Restaurant Reservation Software A Buyer's Guide

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How to get the most from your restaurant floorplan

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The floor plan is the command center of your restaurant

Every restaurant has a finite amount of floor space in which to operate. Getting the floor plan right can have a huge impact on guest experience and also effect the bottom line. With tight margins in the restaurant business, effective floor plan management is a major revenue driver for restaurants.

Getting the floor plan right starts with initial layout and planning. Finding a balance between revenue and experience and making sure guests easily flow through your restaurant. Once you have your floor defined you must manage it on a daily basis to ensure effective and profitable service. This is called table management.

This guide walks you through these two fundamental parts of getting the most out of your floor plan:

1. How to set up and layout your floor plan
2. How to effectively manage your floor during service

How to Layout a New Restaurant Floor Plan

INDENTIFY YOUR CUSTOMERS TO BUILD YOUR FLOOR PLAN

Before creating a floor plan, start by understanding your target customer. Who are you looking to cater to? For example:

✅ **Do you serve breakfast in a city center and expect customers on their way to work?**
✅ **Do you mainly cater to business people at lunch time?**
✅ **Are you a fine dining restaurant with a small number of tables?**
✅ **Are you in a busy center or more rural?**
✅ **Are most of the residents in your area families?**

The most successful restaurants are able to identify this market segment and adjust not only their business hours, but floor plan accordingly. Your floor plan will be defined by they type of customer you are catering to.

Avoid simply trying to fit as many tables as possible into the floor plan to maximise revenue.

BALANCE REVENUE WITH GUEST EXPERIENCE

It goes without saying that when you are outlining your floor plan you should be seeking to maximize revenue - but not at the expense of guest experience.

Usually restaurants will include a mix of table sizes from 2 to 5. The exact mix will depend on the type of customers your are expecting.

Keep in mind you will always want build flexibility into your floor plan to cater to as many groups as possible.

Business Diners

For business diners, use two and three-top tables, with several four-tops scattered throughout. It is especially important to space tables appropriately for business guests.

Families and large groups

Try to lean more toward four and five-tops, with the flexibility to mix and match. Sometimes six or seven tops can be permanent options as well, but only if your service is heavily family oriented.

BEST PRACTICES FOR RESTAURANT LAYOUTS

Use these best practices when setting up your floor plan

✅ Use this formula for determining the maximum capacity of the restaurant.

Maximum Capacity of Floor Plan = Total sq foot of restaurant (including restroom, entrance etc) / 30 or 35

✅ Tables should be a minimum 24-30 inches apart.

✅ Booths are the most efficient seating option as you don't have to plan extra room for chairs.

✅ Less desirable tables should be made as desirable as possible with judicious use of design and decor.

✅ A combination of different table heights makes the restaurant look larger than it is.

How to Optimize Your Floor Plan During Service

INTRODUCTION

Once you have your floor plan layout finished it's time to think about what happens when you have a steady stream of diners coming into restaurant.

Effective, real time floor plan management is the second pillar in unlocking your goal of more seated guests and more profit.

An interactive digital floor plan will provide a feature set to enable you to maximize your revenue. This is often called a 'table management system' and can impact a restaurants operations in terms of filling seats, but also to improve the efficiency of staff and provide analytics on performance over time.

When thinking about floor plan optimization, ask your self these type of questions.

- How will my staff know when a table is due to finish? When can it be turned?
- How long has this table been seated?
- Which course is table 14 currently on?
- I know the kitchen can do 30 covers per hour. How do I not over book the restaurant?

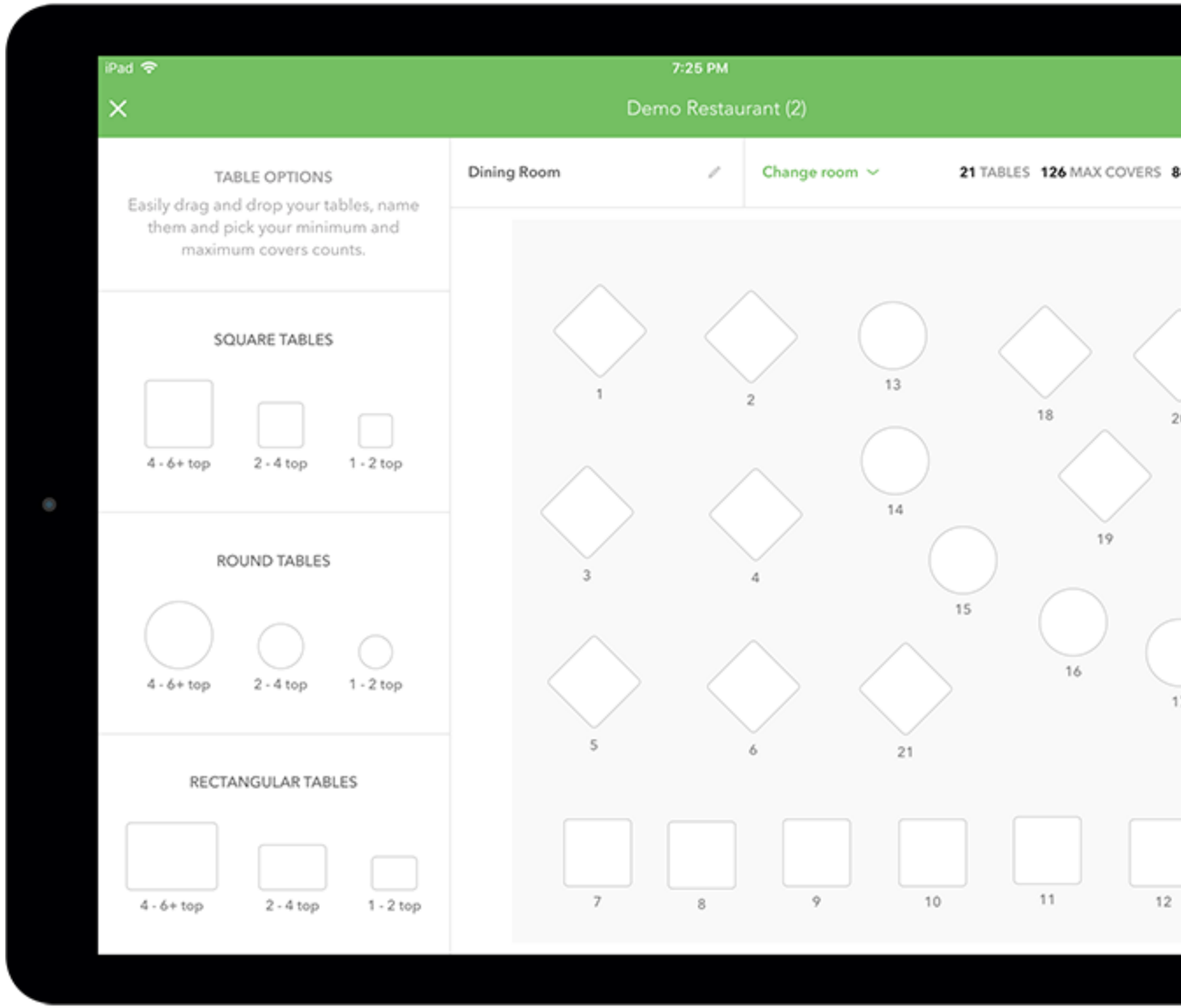
Using your floor plan as the basis for managing the day-to-day of restaurant service is the fastest way to optimize for revenue.

SET UP YOUR DIGITAL FLOOR PLAN

When starting to optimize your floor plan with a digital table management system you should choose a system that gives you ease and flexibility over creating and changing your floor.

In practice this means providing:

- Multiple table sizes and shapes
- Allowing table rotation
- Adding multiple dining rooms
- Editing table capacity
- An easy to you editing interface



TIPS FOR SETTING UP YOUR DIGITAL FLOOR PLAN

1. Try to get all your tables onto a single floor plan view. It's better to have all your tables in one place even if this means your floor plan is not to scale. The key with your digital floor plan is usability.

2. Include table capacity for every table. This might seem tedious but it's essential to having an optimized floor plan.

3. Understand how to combine tables on an ad hoc basis. If you're like most restaurants you often join tables together for larger party sizes. Find out how your system handles joining tables together.

4. Add separate dining rooms to individual floor plan tabs. Good systems will allow you have multiple rooms accessible through tabs. If you have a terrace or multiple floors for example these can go in separate tabs. Operationally this is much easier for your staff.

