

UPTICK INSIGHT SERIES RESHAPING THE F&B INDUSTRY WITH WEB3

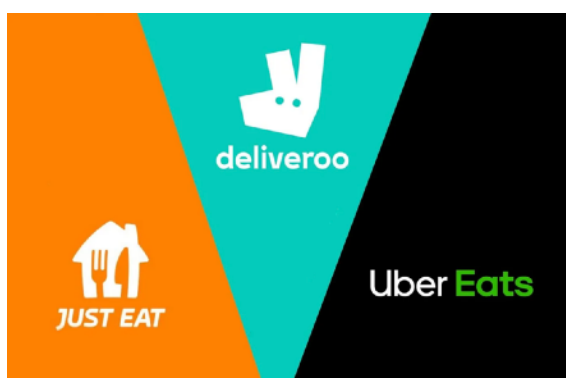
Uptick Insight Series | Reshaping the F&B Industry with Web3

For decades, the restaurant industry has operated on a simple model: customers walked in, ordered food, and paid their bill. Marketing was a pure mix of word-of-mouth, local ads, and occasional PR stunts. For the

most part, success relied on location, quality, and a loyal customer base.

Then the internet changed everything.

Digital menus, online reservations, and third-party delivery platforms started to reshape how people discovered, ordered, and engaged with restaurants, turning dining into an increasingly online experience.



At first, this shift seemed like an advantage, because restaurants could reach more customers than ever before, tap into delivery markets, and leverage online reviews to boost their reputation. But for a lot of businesses, that shift actually came at a cost. The same platforms that promised all of the convenience and exposure quickly turned into gatekeepers, charging extortionate commissions, limiting direct customer interaction, and centralizing control over data.

Restaurants, who were once the architects of their own customer relationships, found themselves dependent on intermediaries that dictated pricing, engagement, and access to their own customers. In parallel, consumer expectations also started evolving. Nowadays, customers expect effortless digital interactions, whether that's ordering food, or earning loyalty rewards. They want transparency, personalized experiences, and convenience, without necessarily realizing how much control they've handed over to tech companies in the process.

For independent restaurant owners, adapting to this digital-first environment means constantly striking a balance between visibility and autonomy, and between growth and sustainability.

Now, Web3 is aiming to provide restaurants with a different approach; one that prioritizes ownership, transparency, and direct engagement. This isn't about speculative crypto trends or gimmicks, it's about practical solutions in the form of decentralized loyalty programs, on-chain reservations, tokenized

memberships, and more, that allow restaurants to regain control over their business models. Unlike the last wave of digital transformation, which largely benefited intermediaries, Web3 is a chance for businesses to take back control.

As the industry heads into 2025, this evolution is starting to see the light of day, but mainstream adoption is still a massive challenge for anyone participating in the industry. While it's true that mainstream restaurants have been slow to fully integrate Web3 into their strategies, early adopters are proving that some decentralized models can work in the F&B (Food and Beverage) space.

The question is no longer whether restaurants will adapt, but how they can do so in a way that *enhances*, and does not *disrupt* the customer experience.

THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY'S DIGITAL DILEMMA



The rise of third-party platforms like Uber Eats, OpenTable, and Yelp initially seemed like a win-win. They gave customers convenience and gave restaurants a lot of exposure to a wider audience. These services streamlined reservations, made online reviews more accessible, and allowed smaller businesses to compete with larger chains in the digital space. However, beneath the surface, a different reality started to emerge.

Delivery commissions of 15–30% squeezed already thin margins, making profitability a constant uphill battle for restaurants operating on tight budgets. Restaurants were also no longer just competing on food quality and service, they were now at the mercy of platform algorithms determining their visibility.



Customer data, which was once a restaurant's most valuable asset, was now owned by tech companies. The ability to analyze order history, preferences, and dining habits was incredibly important for personalized marketing and loyalty programs, but this data stayed locked within the platforms. Restaurants couldn't directly reach out to their customers, which limited their ability to build genuine long-term relationships and adapt to evolving consumer trends. Even loyalty programs remained fragmented, and were locked within closed ecosystems with no way for customers to trade or transfer rewards across brands, which only further weakened customer retention.

For independent restaurants, the impact was even worse.

