Mike Kostyo:
Hi, guys. This is Mike Kostyo. I'm the senior managing editor on the Market Intelligence Team at Datassential. As you might have seen, we've been doing a number of reports over the past few weeks that we've been really seeing on the website looking at consumer sentiment. Soon, we'll have some reports on operator sentiment. Just rounding what's going on right now. But, really, the data only gets you partway there. We also wanted to combine it with some real world perspectives and what's happening in the industry and chefs and manufacturers and distributors and suppliers.

Mike Kostyo:
This week, we're going to talk to two individuals about the independent operator and just a really wide-ranging but relaxed conversation. I know we are all listening to a lot of videos and webinars right now. Hopefully, this is just the interesting fun one. About what happening with the independent operator everybody has to pivot so much very quickly right now, how's it working, what is working, what's not working, what are people seeing.

Mike Kostyo:
I'm really excited to talk to Chef Zoe and Chandra from Plate Magazine. Chef Zoe, if you just want to give us a little bit of your background. Then, for people who are listening who are not from Chicago, just a background of the restaurant and what type of restaurant it is.

Zoe Schor:
My name is Zoe Schor. I've been here in Chicago for almost 10 years at a restaurant called Split-Rail. It's on Chicago Avenue like in Chicago's West Side. Even though we're suspended operations, we do still have a location at the Time Out Market here in the West Loop. I also own a cocktail bar downstairs of the restaurant which, of course, the operations for Dorothy are also suspended presently.

Zoe Schor:
In terms of what kind of restaurant we are, it's actually interesting as we talk about pivoting. We open this sort of your upscale casual or casual fine dining restaurant that you're seeing more and more of over the last five or 10 years, wound up having to make a pretty big pivot about a year and a half almost two years ago to a more casual model. Our focus is fried chicken and biscuits, but if I had to really put in a box, I would just say like American comfort food driven, but definitely a casual neighborhood restaurant.

Zoe Schor:
I think we're poised to fair fairly well in terms of continuing to provide the same resource we've always provide to our neighbors as opposed to some downtown restaurants or restaurants that really rely on large volume from tourism or conventions things like that. We've always just relied on our neighbors coming to have dinner.

Mike Kostyo:
Awesome. Chandra, we know each other, but I'll still let you give your background then. I'm sure most of the people listening also know Plate Magazine, but even just a brief intro would be great too.

Chandra Ram:
Yeah, sure. For any of those sinners out there who haven't gotten on board, I'm Chandra Ram. I'm the editor of Plate Magazine. Plate is a food magazine geared towards chefs. We do, for each of our six print issues a year, we do a deep dive in a cuisine, in a style of cooking, in a cooking technique, in ingredients, anything like that. Then, we also put out four newsletters a week where we talk about recipes. We have a newsletter that's all the openings and closings and chefs moving around every week.

Chandra Ram:
Then, we do a couple of newsletters where we focus on blogs. We do a lot of first-person accounts from chefs. We also have this blogger, Mike Kostyo. I don't know if you've ever heard of him, but he writes about food trends for us. We're just here to really focus on food and, but to do everything through the chef's perspective weeding out some of the home cook style things and really focus on what independent restaurant chefs are interested in.

Mike Kostyo:
What was that conversation like when you found out that you were closing immediately? Were you already doing delivery at that point?

Zoe Schor:
Yeah. We do delivery, and we do takeout. I think, probably, this was going to come up at some point, but I think everyone's aware of this slightly questionable tactics of Grubhub over the last week and a half. We've always used Grubhub. We view it as a necessary evil and we've tried to be respectful, but I'm not happy with them. They take a 30% cut of our deliveries, but they also provide a lot of business.

Zoe Schor:
As an independent operator, it's impossible to have the kind of data that would allow you to say, "How much of this business will we be getting anyway?" That's just impossible. We trust that they offer us a certain amount of business. We've used them. We read and saw that they were suspending their commissions. That's what all the articles said. That's basically what they said in the part of the press conference with the mayor that I saw.

