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The rise of food delivery apps like Uber Eats, DoorDash, and Grubhub have revolutionized the way people access meals due to the array of dining options that can be ordered at their fingertips. Delivery apps have become a go-to solution for meals because of the flexibility and convenience. Newly in the scene of delivery apps are the rise of virtual brands also known as ghost kitchens.

What exactly are ghost kitchens?

Ghost kitchens operate without a traditional dine-in space and exist solely for food delivery through known apps like Uber Eats or DoorDash. These businesses often share kitchen spaces with established restaurants, preparing food under multiple brand names to maximize profits without the overhead costs of maintaining a physical storefront.

How do ghost kitchens create confusion?

The deceptive aspect of ghost restaurants lies in their presentation. Since customers interact with them only through apps, they may not realize that a single kitchen is producing food for several different brands that appear on the apps, sometimes offering very similar menus. This lack of transparency can be misleading, as it may give the impression of a wider variety of dining options than what actually exists if you were to go to the restaurant in person.

Are there ghost kitchens in Syracuse?

Some of the virtual brands on delivery apps include Ridiculous Burger, Pasta Americana, Pardon my Cheesesteak, The Saucy Hen, Mr. Beast Burger, etc., which all operate out of the Syracuse Ruby Tuesday. This is significant as many individuals are not fully aware of where their food is coming from. Some may believe they are supporting a local business or ordering a healthy alternative when in reality the food is coming from a classic American chain.

How do customers feel about this?

“They don’t tell you about these things the people of Syracuse should know about these things, they’re being fooled.” Sydney Froelich, a student at Syracuse University, said after she recently found out that Pasta Americana is really just operating out of the local Ruby Tuesday. “I think they should be more transparent because people give you business and you need to be transparent with them for them to give you business.”

After learning the truth Froelich went on to say “Now that I am aware of what ghost kitchens are I will not be ordering from them.” She added that she felt misled and wished restaurants would disclose when they’re using virtual brands. “It’s about trust—customers deserve to know where their food is really coming from.”

What do restaurant staff think?

During a conversation with Mary Oot Gambuzza, a waitress at the Syracuse Ruby Tuesday, she explained, “The thing is, people order the virtual brands because they can do it online. It’s convenient, and people love convenience.” She went on to reveal, “There are a couple of restaurants in Syracuse where you can order Beast Burger, but no one can walk into our restaurant and order it directly.” Confirming virtual brands can only be sourced through delivery apps and not in person.

What should customers know?

The rise of ghost kitchens highlights the need for greater transparency in the food delivery industry. While the convenience of apps like Uber Eats and DoorDash is undeniable, customers deserve to know where their meals are truly coming from. It’s important for consumers to be aware of the business practices behind their favorite takeout, so they can make informed choices about where they spend their money.