

Apartment Therapy and Kitchn Bring Thanksgiving Food Fest to Instagram

The pandemic has disrupted holidays since March and with Covid-19 surging in the U.S., The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is urging families that don't live together to take Thanksgiving virtual this year. Brands will have to follow suit on their consumer activations.

Kitchn, the sister site of Apartment Therapy, hopes to engage readers around the holiday this year with its first virtual Thanksgiving Food Fest. The recipe, food culture and kitchen design website will use Instagram Nov. 14-15 to deliver its audience interactive social segments focused on Thanksgiving traditions, recipes and cooking demos, led by Kitchn editors, notable cooks and bakers.

The food festival gives Kitchn an opportunity to connect with consumers during its busiest time of the year. While November normally generates 90% more traffic than the rest of the year for Apartment Therapy Media, the company has also reported a 98% year-over-year spike in traffic tied to holiday content this year.

"We wanted to do an online food festival for consumers that's packed with excitement and energy around the holiday, and remind people that cooking for holiday can still be inspiring this year," Kitchn editor in chief Faith Durand said. "We also wanted to create an event packed with a diverse array of voices, looking at Thanksgiving through different family viewpoints and cultural viewpoints."

The event lineup consists of live and prerecorded segments on IGTV, IG Live and Instagram Stories, including a FaceTime

session between Indian-American food writer Priya Krishna and her mom on their secret family recipe; a live “Pie Cam” in which four pie bakers will demonstrate their specialties; and a “Side Dish Showdown” where Kitchn editors will determine the best Thanksgiving side.

Kitchn has brought in brand partners including QVC, Affirm, Cheeses of Europe and Corelle Brands to lead certain events as well.

QVC host Alberti Popaj will show audiences how to set a tablescape in 10 minutes. The network will also sponsor a segment on how to cook an entire Thanksgiving meal in a Dutch oven, and This or That on Instagram Stories, where audiences will be prompted to choose between different QVC Thanksgiving-related products.

“A lot of the virtual events feel like work, where you’re on Zoom and you’re sitting down in front of a computer. We went a different direction,” Durand said. “The audience is able to drop in, have a bite or stay all day if they want to.”

The Instagram-based festival follows Apartment Therapy’s first major virtual event held in May, the Small/Cool Experience, which the brand pivoted from a physical pop-up in Brooklyn. Apartment Therapy Media reports that the event drew 12 million impressions and nearly 2 million video views, in addition to 36,000 live views. The company also reports that virtual events have accounted for 5% of the company’s direct advertising revenue in 2020, compared to 0% in 2019.

Lauren Murphy, vp of brand innovation and strategy at Apartment Therapy Media, said it’s important for the brand to monitor platform metrics and post-event audience surveys to determine the virtual event content that resonates with consumers and what the brand can improve on.

“We want to provide entertainment and service that our audience wants,” Murphy said. “If we see baking content is

spiking on the site, maybe we'll lean into that for our next virtual event. We'll look at what's spiking on the site and on social to inform what our next virtual event topic might be."

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