Zoe Schor:
We were sent an email that said simply, "Would you want to opt-in?" I clicked opt-in before I even look too closely at it. Then, I read a letter later on that day from the CEO that said they were deferring their commissions, and that felt really different from suspending. I dug a little deeper. Not only were they deferring commissions to get repaid starting in about a month's time, but also, when you hit opt-in, one of the fine print that they didn't advertise is that you were opted in for a year. You basically were signing a year's agreement.

Zoe Schor:
We have gotten them to opt us out to get rid of that 12-month commitment. We're not going to be using Grubhub anymore. I think it was just really bad behavior towards your restaurant partner is that they said we're the lifeblood of their industry suspended and deferred or not the same and all the fine print that came along with that deferral is really disheartening. It's like them looking at their own bottom line and rather than saying, "How can we work together," it was how can I fool... People were totally panicked that their industry is collapsing in and of itself into thinking that we're giving them a good deal, so later we get more money.
Zoe Schor:
It's not a good look [crosstalk 00:06:08].

Mike Kostyo:
Is that what you’re hearing, Chandra, because you talk to a lot of chefs. You have a lot of friends who are chef, because the delivery thing, in general, I know we've seen things about which service as a consumer should I be using" What are you hearing from chefs as far as delivery? I know I've seen a few that have even dropped some of the services and just started offering it themselves.

Chandra Ram:
Yeah. I think that that's a really tough thing to do quickly to pivot towards quickly, but I'm personally telling people to just call the restaurant directly or see if there's any way to order directly from the website because, yeah, I have other friends like Zoe who are just blindsided by the fact that it wasn't waived fees as was announced, but it was deferred fees, and it came with a year-long contract with Grubhub.

Chandra Ram:
It's crazy because there's been so much pushback in the last couple of months before COVID-19 really hit about the delivery services. Chefs saying, "How is it my restaurant doesn't offer delivery, but I'm getting complaints from someone who ordered food from it an hour ago?" I think this is going to really push a big reckoning. Even when we all get out of this panicked mode, this real crunch time where delivery and carryout are the only way to do it, I think there's going to be a lot of hard conversations about how and why some of these companies were using a global pandemic as an opportunity to make money instead of actually showing their partnership and affinity for the industry.

Chandra Ram:
Yeah. I do know a couple of people who were trying to see if they could take servers, they would have to layoff otherwise and turn them into delivery drivers. Then, they just said like, "That is just the pay." It's not going to make up the last pay, and it's putting them at risk. It's like there are insurance issues too that’s going... There's the insurance problem with that too. I think it is going to push a lot of restaurants, chefs, and restaurateurs to say how can we do delivery and do it in a way that that isn’t sort of destroying part of our business.

Zoe Schor:
I would take the moment to plug who we do use. The only one we use anymore is a company called ChowNow. What I like about them is, in my opinion, they don't have a huge reach themselves. They’re not providing orders the way Grubhub does, but they charge a flat fee. There’s no commission. All the commission stuff is not a thing. Then, they work with some delivery company. With us, they work with DoorDash, and we do pay a small fee for every DoorDash delivery given, but it's a dollar fee. It's not 30%.

Zoe Schor:
There's more of a true partnership there where it feels more like they're there for us and not just themselves because they just want us to be successful. Grubhub, in similar fashion to OpenTable over the years, has held restaurants over a barrel where you don't have a lot of options because they have
such a huge percentage of the market share. I think this might be a good opportunity for us to reclaim some of that, all independent operators, and say, "Okay. Well, there aren't as many restaurants open in Chicago right now, so this is easier for me to get my name out there for people to find me."

Zoe Schor:
Maybe, when we come back from this, I won't ever have to use Grubhub again. That's the hope. We've cancelled Grubhub.

Mike Kostyo:
One of the things I think we keep hearing about is now we're seeing so many people who hadn't even used delivery services before this happened start to use delivery services. My parents use grocery delivery service yesterday which is their first time in their lives using any type of delivery service like that. Do you think, and I know it's hard to know right now that from the consumer standpoint that there will be even more delivery after this is over.

Chandra Ram:
Interesting because I'm sure there are people who are going to say like, "Oh wow. This is great. I'm getting all of these different meals." I personally can't wait to go back into restaurants [crosstalk 00:10:34]. I want to go to restaurants and then just start hugging people which is obviously going to also feel weird and probably shouldn't happen immediately at least.

