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# THE HUNGRY SEARCHER

HOW RESTAURANTS CAN ATTRACT MORE DINERS TODAY





“Hey Siri, where’s a pizzeria near me that’s good for kids?”

“Ok Google, where can I get curly fries from a restaurant open now?”

Just three years ago, virtually nobody was asking these questions. But today, everything has changed.

We are in the midst of a massive shift in the way we, as consumers, find and engage with local businesses. Intelligent services like discovery sites, smart devices, AI, and voice search are quickly becoming the norm — not just in our daily lives, but in our search habits, too.

Consider this — Andrew Ng, formerly of Baidu, estimates that 50% of all searches will be completed via either speech or image search by 2020.<sup>1</sup> And eMarketer shows that the use of voice-enabled speakers will grow by 130% in the next year.<sup>2</sup> As the most searched-for local business category, restaurants are already seeing the biggest impact of this evolution.

I remember as a kid, when my parents would take the family out for dinner, they would ask, “Where should we go eat?” Today, that *where* is now a *what* because how we decide where we want to eat has changed. We’re searching for whatever we’re craving (whether it’s Mexican food or pizza) over twice as often than the name of a restaurant itself.<sup>3</sup> We expect direct answers to our search queries... and we expect those answers immediately.

The competition for *share of stomach* in the foodservice industry is becoming more complex. Home-delivered meal kits, ready-made meals available in grocery stores, and third-party, on-demand delivery platforms, combined with the oversaturation of restaurants,<sup>4</sup> are making it more difficult than ever to compete in an industry where margins are already razor-thin.

For a restaurant to succeed — let alone, thrive — in this perfect storm, it’s essential to have a strong search presence, and to attract consumers in their micro-moments of need. Most consumers searching for a restaurant end up completing a purchase within 24 hours, and over 30% do so within the hour!<sup>5</sup> Restaurants need to make sure their online customer experience is optimized for the intelligent future. It’s simply the new table-stakes.

I hope our research gives you a greater understanding of this change in customer search behavior, and that it inspires you to leverage your assets in new ways so your business can adapt as both the search ecosystem and restaurant industry continue to transform.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Zucker'.

**Lee Zucker**

Head of Industry, Food Service, Yext

<sup>1</sup> [Baidu World 2014, Gigaom](#)

<sup>2</sup> [eMarketer, 2017](#)

<sup>3</sup> Yext Local Search Behavior Study, July 2017

<sup>4</sup> [The New York Times, 2017](#)

<sup>5</sup> Yext Local Search Behavior Study, July 2017

## Leverage the rich details about your restaurants and menus to boost discoverability.

Today's world of connected devices, search experiences, voice assistants, and AI has expanded your restaurant brand's digital footprint far beyond your own website. The facts about your business — from hours of operation to menu information — now live in maps, voice search, conversational UI, knowledge cards, and so many more places that show intelligent and direct answers.

These intelligent services have generated a society of liberated, hyper-mobile consumers who perform searches in the moment. 50% of consumers most often search for food when they're on-the-go.<sup>1</sup> And the surge in 'near me' searches we saw two years ago has become so commonplace that fewer people bother to search using those words at all — increasingly, the phrase 'near me' is merely implied.

Instead, searches for 'open now' are on the rise, tripling in the past two years.<sup>2</sup> It's now expected behavior that search engines will factor in relevance, prominence, and proximity for every search a consumer performs.

This increase in searches that include terms like 'open now' demonstrates consumers' need for immediate answers — and it provides insight into their intention. On average, 63.89% of consumers eat at a restaurant within 24 hours of researching it online and 30.26% go within an hour.<sup>3</sup> This means when consumers are searching for food, they usually intend to dine right away.

On average,  
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24 hours of researching  
it online.



<sup>1</sup> Yext Local Search Behavior Study, July 2017

<sup>2</sup> [Think with Google, August 2017](#)

<sup>3</sup> Yext Local Search Behavior Study, July 2017

Consumers not only want things now, they want to be very well-informed before stepping foot into a restaurant. This behavior is most prevalent among fine diners, who fill tables on weekends, but do their research days in advance.<sup>4</sup> Consumers are making conventional, attribute-based searches, like 'restaurants good for kids' or 'dinner takes reservations' that suit their needs. Consumers want rich attribute information (like price range, meals served, and attire required) so they can choose the place to dine that's right for them. In fact, 76.09% of consumers say they're more likely to choose a restaurant that gives them in-depth attribute information in search results.

