



THE REPEAT CUSTOMER KIT: EMAIL & SMS MARKETING FOR INDEPENDENT RESTAURANTS



ChowNow

REPEAT BUSINESS IS SOME OF THE BEST BUSINESS YOU'LL EVER HAVE



Diners who already love your food, already know how to order, and just need a little nudge to come back. This guide is about making that nudge automatic.

You don't need a marketing team or a complicated setup to make it happen. What you need is the right message, sent at the right moment, to the right person. This guide gives you exactly that: **a practical system for bringing diners back, built for restaurant owners.**

Survey data referenced throughout comes from ChowNow Restaurant Partners.

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WHY THIS WORKS: THE SIMPLE MATH OF REPEAT BUSINESS

Diners who've ordered from you before are your warmest leads. A well-timed email or text is often all it takes to bring them back, and loyalty program members spend 20% more than non-members.

The channel doing most of that work is email, already used by 60.4% of ChowNow Restaurant Partners. SMS closes the gap it can't.



60.4%

OF RESTAURANTS USE IT

- Relationship-building
- Promotions
- Staying top of mind between orders



27.1%

OF RESTAURANTS USE IT NOW
AND 39% WANT TO ADD IT

- Urgency and same-day action
- When you need a diner to order tonight, a text wins.

SMS is 5x more effective than email

at driving engagement and 90% of texts are read within 3 minutes.

Email builds the relationship. SMS drives immediate action.
Together, they keep orders coming back.



YOUR CUSTOMER LIST IS ALREADY WORKING FOR YOU

Every email or text you send is only as good as the list behind it. And that list is built one direct order at a time.

When a diner orders through your own website or app, you get their name, their email, and their order history. That data is yours. It stays with you, syncs to your marketing tools automatically, and gives you everything you need to bring them back again and again.

Restaurants that combine their online and in-store lists see up to 3x growth in their marketing audience.

That's what makes direct ordering the foundation of this whole system. Email and SMS let you reach your customers on your own terms. And because your list belongs to you, it goes with you even if you ever switch platforms.

The more direct orders you take, the stronger your list gets. And the stronger your list, the more every campaign in this guide is worth.



PRO TIP

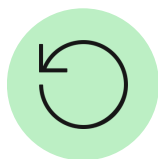
ChowNow lets you upload a CSV of your guest data to connect your in-store and online diners into one unified list. Restaurants that do this see ~3x growth in their marketable audience.





EMAIL AND SMS BEST PRACTICES

Before you write a single subject line, get these fundamentals in place. The restaurants that see consistent results from email and SMS are sending the right thing at the right time, without overdoing it. Here's what makes both channels work:



CADENCE

- 2 to 4 emails per month max
- 1 to 2 texts per month max



CONTENT THAT WORKS

- Clear offer, one call to action
- Short subject line
- Your brand voice throughout



WHEN TO SEND

- Email performs best
 - Tuesday through Thursday
 - Mid-morning (10–11am) or early evening (5–6pm)
- SMS works best in the afternoon (2–5pm) for dinner-drive offers



EMAIL VS. SMS

- Email for relationship-building and longer-form content
- SMS for urgency and same-day action



PROMOS

- Percentage-off and dollar-off both work
- Deadline-driven offers outperform open-ended ones



OPT-IN NOTE

- Email is passive capture
- SMS requires active opt-in from the diner

CAMPAIGN TYPES TO RUN

There are two kinds of campaigns in this guide: ones you set up once and forget, and ones you pull out when you need a boost.



Start with the lifecycle campaigns. They do the most work with the least ongoing effort. Add the on-demand ones when your foundation is in place.

1

LIFECYCLE CAMPAIGNS

- These campaigns fire based on what a diner does, not what day it is.
- Set them up once and they run in the background for every diner who hits the trigger.
- Welcome, win back, VIP: three campaigns that cover the full arc of a customer relationship.

2

ON-DEMAND CAMPAIGNS

- These are the campaigns you have full control to build and schedule when it matters most.
- Send them when you have a more custom message: a new dish, an upcoming holiday, a catering order you want to turn into a second one.
- Have a fully-unique campaign ready to launch in just minutes.



1 LIFECYCLE CAMPAIGNS

THE WELCOME EMAIL

What it does:

- Sent automatically after a diner's first order.
- This is the first impression your restaurant makes outside of the meal itself.
- Use it to bring them back for a second.