SEATING AND ORGANIZING GUESTS

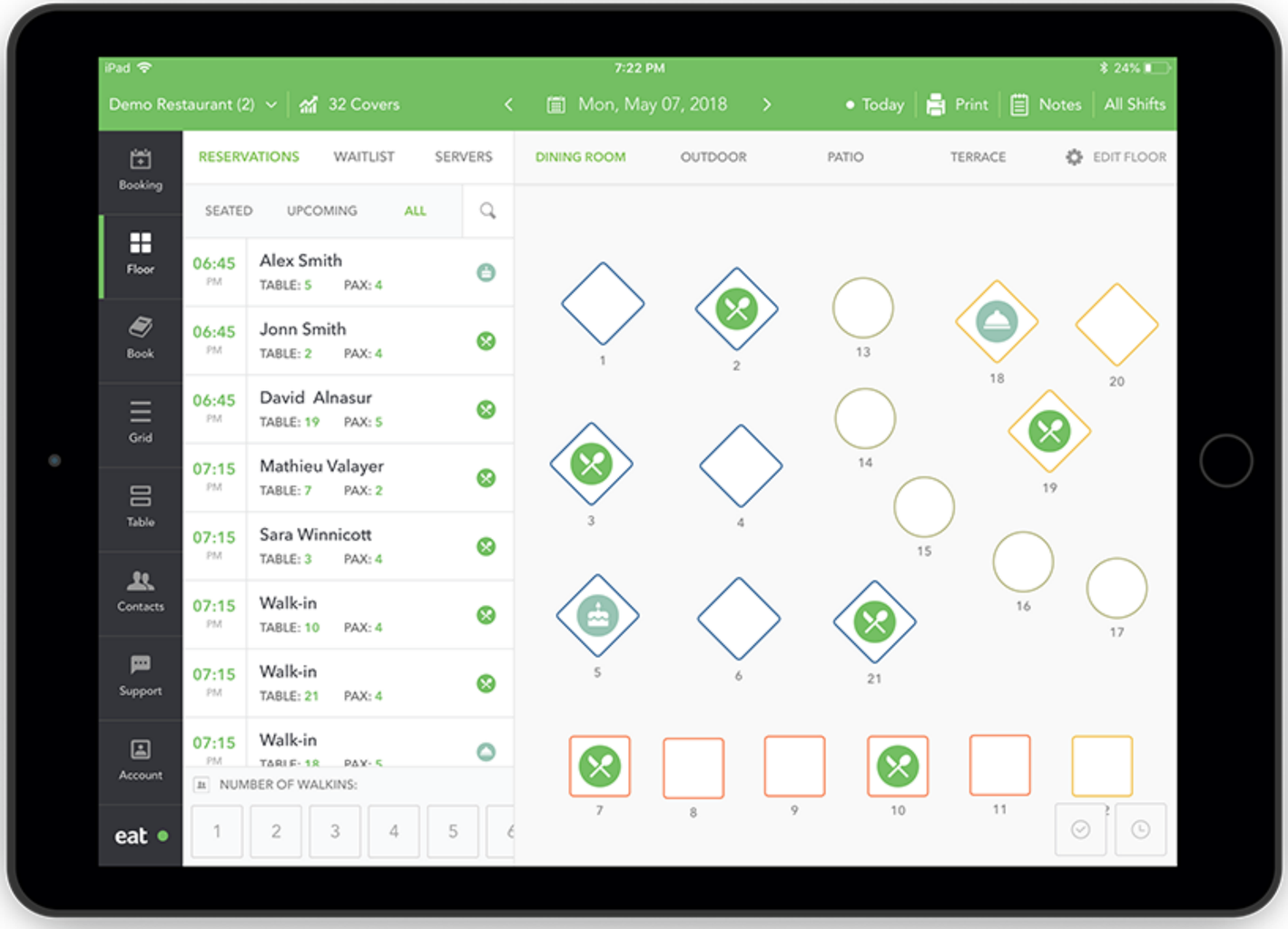
The core of real time floor plan management is adding guests to tables when it's time for them to be seated. When everything is running smoothly, and hosts are seating guests as they arrive in the restaurant, all the front-of-house staff from managers to servers have a real time view of the whole floor.

Tracking the status of guests through service

As well as knowing which tables are occupied at any given time you can go more granular and know at what point during their meal they are currently at.

The guest status refers to where the guest is in customer journey. Have they just ordered, received dessert or has the cheque been dropped?

By using color coding and easy to understand icons any table can be updated with the status of a guest. This type of tagging as many benefits for table turn planning as well as hospitality. For example, a GM might see a regular customer is on dessert and pay that table a visit.🐓



Seating and tracking guest statuses

TURNING TABLES FASTER AND SEATING MORE GUESTs

This is where the real benefits of a table management system for profit maximization start kicking in.

Unlike pen and paper restaurant management, or a digital reservation book, a table management system gives you time based information about your current and upcoming reservations. This is the information your staff need to turn tables faster and more efficiently.

Goal:

Seat Guests When You Thought You Couldn't

See upcoming reservations on a per table basis

With just one tap we can see the upcoming reservation times for all our tables. (in the black boxes on the next page)

Let's say someone calls looking for a reservation later in the evening. The host can see which tables are available at that time and add the reservation directly into the table in seconds.

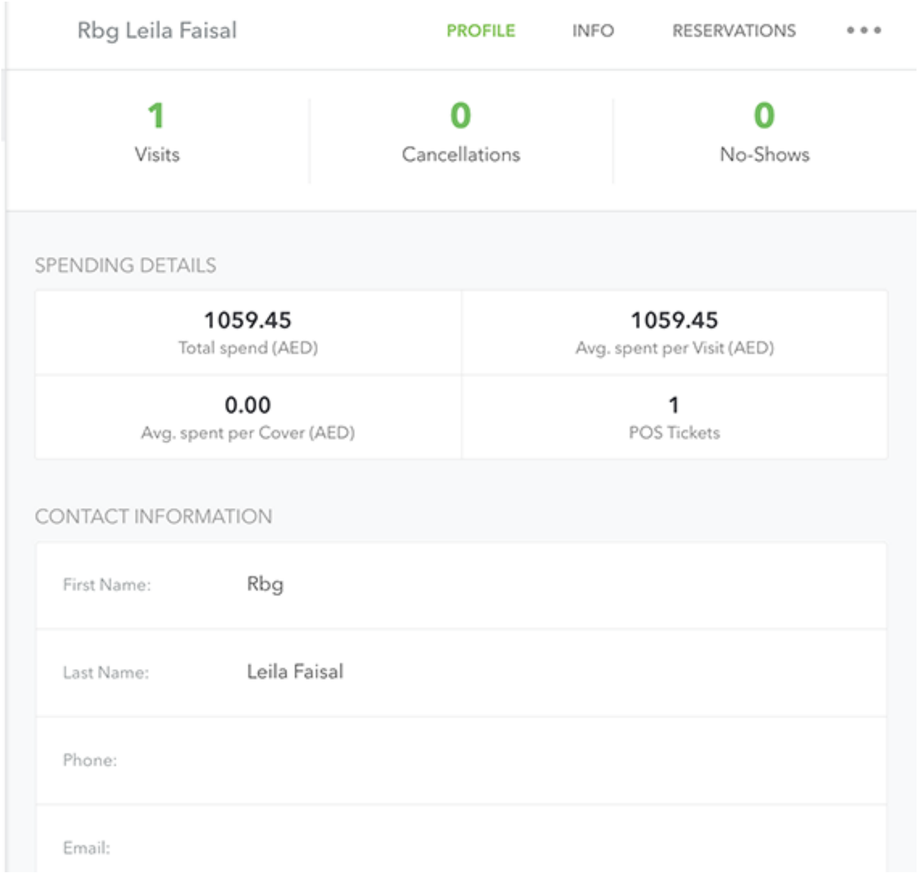
This makes dealing with late booking requests and walk-ins easier to handle, but crucially gives staff the confidence to seat guests without worrying about time conflicts.

Track table turn times table by table

TRACKING GUEST SPEND

Another dimension in floor plan management is incorporating guest spend. Through integrations with a restaurant's POS, the table management system can display guest spend information. This is particularly useful for managers looking to track table revenue in real time.

Spend information can be used as part of a customer service initiative or a comping strategy.