<sup>4</sup> Yext Local Search Behavior Study, July 2017

**76% OF CONSUMERS**  
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Closed on Sundays

Reservations Accepted

Outdoor Seating Available

Wifi Available

Wheelchair Accessible

Deli Counter

Full Service Bar

Parking Available

Weekly Brunch

Take-out

Family Friendly

Open to the Public

Vegan Options

Delivery

Gluten Free





Quite simply, details matter.

Cravings matter too.

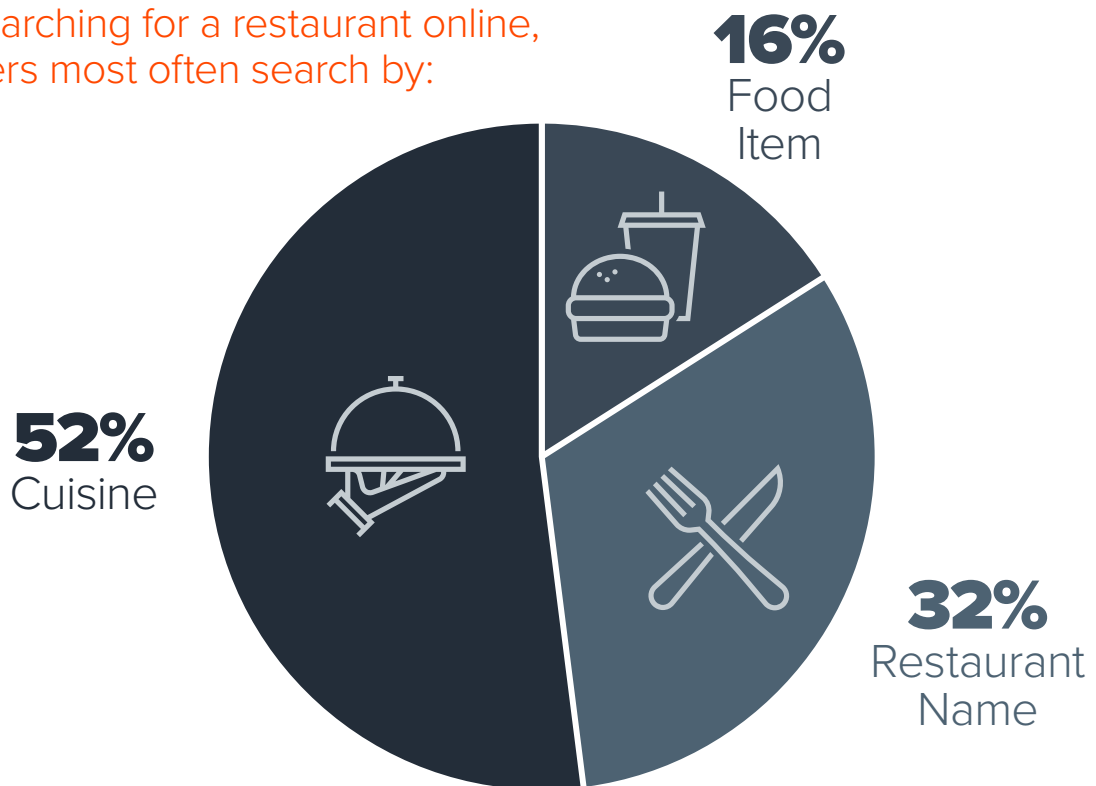
Consumers want to know if you have what they want to eat. Searches like 'pepperoni pizza,' 'fish tacos,' and other unbranded food searches are reigning supreme.

When searching for a restaurant online, 68.30% of consumers either search by cuisine or food item — not by restaurant name. When almost three-quarters of food searches are unbranded, it's clear that menus are more important than ever to a restaurant's search strategy.

What many restaurants brands don't realize is that the rich details consumers care about (like their menu and attribute information) are also their secret ingredients to showing up in search. Intelligent services need these details — this structured data — because they want to be able to answer consumers' queries, like 'drive-thru open now' and 'burger has wi-fi.' Many of them have started indexing this menu and attribute data — simultaneously creating new opportunities for restaurant brands to optimize themselves for search, with the exact search terms consumers are already using.