What makes it work:

- Sends while the experience is still fresh.
- Gives the diner a concrete reason to order again (an offer, not just a "thanks.")
- Points them to your direct ordering page, not a third-party app.

What to write:

- Subject line: short, warm, includes the restaurant name.
- Body: 3 to 4 sentences max. Thank them, remind them who you are, give them a reason to return.
- One offer. One link. One CTA.

Subject line examples:

- "Thanks for ordering, [first name]. Here's something for next time!"
- "Your first order is in the books. Here's 15% off your next one."
- "Welcome to the [Restaurant Name] family!"

Timing note:

- The text fires 24 hours after the welcome email, not the same day.
- Avoid sending a message to a diner twice on day one.

H

YOU UNLOCKED 10% OFF YOUR NEXT ORDER

Get 10% off with code: **WELCOME10**

CLAIM NOW

Thanks for ordering direct from The H Cafe. Your order helps us keep serving the food you love—and gives you access to exclusive deals and offers.

Offer valid on one order through the H Cafe website, mobile app and ChowNow App. Must be logged in to redeem promotions with Apple Pay or Google Pay. Offer cannot be applied to catering orders.

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Seeing this in Promotions? Move us to your inbox to stay in the loop!



PRO TIP

With [ChowNow's Marketing Suite](#), the welcome email and text trigger automatically after a diner's first ChowNow order. Set it up once and it runs.



1 LIFECYCLE CAMPAIGNS

THE WIN BACK EMAIL

What it does:

- Sent automatically when a diner hasn't ordered in 30 days (and again at 60 and 90 days if they still haven't returned.)
- This is the highest-ROI campaign type for most restaurants.
- The diner already knows you and just needs a reason to come back.



WIN BACK CAMPAIGNS ARE THE #1

campaign type ChowNow Restaurant Partners want to run. 54.5% say it's their top priority. Now you can run them automatically.

What makes it work:

- 30 days is long enough that they've had time to drift, not so long that they've forgotten you.
- The offer needs to be worth coming back for: a genuine reason to return, not just a big markdown.
- The 60-day version should escalate slightly: better offer, more direct tone.
- The 90-day version is your strongest offer with the shortest copy, making it easy to say yes.
- Keep the tone warm and inviting across all three as you're welcoming them back.

Subject line examples:

- "We miss you, [first name]. Come back for 20% off."
- "It's been a while. Here's a reason to come back!"
- "Your usual is waiting, [first name]!"

An email template for H Cafe. At the top is the H Cafe logo, a red circle with a white 'H'. Below it is the headline "ORDER AGAIN AND GET 20% OFF". The body text reads "It's been a while, Caroline. Order your favorites, or check out what's new." Below this is a dashed-line box containing a gift tag icon, the text "Get 20% off with code MISSYOU20", and a green button labeled "CLAIM NOW". At the bottom of the email is a photo of a meal featuring ribs, corn on the cob, and potatoes. Below the photo is the offer details: "Offer valid on one order through the H Cafe website, mobile app and ChowNow App. Must be logged in to redeem promotions with Apple Pay or Google Pay. Offer cannot be applied to catering orders." followed by the copyright notice "© 2026 The H Cafe. 2327 Main St., Unit 10, Santa Monica, CA 90405. All Rights Reserved" and a footer note "Seeing this in Promotions? Move us to your inbox to stay in the loop!"

Timing note:

The win back text fires 3 days after the 30-day email goes out, if the diner still hasn't ordered.

1 LIFECYCLE CAMPAIGNS

VIP / LOYALTY EMAIL

What it does:

- Sent automatically after a diner hits a milestone, typically their 4th order.
- Recognizing loyal customers makes them feel seen and gives them a reason to keep the habit going.



**LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBERS
SPEND 20% MORE.**

A well-timed recognition email gets you there.

What makes it work:

- The diner has already proven they like you. This is about locking in the habit.
- The offer can be smaller than a win back since they're already engaged.
- Tone should feel like a genuine thank-you: personal, warm, and specific to them.

Subject line examples:

- "You've become one of our regulars, [first name]!"
- "4 orders in. Here's a little thank you from us!"
- "Official regular status: unlocked."

PRO TIP

ChowNow's [Rewards Program](#) lets restaurants set up a digital loyalty program directly tied to online orders. Diners earn rewards automatically, and you control the discount and order minimum.



\$5 OFF FOR VIPS ONLY— THAT'S YOU, CAROLINE

Get \$5 off with code **VIP50FF**

CLAIM MY VIP OFFER

Thanks for being one of The H Cafe's most valuable customers. Every time you order directly from us, you're supporting our team—so we can keep offering exclusive discounts and your favorite dishes.