POS Integration in Eat’s Table Management System

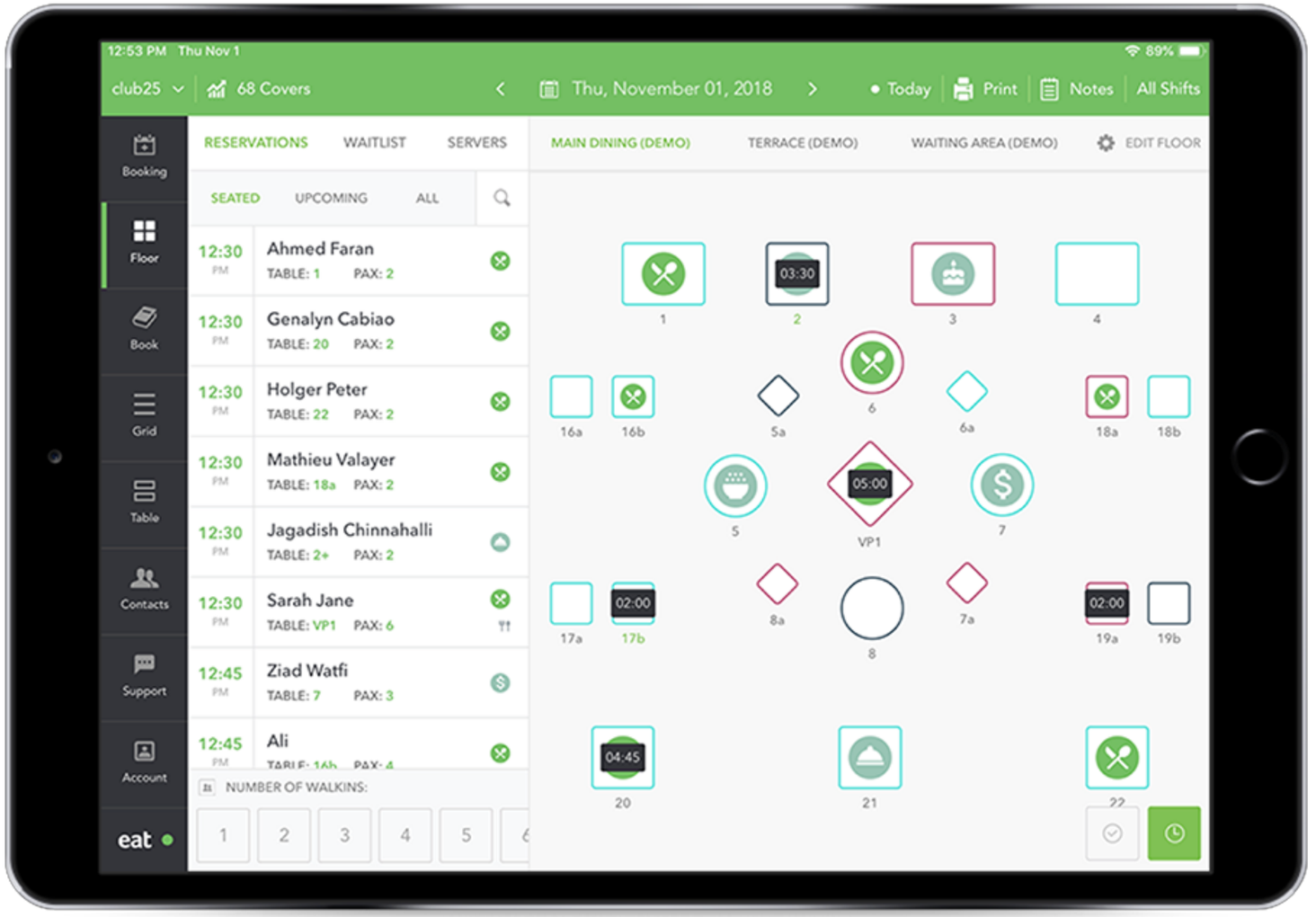
MATCHING KITCHEN AND GUEST CAPACITY

Many restaurants run a tight line between kitchen and dining room capacity. On any given day or night the kitchen may only be able to accommodate a certain number of covers per hour.

If the kitchen is at maximum capacity the host won't want to accept walk-ins even if there is a free table as this will inevitably lead to poor customer service and complaints.

A table management system can help you plan and mitigate any issues that arrive with capacity management.

At Eat, for example, restaurants have access to our Grid View system that shows the cover flow per hour and makes it very easy for a host to see if the kitchen can handle any more covers in that hour.

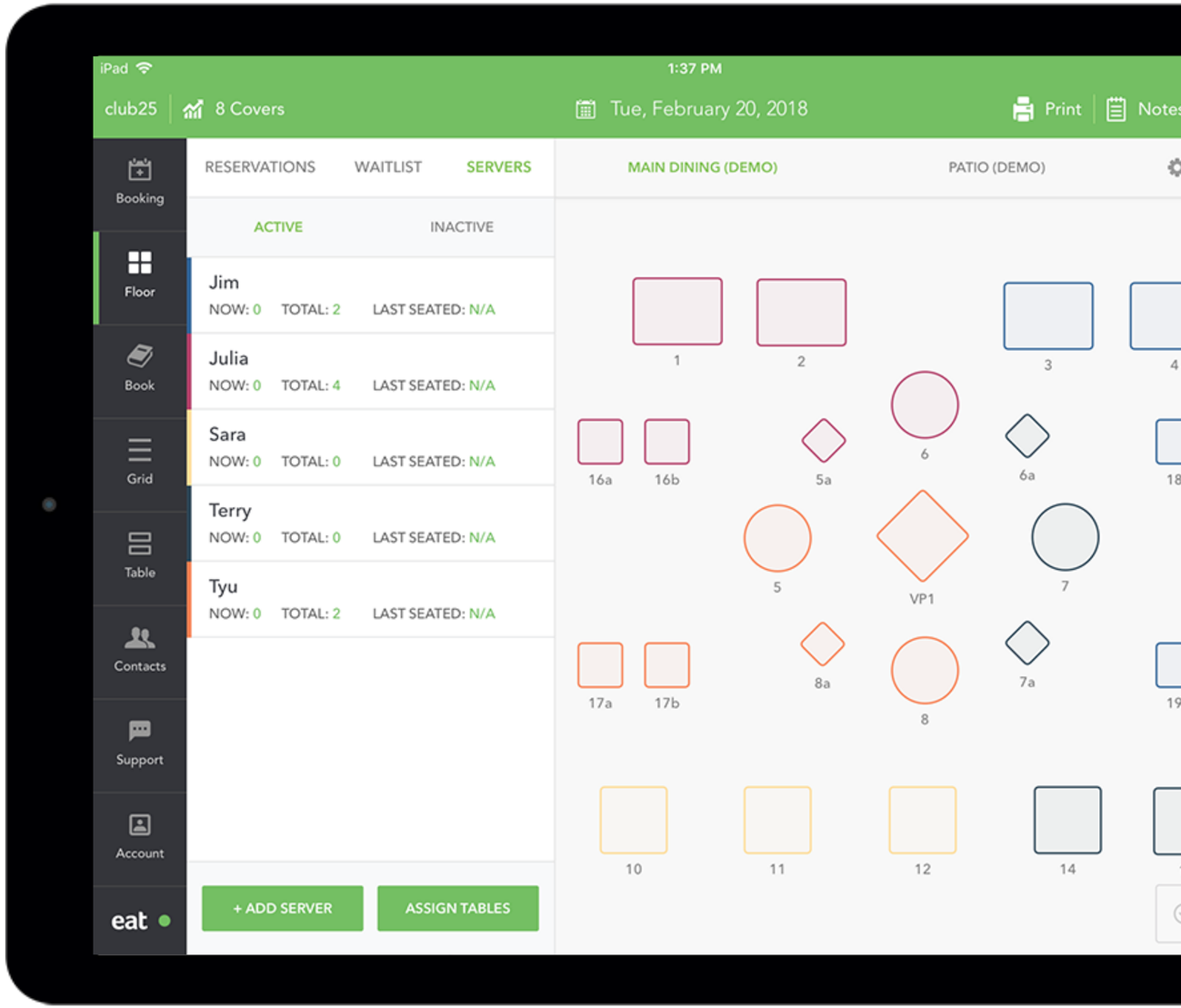


Track table turn times table by table

KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR SERVERS

An additional benefit of digital floor plan management is server tracking. Most restaurants want to evenly distribute the workload between staff and to assign specific sections to certain servers.

By assigning servers to tables inside your table management system you'll have a visual way of knowing which server is working which tables.



WRAPPING THINGS UP

Effective floor plan management involves setting up your floor in a way that maximizes revenue without sacrificing the guest experience. Once set-up it's all about effective real time floor plan management to help you turn tables faster and reach operational efficiency. Get these two pillars of floor plan management right and you'll be on the way generating the most revenue per sq foot possible from your restaurant floor plan.

TRY EAT APP

Request a trial today, and you can try out our platform for free for 1 month.

Eat App is a modern, fast and light table management system used by forward thinking restaurants around the world.

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Restaurant reservation providers are currently in a highly competitive race....

to deliver the best product on the market, and each offer a variety of different features. The differences between providers can often seem confusing so we wanted to highlight the features and services sophisticated restaurant owners and F&B directors look for when assessing front-of-house restaurant software and help create a better understanding of what buyers should be looking for.

You could be reaching a point where you've found a solution that works. Or you could be wondering how the technology has developed over the past few years, and considering a switch.

You probably know generally about the benefits of reservation software, but less about the specific features available in different systems. You might have already concluded that you need a reservation system, but you might not know exactly what you want. With this guide, you'll be able to make a clear and informed decision on which system could be best for you.

We do this by breaking down everything you need to know about different platforms, and giving you questions and ideas to take with you when talking to restaurant software providers about working with them.

WHAT IS RESERVATION SOFTWARE?

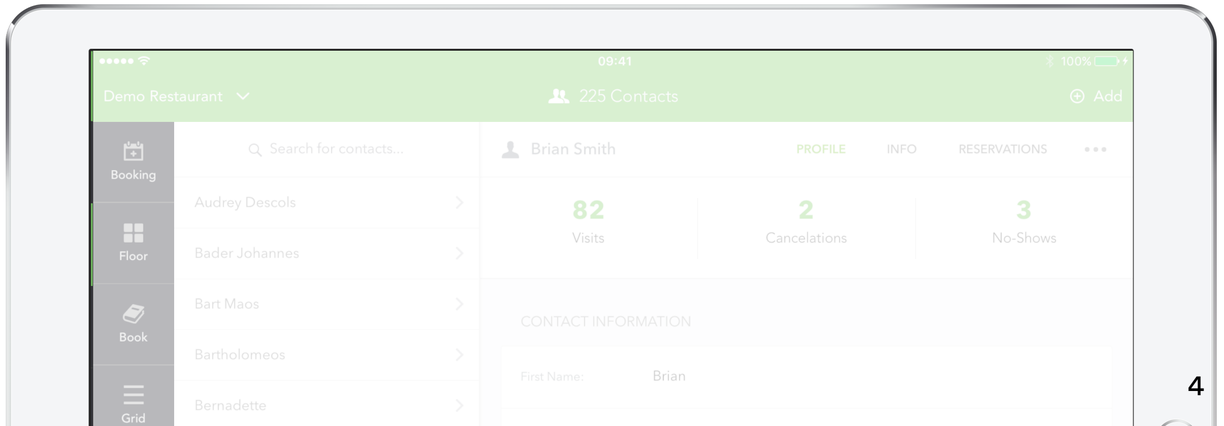
In the restaurant industry, reservation software refers to digital applications that, broadly speaking, replace the traditional pen and paper method of organizing reservations in a physical diary.

However, by digitizing front-of-house operations, reservation systems now have a greatly expanded feature set available to staff all the way up the management chain. As a result, reservation software now interfaces, and is sometimes fully responsible for, database and contact management, marketing, guest communication (CRM), capacity and stock planning and business intelligence.

