

# **Boston Hospitality Review**

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Published by the Boston University School of Hospitality Administration

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## **Kindness is not 86'd: The Spirit of Hospitality in a World of COVID-19**

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Special Edition: COVID-19 Crisis



*Source: Travel Media Group*

Beginning in March of 2020, individuals started the practice of the unfamiliar act of social distancing. Along with the uncertainty of the virus, many of us are left apprehensive about the future. Having consensual physical contact with other people and enjoying the company of others in the flesh releases chemicals in the brain and body (e.g. endorphins, serotonin and oxytocin) that give us feelings of happiness and even love (Dewan, 2020). Humans generally thrive from social interaction—making self-isolation feel unnatural. The option of enjoying a glass of Barolo and a charcuterie board, while engaging in meaningful conversation with the bartender at a local restaurant, is temporarily unavailable. For centuries, many have leaned on the shoulders of hospitality personnel for company, laughter and guidance. What have the restaurants, hotels, distributors, suppliers and other members of the hospitality community been doing during this time? While hospitality establishments start to reopen, it is crucial to remember how an overwhelming amount of those in the hospitality business have been aiding the community in extraordinary measures.

### **Restaurants**

Eleven Madison Park, a three-star Michelin rated NYC restaurant is now operating as a food commissary for those in need and for NYC's first responders. Chef-owner, Daniel Humm, shares the “meals we’re cooking today are some of the proudest moments in my career” (Alarcón, 2020).

Jody Adam’s Boston-based restaurants, Porto, Saloniki and Trade, teamed up with the charities Off Their Plate and World Central Kitchen to prepare freshly cooked meals for front-line workers and displaced hospitality employees. So far, over six million dollars has been raised,

providing up to 70,000 meals per week (*Off Their Plate*, 2020; *Trade | Porto | Saloniki GIVES Organized by Elissa Rae*, 2020). The team worked tirelessly to serve those who are bravely serving our community. Many restaurants across the country are doing similar efforts to assist those in need.



*Source: World Central Kitchen*

COVID-19 took a major financial toll on David Dale, owner of Kingdom Bean Coffee Roastery. Despite a substantial income decrease, Dale donated over \$1000 in coffee beans, in just one week, to the local Louisville, Kentucky fire and police departments (Baileys, 2020).

Restaurateur and celebrity chef, Guy Fieri partnered with the National Restaurant Association (NRA) to create a charity to benefit restaurant industry workers affected by COVID-19 the Restaurant Employee Relief Fund (RERF). The educational foundation of the NRA is familiar with dispersing money and helping with scholarships (McCarthy, 2020). Fieri's goal is to raise \$100 million for the charity with \$500 disbursements to eligible employees. As of April, over \$20 million has been donated (National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, 2020; Petre, 2020). Celebrity chef Rachael Ray has donated over \$2 million to charities, including the NRA (Saxena, 2020).



*Source: National Restaurant Association*

### **Beverage Distributors and Suppliers**

Many beer, wine, and spirits distributors and suppliers have made generous efforts to help those negatively affected by the virus.

In 2019, over 16.78 million people made up the hospitality and leisure workforce—many of which are now left unemployed or furloughed (Lock, 2020). Samuel Adams and The Greg Hill Foundation teamed up to create Restaurant Strong Fund. Soon after a successful start, Samuel Adams jump-started the donations by contributing \$2 million. The Restaurant Strong Fund was unveiled in Massachusetts on March 18th raising nearly \$500,000 from 2,000 individual donors in its first week, with support from athletes David Ortiz to Jimmy Develin and chefs Ming Tsai, Chris Coombs and Ken Oringer (“Restaurant Strong Fund: About,” 2020).



*Source: Samuel Adams*

Between Restaurant Strong Fund, NHLRA and National Restaurant Association, the wine and spirits distributor, Martignetti Companies donated over \$300,000 to assist the hospitality community members in need (*Martignetti Companies, 2020*).

- The United States Bartenders' Guild (USBG) National Charity Foundation has committed over \$7 million for the COVID-19 relief fund, with 3,900+ donors and over 500 volunteers (USBG, 2020).
- Many suppliers have made generous contributions to charities. Diageo (parent company to brands such as Ketel One, Don Julio, Johnnie Walker, Captain Morgan) has donated over \$4 million to various charities, including \$1 million to USBG (Pageler, 2020). Diageo also unveiled its \$20 million community fund to aid black communities and businesses recover from the COVID-19 virus.
- Other liquor suppliers such as Pernod Ricard has made monumental contributions, including producing and donating 10,000 gallons of hand sanitizer, in the midst of a shortage on retail shelves (Brunner, 2020).

The beer, wine and spirits sector of the industry has thrived off of the efforts of those working in hospitality operations. The distributors and suppliers have overwhelmingly shared their appreciation.

## **Retail**

Vermont-based ice cream company, Ben and Jerry's, has raised awareness regarding a less-discussed COVID-19 issue—sanitation in correctional facilities. COVID-19 has spread rapidly throughout prisons. This not only affects the inmates, but those who are visiting, attorneys, guards, and other personnel. According to the company, correctional facilities have never been able to provide adequate healthcare; hand sanitizer and soap aren't even allowed in many jails and prisons (Ben & Jerry's, 2020). Ben and Jerry's created a petition titled, *Humanity Not*

*Cages—Demanding a Just and Humane Response to Outbreak.* The petition is to raise awareness and to demand federal and state action.

## Hotels

Doctors, nurses and other medical personnel across the world are battling COVID-19 directly. Four Seasons Hotel on 57th Street in New York City opened its doors to shelter many of those working in neighboring hospitals. While reservations are temporarily unable to be made by the general public, the ownership group Ty Warner Hotels and Resorts saw this as an opportunity to let those, who otherwise would have to travel a great distance to work, reside in a luxury room—free of charge (Barone, 2020; Caplan, 2020; Kim, 2020). The five-star property is not only providing shelter for the brave individuals, it is minimizing the risk of spread for the families and community.

Hotelier and Travel Channel’s host of *Hotel Impossible*, Anthony Melchiorri, has teamed up with SKAL International to create the #HospitalityStrong fund. The funds raised will be disbursed to employees working in hotels, restaurants, catering facilities, attractions, or one of many other hospitality-related organizations comprised in the tourism economy (*USA #HospitalityStrong Relief Fund Organized by USA HospitalityStrong*, 2020).



Source: *Skal International USA*

## A Generous Future

Restaurateur, Alice Walter once stated:

*“Our full humanity is contingent on our hospitality; we can be complete only when we are giving something away; when we sit at the table and pass the peas to the person next to us we see that person in a whole new way”* (Waters, n.d.).

Although the hospitality industry is experiencing a time of incertitude, the level of generosity is unparalleled. As a community, we can continue the generous efforts of the hospitality industry, whether it be financially or through raising awareness.

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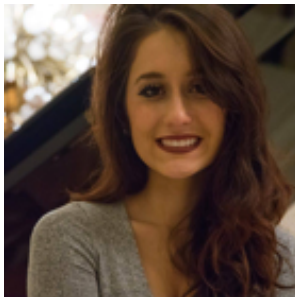
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*\*Note: Her authorship of this article does not reflect the views of Martignetti Companies, Moët-Hennessy or Diageo.*