Without the marketing budgets of large chains, many felt trapped in a system that prioritized platform profits over restaurant sustainability. Third-party apps controlled

menu pricing, determined which businesses got visibility, and inserted themselves as the default gatekeepers between restaurants and their own guests. Some platforms even ran promotions or discounts on behalf of restaurants without prior approval, cutting further into margins. This dependency left a lot of restaurant owners feeling completely powerless, and unable to operate on their own terms.

This isn't simply a financial problem, it's an existential one.

The ability to engage with customers directly is what turns a one-time visitor into a loyal patron. However, under the current system, restaurants are left fighting for scraps, and are unable to fully capitalize on the relationships they work so hard to build. Some restaurants have adapted by strengthening direct engagement through messaging platforms and exclusive in-house events, but even these efforts require strong incentives to shift customers away from third-party platforms. In regions like China, where apps such as Dianping and Douyin dominate the food industry, restaurants are forced to play by the rules of these platforms to remain competitive.

Even when restaurants attempt to build their own digital infrastructure, whether through first-party ordering systems, membership programs, or social media engagement, the challenge is ultimately still the same: *getting customers to break their ingrained habits*. Third-party platforms are super convenient, widely adopted, and deeply embedded into consumer behavior. Without compelling

incentives, most customers see very little reason to switch to direct restaurant engagement, making it difficult for businesses to reclaim their autonomy.

Restaurant owners are now actively seeking alternatives. We know that the current model is flawed, so it becomes more about how restaurants can break free from third-party reliance while still catering to the familiar digital expectations of modern consumers.

THE REALITY OF WEB3 F&B TODAY

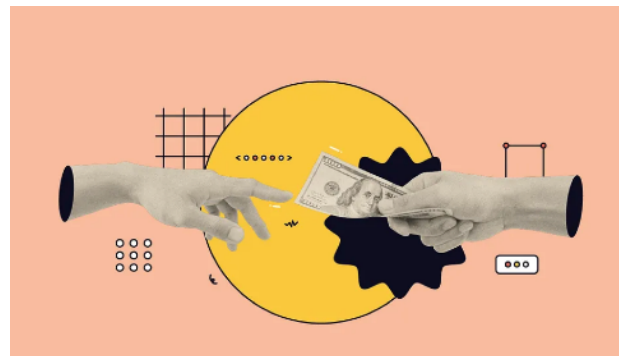
Restaurants exploring Web3 in their business models are aiming to reclaim customer relationships and unlock new revenue streams. However, widespread adoption is still painfully slow.

A lot of restaurant owners acknowledge the potential of decentralization, but practical implementation is still in its nascent stages. While some forward-thinking establishments are exploring on-chain solutions, the majority of restaurants are still pretty hesitant, either due to lack of familiarity with the tech, regulatory concerns, or uncertainty over its long-term viability.

For example, Web3 loyalty programs could allow customers to earn and trade rewards across multiple brands, enhancing engagement and retention. This kind of flexibility is something traditional systems really struggle to offer, as most loyalty

programs are locked within single-brand ecosystems with little interoperability. The problem is that most customers aren't familiar with Web3, and onboarding them smoothly becomes a huge challenge.

Without clear benefits that feel intuitive and effortless, most diners will probably default to existing loyalty programs that they already understand. This is something we believe will improve over time as adoption increases and the masses become more familiar with crypto, but long-term, this process shouldn't even feel separate, it should be abstracted into the Web2 world without the customer even realizing it.



The current priority for many restaurants is to balance Web3 adoption with the expectations of a non-crypto-savvy audience. A significant portion of customers have never actually interacted with Web3 wallets or digital assets, meaning any transition needs to be frictionless. If a loyalty program requires multiple steps, app downloads, or a completely unfamiliar transaction process, customers are unlikely to participate in droves. This is one of the biggest hurdles Web3 faces not just in F&B, but the entire space, and it's not the technology itself, but the user experience surrounding it.

So, how do we fix this?

Well, rather than replacing existing systems, restaurants could integrate a hybrid approach with Web3 tools working alongside traditional CRM and payment platforms. NFT-based memberships for VIP customers, for example, could work in tandem with credit card-based loyalty systems, gradually introducing Web3 benefits without requiring a complete overhaul.