The core features of reservation software are:

✅ **Reservation management - add incoming reservations**
✅ **Table management - managing a restaurant floorplan**
✅ **Database management - maintaining a guest database**

How these features work, additional features that extend the core functionality and price make up the difference between different providers.



WHY IS RESERVATION SOFTWARE IMPORTANT?

In today's world, digital technology is embedded in most of the dining experience. This means that the expectations and behaviours of people who go to restaurants has fundamentally shifted.

Because reservation software is deeply connected to how people discover, reserve and visit restaurants it provides significant competitive advantages in today's restaurant landscape.

As more and more restaurants begin leveraging the power of these types of system, those that do not fully embrace their potential, risk finding it increasingly difficult to compete.

Personalization

With a digital system you can provide a more personalized experience for guests by recording preferences and keeping track of dining patterns.

Optimization

Digital systems give managers data they need to make informed operational decisions; influencing restaurants bottom line.

Organization

Both managers and staff use digital software to reduce errors with reservations, customer service and table allocation.

HOW DO YOU FIND THE BEST RESERVATION SOFTWARE PROVIDER?

With the basics out of the way, we'll focus on what a buyer's perspective should be, by looking at what you should know when looking for a provider. Having an understanding of what every solution must include as a minimum, can remove some uncertainty.

✅ Restaurant reservation software must enhance your ability receive bookings from all the major digital channels, phone calls and walk-ins.

✅ In addition you should have to ability to cut off online reservations for individual tables, as well as the whole restaurant instantly.

✅ The right provider needs to automatically build your customer database from incoming reservations and also allow you easy, downloadable to access to the raw data.

✅ The tool should give you a customized, editable floorplan that provides you with a table management solution for tracking guests as they enter, eat and leave your restaurant.

✅ The system should fit into, and complement, your existing technology and customer lifecycle.

What do switched-on restaurant managers and F&B directors tend to look for from reservation software?

At Eat we with work with hospitality professionals from some of the world's biggest hotel chains, such as the Four Seasons, as well as high volume independent restaurants. From many discussions, here some key features they tend to look for:

Speed

Whilst digital technology enables a much wider feature set, many people with experience of reservation systems point out that pen and paper is still much faster for inputting bookings from phone calls and walk-ins. This is due to the simple fact writing is usually faster than typing or tapping.

Switched on buyers tend to look closely at how reservation software is built for speed-of-use through its feature set and design elements. This is because in a busy restaurant front-of-house, speed is a crucial element of effective customer service. This is why buyers tend to reject solutions that slow down front-of-house staff.

Questions to Ask

How do my staff enter reservations into the system and how long does it take?

Do you have any features that speed up this process?

Powerful Booking Widgets

It's no secret that the rise of digital reservation systems has ushered in new customer behaviour around booking tables online. In the US, 20+% of all restaurant reservations are made online, with international markets catching up fast as restaurant ecosystems develop.

As a result, almost all restaurant booking software comes with 'widgets', small pieces of embeddable code connected to your digital reservation book, designed to allow customers to book tables online.

Today, as social networks and large technology platforms start to make restaurant websites less-and-less important, reservation widgets are now appearing across the web.

Sophisticated buyers are keenly aware that reservation widgets must be flexible enough to cater to this ever changing environment, and built to generate reservations across the web, e.g. from Google Business Pages or Facebook, rather than just directing people to a website.

Questions to Ask

Can I use your widget to take reservations from Facebook, Google Business or any other website apart from my own?

Do your widgets load without loading my full website?

Inventory and Demand Management

Digital reservation software has unlocked many advanced restaurant management features that switched on buyers are increasingly looking for in a solution. The newest software is helping solve some of the most common problems for restaurant managers, such as removing bottlenecks around peak times and matching the capacity of the kitchen with the volume of guests. In short, buyers want to take full advantage of digital systems rather than simply replace their reservation book.

At Eat we've built features that help managers overcome these challenges, for example auto-suggesting less popular times in our booking widgets.

We've also created a brand new interface called Grid View, which many of our busiest restaurants use to manage kitchen capacity effectively. Built working directly with the Four Seasons, Grid View gives an hourly update on guest volume at a glance so staff know when to make upcoming tables available.

Questions to Ask

How does your system help me manage kitchen capacity?

How do you help me fill tables at less popular times?

WHAT ELSE TO CONSIDER

Typically, buyers of restaurant software have differing requirements as no two restaurants are the same. To help highlight some of those difference here are a few other areas buyers often look at when considering a purchase. For you, maybe only one or two will be relevant, but it's helpful to get a more complete picture when evaluating a purchase.

Table Management Feature Set

When evaluating booking software, you should look in depth at the features for tracking guests through your restaurant and whether the provider meets your requirements.

Reducing no shows

Reservation software can send automatic notifications via email and SMS. Evaluate how the system handles reservation notifications, including things like text customization.

Mobilty

In the past reservation software was supplied through a large computer terminal installed at the front of the restaurant. Today you can run your front-of-house from iPads and Mobile Phones.

Waitlist

If you require a waitlist and currently use pen and paper, or have been using a standalone digital provider, it's worth knowing that some systems include an integrated waitlist within the app.

RESERVATION SOFTWARE PRICING

There’s no single pricing model which each vendor follows. In fact, pricing models can be quite different for each provider. For instance, Eat's pricing is a simple per month flat fee that includes SMS notifications for free.

A competitor might price their monthly fee extremely low and then charge per reservations over a certain threshold. There are pros and cons to each approach. Pricing that charges per reservation may seem like the best, but if you intend to grow you may be see your costs exponentially grow as well. So this is something to bare in mind

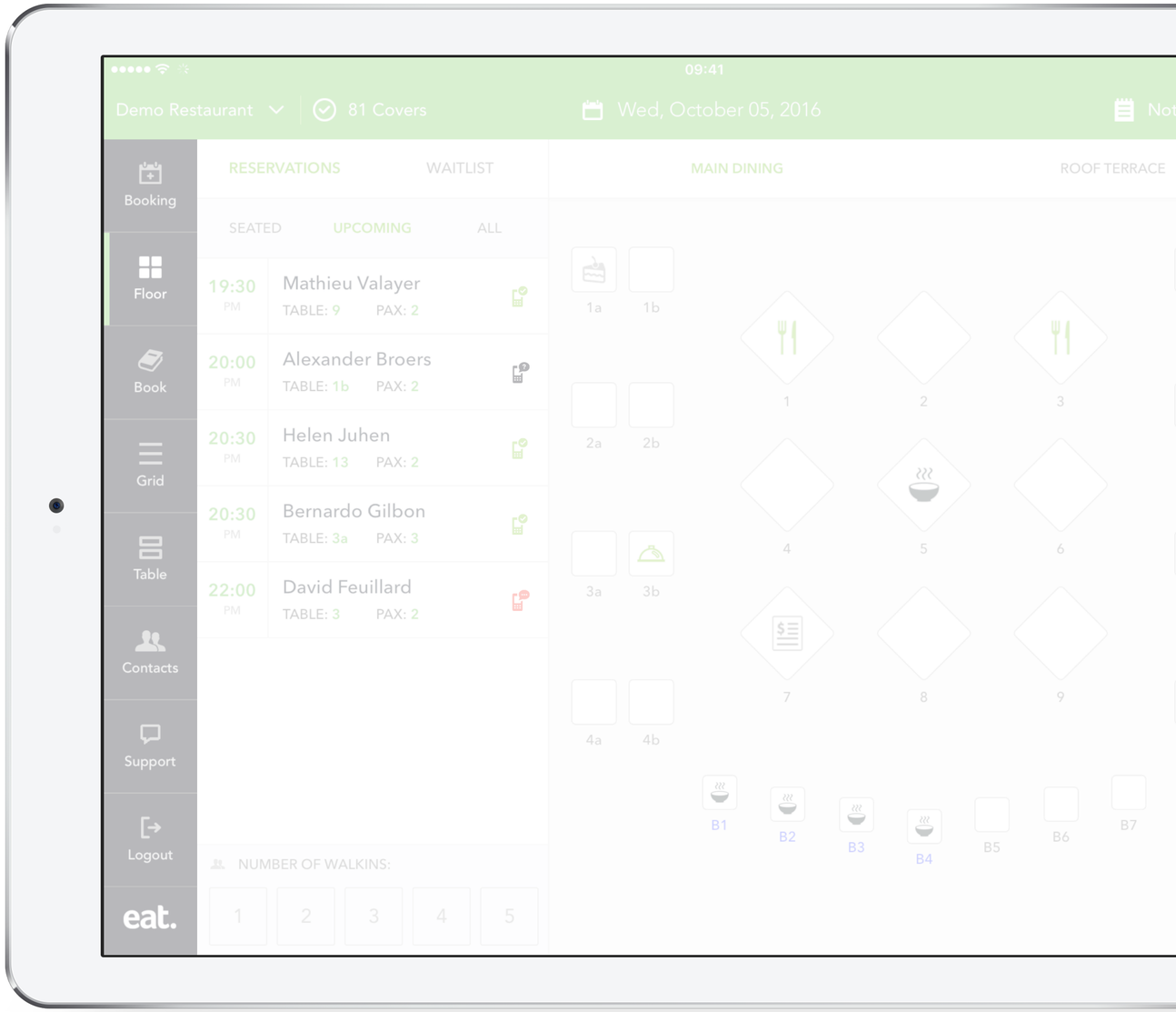
Things to watch out for with reservation software pricing include, installation and admin fees, per reservation charges, SMS charges and tiered pricing, which limits features on cheaper plans.