## 68% OF FOOD SEARCHES ARE UNBRANDED.

When searching for a restaurant online, consumers most often search by:



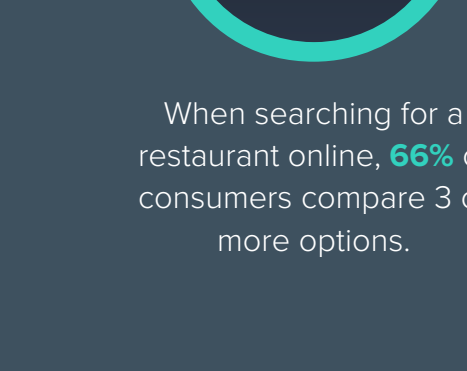
# WHERE SHOULD WE EAT?

Trends in how consumers armed with new technology look to answer this age-old question

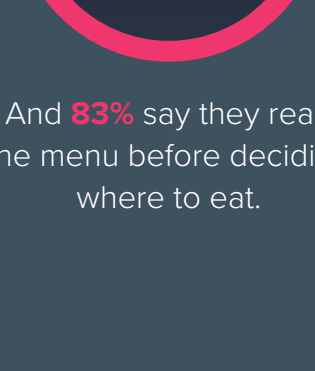
Consumers search for restaurants online now more than ever, and the way they search is evolving quickly. **Smart devices, voice search, AI,** and **intelligent services** make it easy for people to find what they're looking for—when and where they're looking for it.



**68%** of food searches occur without a specific restaurant name in mind.



When searching for a restaurant online, **66%** of consumers compare 3 or more options.



And **83%** say they read the menu before deciding where to eat.

## TRENDS AND TAKEAWAYS

The following proprietary insights into local search behavior were collected across 62 sources including major search engines, local directories, apps, and social networks.



### Engagement actions:

profile views, clicks-to-direction, clicks-to-call, featured message clicks, & clicks-to-website



### Impressions:

number of times a listing is on a search results page

=



### Engagement rate

1

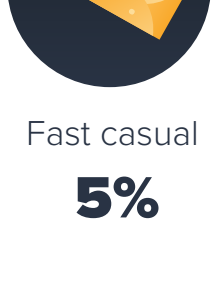
## The faster the food, the faster the decision.

Quick service listings have the highest average engagement rate (**5.26%**)



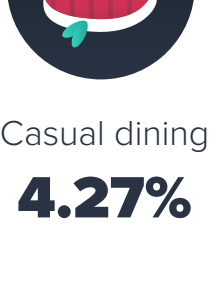
QSR

**5.26%**



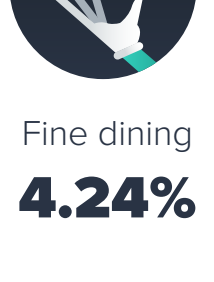
Fast casual

**5%**



Casual dining

**4.27%**



Fine dining

**4.24%**

When someone is looking for a quick service option, they want something **convenient** and **nearby**—and they want it **now**.



**63%** of consumers say they eat at a restaurant within a day of researching it online.

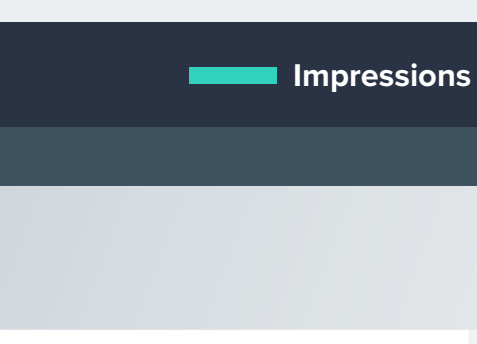
And **30%** go within an hour.

2

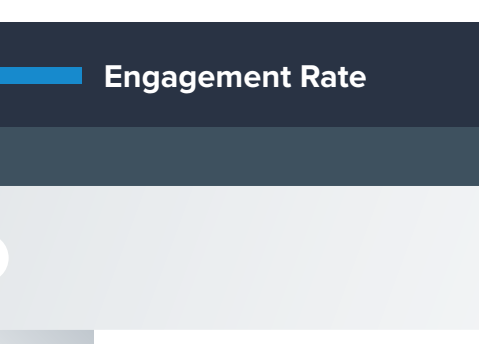
## Fine diners research first.