Offer valid on one order through the H Cafe website, mobile app and ChowNow App. Must be logged in to redeem promotions with Apple Pay or Google Pay. Offer cannot be applied to catering orders.

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2 ON-DEMAND CAMPAIGNS

SLOW-DAY FLASH OFFER

What it is:

- A one-time email or text you send on a slow day to drive same-day orders.
- Think of it as your on-demand revenue lever, ready whenever you need it.

When to use it:

- Tuesdays and Wednesdays (typically the slowest ordering days).
- After a rough weather week.
- When you've got inventory to move.
- During a slow stretch between holidays.

Why SMS is the better channel here: Text is read faster. For same-day urgency, you want it in their pocket, not their inbox.

What to include:

- The offer and deadline in the first two lines. Never bury them.
- Tonight-only or today-only window. Vague deadlines don't convert.
- Short subject lines with a clear offer outperform clever ones every time here.

NEW MENU ITEM

What it does:

- Gives your regulars a reason to come back and try something new.
- Works well for seasonal additions, limited-time items, or anything you're genuinely excited about.


Best channel:

- Email for context and photography.
- SMS for a quick nudge to your most loyal customers.

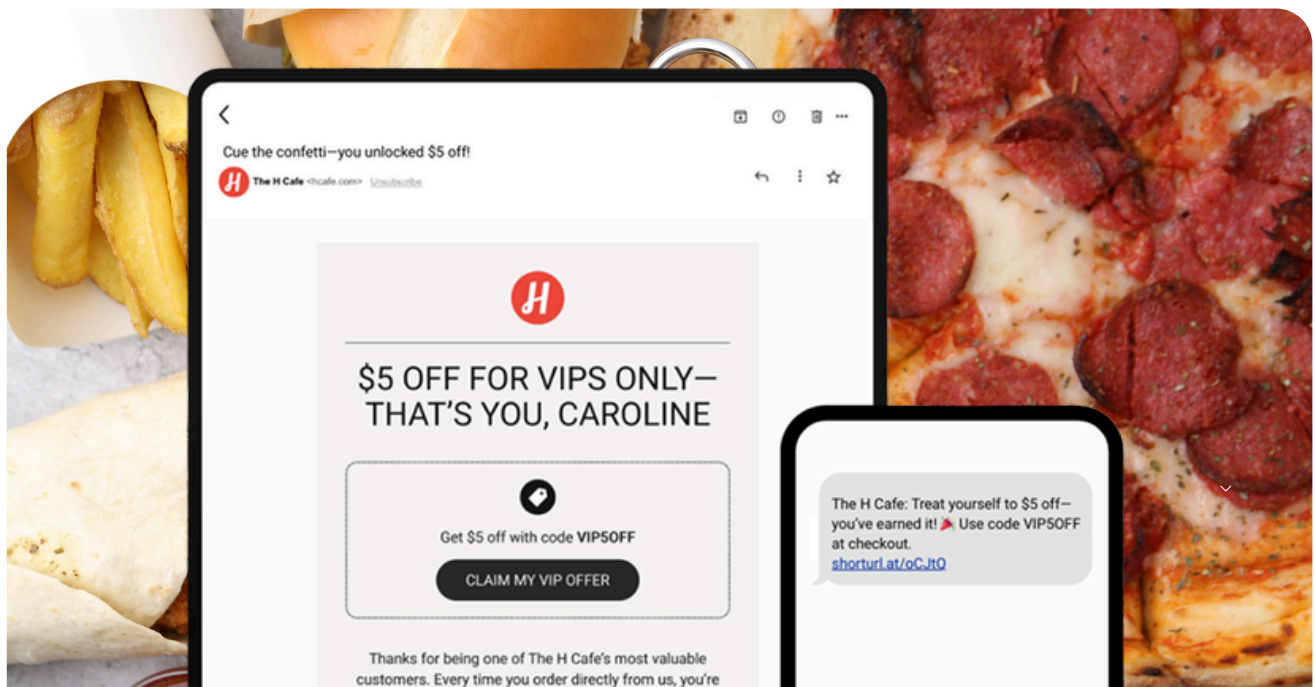
What to include:

- What's new and why it's worth ordering (one or two sentences is enough).
- A direct link to the menu or ordering page.
- Optional: a small offer or free-add to drive the first try.

