a campaign. They also know their target audiences well and are effective partners for brand awareness campaigns.

Mid-tier influencers

100-500K followers

Price on request

Mid-tier influencers may manage blogs, newsletters, or podcasts in addition to their social channels, and have a reputation for polished, high-quality content. These influencers can create a larger brand awareness impact due to their higher follower counts.

Macro-influencers

500K-1M followers

\$1000+ per post

Macro-influencers can be expensive, but everything they share is guaranteed to reach an enormous audience. The quality of their content – and their authoritative credibility – is well-established, which makes them a strong choice for a restaurant's biggest and most important campaigns.

Mega-influencers

1M+ followers

\$10,000+ per post

Mega-influencers are considered "celebrities" from a social media perspective. This type of collaboration has the potential to introduce a restaurant to a global audience – which may or may not be worth the expense, depending on your goals.



COMMON INFLUENCER CAMPAIGNS FOR RESTAURANTS:

COLLABORATION

Initiate a completely bespoke partnership, such as allowing influencers to see behind the scenes of your restaurant, learn from your chef, or even co-create a limited-time menu item.

ONE-OFF OCCASION

Host a one-time event, such as a party, pop-up, or media preview of a new menu offering, and send a personalized invite to influencers.

GIVEAWAY OR CONTEST

Collaborate with an influencer on a fun contest or social media giveaway by providing an enticing prize that participants can win by liking, following, tagging, and sharing a post.

DISCOUNT CODE

Provide influencers with a discount code to share with their followers, which can help bring customers to your business.



HOW TO REACH OUT TO FOOD INFLUENCERS

Once you know the level of influencer you want to work with and the type of campaign you want to run for your restaurant, it's time to find content creators that fit your brand. To start, simply search on Google for "restaurant influencers" or "food bloggers" plus your location.

On social media, search hashtags related to your restaurant type or cuisine. Many influencers' profiles include keywords, such as "[city name] food," to help potential clients find them. There's also an account suggestion feature on Instagram and TikTok, so once you find one influencer who may be right for you, the platforms will surface similar accounts.

Lastly, you can search for influencer databases, with influencers categorized and searchable through filters such as subject area, location, and audience size.

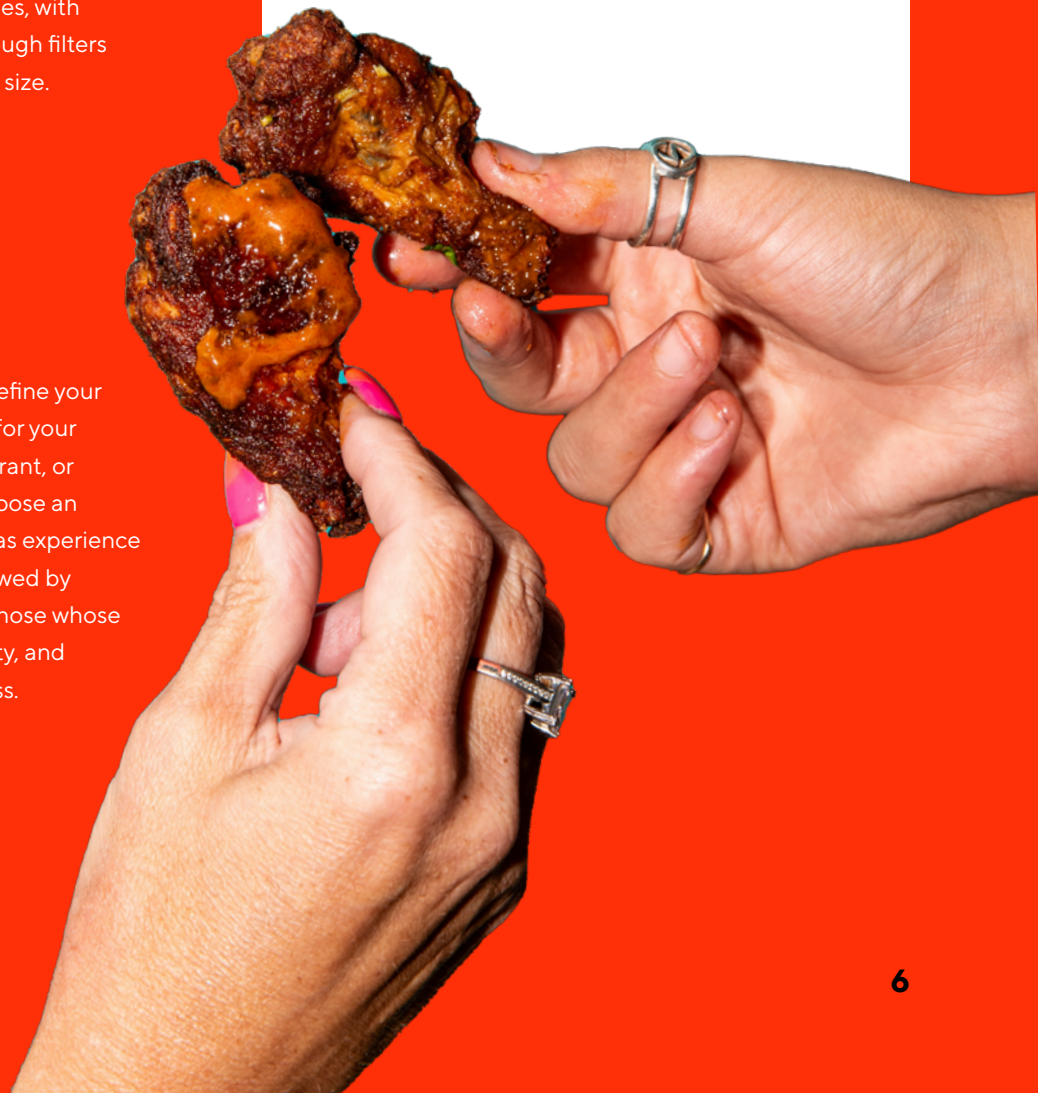
KNOW THE WHAT, WHY, AND HOW OF YOUR CAMPAIGN

