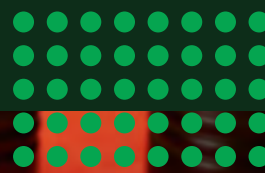




State of Business Dining Report

Spring 2025

Presented by





What's Inside

The State of Business Dining Report is an exclusive look at business dining trends and behaviors. Food and beverage is one of the largest expense categories, and business dining represents an estimated \$245 billion market. Using Dinova's proprietary business dining data from corporate cardholders and third-party insights, the report offers exclusive tips to help restaurants tap into this lucrative segment.

About Dinova

Dinova operates a business dining program that includes a network of 24,000 restaurants in the U.S. and Canada and nearly 600 corporations, government agencies, and small to medium-sized businesses.

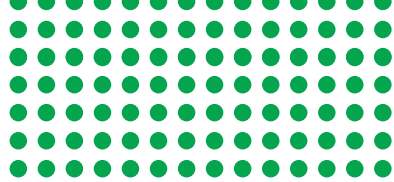


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Introduction

After strong momentum at the end of 2024, restaurants entered 2025 with high expectations only to face a challenging start. Weather disruptions, illness, consumer hesitation, and new tariffs have created significant uncertainty across the industry.



The economic landscape remains unpredictable. While we had anticipated continued growth, macroeconomic uncertainties are causing both consumers and businesses to exercise caution. This may impact travel budgets and expense accounts in the short term.

However, opportunity remains within the \$245 billion business dining market. Even during uncertain times, business dining has historically shown resilience as companies continue to prioritize key relationships and support their workforce. With business travel still projected to reach significant levels, restaurants that adapt strategically can capture this valuable segment.

This report provides practical insights to navigate today's challenging environment while positioning for stability when conditions improve.

Alison

Dinova CEO Alison Quinn



Even during uncertain times, business dining has historically shown resilience as companies continue to prioritize key relationships and support their workforce.

Restaurants Navigate Uncertainty in Early 2025

After a strong finish to 2024, the restaurant industry expected momentum to carry into the new year. Instead, Q1 delivered an abrupt slowdown for some restaurants. Factors like severe weather, widespread illness, and consumer anxiety over inflation and emerging policy shifts including new tariffs have all contributed to a more cautious market than initially anticipated.

While the National Restaurant Association initially projected record sales of \$1.1 trillion in 2025¹, shifting market conditions have tempered expectations. Growth remains possible, particularly in the business dining segment, but sales increases will likely be more modest than earlier forecasts suggested.

¹<https://restaurant.org/research-and-media/research/research-reports/state-of-the-industry/>

Consumer Outlook Remains Mixed

New Data Reveals Shifting Sentiment

- **46% of consumers feel optimistic** about the economy in Q1 2025, while **54% express mixed or pessimistic views**
- Despite citing stable conditions as positive, **half of consumers still worry about rising prices**, with older demographics showing greater concern

Given these contradictory signals, it's unclear when consumers will increase restaurant spending. **Restaurants can mitigate this uncertainty by focusing on business diners, who have historically shown resilience during economic fluctuations.**

Source: McKinsey State of the Consumer Insights





Business vs. Consumer Dining

Overall U.S. restaurant sales year-over-year were 5.6% higher in 2024 than 2023, but this growth has slowed significantly in early 2025. According to the U.S. Census Bureau¹, February 2025 sales were down 1% year-over-year. Month-to-month figures also show declining revenues, with February posting a 2% dip.

Business dining offers greater stability amid this slowdown. Dinova's data shows business dining grew 5.6% in 2024 and continued with moderate 3.6% growth in January 2025. The business dining segment typically follows predictable patterns and demonstrates resilience during economic uncertainty.

¹<https://www.census.gov/retail/sales.html>

Takeaways for Restaurants

With industry growth projected to slow in 2025, **restaurants must act strategically**—finding fresh, high-value channels to drive revenue.

Business dining spend is outpacing inflation and overall restaurant sales, fueled by a resurgence in corporate travel and catering demand. This offers a key growth lever in an otherwise constrained environment.

Shifting preferences toward **local, experiential, and independent dining**

could give smaller operators an edge.

Restaurants that **understand the needs and behaviors of business diners** will be best positioned to capture steady, high-margin sales.

➤ **Read on for actionable insights and practical strategies** to help your restaurant seize emerging opportunities, meet the moment, and grow—despite the challenges of a cooling market.



Business Travel in Uncertain Times

86%

Professionals who say 2024 business travel met or exceeded expectations.¹

60%

Of professionals say economic indicators are having little to no effect or minimal effect on company travel.²

26%

of travel professionals are pessimistic about the business travel industry in 2025; 71% are optimistic or neutral.³

The Global Business Travel Association's data reveals a market with diverging perspectives. While most companies maintain their travel commitments despite economic headwinds, a growing number are exercising caution. This split suggests more modest growth in 2025 for the business dining sector.