HOW EASY IS IT TO SWITCH PROVIDERS?

Switching between reservation providers should be quite simple.

As long as your current solution has the ability to download your existing client database, and your new solution can receive it, there shouldn't be hiccups in the exchange, and your customers would be populated within a new database as soon as it's finished importing.

Beyond that, the best companies will always provide dedicated support for a switch, including staff training on the new system.



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Restaurant reservation providers are currently in a highly competitive race

Restaurant reservation software helps restaurants take advantage of digital and social media channels in an increasingly connected world. It also helps restaurants manage those reservations in a digital reservation book and/or floorplan.

How to do you choose a reservation system that is right for you? This guide breaks down everything you need to know about different systems and how to choose the right one – at the right price.

We look at:

- What is reservation software
- What are the key features
- How much does it cost
- How do different systems compare

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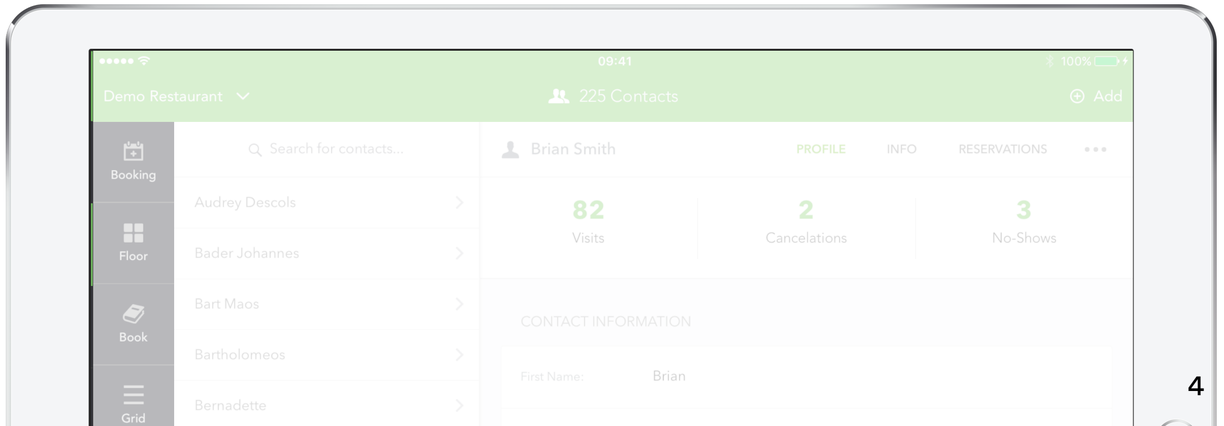

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Get more bookings online

A reservation system gives you unique booking links to use on your website and social media meaning you can capture more bookings online.

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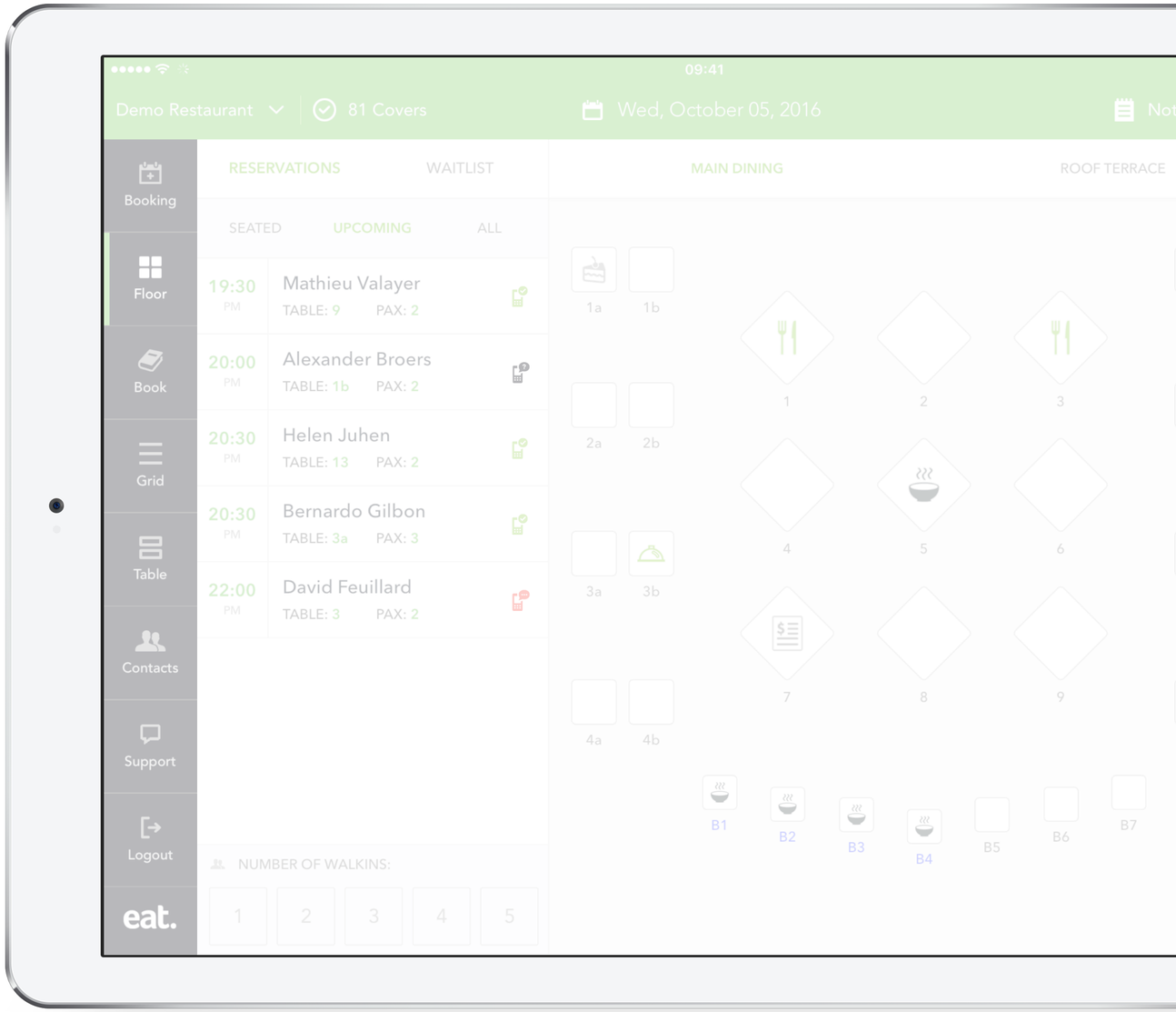