Fine dining engagement varies the most by day of week.

### Fine Dining



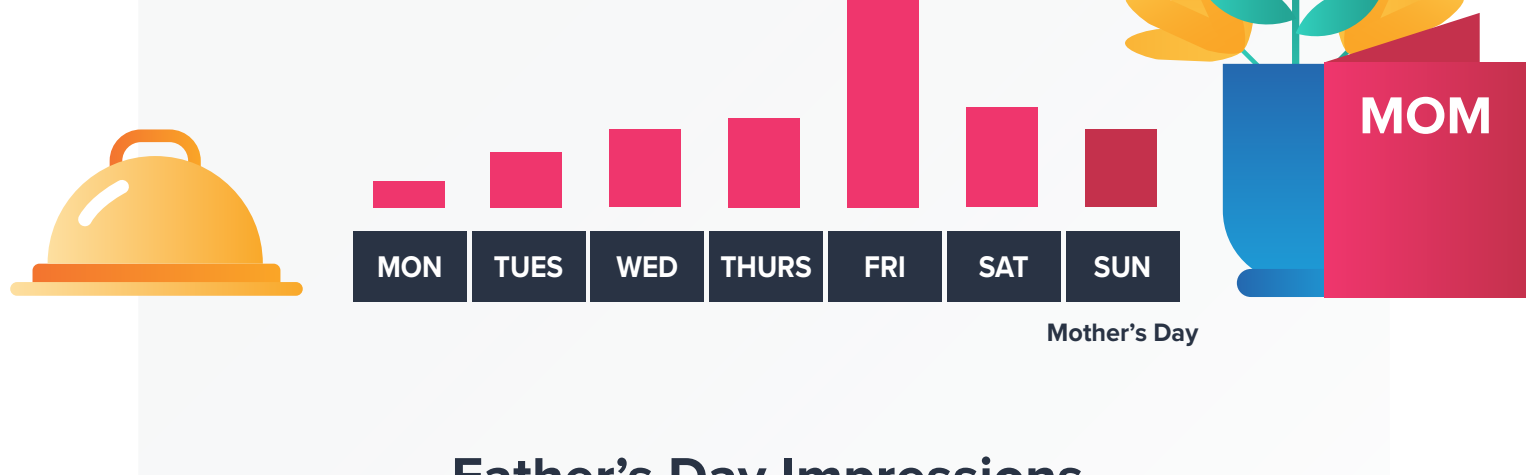
### Other Food Services



In fine dining, engagement rates increase **56%** from Monday to Saturday. In other food services, consumer search impressions are relatively consistent with their engagement rates. But when it comes to fine dining, consumers aren't searching in-the-moment—they do their research days in advance of when they actually plan to eat out.

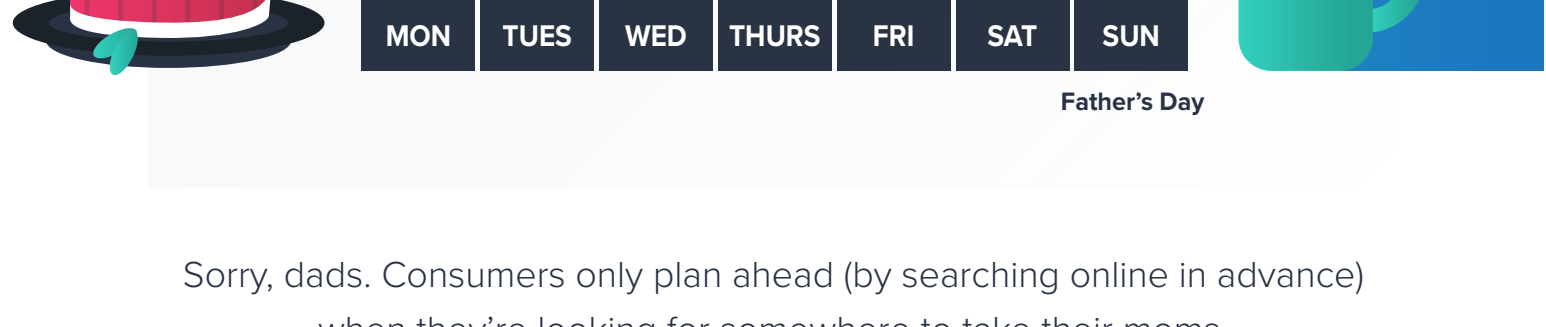
### Mother's Day Impressions (fine dining)