Before reaching out to influencers, clearly define your goals for the campaign, such as more views for your content, increased foot traffic to your restaurant, or greater demand for a particular offering. Choose an influencer who aligns with your brand and has experience with similar campaigns. Influencers are followed by their fans for different reasons, so focus on those whose persona, tone, content, aesthetic, community, and interactions are consistent with your business.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS WHEN PROPOSING A CAMPAIGN:

Be candid: Provide information on the purpose of the campaign and the types of content you'd like them to create.

Negotiate terms: If the influencer shows interest, negotiate the terms of the agreement, including campaign timing, compensation, and whether you have the right to approve content.



PROMOTING THE INFLUENCER CAMPAIGN

While the influencer will be the one creating and posting the content, that doesn't mean restaurant partners should just stand by and hope for good results. You can play an active role in improving the performance of a campaign by promoting the influencer's posts across your own channels. This can include paid strategies like boosting the post with an advertising spend, as well as promotional tactics like creating a hashtag and sharing the influencer posts on all your channels, stories, and mailing lists. Lean into it as much as possible to create and sustain social media buzz, including leveraging any media contacts or even in-store signage for greater visibility.

Before reaching out to influencers, restaurants can proactively optimize their space for a social media audience. This can include creating the proper ambience for **impactful photography** and videography, and plating dishes with an aesthetic that encourages guests to capture them on their phones. You can also consider hiring a social media manager or consultant to refresh your online channels and grow your following and engagement.



YOUR RESTAURANT HAS GONE VIRAL — NOW WHAT?

When collaborating with influencers whose followers are engaged and willing to share posts, there's a very real possibility that your restaurant could go viral. This may be for a fleeting moment, or it could bring a sustained uptick in business well into the future.

It's difficult to predict a viral moment; going viral on a platform like TikTok can happen seemingly at random, based on the algorithm and audience behavior at any given moment. But in case it happens to your restaurant, preparation is key — being a viral sensation can be a challenge to manage.

BE ATTENTIVE

Before the influencer campaign, communicate with your supply chain so that your restaurant and its partners can handle changing demand without disappointing customers or squandering resources.

RESPECT REGULARS

An influx of selfie-snapping crowds can alienate your regulars who appreciate your restaurant as a trusted neighborhood joint — and whose business keeps your doors open after the hype dies down.

KEEP ORDER

Crowds also may not be on their best behavior. Some restaurants that achieved viral status ended up banning content creation on their premises due to an excessive influx of social media-loving customers.



MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Monitor your influencer campaign's success by tracking audience engagement and response, and quantitatively assess your results by looking at reach, likes, comments, orders, and sales. You can also request that your influencers share their analytics with you.

Factors to pay attention to include content performance, follower growth, and engagement across your own website and social channels. But since sales growth is the top priority for many business owners, the ability to attribute tangible results to marketing campaigns is critical. See if these figures correlate with notable changes in your business such as increased table bookings, physical foot traffic, popularity of certain menu items, and volume of takeout or delivery orders. This will help you better calculate the value you're getting from your influencer collaboration.



CASE STUDY: COYO TACO'S INFLUENCER MARKETING STRATEGY

At Miami-based taqueria **Coyo Taco**, influencer collaborations are integrated in the business's day-to-day marketing strategy and happen on a regular basis.

"Each week, we have at least three influencers coming in to dine at one of our five locations across South Florida, whether it's a micro-influencer or a macro-influencer," says Alexa Fidelman, Director of Marketing & Social Media at Coyo Taco. "And then we'll have larger campaigns or events, with 10 to 15 influencers posting throughout the week to promote it."

Coyo Taco launched one recent influencer campaign to promote their partnership with DoorDash. "We worked with about five influencers in Miami, all of different calibers — some had 3,000 followers, some had 30,000 followers," says Fidelman. "They gave out a code, so we got to track how many people redeemed it on DoorDash, and it was really successful."

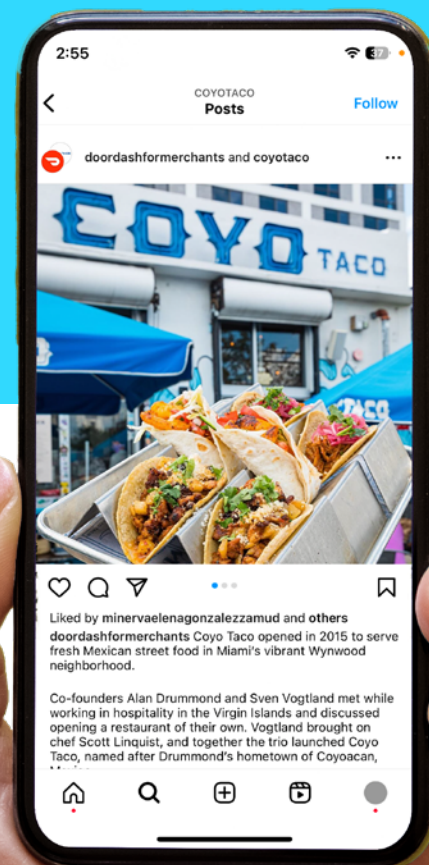
Coyo Taco also partners with influencers on limited-time offers and social media giveaways — or sometimes they just engage with influencers for brand awareness.

"We just love to have influencers come in," says Fidelman. "We always reach out to them, and the videos they post can get hundreds of thousands of views. They also have niche audiences that we ourselves might not reach. A makeup influencer will definitely have different followers than a health food influencer, so it's good getting different people involved."

"If you look at someone's account and they have 20,000 followers but their engagement is 200 views on a video, it doesn't really make sense to work with them because you know they're not authentic."

Alexa Fidelman

Director of Marketing & Social Media, Coyo Taco



For Coyo Taco, connecting with influencers is an intentional process. “We usually reach out through our DMs or email,” Fidelman explains. “And I like to look at the type of influencer they are and if they’re a good fit. I want to see exactly what kind of content they’re posting, and if it’s food-related or if it’s just kind of all over the place.”

Research is especially key because a self-proclaimed influencer may have purchased their follower count.