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WATCH PRESENTATION VIDEO

FEATURES FOR NEXT GENERATION RESTAURANTS

Table Management

Manage reservations and wait-lists with ease using multiple iPads

SMS & Email Confirmations

Send unlimited SMS & email confirmations to customers for free

Customer Database

Store customer allergies and preferences, and keep count on visits

Restaurant Analytics

Gain insights into your business and see real peak and down times

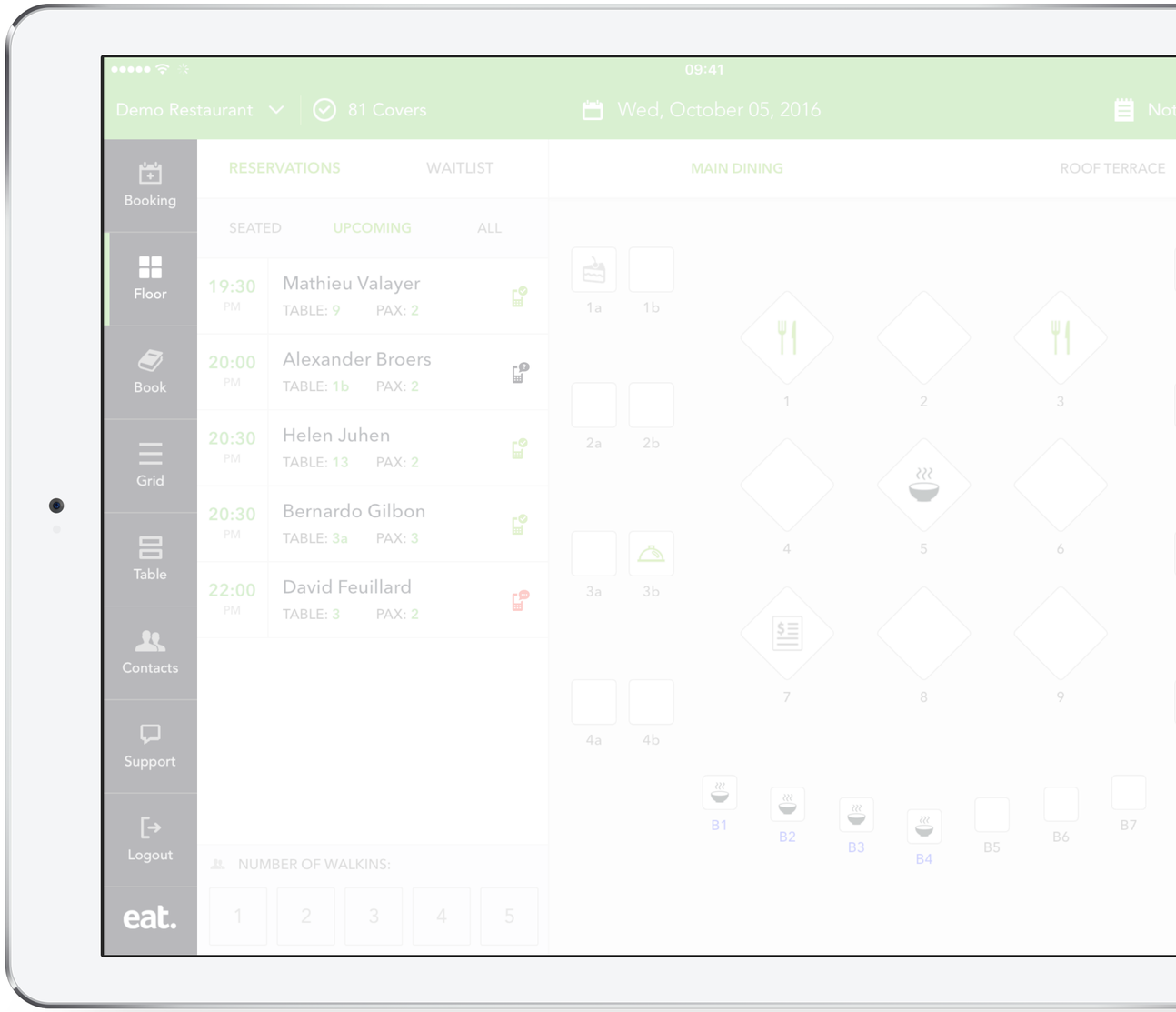
Online Reservations

Accept online bookings from facebook and your website, free of charge

TABLE MANAGEMENT

A visual view of all tables and rooms in the restaurant, with icons indicating which tables are available and which are occupied. This helps turn tables faster and generate more revenue. On the left, the host can view all reservations and walk-ins, and seat guests using “Drag and Drop” technology.

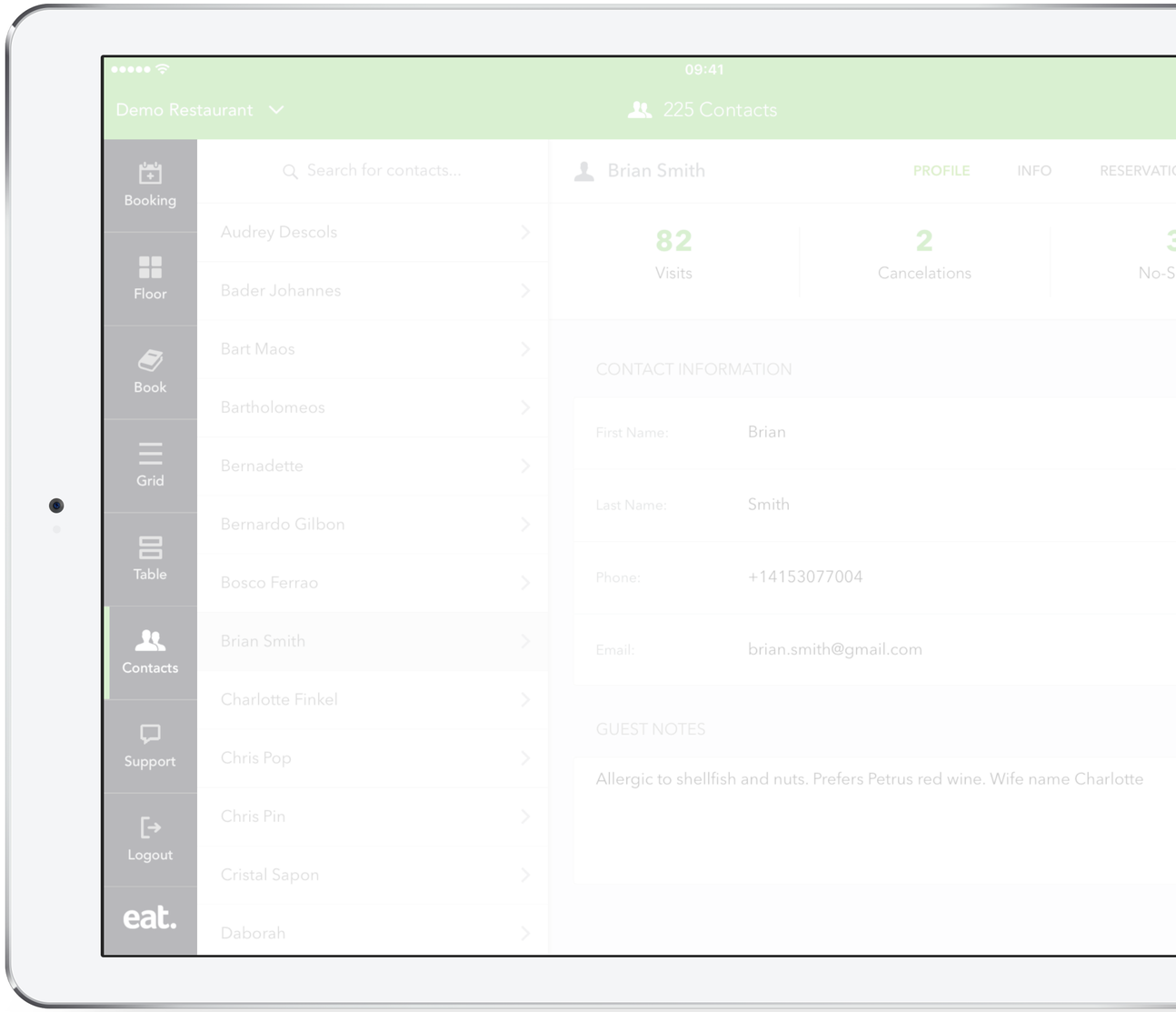
✅ Send Free SMS confirmation
✅ Send Free Email confirmation
✅ Manage wait-lists and walk-ins



CUSTOMER DATABASE

Every time a new reservation is created, the guest is automatically added to the restaurant's database alongside their dining preferences and allergies. The address book displays the dining history of all guests, making it easy t o find frequent diners and build loyalty reward programs.

✅ Visits, cancellation and no-show counter
✅ Save birthdays and anniversaries
✅ Search by telephone number



George Safi

F&B Director at The Four Seasons

“This system is much easier and cheaper than ResPAK. It runs entirely on iPads, and is focused on important features like mobility and accepting online bookings”

Jimmy Lopez

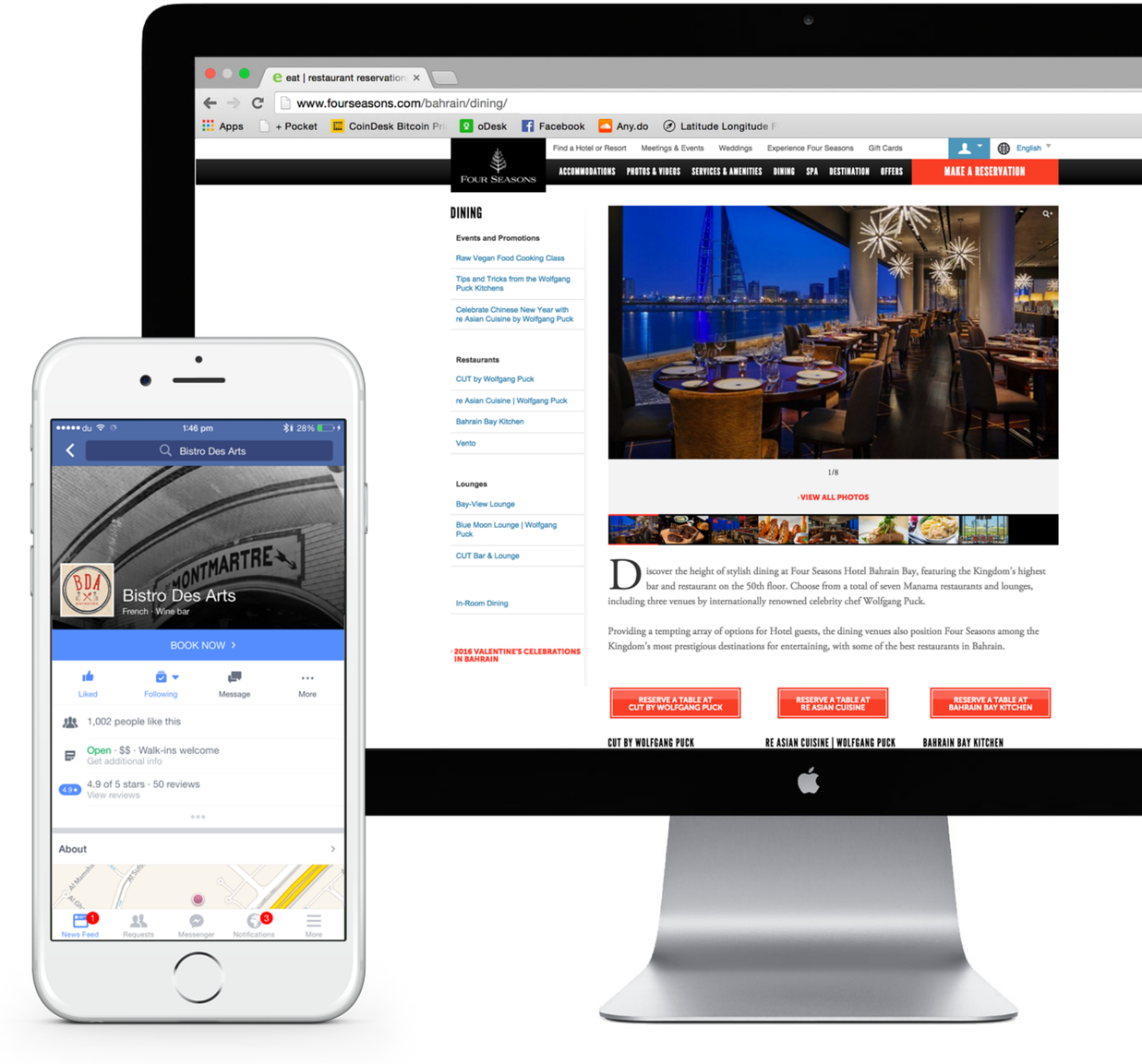
F&B Director at The Palazzo Versace

“Eat costs are economical and it’s very convenient for us because of the monthly payment plan. I can employ someone else with the amount I save with eat”

ONLINE RESERVATIONS

Acquire customers online through a booking widget, installed on the restaurant's website and Facebook page. The widget is responsive, works great on mobile, and has a clear call to action to reserve a table. Restaurants using widgets see a 60% increase in online reservations compared to reservations by email or regular online forms.