(fine dining)



### Father's Day Impressions (casual dining)

(casual dining)

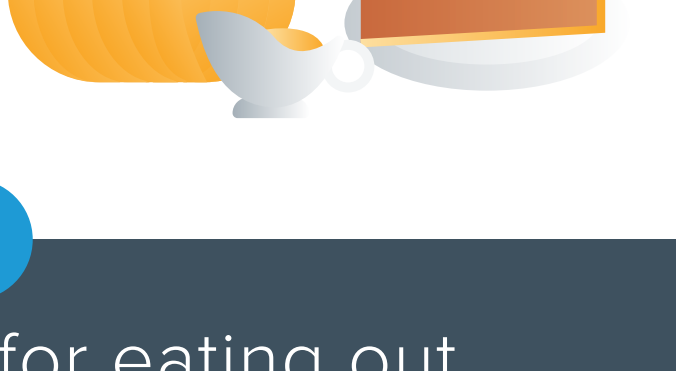


Sorry, dads. Consumers only plan ahead (by searching online in advance) when they're looking for somewhere to take their moms.

3

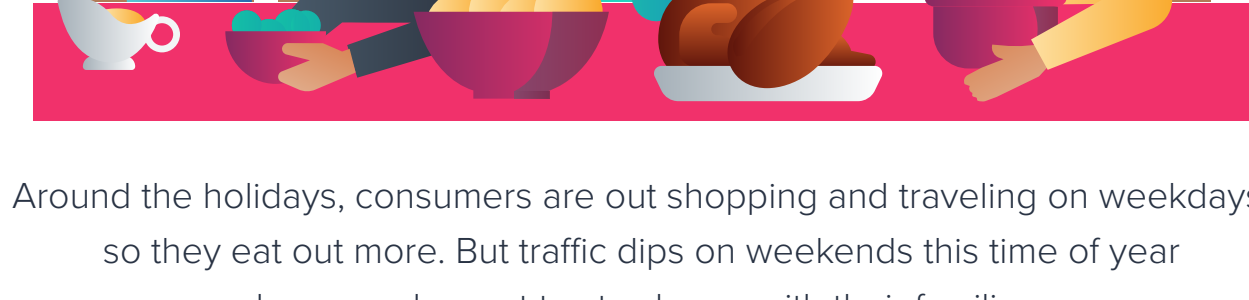
## Thanksgiving leftovers leave diners with plenty to eat at home.

Restaurants of all types receive **5.5%** fewer engagement actions in November than October.

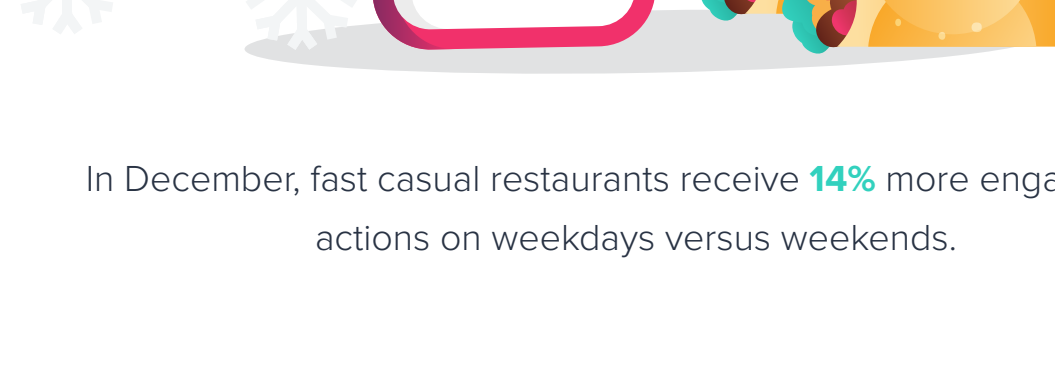


4

## Weekdays are for eating out during the holiday hustle.



Around the holidays, consumers are out shopping and traveling on weekdays, so they eat out more. But traffic dips on weekends this time of year when people want to stay home with their families.



In December, fast casual restaurants receive **14%** more engagement actions on weekdays versus weekends.