PRO TIP



In [ChowNow's Marketing Suite](#), you can set up a one-time campaign and customize it to fit your offer. It's simple enough that you can have a promo live in under 5 minutes.



2 ON-DEMAND CAMPAIGNS

PROMOTE CATERING

What it does: Surfaces your catering option to diners who already know and like you. Your best catering leads are often sitting in your direct ordering list already.

Best timing: Before the holidays and ahead of slow corporate seasons (January and August tend to be strong catering months).

What to include:

- What catering looks like at your restaurant: group size, menu, setup.
- Minimum order info and lead time requirements.
- How to place an order: a direct link to your catering page.

POST-CATERING FOLLOW-UP

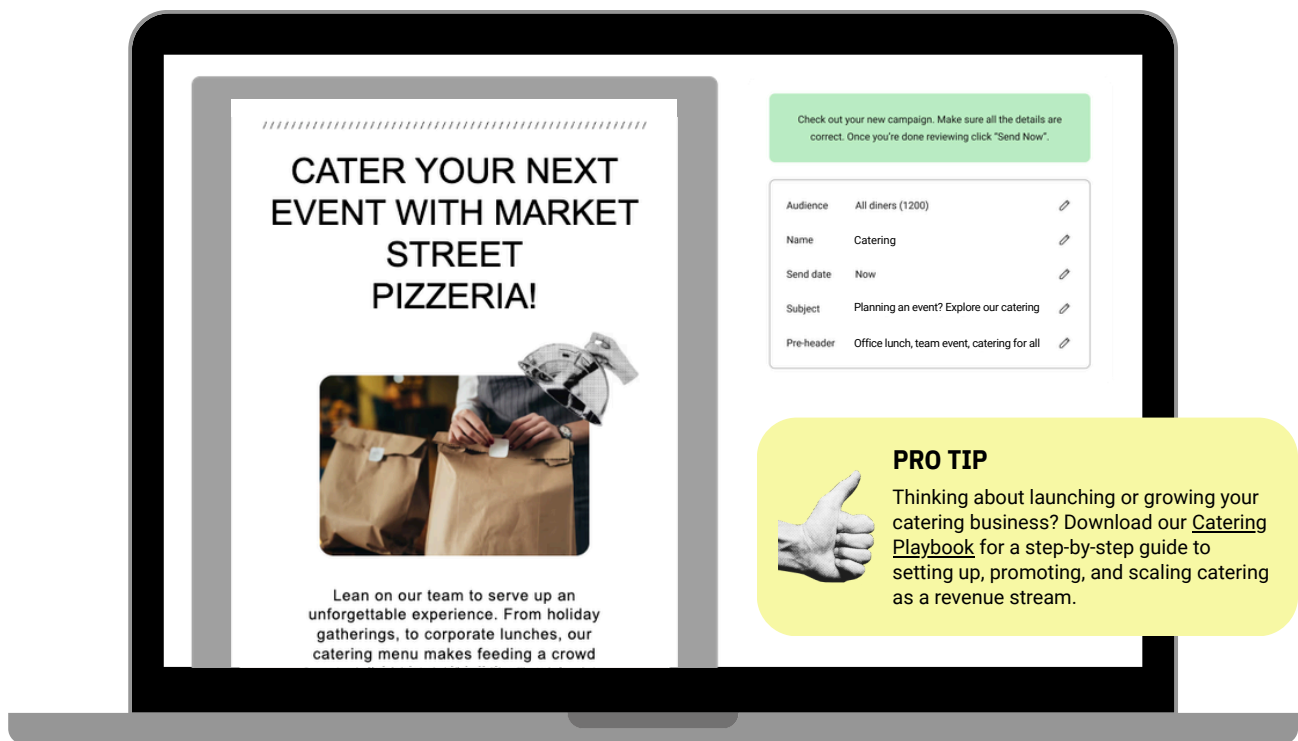
What it does: Closes the loop after a catering order and seeds the next booking. Catering customers who had a great experience are your easiest repeat business, and a timely follow-up is often all it takes.

Best channel: Email, within 48 hours of the order. Keep it short and genuine. Think of it as a check-in, not a campaign.

What to include:

- A thank-you that references their specific order if possible.
- A simple ask: how did it go?
- A soft prompt to book again, with a direct link to your catering page.

Here is how you can set up your very own one-time catering email to your customers in ChowNow:



2 ON-DEMAND CAMPAIGNS

SEASONAL SPECIALS AND EVENTS

What it does: Ties your restaurant to moments diners are already thinking about. Timely sends consistently outperform generic promotions.