Chandra Ram:
I just want to get back to being around humanity, but I also think that we're in such a weird place where there's restaurants that will offer delivery now and will stop doing that after the crisis has shifted a bit. As well, we're seeing a lot of food that isn't ever available at the restaurant suddenly be what this restaurant is known for. You're seeing fine-dining restaurants saying, "Okay. Well, here's a lasagna, and here's chili and all of this super, super homey stuff."

Chandra Ram:
I think it's great because it's the type of food that can stand up to delivery. It's homey. It's easy for a group of people to split, but it's not really representative of the restaurants. They're going to wind up in a little bit of a situation when they open up again and people are like, "Oh, what do you mean I can't get the mama's meatballs kind of thing?" They're like, "Oh yeah. No. Sorry. We're actually upscale Mediterranean."

Zoe Schor:
But I like the idea. I really like the idea of everybody's talking about what comes next. We'll see how long this lasts and what happens, but I like the idea of reinvention happening right now and that maybe what a restaurant was known for isn't what, A, they will be known for after this, or, B, what you need to be known for all the time. As a restaurant that has already done a pretty significant pivot, one of the things that I'm looking for right now is feedback from my guests about what they'd like me to be providing.

Zoe Schor:
We are a neighborhood restaurant that we have people who eat in here four or five times a week sometimes. What do they want me to do that's different that I could do more easily because it's easier
"Sorry, we’re out of half the menu, but we have this extra 18 things I can tell you about?" You know what I mean?

Zoe Schor:
There's a freedom to this that does not exist. If you're a restaurant that has a printed menu that doesn't get reprinted every single day, then, I think it’s really special and glorious. I think that if a fine-dining restaurant has incredible chefs who make the best lasagna you've ever had, why should they stop making that when this is over? Why do we need to be so narrowly defined as restaurants. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to make some dishes that we used to make on our own menu, make things maybe we've never made before and trying to in addition to all of the fear and the planning that goes into it also revel in this opportunity we have right now to do things completely differently than we've ever done before

Mike Kostyo:
What are you offering? Is everything you're offering right now is something that was previously on the menu or have you developed things just for this?

Zoe Schor:
For right now, it's mainly stuff that was available on our menu two weeks ago or whatever, but we've been streamlining some things. As we weren't sure whether the governor was going to let us keep operating, we tried to order really light. Then, we're trying to move through stuff we have like pantry staples and grains and stuff that are just kicking around, but yesterday, we did Taco Tuesday. We did four tacos with to-go margarita package because you can sell like a whole bottle of tequila as long as it's still sealed up and lime juice and agave and salt and whatever.

Zoe Schor:
We have a lot of fun developing these tacos. Again, it'd be harder in the restaurant to have to server tell you there are four different tacos. They're to print it out. Then, as we ran out of one to then be like, "Oh, sorry. We're out of that one. Let's do a different one." It's a lot easier online. That's what we did. We did four different tacos with things that I had on hand playing around with things. When something ran out, I just sell something different. We updated the online description.

Zoe Schor:
Today, I was in the middle of making a new salad when I started this that I'll put online later. Tomorrow, we're going to do ramen when it starts raining again. We're just going to have some fun with it. I've got some feedback on Instagram that people want to see the chicken nuggets that we used to be well-known for. I'm going to make chicken nuggets sometime this weekend when I've got free time, stuff like that.

Chandra Ram:
Is this an appropriate time for me to completely hijack this interview and make a request for the baked potato gnocchi? Is this the moment because-

Zoe Schor:
Sure, absolutely. I just made some a couple of weeks ago [inaudible 00:14:43] special, but we can do it this week. I have more free time. We're still working 60 hours a week, you know what I mean, give or take, but that's way less than I usually work. We don't need to be like, okay, it's five o'clock, go town, lights down, music up, unlock the doors and make sure that everything's in place. It's a lot more casual.

Zoe Schor:
I think that that casualness will lend itself to creativity and creative development once we get past this running around panicked [crosstalk 00:15:14] phase that some of us are still handling a little bit.

Chandra Ram:
Yeah.