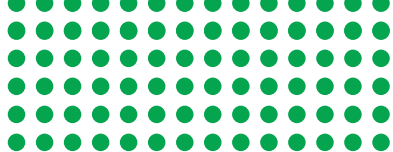
Companies want tangible returns, and new technology makes it easier to manage costs, mitigate risks, and enhance productivity, traveler experience, and corporate responsibility.



¹<https://www.gbta.org/business-travel-industry-reflects-on-a-resilient-2024-sets-optimistic-plans-for-growth-technology-and-sustainability-in-2025>

²<https://www.businesstravelnews.com/Intelligence/Trump-Liberation-Day-Saps-Corporate-Travel-Outlook>

³<https://www.gbta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-US-Govt-Actions-Poll-Deck-04.16.25-FINAL.pdf>



Demystifying Business Expense Management

How Restaurants Can Align with Corporate Spending Policies

Sophisticated tools give businesses unprecedented visibility and control over travel spending. Most large companies rely on corporate booking platforms like Concur to keep travel within policy, streamline reimbursements, and reduce administrative hassle when employees book airfare or hotels.

As economic conditions become more unpredictable, companies are increasingly scrutinizing expense management policies. Understanding these evolving policies is crucial for restaurants seeking to maintain their share of the business dining market during cooling conditions.

Going Behind the Firewall

Travel & expense tools like Concur, Tripism, Bizly, and Tripkicks (among many others) help business travelers stay compliant with corporate policies when selecting airlines, hotels, and restaurants. Dinova's preferred dining program integrates seamlessly with these platforms, giving restaurants exclusive visibility and connecting employees to in network options that offer rebates, helping companies curb business dining costs.



How Expense Policies Shape Meal Choices

Preferred Travel Programs.

Corporate-negotiated rates and partnerships with airlines, hotels, and dining programs guide employee choices in travel management platforms.

Spending Limits & Per Diems.

Caps on daily or per-meal spending influence everything from fast-casual lunches to fine dining.

Policy Restrictions (Alcohol & Extras).

Most companies reimburse standard meals, especially for business purposes, but there may be different guidelines for alcoholic beverages

Ease of Reporting.

Nobody likes chasing down paper receipts. Integrations that deliver itemized e-receipts are a hit.

Whose Card?

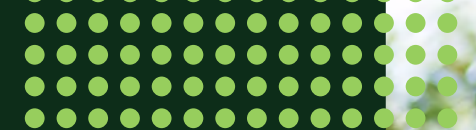
80% of U.S. business travelers use corporate credit cards for meals, which may reduce price sensitivity.¹

Sustainability.

Many policies now reward eco-friendly dining choices.



¹<https://www.businesstravelnews.com/Payment-Expense/BCD-Survey-Personal-Card-Use-Common-Among-Corp-Travelers>



Digital Transformation's Impact

About half (49%)¹ of travel programs plan to increase tech investments in 2025, with artificial intelligence (AI) adoption top-of-mind. **A few ways AI could shape business dining decisions:**

- **Itinerary Optimization:** AI tools act like virtual travel assistants, streamlining bookings and pinpointing when and where to eat.
- **Personalized Experiences:** AI crunches personal data (dietary restrictions, cuisine preferences) and local listings to recommend eateries that fit each traveler's tastes.
- **Expense Management:** AI-driven platforms flag out-of-policy purchases, promote cost-conscious choices, simplify reimbursements, and provide real-time visibility.

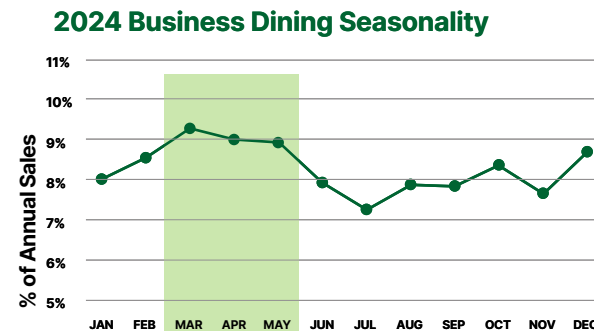
As AI-powered travel tech becomes more sophisticated, restaurants that tailor offerings to corporate travelers, deliver top-rated experiences, and leverage preferred dining programs like Dinova to integrate with travel policies and platforms stand to gain.

¹<https://www.gbta.org/business-travel-industry-reflects-on-a-resilient-2024-sets-optimistic-plans-for-growth-technology-and-sustainability-in-2025/>

Business Dining Seasonality

Business dining spend follows distinct seasonal patterns, offering critical insights for restaurants aiming to capitalize on peak periods. Understanding these patterns becomes even more essential during economic uncertainty, allowing restaurants to optimize limited resources during predictable peak periods.