Some restaurants are already experimenting with this approach, offering NFT-based dining perks while still accepting traditional reservations and payments. Some high-end restaurants have introduced limited-edition NFT memberships that offer priority bookings, access to exclusive menus, and even personalized dining experiences with the chef. These models enhance customer engagement and create new revenue streams by allowing memberships to be resold or transferred, something traditional loyalty programs are unable to support.

The issue we have is that until it becomes more intuitive for mainstream users, most restaurants will continue using Web3 as an optional enhancement rather than a core business function.

HOW RESTAURANTS ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH WEB3

Despite the challenges, some early adopters are seeing promising results. Fine-dining establishments have introduced NFT-based memberships that grant holders exclusive event access, priority reservations, and unique menu offerings. In these cases, NFTs function more as access passes than speculative assets, adding real-world value to the dining experience. Customers who invest in these memberships gain tangible perks, and at the same time, restaurants create an additional revenue stream that isn't tied to daily sales volume. Some restaurants have even experimented with tiered NFT memberships, where different levels of ownership unlock progressively better benefits, enabling long-term customer loyalty.

Other restaurants are testing on-chain reservations, where customers put down smart contract deposits to secure tables, reducing the issue of no-shows. This approach has worked particularly well in high-demand dining spots, where last-minute cancellations can lead to significant lost revenue. Requiring guests to commit funds in advance allows restaurants to create a fairer system where availability is guaranteed for serious diners, and cancellations become less disruptive. Some proposed models allow customers to resell or transfer reservations, potentially creating a secondary market for premium dining experiences.



Beyond reservations and memberships, Web3 is also being used for customer engagement and brand building. A growing number of restaurants are experimenting with tokenized loyalty programs that reward customers for repeat visits, social media promotion, or participation in community events. Unlike traditional loyalty points, these rewards can be stored, traded, or even combined across multiple partner establishments. This interoperability makes them more valuable to customers and increases the likelihood of ongoing engagement.

Some forward-thinking businesses are also integrating Web3 for supply chain transparency, allowing customers to verify ingredient sourcing, sustainability efforts, and ethical production practices. Placing key product data on-chain allows restaurants to offer verifiable proof of farm-to-table claims, which can appeal to the increasingly conscious consumers who actually care about where their food comes from. While still a niche use case, this technology has the potential to reshape consumer trust in food quality and sourcing.

Many of these implementations are still in their early phases, but they do indicate a growing willingness among restaurant owners to explore new strategies. The key challenge is still about usability, making sure that

customers can engage with these systems as easily as they would with a traditional app or website. Over time, Web3 tools will become more effortless, and as customer adoption increases, these experimental models could evolve into standard practices that define the future of the restaurant industry.

WHAT COULD A WEB3-POWERED RESTAURANT LOOK LIKE TODAY?

If a new restaurant were launching in 2025 with Web3 infrastructure built in from day one, what would that look like?

This wouldn't just be a traditional restaurant with a few Web3 integrations tacked on, it would be a fully digital-first experience, where customer engagement, loyalty, and operations are structured around a suite of decentralized tools. Instead of relying on third-party platforms for marketing, reservations, and customer management, the restaurant could operate with a direct-to-customer model, using blockchain to build stronger, long-term relationships.

Here are a few ways this model might play out:

On-Chain Loyalty Systems

Customers earn blockchain-based tokens for dining, referring friends, or engaging on social media. These tokens aren't limited to one restaurant, they're interoperable across a

network of participating businesses. Unlike traditional points programs that expire or remain locked to a single brand, tokenized rewards can be used at partnered establishments, increasing their overall value and encouraging repeat business.

NFT Memberships

Instead of static rewards programs, premium customers hold NFT-based memberships that unlock exclusive perks, such as private chef experiences, priority reservations, and VIP seating. Some high-end restaurants have already experimented with lifetime NFT dining memberships, allowing holders access to private events or special menus. Unlike conventional loyalty programs, these memberships can be resold or transferred, allowing customers to extract value if their dining habits change.

Decentralized Identity for Reservations

No more fake bookings or bot-driven scalping. DID means that real customers secure high-demand tables, with deposits managed transparently through smart contracts. Customers could have verifiable dining profiles, enabling restaurants to tailor personalized experiences without collecting excessive private data. As previously mentioned, a system like this could also reduce no-shows, as reservations could require tokenized deposits that are refunded only upon attendance or fair cancellations.