5

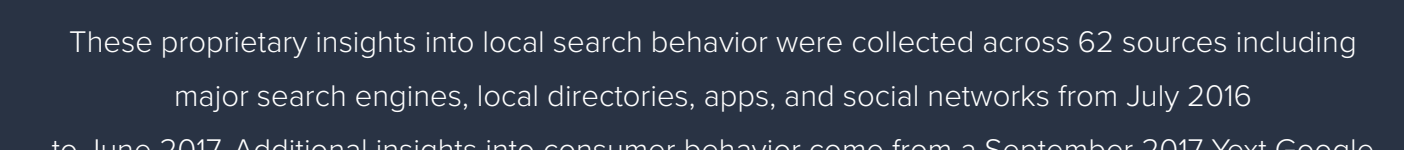
## Folks hit the road to celebrate summer.

**June and July are top travel months.** Consumers are much more likely to search for restaurants when they're away from home or on the go.



In fact, in June and July, restaurants receive an average of **7.3%** more daily engagement actions than the two months before—and two months after—this peak.

**50%** of people say they search for food when they are on the go.



These proprietary insights into local search behavior were collected across 62 sources including major search engines, local directories, apps, and social networks from July 2016 to June 2017. Additional insights into consumer behavior come from a September 2017 Yext Google Consumer Survey of 518 respondents. The Yext Knowledge Engine helps food service businesses manage the public facts that hungry consumers need to know—all across the digital ecosystem.

To start driving consumers from phone to fork with Yext, request a demo at [yext.com/industries/food-services](https://yext.com/industries/food-services)

## New Table Stakes for Restaurants

A menu is the backbone — some may even call it the ‘identity’ — of a restaurant. And great care is taken to craft the perfect one.

The menu matters to consumers too because the menu is what confirms whether or not a particular restaurant serves what they are craving.

83.39% of consumers say they read a restaurant’s menu online before deciding where to eat. With so much demand to view restaurant menus prior to dining, it’s undeniable that the menu is instrumental to a consumer’s selection process. And if a restaurant wants to be considered, they need to ensure consumers can easily find an up-to-date menu online.

Consumers like to have options. 67.11% of consumers say they consider more than three options before making a decision.<sup>5</sup> This means that restaurant brands not only have to show up in search, they need to stand out if they’re going to have a chance at being chosen as a consumer’s next dining destination.

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usually consider  
**MORE THAN THREE OPTIONS**  
before making their decision.