Mike Kostyo:
Well, that's what's working because I noticed you said that you were going to introduce a salad because it definitely feels like we've seen a lot of casual comfort foods like the other, that's what's being offered right now. Is that what's working for you, guys, or do you think now we're getting to the point where people are like, "Okay, I need to start eating healthier again?"

Zoe Schor:
I think that's what's going to happen. I can only look at my small section of the market or whatever, but I think that our regulars who are awesome people and love coming through here and saying, "Hi," and they get their food can't eat fried chicken seven days a week or six days we're now [inaudible 00:15:48] closed on Monday so we can take a day off.

Zoe Schor:
I am going to make this salad. I'm thinking about bringing some lighter options, some fish options, things like that, and again not having to reprint the menu every time I make a change or make four servers memorize a bunch of brand new dishes gives you a lot more freedom. All I have to do is put it in Instagram, put a caption on it and then throw it on to the channel website, and the rest of the work gets done. It's so much easier.

Zoe Schor:
It really does, like, I'll make a salmon dish probably tomorrow. I'll get some salmon in. If it goes well, I can do it again. If it doesn't, I can eat it for family meal. You know what I mean? We just have a lot more freedom, I think.

Mike Kostyo:
True. Yeah, and in that freedom, we're seeing a lot of creativity not just on the menu and just even the types of services being offered. Chandra, what are some of the creative ideas that you've seen out there that people are implementing?

Chandra Ram:
I think the fact that more and more cities are allowing bars and restaurants to sell liquor to-go has been huge. Certainly from a financial point of view for people, as Zoe said, she can sell tacos, and she's going
to have a certain profit level at that, but then, if she sells the margarita kit with that and a full bottle of tequila and a margarita mix if they make, that's a whole different opportunity for her.

Chandra Ram:
I think it's a way to make it fun. Like you said, so many of us have been doing. I'm invited to doing online happy hours. I'm invited to a friend's birthday party tomorrow night. There are 30 of us except we're all dialing in. I'm not really sure what we're going to do.

Zoe Schor:
Chaos.

Chandra Ram:
Chaos, right. [crosstalk 00:17:32] I'm sure the internet is going to be able to take that, but I think those are really fantastic. We ran an article on Plate's website yesterday about Canela, a restaurant in San Francisco. It's Spanish and the chef, Matt, the chef/owner said, "Normally, he can't do paella because it's so time-consuming and requires a good amount of tending over," that when his restaurant's busy, he doesn't offer it, but now, he can make these paella kits and so you can decide if you want chorizo, if you want seafood, if you want a vegan base. You get the bomba rice.

Chandra Ram:
You get a season stock. You get the spice mix. You get a recipe card. He said he's even adding on an option if you want to buy a paella pan. Those are doing so well. He said it's this balance of all the ideas coming in plus figuring out how they can how pull it off, but he's doing brunch kits now.

Chandra Ram:
I think those things are cool. I love all the cocktail kits. I love just the little detail. There's Amici. A pizza place in Denver is offering and I think it's free just an add-on if you request. You can get some extra uncooked pizza dough with your pizza delivery so that your kids can play with pizza dough and learn how to roll it out, and I don't know, plaster it on the walls, whatever it is children do.

Chandra Ram:
I think some of those things are really cool. The opportunities that chefs are finding, I hope, that they are profitable enough. I also hope they're able to keep them up afterwards because like Kopitiam in New York is doing Malaysian kaya toast with a special Malaysian kaya jam and everything on it. It would be a lovely thing to buy as a send somebody as a little gift anyways. I think we're seeing some really cool stuff. I just hope it adds up to being able to keep the restaurant surviving during this time.

Zoe Schor:
Just to shout out, Brian Jupiter, who's a chef that anyone in Chicago whose name she knows pretty well, he's always out and about and doing things, but he's doing a cool thing. He seems so prepared for this. It's almost like I was still scrambling to get everything together, and he was right on top of it, but he did online cooking demo yesterday like cooking class where people could buy the ingredients ahead of time so you could cook it along with him which I thought was really brilliant and a great way to monetize without just being like, "Pay me for this information I already have." They bought the ingredients from him.
Zoe Schor:
That's the financial aspect. Then, Brian just led this Instagram live video, whatever you call those things, under this cooking class, and people get to make it and then send in photos of themselves making it and stuff. It was very cool and very interactive. I think you're seeing more that kind of stuff. My partner owns an event space where obviously they had to cancel all their events. They just had their first live streaming event on Monday night again via Instagram live where 60 of us tuned in and watched this young woman perform from her bedroom, but she did it on the event space which is called The Martin here in Chicago, did it on their Instagram feed.