Web3-Powered Supply Chain Transparency

Customers can verify ingredient sourcing, sustainability efforts, and fair-trade certifications, all on-chain. Integrating transparent, verifiable tracking into food procurement, restaurants can appeal to increasingly conscious consumers who prioritize ethical and sustainable sourcing. This would also help restaurants differentiate themselves in a competitive market by providing proof of quality and authenticity.

Cross-Brand Partnerships

A restaurant group could partner with coffee shops, wine bars, or supermarkets, allowing customers to redeem rewards across multiple businesses without an intermediary. This could actually extend beyond F&B, creating an ecosystem where dining tokens could be used for entertainment, travel, or retail experiences. A partnership model like this would increase customer retention across industries and drive additional engagement.

The key to success in a Web3-powered restaurant is making sure that these innovations *enhance*, not *complicate* the Web3 offers a lot of exciting possibilities, but it needs to be effortlessly integrated into existing consumer habits. Customers will be less inclined to adopt a new system if it doesn't feel as convenient as traditional alternatives. This is why many restaurant owners experimenting with Web3 are focusing on hybrid approaches, where Web3 tools can

run in parallel with traditional loyalty programs and payment methods.



For

example, a restaurant could implement a tokenized loyalty system but still allow customers to redeem rewards through their phone number or email, rather than requiring them to set up a crypto wallet. Similarly, NFT memberships could be sold using fiat currency, but still grant access to blockchain-verified benefits.

The Future of Tokenized Economies

These incremental steps can help bridge the gap between traditional diners and Web3 early adopters.

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As Web3 adoption in the F&B industry grows, some restaurants have already explored different Web3 strategies. But what does this shift look like from the perspective of an actual restaurant operator?

To gain a clearer understanding, we caught up with Miguel, the owner of MAYA, a restaurant

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where he's had firsthand experience integrating technology into the business:

Customer behavior and economic shifts have reshaped the F&B industry. How do you feel these changes have influenced how restaurants approach growth and innovation?

The last few years have forced restaurants to be more agile than ever. Economic shifts and changing customer habits — especially post-pandemic — have accelerated digital transformation.

For many of us, survival meant optimizing delivery, investing in CRM tools, and focusing on community-driven marketing. Growth today is less about expanding physical locations and more about creating a brand that resonates across multiple online and offline channels.

Third-party platforms dominate reservations, delivery, and reviews. How are restaurants strengthening direct customer relationships through their own online channels and tech, and what challenges do they face in reducing reliance on these platforms?

Third-party platforms have become unavoidable, but they also take significant margins and limit direct customer interaction. At MAYA, we've focused on strengthening our direct relationships through WeChat, and exclusive in-house events. In China, Dianping, Little Red Book, and

Douyin remain hugely influential in directing customer traffic, and most restaurants currently focus their marketing efforts via these platforms. The challenge, though, is that customers are accustomed to the convenience of third-party apps, and driving them to proprietary platforms requires strong incentives — whether through personalized offers, loyalty rewards, or unique content.

Which Web3 applications, such as loyalty programs, reservations, or event access, do you think hold the most

immediate potential for restaurants?

If Web3 adoption were higher, I could see tokenized loyalty programs being a game-changer, offering customers ownership in a way that traditional point systems can't. NFT-based memberships for exclusive dining experiences or event access could also create a stronger sense of community. But in practice, I think we're still far from mainstream adoption, particularly in China and broader Asia.

What tangible benefits have Web3 tools brought to restaurants in terms of efficiency, customer retention, or revenue?

For now, I haven't seen Web3 tools making a significant impact on efficiency or revenue in this space — at least not in a way that traditional tech can't already achieve. While blockchain-based loyalty programs and transparent supply chain tracking sound promising, the infrastructure and consumer adoption just aren't there yet, especially compared to existing solutions that work smoothly today.

If you were launching a new restaurant today in Hong Kong or Southeast Asia, how would you integrate Web3 from the start?