Best moments to plan for:

- **October through December:** peak catering and holiday orders. Start promoting in late September. Send before the Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve noise, not during it.
- **January:** post-holiday win back moment. Diners who ordered in November or December and went quiet are a natural target.
- **February:** Valentine's Day push plus post-holiday win back. Mid-February tends to be slow after the holiday, so layering both sends works well.
- **Mother's Day and Father's Day:** both drive above-average order volume. Promote 5 to 7 days in advance. A family-pack or catering angle works well.
- **Summer:** slow-day offers to smooth out mid-week gaps.



PRO TIP

[ChowNow's Marketing Suite](#) includes seasonal campaign templates that activate monthly. The February Valentine's promo, for example, is pre-built and goes out on a set date once you turn it on.





BUILDING AND GROWING YOUR LIST

The first time a diner finds you on a marketplace or third-party delivery app, that's a win. But that order belongs to them. Their contact info does too.

When a diner orders direct, their name, email, and order history become yours — and every channel you use is an opportunity to grow that list.

Where your marketing list builds:

1

Your direct channels. Orders from your website, branded app, or catering storefront.

2

Dine-in & QR Code Ordering. Every scan turns a walk-in into a known contact on your list.

3

Discovery Network & ChowNow Marketplace. Orders via ChowNow's app or Google, Apple Maps, & more.

As your list grows, ChowNow automatically organizes it so every message reaches the right guest at the right time:

- **New diners** — First-time customers ready for a welcome offer.
- **Repeat diners** — Regulars worth rewarding to keep coming back.
- **VIPs** — Your highest-value guests who deserve a little extra.
- **Lapsed diners** — Guests who haven't ordered in a while and need a reason to return.

The goal isn't just to collect contacts. It's to build a list that actually converts.



PRO TIP

Already have a guest list from reservations, events, or in-store visits? On ChowNow's Grow and Elevate plans, you can upload your existing contacts via CSV to expand your audience.

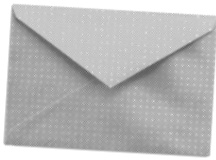
WHAT TO TRACK (AND WHAT TO IGNORE)

The metrics that matter are simpler than most people make them. Focus on what drives orders and revenue. Here's what to watch, what good looks like, and when to make a change.

What matters:

- **Orders driven:** the only number that matters. Open rates are a signal, not the goal.
- **Revenue per campaign:** track which sends brought orders in and use that to sharpen future campaigns.
- **Repeat order rate:** are lapsed diners coming back after your win back?

REALISTIC BENCHMARKS FOR INDEPENDENT RESTAURANTS:



EMAIL OPEN RATES:
25 to 40% is solid for a warm list



WIN BACK CONVERSION:
5 to 15% of lapsed diners placing an order is a good result



SMS CLICK RATES:
10 to 20% is typical, higher for time-sensitive offers

When to adjust vs. when to wait:

- Give automated campaigns 60 to 90 days before drawing conclusions. They need volume to show results.
- If a one-time promo gets zero conversions, try a different offer or a different send day before writing off the channel.
- If your list is under 200 contacts, focus on growing the list first. Results are hard to read at low volume.