Zoe Schor:
She was able to access the Martin's contacts and followers and still got some new followers, new people seeing her stuff they'd never seen it before, myself included, without leaving her home. I think you're seeing a lot more of that kind of thing.

Mike Kostyo:
How are either of you keeping in touch with either your readership or your customers or fellow chefs because, in a weird way, we are seeing a lot more of that where people are at home and they also feel for their neighborhood restaurant and want to support it? Are you doing anything like that? Are you doing classes or webinars or whatever it may be?

Zoe Schor:
We're not doing anything like that yet. We've definitely talked about it. We've had a ton of support from the neighborhood. Frankly, the weeks leading up into the governor shutting restaurants down, we had some our busiest weeks we've ever had. I think going into probably next week, we're going to try to come, some more creative ways just like create engagement and keep things interesting just again because we are creative profession in creative pursuit more than the other thing. It's not really...

Zoe Schor:
I mean saying profitable is ideal, I don't know, realistic, but it's ideal. But it's really about continuing to push ourselves to see again how we can reinvent ourselves in this period because we're not talking about a week or two weeks. We're already halfway through the second week. This is not a two-week thing. This is not a three-week thing. We need to reimagine the restaurant that we are right now for the time being because this is the reality and how we can again engage our diners, engage our neighbors, be productive members of this community, of our society because this is not going away by Easter, I don't think, no matter what Donald Trump [crosstalk 00:22:45].

Mike Kostyo:
Then, Chandra, I don't know how much you can see on the Plate website just in the past week or so. What are people looking at? What are people looking to you for? Everybody's had the kind of change tactics and put new things on the menu so quickly. Are they searching like comfort food recipes or anything like that?

Chandra Ram:
There's certainly definitely recipe searches leaning in that direction. We frankly made some tough choices in changing our coverage because, like I said, normally, our Monday newsletter is all recipes. We
were just like last Monday, okay, well this isn't the time to start throwing out recipes and pretending that none of this is happening. We're taking a break for a couple of weeks from our Chefs On the Move Newsletter because all of that is changing so much.

Chandra Ram:
Restaurants are changing their hours, their days. People are closing. We hope it's just until this really horrible time shifts a bit. Our coverage has gotten to be just incredibly service-orientated where we're getting a lot of traction with like we have an ongoing feature that is resources for restaurant workers who are now unemployed. That's a piece on our website that we update every day. It has national resources and then state-by-state restaurants that Chef Edward Lee out of Louisville, Kentucky has a foundation called the Lee Initiative.

Chandra Ram:
They've partnered with Makers Mark and are doing community kitchens and pantries for unemployed restaurant workers in 11 cities now, partnered with chefs in different cities. We've been writing about that. We're getting a lot of personal stories. I think anytime you're going through something difficult like this, it helps to know. Even if somebody else doesn't necessarily have the answer for you, it helps, I think, to hear their story and hear that you're not the only person in that situation.

Chandra Ram:
We're really focusing a lot on those areas. I've been just trying to write blog posts that make sure chefs know that we're here with them and how much we know that there is no life as we know it without restaurants. I think it was the headline of the editorial in The New York Times yesterday that Tom Colicchio and a few others wrote and said, "There is no America without restaurants."

Chandra Ram:
We're trying to make sure that people know that we're on their side. We've got pieces coming out about what does it mean for restaurant workers who are undocumented and so are not going to be eligible for a lot of the aid packages. What can be done? Where can they find help? What can we all do to help them finding out what's happening with insurance companies and what's covered and what isn't, which is a huge issue?

Zoe Schor:
Nothing as far as I can tell.

Chandra Ram:
Yeah. It's interesting because some of them are saying, "Oh no. It's just that it's this kind of policy." I'm like, "I don't know. If a pandemic isn't an act of God, then what it is?" [crosstalk 00:26:24]

Mike Kostyo:
[crosstalk 00:26:24], can you talk about the petition to just the development of the petition and where it stands right now?

