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NRA Show

THE INTERNATIONAL FOODSERVICE MARKETPLACE

RESTAURANT HOTEL-MOTEL SHOW
May 21-24, 2005
 McCORMICK PLACE CHICAGO

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NRA Show Dates & Times

The NRA Show runs from Saturday, May 21, 2005, to Tuesday, May 24, 2005, from 9 am to 5 pm each day.

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May 27, 2005

May I send your order to the kitchen instantly?

May 24, 2005 --

Okay, so the waiter's notepad hasn't become obsolete yet, but with some of the new handheld PCs hitting the floors of dining rooms all over the world, it may not be too long before servers ditch their pens.

Several POS vendors exhibiting at the NRA Show unveiled new or upgraded technologies for servers to use, tableside, to take orders and wirelessly transmit them to kitchens. Such technology, said Christopher Wright, marketing director for [ASI/Restaurant Manager](#), improves sales, reduces the likelihood of errors in food orders, and speeds turnaround time.

"The faster you get the first drink in their hand, the more quickly you can get them a second drink," said Wright, as he demonstrated his company's Restaurant Manager write-on wireless handheld. First released in 2002, the handheld unit relies on handwriting recognition to create a POS system rather than touchbuttons.

As the cost of hardware goes down, and the technology improves, Wright said he expects more businesses to upgrade from paper systems.

Paul Williamson, sales director, [WaiterPad](#), agrees. He said handheld wireless systems are just now starting to emerge with stronger reliability, functionality and battery life.

WaiterPad is an integrated handheld, POS and back-office system that uses a proprietary radio-frequency technology to transmit wireless orders. The system, originally developed by Australian company PalmTeq, is in use in about 1,000 restaurants internationally. WaiterPad, the U.S. version, came onto the market late last year.

The WaiterPad handheld unit weighs just under 11 ounces and has a battery life of about 14 hours of continuous use. It prompts servers through the ordering process -- including upsell suggestions -- and can be programmed to include extra information, such as ingredient or nutrition data.

[NextPOS](#) technician Carl Parnell said he's seen an increase in sales of wireless handheld POS systems in the last year, among big restaurant chains and small businesses alike. The corporation is marketing a new handheld model this fall with new applications, including one that gives servers an option to recall orders.

NRA Show attendees said they were impressed with the personal digital wireless systems. Thomas John, an executive chef for Au Bon Pain, spent an afternoon at the NRA Show picking up pamphlets for companies like [CSI Hospitality](#), which showcased its new Order Buddy Lite in the NRA Show's Technology Pavilion. He said he is looking at several options to make curbside service quicker, or to speed up orders when there are long lines in the restaurant.

"We've been looking at wireless [point-of-sale] pads for quite some time," John said. "If you have a long line, it helps to be able to take orders."

The Buddy Lite is an extension and a smaller version of CSI's full-scale Order Buddy POS system for restaurants, which includes touchscreens, handhelds and printers. If a restaurant already has a reliable POS system in place, but wants waitstaff to start using wireless handhelds, the Buddy Lite is for them, said Ira Handelsman, the company's president.

"For our customer base, this is a very economical line," Handelsman said.
 --by Marisa Torrieri

The NRA Show:
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