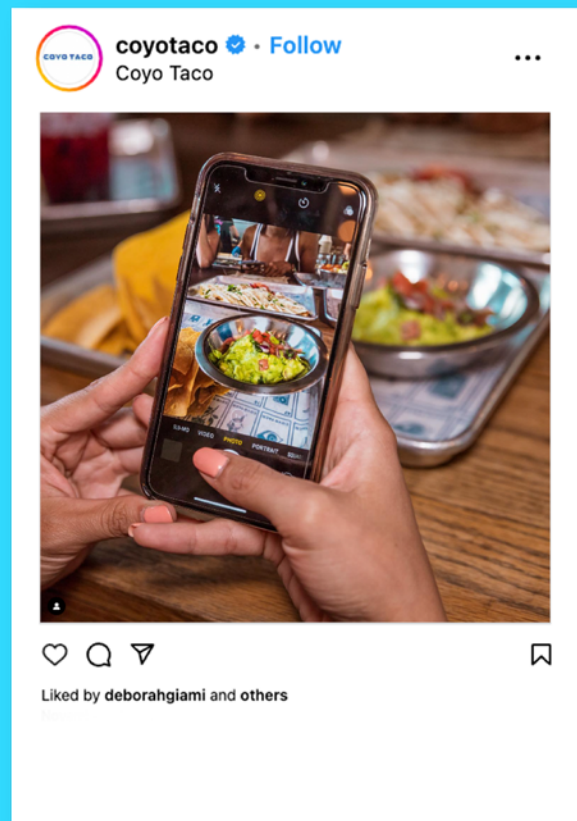
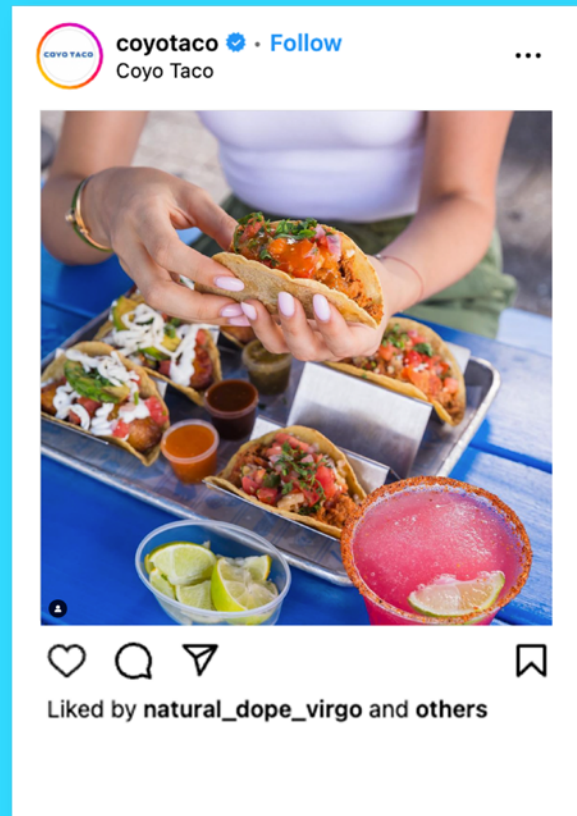
When partnering with influencers, Coyo Taco is clear about their expectations. “There’s an agreement that if you come in and order on us, we hope that you would post at least one Reel and three Stories — and have it on your grid. The worst is when influencers only post on their Stories, which obviously is only up for 24 hours. We want to make sure that we have a presence on their page that will be there for a little bit.”

To narrow down their search and make the most of their campaigns, Coyo Taco focuses on influencers who meet certain core criteria:

Location: Coyo Taco prefers to work with influencers in their city to help drive online orders and in-store traffic. “We have a core set of five to ten influencers that we typically work with, and they’re all Miami-based,” says Fidelman.

Category: Fidelman finds that working with a range of influencers within the food space is beneficial. “Some have two to three million followers, like [The Naughty Fork](#), while others have around 10 to 13 thousand,” she says. “Though we do work with a bunch of smaller influencers as well.”

Channel: Restaurants can choose which social media platforms to focus on. “For Coyo Taco, we’re really only on Instagram,” says Fidelman. “I personally have worked with TikTok before and I love it, but it’s a labor of love and you have to be on it 24/7, posting at least two to three times a day for the videos to really catch on. It is a full-time job.”



CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESSFUL FOOD INFLUENCER MARKETING

Here are the key steps to effectively leverage influencer marketing for your restaurant:

- Identify your business objectives
- Define the type of campaign or partnership
- Allocate budget or resources to execute your strategy
- Reach out to potential influencer partners
- Create the content needed to support your campaign
- Promote the influencer content on your own channels
- Measure campaign performance



For more restaurant marketing tips, visit the [DoorDash Merchant blog](#)

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