Zoe Schor:
Yeah. I guess this is over a week ago. Andrew Friedman who is a food writer and host of podcast, Andrew Talks to Chefs, is very involved in the chef world. He and I work together several times. He writes for Plate. We've done some things together. We're also good friends. He texted me and said, "Hey, we should do something."

Zoe Schor:
We put together a letter and got a small group of chefs around the country to be lead signatories on a petition that we put up on change.org. It's really something that the chefs were driving. Alice Waters is one of the signatories, Will Guidara the restaurateur, Jeremy Umansky from Larder in Cleveland, Michael Galata, [Mariwana Rani 00:27:23], Cheetie Kumar, they're chefs around the country who did this. We got it up on change.org.

Zoe Schor:
It has over 300,000 signatures which has just blown us away. I think we both thought like, "Oh, 10,000 people will sign this." Then it'll mean something. It'll do something. What we are doing right now is we're trying to pivot from just saying, "Okay. Yes, I agree with this to how we can turn this into some actionable change and affect some change."

Zoe Schor:
We're actually partnering with the independent restaurant coalition which is very like-minded has a restaurant, saverestaurant.co and where they're going to basically take ownership of that list and of the petition and use it to push because they are partnering with people in Washington who can actually push for more of the change that we need to save independent restaurants.

Zoe Schor:
Things like an income grant program for income replacement, making sure that any relief for restaurants isn't limited to just large restaurants. We've talked about other things like working with chefs and restaurant owners so that they can get either no interest loans or just a bailout if we can bailout airlines and we can get-

Zoe Schor:
Well, the hard thing about loans even no interest loans and then pay them back with what, I mean I'm loathe to take a loan because we're already not making ends meet as an independent restaurant with the cost that we have. If you take this loan, if you take Grubhub's offer deferrals, if you take any of this money that's being offered right now and pay it back with, what. I think that's part of the reason we're still open.

Zoe Schor:
Basically, my philosophy around still being open right now is we have a certain level of obligation to our community, to the people who are work at the restaurant. We definitely had to lay off a lot of people, but we're keeping most of our kitchen impact to our neighbors who dine with us and also to the economy, in general, of, like, if we can only put half of our team on unemployment instead of the whole team, that's helpful.
We're looking at it through the lens of what's our obligation to try to put our fight into it as well as much as we can as long as we're all healthy which we are or have a good practice which we do. I think that the scary thing about all these loans that are floating around is low interest, no interest, some interest, whatever, if you take a 10 or a 50 or $100,000 loan right now, what do you pay that back with?

Chandra Ram:
Right. It's not like you guys were like, "Oh, the profit margins are so high anyways." We'll just pay it back in the summer.

Zoe Schor:
Right. There's no time for us where we have extra money to pay anything back. We're staying open to try to make ends meet so that we don't have to take on any loans because if we do... It's just one more bill we won't be able to pay at some point.

Mike Kostyo:
Yeah. One thing we've been asked is to what extent is the model right now. I don't want to say working because it's not working, but we saw some restaurants that were offering takeout and delivery. Then after a few days, they were like, "This is just not going to be sustainable for us." Earlier this week or late last week, they were like, "We're going to shut down or ride it out." Where are you guys at right now as far as what takeout and delivery is doing for you? Can you get behind a few more weeks or indefinitely?

Zoe Schor:
I think it remains to be seen. My partner and I had agreed that as long as we were meeting the burden of our labor costs and our food costs that we would stay open. In terms of deferrals, we're deferring paying rent for right now which our landlords are partners in theory in the sense that they have a vested interest in us being they're not built to replace us.

Zoe Schor:
That's already that some of money is money we'll have to pay back and lump in to either paying back in installments or just taking the rent for the rest of the year once we can start paying rent again and adding that in. There's already these added costs that come into play. But I think it remains to be seen. I think it remains to be seen.

Zoe Schor:
Again a lot of how we're making these decisions is through the lens of what's our obligation, who's our obligation to. There may come a point where restaurant being open is having an unsustainable impact on the way the virus is spreading. There may come to a point where we don't have enough to-go orders to justify it or we could get busier. I really don't know. People do need to eat.

