

What is a Virtual or Ghost Kitchen? A confused marketplace is about to get some clarity

Ghost Town Restaurants (GTR) is moving into the tense territory of online ordering applications. The GTR app delivers more to the bottom line for restaurants.

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The growing trend of "Ghost Kitchens" and "Virtual Restaurants" is creating a confused marketplace for consumers. In addition to the confusion, the high fees paid to app based delivery services challenge the restaurants that offer their goods through those apps. What is going to happen next? How can this market adapt? In an industry that is outgrowing change faster than change can get in place, there is a solution on the horizon that may bring some sense to it all.



First, let us clarify the difference between a "Ghost Kitchen" and a "Virtual Kitchen". Many people

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Daniel Francis, CEO, Ghost Town Restaurants

believe they are the same thing, however, there are important differences to consider. A Ghost Kitchen is an open, inspected and licensed restaurant, that likely has a dining room and offers pick-up as an option. These restaurants create new menus and offer them under different brands through the ordering applications. They are real restaurants that offer a variety of online only choices under branded menus. For instance, you local Italian restaurant may offer a thai menu through the apps, and not in house, hence, in house you cannot see that they also prepare thai food, hence the "Ghosting" of the menu. This is different than a Virtual Kitchen

Virtual Kitchens have no other business than the online business. They do not have a dining

room or location for pick-up that is anything like a traditional restaurant. No sign out front, no location advantage. They can be opened just about anywhere, and that does pose a problem. The Virtual Kitchen must be a licensed and inspected facility, even so, they can remain anonymous and fly under the detection of local regulators. They do not offer a business that is typical of the restaurant industry, they operate as brands within online ordering applications, and nowhere else. The majority of these businesses operate legally and work to provide the best possible products. [Cloud Kitchens](#) is an example of a community of operators, all inspected and licensed, operating in a partially shared environment. Even so, with the ability for some bad players to enter into the market, a consumer should be careful about the quality and safety of the food they order if it is from a virtual kitchen.

How can a consumer know if their food is coming from a Ghost Kitchen or a Virtual Kitchen? Well, for now, in most cases, it is not something one can know. This is why [Ghost Town Restaurants](#) CEO Daniel Francis and other industry leaders are moving forward with an organization to help. This organization has been oncoming for about a year now. It is called The [National Association of Virtual Restaurants](#) or N.A.V.R. Membership is open to all who wish to be a part of developing this exciting market segment.

Regulations are likely coming, probably sooner than later. The National Association of Virtual Restaurants has some guidance on what regulations may look like in the future. Acknowledging the need for consumer information, they advocate for the address of the virtual and ghost kitchen alike to be made available in app alongside the official corporate name of the company and the most recent health inspection score. N.A.V.R. also advocates for food security measures when packaging meals. In 2021, they will be offering a certification to restaurants of all sizes that shows they understand and are compliant with recommendations for food safety.

There is one application that will be offering all of these services in late 2020. Ghost Town Restaurants, an online restaurant syndication firm, will offer an application that works differently than the current generation of apps. "The GTR App will be much more cost effective to the restaurant operator, certify the organization offering the food and simplify the overall fee process to create a consistent, predictable and reliable food ordering experience alongside a profitable sales outlet for restaurant operators." States Daniel Francis, CEO of Ghost Town Restaurants. "We are working closely with our friends that helped form N.A.V.R. to establish a simplified process so all restaurants can easily participate in this segment of the industry".

The GTR app is designed to offer Ghost and Virtual brands.

The pace is mind-blowing and the innovations are still emerging. The National Association of Virtual Restaurants will lead this industry into a safe and reliable operational methodology, allowing all participants to thrive in their business.

Greg Mulligan
National Association of Virtual Restaurants

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