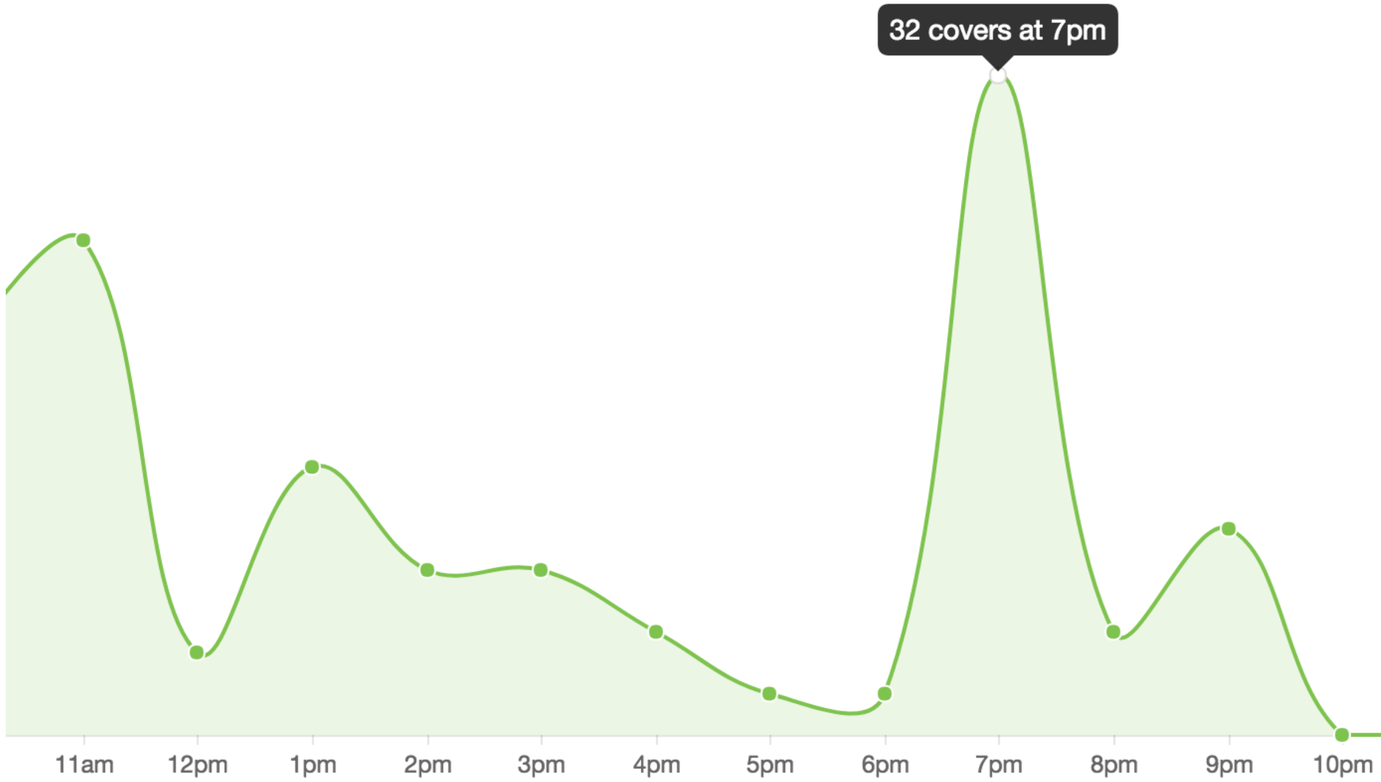
✅ No cover fees for online bookings
✅ Easy installation on Facebook
✅ Easy installation on Website



RESTAURANT ANALYTICS

Restaurant owners can access and enjoy analytics on the performance of their restaurant in real-time, anywhere in the world. Restaurants can also easily download reports and run interesting outputs such as:

✅ Covers lost from cancellations and no-shows
✅ Which tables are best performing
✅ Which times are busier than others



132 Covers

RESTAURANT PORTFOLIO USING EAT

Hotel Chains

RESTAURANT PORTFOLIO USING EAT

Independents

HAKKASAN

GAUCHO

TheMeatCo

calexico

CUT
WOLFGANG PUCK

MYTHOS
KOUZINA & GRILL

MASSO

billionaire
MANSION
DUBAI

INDIE

Bruges & lobster

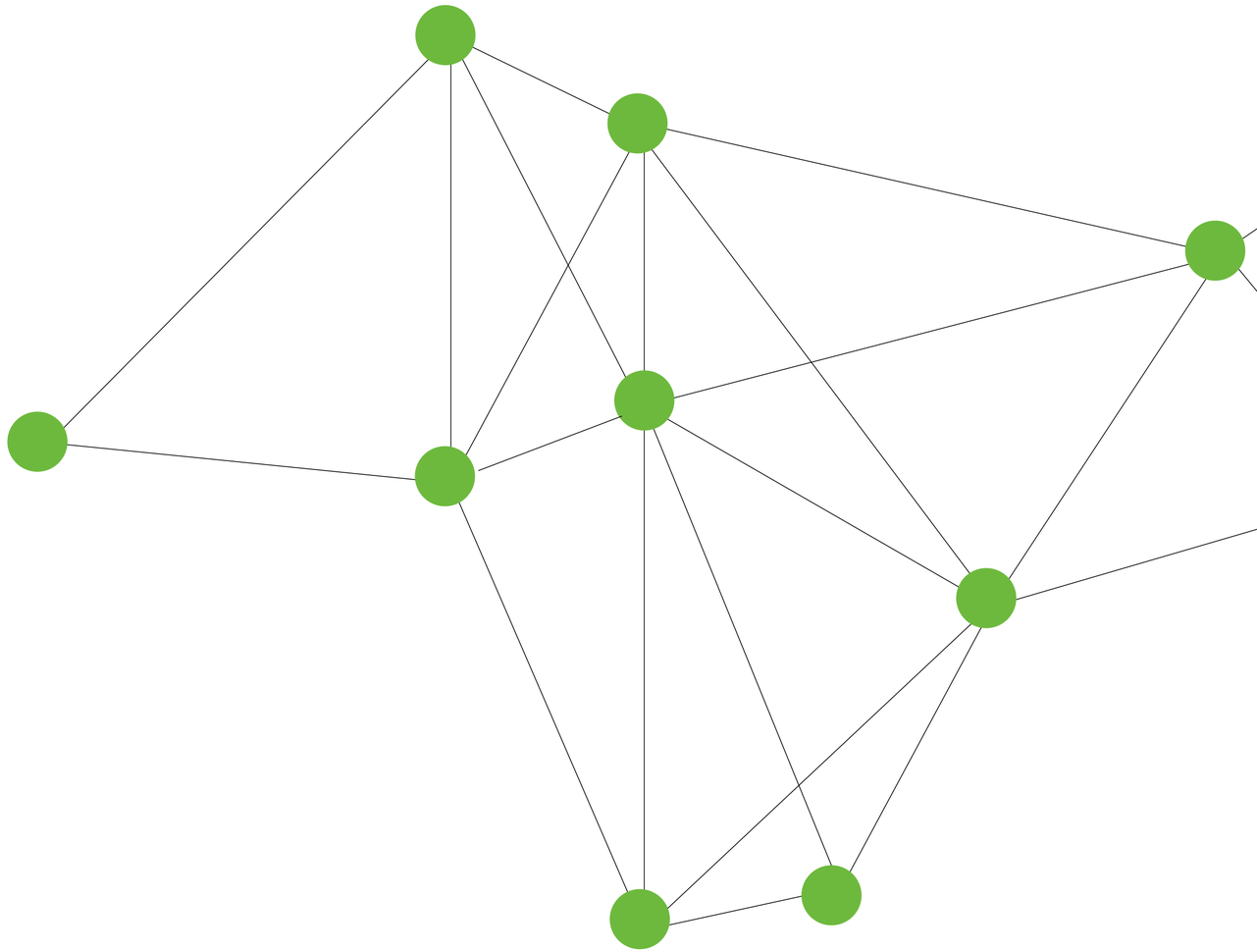
COCKTAIL
KITCHEN

cavalli club
RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

MERGE CONTACTS

If a restaurant belongs to a hotel or F&B group, then eat can share guest details and preferences across all restaurants in that group. This is especially helpful when recording guest allergies.