Zoe Schor:
It is only the middle of the second week. I do fear that as the stock market is quite volatile right now and as people are getting laid off and then some people I know are being asked or told to take pay cuts whether that's pay that will be paid back in back-pay or not, I don't know, but people are taking pay cuts, seeing their business shrink. At some point all these people working from home weren't going to have anything to work on.
Mike Kostyo:
How do you plan for that? How are you even ordering right now?

Zoe Schor:
Every day is a mystery. If the governor tomorrow decides to shut down everything, I don't want to have order for the weekend. Obviously, nothing's going to go to waste. You'd give it to our team members. We'd give it neighbors or whatever, but still if we spend a couple of grand ordering up for the weekend and then we can't use that product, that's going to put us out of business just as readily as anything else.

Zoe Schor:
I mean lightly, carefully, thoughtfully and again trying to find this balance of like it's easier to order things that can either be put in a freezer or sitting on the shelf because at least, it's not a full total loss, but that's not necessarily what people want to be eating right now. If I don't order any greens or I don't order any vegetables, are people even going to want to order from us for as long as they can? It's an impossible equation.

Mike Kostyo:
But how do you think it will change things when it's over whenever that is? I know [crosstalk 00:33:42] question.

Zoe Schor:
I think a lot is going to change. I think it's weird how quickly we're adapting because really, to Chandra's point, about going to restaurants and hugging people, I talk to a lot of my friends and family about this phenomenon of watching TV and be like, "Oh, no, stop touching each other. You're not supposed to be doing that." I felt watching TV even new TV that was just filmed not that long ago where they didn't know how drastically the world is, but [inaudible 00:34:08] I watched last week Top Chef Season Premiere which is my show. I love that show.

Zoe Schor:
They filmed this whole season not knowing how much their whole industry's about to change it. We just watch chefs run into the kitchen, start cooking and not know what's happening in this world that we're living in now. I think things are going to change a lot. I think the way people interact is going to change a lot. I think that one of the reasons that I would push the most for like how Chandra you were saying in California, they're allowing people to sell cocktails.

Zoe Schor:
We can't do that. We can sell a whole bottle of tequila or a whole bottle of wine, but we can't make a cocktail to send it home with you, but that's starting to change. I think the biggest reason that I would push that is that I want us to maintain some level of normalcy because I think that people adapt very quickly. We adapt very quickly to being this antisocial all online society that like that really scares me. I think we're already moving too quickly in that direction [crosstalk 00:35:04] too much online dating, online interacting and not enough real-life interactions.

Zoe Schor:
I think it would be very easy in this climate to become very xenophobic and become very even more poised to disagree people who don't think the same way you think and to move away from the way we've socialized as a society. I think that it's really important that we that and we keep that contact and interaction and that we don't just hold up inside of our houses. Even if we hold up inside of our houses for a month, even if all of us had the funds to do that which I don't, I mean if we close the restaurant, I'm in this much trouble as anyone else, what do we come back to at the end of that month?

Zoe Schor:
I think it's important that we maintain some level of connection and connectivity and interaction and not become so conditioned to fear being around people that we can't come back to regular life.

[crosstalk 00:35:58]

Mike Kostyo:
of interaction in connecting with one another, I think politically where we're still very far part from each other, are they having some really great stories that have come out of this? Even when I leave the house and I go to the grocery store, it feels like people are looking out for each other and that the neighborhood feels a little bit more connected than even it did before this.

Mike Kostyo:
I want to end on somewhat of a high note. I mean is there any story? Zoe, is there a customer, an employer or something just that like something nice that came out of this in the past couple of weeks?

Zoe Schor:
There's been so much incredible outpouring of support. We want to put in together a GoFundMe for our team who aren't working which is I'm excited to support the team, but I think it's tricky because all these individual restaurants are putting together all their individual GoFundMes and it ends up kind of being almost like a popularity contest as opposed to doing something a little more universal where we could all draw from the same well, but we've put together a GoFundMe that's raised about four grand in the last week that we're really excited to give to our team members who aren't working right now and just watching those numbers rack up.