I'd focus on hybrid solutions rather than going all-in on Web3. Maybe an NFT-based VIP membership or tokenized rewards for early supporters, but it would have to be user-friendly and work alongside traditional payment and CRM systems. The challenge is that most customers still don't have crypto wallets or familiarity with Web3, so any integration needs to feel seamless rather than forcing education on the consumer.

Have you seen any specific examples of F&B businesses that have successfully integrated Web3, and if so, what do you think made their approach effective?

I've seen some brands experiment with NFT memberships and tokenized rewards, but very few have achieved long-term success. The ones that work best are those tied to strong communities — where the NFT or token actually provides real-world value beyond speculation. For example, I've understood that certain restaurants using NFTs for priority reservations and private events have made it work, but these are niche cases rather than industry-wide trends. I also don't have reliable data on this.

What excites you most about Web3's potential in the restaurant industry, and what

gaps still need to be addressed for its adoption?

The idea of decentralized loyalty programs and tokenized brand ownership is exciting, but the biggest gap is usability and consumer adoption. If Web3 can integrate more smoothly into existing payment and CRM systems, then we'll see more traction. Until then, it remains a niche experiment rather than a core business tool for most restaurants.



THE PATH TO ADOPTION

For Web3 to gain traction in the restaurant industry, three important barriers need to be addressed:

Usability

The average customer doesn't have a crypto wallet or understand blockchain mechanics. Web3 needs to be as intuitive as scanning a QR code or using a credit card. Web3-natives may be comfortable with digital wallets and token transactions, but mainstream customers expect a frictionless experience. To bridge this gap, restaurants need solutions that abstract away the complexity of blockchain.

This could mean using social login-based wallet creation, or allowing customers to interact with on-chain loyalty programs without downloading a dedicated crypto wallet. Some businesses are already experimenting with gasless transactions to remove the need for users to understand

blockchain fees. The goal is to integrate Web3 into the existing customer experience so easily that diners engage with it without even realizing it.

Regulatory Uncertainty

Tokenized loyalty programs and NFT memberships operate in a legal gray area in many regions. Restaurants need clear compliance frameworks before deciding to commit to and scale Web3 initiatives. Depending on the jurisdiction, some tokenized rewards might raise legal or tax questions, especially if they're tradable or imply future value, so restaurants need to carefully assess how they structure these programs.

The current regulatory landscape is definitely shifting into a more positive light, and early adopters are working with legal experts to structure their programs in a way that avoids financial regulation pitfalls while still providing tangible value to customers.

Tech Integration

The simple fact is that existing POS and CRM systems aren't built for blockchain. Web3 tools need to integrate smoothly with traditional restaurant software rather than forcing a full transition. For example, many restaurants use legacy reservation and ordering systems that don't have native blockchain support.

The challenge is finding middleware solutions that allow Web3 loyalty programs, NFT memberships, and decentralized identity verification to work alongside existing

restaurant infrastructure. Some startups are already developing API-based Web3 integrations that can be plugged into traditional POS systems, enabling Web3 features without requiring restaurants to overhaul their entire tech stack.



Beyond these core challenges, there's also the issue of customer education. Web3 provides so many powerful tools for decentralization and ownership, but to be frank, most diners are unfamiliar with the benefits. Unlike industries where Web3 adoption has already taken hold, such as gaming or digital art, the restaurant sector is still lagging and figuring out how to communicate Web3's value proposition in a way that resonates with everyday customers.

Education needs to happen organically, through actual experiences rather than complicated explanations.

Despite these challenges, dissatisfaction with third-party platforms is driving restaurants to seek alternatives. A lot of restaurant owners recognize that the current system, where platforms take a significant cut of revenue while controlling customer interactions, is unsustainable in the long run. Web3 doesn't have to replace existing systems overnight, it can complement them, offering new ways to engage customers, reduce costs, and build sustainable business models. As more

restaurants experiment with Web3 solutions and real-world case studies emerge, adoption is more than likely going to accelerate.

For restaurants that put in the work and successfully navigate these barriers, the benefits could be substantial. Not only can Web3-based models provide greater revenue control, but they also provide new ways to build customer relationships that extend beyond simple transactions. The shift won't happen overnight, but as the industry looks for alternatives to platform dependence, Web3-powered solutions are likely to play an increasing role in reshaping the restaurant business.



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