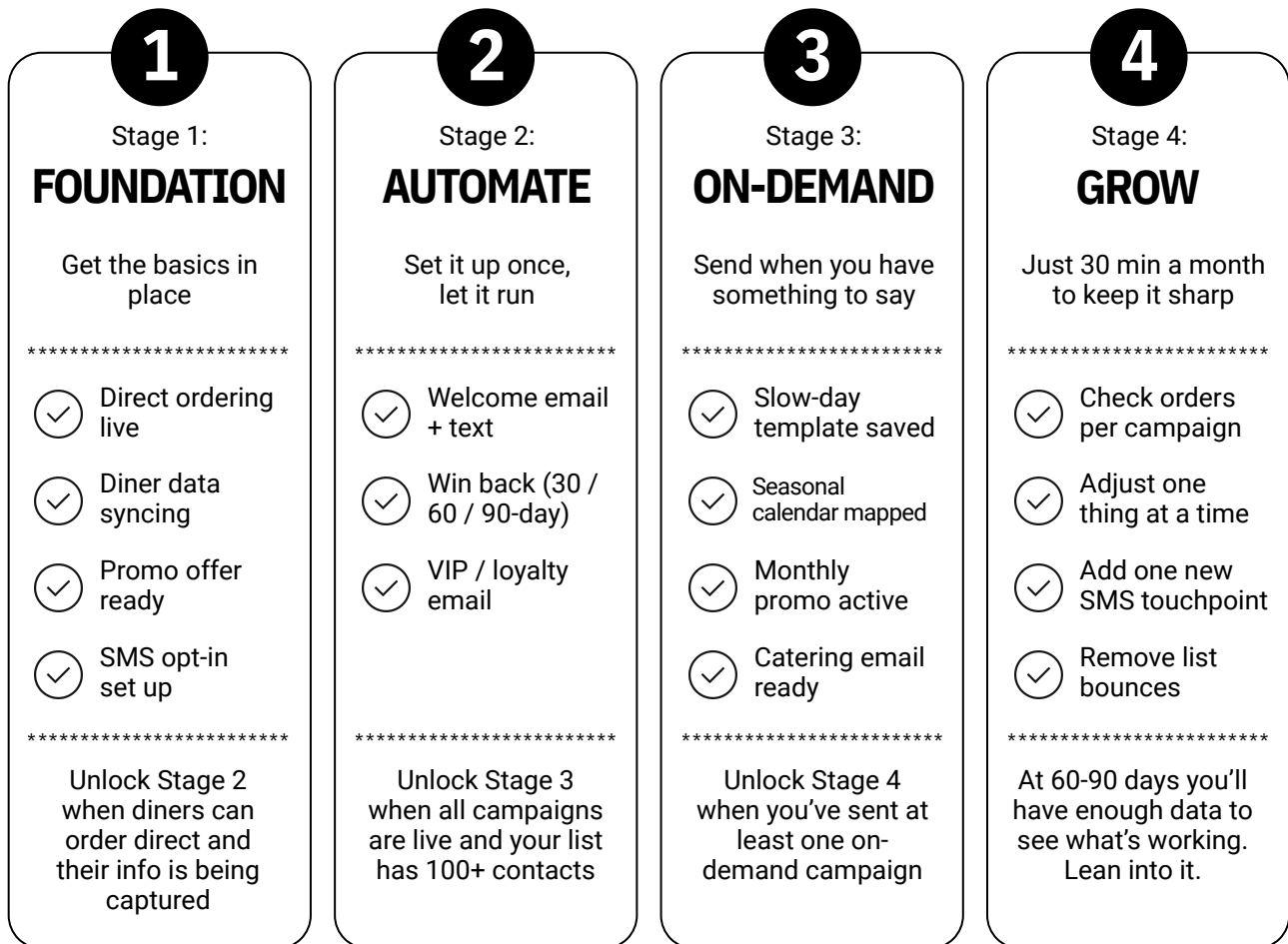
PRO TIP

Campaign reporting lives in [ChowNow's Marketing Suite](#) dashboard, where you can see exactly which campaigns drove orders and how much revenue they generated all without opening a spreadsheet or logging into another tool.

THE REPEAT CUSTOMER ROADMAP

Not sure where to start? Start here.

This roadmap breaks the whole system into four stages so you're never doing everything at once. Work through them in order, or jump to wherever you actually are right now.





MARKETING SUITE

Every campaign in this guide is something you can run on your own. And when you're ready for the whole system to run itself, that's what the Marketing Suite is built for.

With every direct order, you grow a customer list you own. That list becomes the foundation for automated email and text marketing that brings diners back, drives repeat orders, and keeps your restaurant top of mind, without adding to your plate.

Marketing Suite works right out of the box with campaigns designed specifically for independent restaurants, while still giving you the flexibility to launch your own promotions when you want to drive demand.

“Having automated email is great. With monthly marketing on autopilot, that lets me worry about other things for my business.”



Billy Wang, Ollie's (NYC)
108% increase in repeat orders



MARKETING SUITE

ChowNow's Marketing Suite puts all of it in one place:



Automated Campaigns:
Always-on email and SMS campaigns that bring diners back without ongoing effort.



Expanded Reach:
Connect in-store and online diners into one unified customer list.



On-Demand Campaigns:
Launch custom promotions, events, and offers in minutes.



Performance Reporting:
Track engagement and revenue for each campaign to see what's driving orders.



Smart Targeting:
Automated segmentation (new, repeat, VIP, lapsed) based on real ordering behavior.



Loyalty Program:
Turn diners into loyal regulars with digital rewards and incentives.

Simple, restaurant-controlled marketing that turns every order into the next one.

See how ChowNow Marketing Suite works below:

[BOOK A DEMO](#)