Zoe Schor:
It's been huge, really touching watching the huge tips that come in with the to-goers that are obviously again going to our team and will help people is really touching. I actually think it was Chandra. I think it was you who wrote that I read was the first person that I saw saying like, "Have people buy gift certificates to restaurant, give cards to restaurants."

Zoe Schor:
Then, I've seen a lot of that publicized over the last couple of weeks. We've sold a ton of gift cards which is a huge showing the support because obviously a gift card, it's like an unsecured loan. Right now, while the restaurant industry is pretty... the future is uncertain, it's showing a lot of faith.

Zoe Schor:
Actually, one of the coolest things, a ceramic artist that we've worked with before, he's a collage artist. He did a collage for us, put together a mug that's a Split-Rail custom mug that he is taking a small
percentage of the profits, but most of it's going to go back to our team as well. That was his idea. That wasn't something I asked him to do. It's funny he asked if he could do.

Zoe Schor:
It's a huge show your support as well, these beautiful custom mugs that he's hand-making. There's all this incredible support. I think guests who keeps showing up who say thank you for being here, we got this really, really sweet note from somebody's thinking of food that just said like, "Thanks for everything you're doing for our neighborhood all the time, but especially right now."

Zoe Schor:
People are writing us notes and putting in posts on their social media and giving us money and time and buying product and shutting us out. It's been a ton of positivity. We feel very thankful just every day that we have enough to go to sustain another day of business. We feel very thankful for it. All of our team too who just keeps showing up and who want to be here and be a part of it are happy to still have their jobs.

Zoe Schor:
We feel very thankful and grateful and positive every day in spite of what's happening in the world. It probably doesn't hurt that I would never have to run in the grocery store ever.

Mike Kostyo:
Same to you, Chandra. Yeah, just the positive things that you've seen come out of it?

Chandra Ram:
I think it's the change in social interaction when I was trying to go to the grocery store less often, but I go to a small grocery store or a small independent grocery store. I don't go to a big supermarket. Last time, I was there, the guy behind the meat counter was like, "Hey, take care of yourself. Stay safe." It's heartrending in a lot of ways, but it's also where we're taking time to personally thank people for still being open for still cooking food, for still running their grocery store so that I think there is that appreciation of it.

Chandra Ram:
I'm seeing that with any interaction I have if it's picking out take-out, if it's even going to the drugstore to pick up a prescription or something like that is that we're all realizing the small things that we took for granted are really nice lovely things. I've noticed as well a lot of my friends who normally don't live near me and we normally just text, we're doing phone calls again which feels very 15, 20 years ago, but we want to have personal interaction.

Chandra Ram:
I think that if we're in a world where we're appreciating each other as human beings and how much we enjoy having that connection even if it's someone you don't know but you see regularly just the fact that maybe moving forward instead of just like, "Oh, there's the guy who works at the store." It's like a smile and a wave or saying hello or something like that. Yeah. I'm spending less time being disconnected.
Chandra, thank you. This was great, you guys. This was such a good conversation. Is there anything that we didn't cover that you were like, "I just wish I could have said X or anything like that?"

Zoe Schor:
I mean I think, for me, I think we covered a lot, but I think the biggest thing is I think that we all need to maintain this positive outlook. I think a lot of people are acting like there was before and there's now. Now, is an in-between. There's going to be an after. I think we need to plan for that after. We might not be able to plan the date that we're going to reopen, but we need to plan for what this future looks like and believe that it's going to happen or else I think that where that optimism that positive energy is really necessary to get to this time.

Zoe Schor:
We're seeing a lot of that from our guests and a lot of support and positive energy from our guests. We're just trying to put that back out there. I think that's important for all restaurant people and all people just to remember that this is just something that's happening right now. There will be an after to this.

Mike Kostyo:
Well, I just want to thank Zoe and Chandra for joining me today and for you guys for watching. I think it's clear that there's a lot of issues that we're going to have to deal with in the months and even years ahead, but I think there's things to be positive about and to be thankful for too. This is the second in our series of video. We'll continue to upload videos to the Datassential website, datassential.com. Just click on that button in the upper right-hand corner. You can see all the videos in the series as we release them as well as all the reports that we'll release in the upcoming weeks. Of course, follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter. You'll also see updates for when we released the reports and videos as well. Thank you for joining me.