<sup>4</sup> Yext Local Search Behavior Study, July 2017

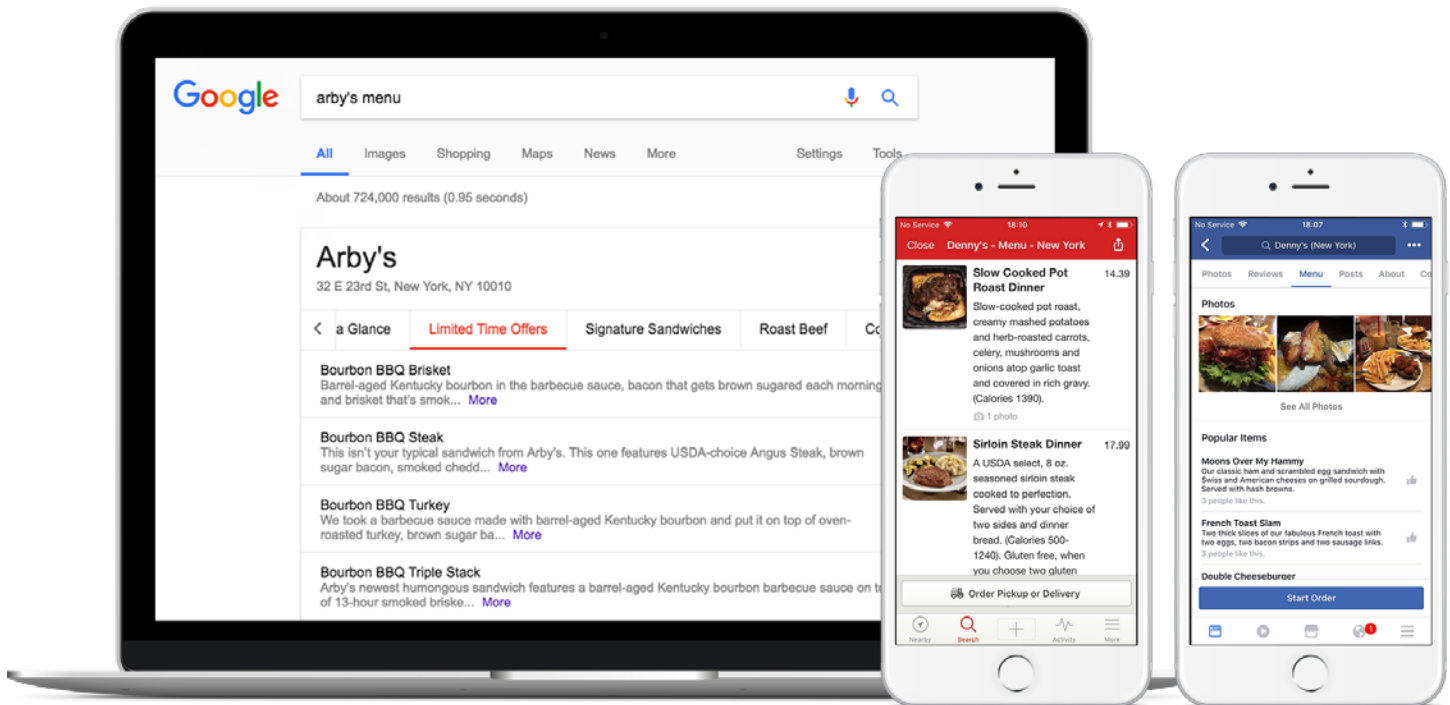


## Menu and attribute information is a restaurant's secret ingredient to appearing in search.

Intelligent services are smart, but they still rely on restaurant brands to provide them with this rich, structured menu and attribute data. A restaurant's menu and attribute information is constantly changing, and it's fragmented throughout the systems that power it. Menu data lives in POS, hours and specific location data are kept by local managers, photos live with marketing, address data is managed by HR or real estate, and so on. And unfortunately, the

majority of a restaurant's data goes underutilized because it's nearly impossible to collect.

So how can a restaurant brand bring all of its structured data together? Ideally, all of the rich, structured information about its business lives in one place, with one source of truth powering internal systems. This unified foundation ensures that everything intelligent services need to serve consumers with the details they want to make a dining decision is accurate, and in front of them at their moment of intent — no matter where they're searching.





# Yext for Food helps nourish restaurant brands for the intelligent era.

A single system of record for all the details and facts about your restaurant brand is achievable — with Yext. Enhance your discoverability by making your restaurant and menu details visible on the intelligent services of today and tomorrow, to drive more consumers from phone to fork.



## knowledge manager

Centralize the details about your restaurants and menus — from locations and hours of operation to seasonal menus and nutritional information — that both intelligent services and consumers crave.



## listings

Emerge in more unbranded searches and fuel consumers' dining decisions by powering your menus on Google, Yelp, Zomato, Facebook, Postmates, and many more intelligent services in the PowerListings Network.



## reviews

#FireUpYourFans to capture authentic, first-party customer reviews that will help you star in intelligent search and keep customers coming back for seconds.



## pages

Convert high-intent consumers both online and in-restaurant with beautiful and intelligent local pages, built with SEO best practices.



## analytics

Gain a complete, single view of how consumers engage with your restaurants across sites, platforms, and devices so you can optimize your business strategy.



## app directory

Connect the power of your digital knowledge to the systems and processes — like OpenMenu, Trabon, HubSpot, and more — that you use every day.

## Franchise Controls

Empower local franchisees, while maintaining corporate control, with sophisticated approval workflows and user permissioning.

“People are using mobile to find everything. So when somebody walks outside of their office building and is looking for, ‘where am I going to go for lunch today?’ and they type in, ‘great lunch spots,’ it’s based on location. We want to be there. This partnership with Yext gives us confidence that we will be there.”



— **Rob Lynch**  
Brand President & CMO





Yext is defining a new category called digital knowledge management, which helps businesses manage all of the public facts that they want consumers to know across the digital ecosystem. The Yext Knowledge Engine™ lets companies manage their digital knowledge in the cloud and sync it to over 100 services in the PowerListings® Network. Yext Listings, Pages, and Reviews help businesses around the globe facilitate face-to-face and digital interactions that boost brand awareness, drive foot traffic, and increase sales.

# yext

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