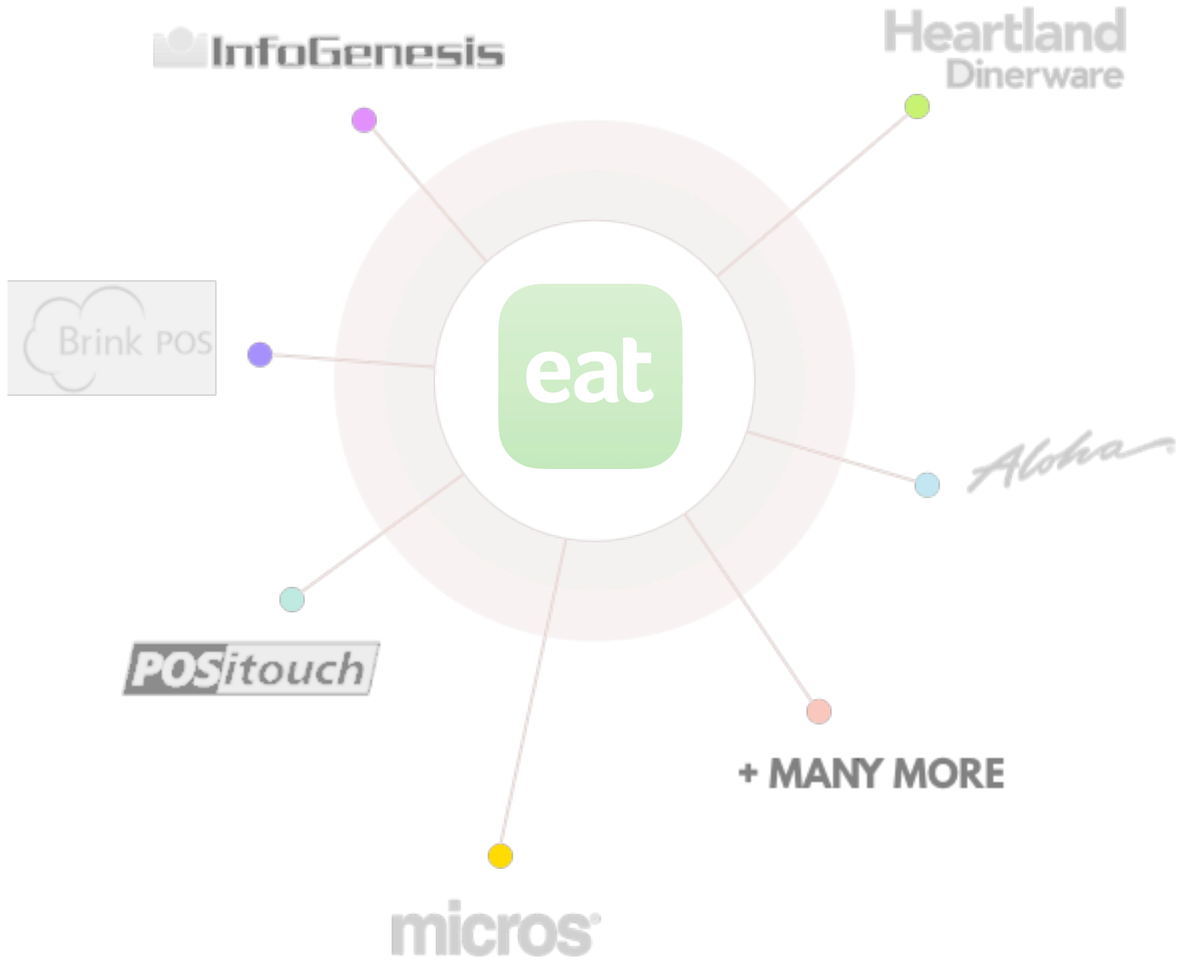
Hotels and F&B groups may also have a call center to centralize their reservation lines. Eat provides an interface for call centers to view live availabilities across all restaurants. Any change created on the call center interface is instantly transferred to the restaurant.



POS INTEGRATION

Eat integrates with the many Point of Sale (POS) providers via omnivore.io, including Micros 3700 versions: RES4 + RES5, and Micros Symphony 1.x - 1.6.

Eat is able to extract real-time data from the POS, including: guest spend, guest order history, and table status. This data is stored in the restaurant database, to allow advanced search features, such as finding the highest spenders, or determining repeat orders by customer.



SECURITY & PRIVACY

Eat takes security and privacy very seriously, which is why its invested in industry leading tools to ensure that all data and communication is secure and encrypted.

HTTPS

All of eat's cloud communication is over HTTPS, a protocol to secure and encrypt data transfer.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTTPS

AWS

All data is hosted on Amazon Web Services (AWS), the industry leader in cloud computing

https://aws.amazon.com/

Heroku

Eat's applications are supported entirely by Heroku. Heroku is PCI compliant and ISO 27001 certified.

https://www.heroku.com/policy/security

Apple

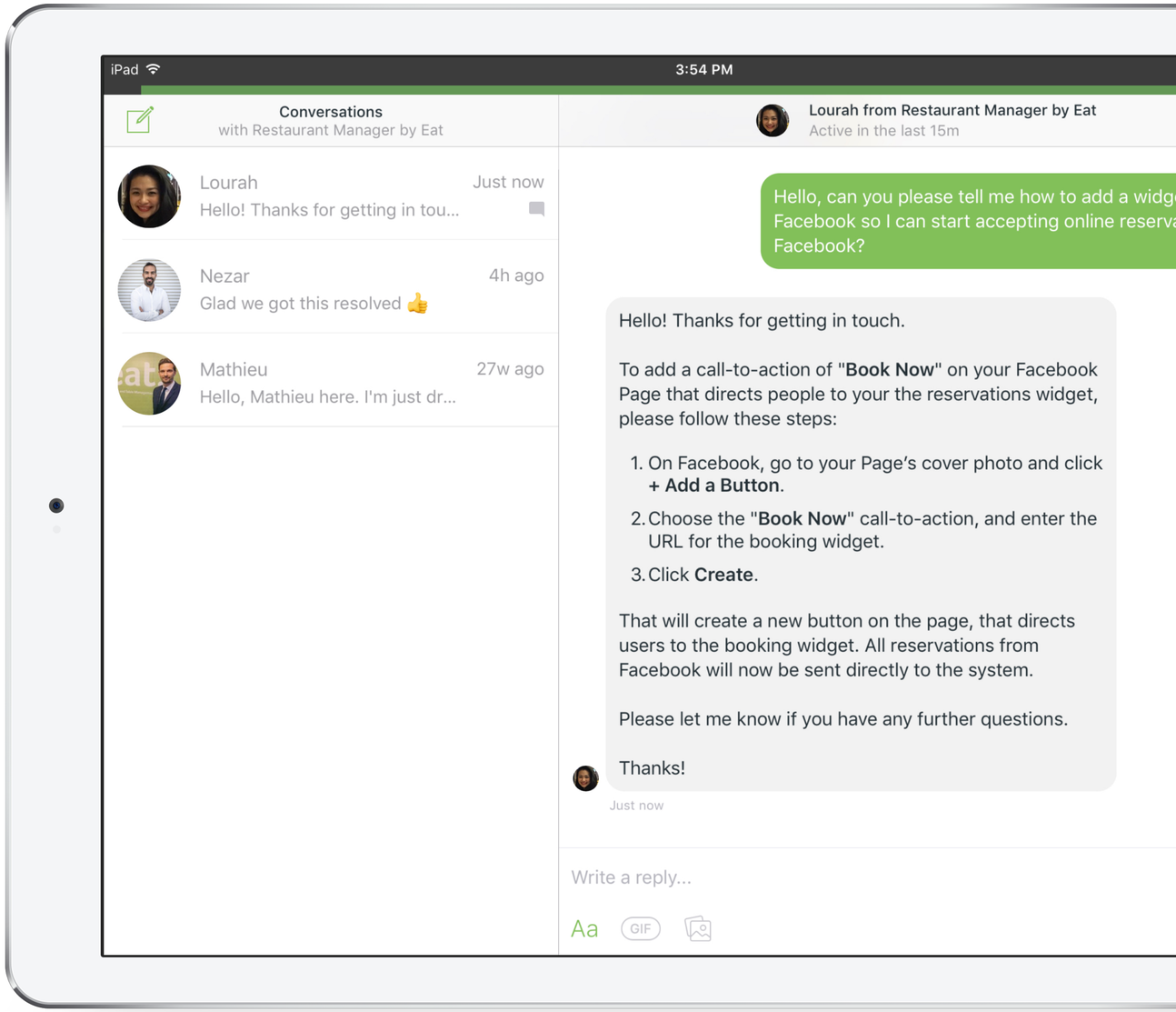
The iPad restaurant application is solely distributed by Apple, and is part of Apple's privacy policy program.

https://www.apple.com/legal/privacy/

SUPPORT

Eat offers support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week free of charge. Simply send a message by clicking on the “Support” button on the app, and request help. Languages supported are: English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Filipino, Hindi, German, Mandarin, and Indonesian.

✅ Unlimited training sessions with staff
✅ Help with floor plan customization
✅ Help with widget installation on Facebook



PRICING

Pricing suited for every restaurant, small or large. Pricing in USD.

$99

per month

billed annually

- No setup fees, or additional charges
- Unlimited SMS & Emails for free
- No per cover fees for online bookings
- Free 24/7 support, request help anytime

PRICING

Eat is a subscription based business (SaaS), charging a recurring monthly fee.

Eat charges restaurants a monthly subscription fee. The fee covers all expenses, including installation and setup, training, and tech support.

A per cover fee is charged for every online reservation created on Eat's consumer facing application. Cancelations and no shows are not charged.

SIGN UP TODAY TO GROW YOUR RESTAURANT

Not expensive

Eat is the most cost effective solution on the market today, eliminating server hardware

Easy to use

All hostesses and restaurant managers will find it extremely easy to get up to speed.

Increases revenue

Online reservations and building a strong database is guaranteed to drive customers back.

eat

Thank you

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