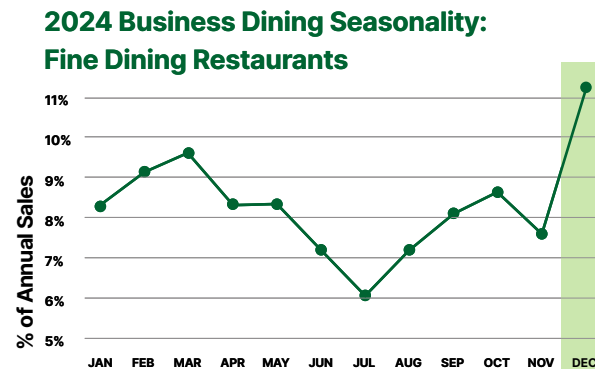
Across the industry, March through May typically represent the strongest months for business dining activity, highlighting a key window for



Restaurants that strategically align with business dining seasonality can maintain revenue stability even as overall dining markets cool.

operators to strategically target corporate diners and drive incremental revenue.

Fine dining restaurants, however, experience their highest business dining revenues in December, underscoring a clear preference among businesses for upscale, full-service experiences during the holiday season. Understanding these seasonal nuances allows restaurants to optimize operations, staffing, and marketing efforts precisely when corporate spending is most robust.





Elevating Experiences for Every Kind of Traveler



National travelers, who may spend extended periods away, seek unique and memorable dining experiences.

The Jet-Setter

National travelers average 6 trips per year to new destinations. They seek to immerse themselves in local culture and build client or team relationships.

Typical Order: Multi-course meals, cocktails

Preferred Cuisine: Fine dining, regional specialties

What They Crave: Memorable experiences, easy reservations, recommendations

Why Target Them: Larger check averages, high-margin purchases

Marketing Tip: Spotlight unique local flavors, highlight reviews, and simplify booking for group meals.



Regional business travelers—often traveling by car—prioritize convenience and reliability in their dining choices. They are also more likely to order catering for clients and employees.

The Territory Manager

Regional travelers (e.g., sales reps) take frequent, shorter trips. They often squeeze in quick meals but also use dining as a relationship-building tool.

Typical Order: Catered box lunches, coffee on-the-go

Preferred Cuisine: Pizza, sandwiches, breakfast spreads

What They Crave: Consistency, speed, and convenience

Why Target Them: High frequency, repeat business

Marketing Tip: Offer quick service, loyalty perks, and reliable pickup/delivery to keep them coming back.



Trends to Watch: Experiential Dining

While high-end steakhouses and speakeasies remain go-to spots for executive networking, the rise of “eatertainment” venues—offering virtual golf, bowling, live demonstrations, and more—has redefined corporate team-building. Interactive experiences like these make business dining more engaging and memorable than ever.



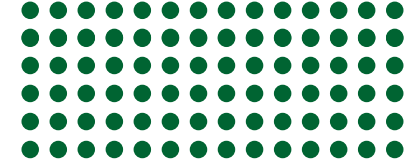
Business Catering in 2025

While the catering industry has shown strong performance, it may face a more measured pace in the uncertain economic environment of 2025. The numbers reveal a substantial market, largely propelled by corporate spending.

- While 11% of all restaurant revenue is catering, per Curate's 2025 Catering Industry Report, far more business dining revenue is driven by large, group orders.
- In fact, businesses are now the top driver of catering sales, eclipsing weddings in 2023.⁴

Dinova's 2024 business dining data reveals that a significant share of sales from limited service restaurants (LSRs) comes from large group orders: in fact, 42% of purchases at limited-service restaurants are over \$150 (defined by Dinova as catering).

Even during cooling markets, catering's consistent share of business dining spend demonstrates its enduring importance to corporate clients, making it a strategic focus area during uncertain times. As more restaurants look to tap into catering's higher-margin potential, this steady performance highlights its value as a long-term growth strategy.



54%

Restaurants planning to introduce offsite catering services.²

11%

Catering's share of all food service revenue.³

¹<https://www.restaurantdive.com/news/return-to-office-fueling-restaurant-catering-growth-outlook-2024/705757/>

²<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20240117572088/en/Ninety-Four-Per-Cent-of-U.S.-Full-Service-Restaurant-Operators-Have-Expansion-Plans-for-2024-Findings-From-TouchBistro%E2%80%99s-Latest-State-of-Restaurants-Report>

³<https://we.curate.co/blog/2025-catering-industry-trends-report>

⁴<https://nuphoriq.com/catering-stats/>

Unlock Corporate Dining Revenue with Dinova

In today's uncertain economic landscape, reliable revenue streams are crucial. Dinova connects restaurants to the corporate dining market by integrating with company expense management systems. While consumer spending fluctuates, business dining has historically shown resilience, with companies continuing to prioritize relationship-building meals even during challenging periods.

Our platform requires no operational changes yet attracts high-spending business diners who visit more midweek and spend at least 50% more per check—providing stability in an unpredictable market.

Learn more at Dinova.com.

