



CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF TOURISM  
**Tourism Insights Program**

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2020 REPORT

# Top 10 takeout innovations

The pandemic has illustrated both the resolve and inexhaustible ability of restaurants to innovate and find new business avenues as they have had to shift their entire sales models overnight. Takeout has become the lifeline of many restaurants across the country, as dining is limited or nonexistent. Here are some of the most creative takeout ideas and promos seen thus far.



**Unconventional Takeout Foods.** Items in your restaurant's pantry that would otherwise spoil—milk, eggs, cheese, etc.—can be repurposed into unconventional takeout options.



**Creative Coronavirus Specials.** Cater to your customers' current experience with specials and promotions tailored to the lockdown—Quarantine Kits, Lockdown Lunches, etc.



**Heat-and-eat dishes.** Not all dishes work well for takeout. Restaurants have adapted to this problem by making dishes that can be made in bulk, frozen or refrigerated and sold via delivery or carryout.



**Meal Kits.** Many restaurants are deconstructing their favorite dishes, packaging ingredients with instructions and delivering them as meal kits to their hungry customers.



**Wholesale Ingredients.** Several restaurants began selling their ingredients in bulk, either to other businesses or directly to consumers.



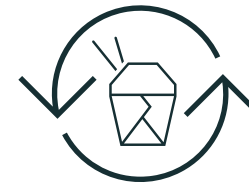
**Meal Donation.** Many restaurants have donated meals to first-responders and those at higher-risk by using "Buy Meals, We Donate Meals" promotions.



**Carryout Cocktails.** Many states have lifted their laws on alcohol delivery, allowing restaurants to serve sealed drinks to go.



**Wine Pairing and Subscriptions.** Restaurants have been selling wine by the case, pairing wines with their favorite dishes and offering subscriptions that deliver.



**Food Subscriptions.** Customers sign up for a plan with their favorite restaurant, and their meals are delivered or picked up at a predetermined time.



**Hashtag Movements.** Participating in national hashtag campaigns can amplify your brand and help you reach new audiences.

## Key Insight

*There are more ways to sell "to-go" than your traditional menu boxed up and taken out to for curbside pickup.*

## What you need to watch in 2021 & beyond

The hospitality industry is changing quicker than ever before, making it nearly impossible to keep up with all the hotel, travel and hotel management trends that are impacting this dynamic business. And in a world where technology is becoming increasingly more important, the hospitality industry must stay up-to-date.

A few technology-forward trends that you need to watch out for this next year and beyond are:

- ✓ **Bring your own streaming.** Portable streaming devices like the Amazon Fire Stick allow guests to pack their own movies or shows in their suitcases, but only if hotels can provide a TV with a USB port. Hotels can also leverage a platform like Enseio which allows guests to login to their favorite streaming accounts during their stay.
- ✓ **Blazing fast internet.** Wi-Fi is not a one-speed-fits-all amenity. If your internet provider hasn't made any upgrades in a few years, your Wi-Fi might be too slow to stream movies or download large files.
- ✓ **Mobile concierge.** Restaurant reservations, tour bookings, area information and more at the palm of one's hand. Give your guests instant answers and recommendations.
- ✓ **Contactless payments.** Hotels must upgrade their payment technology to accept payments via near field communication (NFC).

### **Key Insight**

*Upgrade your internet and technology now while business is slow, so that you can have all the kinks worked out when travel picks back up.*





### **Key Insight**

*Employees are the lifeblood of your business. Keeping your policies, plans and safety measures up to date will ensure happy employees—and happy customers.*

## COVID-19 BUSINESS ACTIONS

### What companies are doing right now

It is difficult for businesses to maneuver around the rapidly developing Covid-19 pandemic. However, when looking at the actions of the top performing companies, one theme is clear—their actions have a longer-term impact and benefit, as opposed to a piecemeal solution that offers short-term effects.


**Company Policies.** Create a company policy that addresses Covid-19 specifically. HR resource websites recommend policies that scrap the need for doctor's notes, encourage the use of Telehealth and deploy wellness programs.

**Company Response Plans.** Put together a Covid-19 response team to monitor and respond to daily pandemic developments and create a structured response plan that is scaled to different levels of severity.

**Sanitation & Precautionary Measures.** For businesses that are not able to operate in a fully remote environment, enhanced sanitation protocols and precautionary measures that work to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 are crucial. Once these are in place, be sure to educate your employees well, as this is an "all hands on deck" situation.

**Employee Care.** Understand that your employees will be anxious about several things—not just the pandemic itself, but the impact on their job and personal budget. They need to know you have their back, whether that be from an expansion of digital workplace resources or work from home leniency.

# 10 Positives to Emerge From Pandemic

**Key Insight**  Now is the time to focus on training, marketing and your visitor experience. Collaborate with your neighbor and learn from each other what works and what doesn't. Post-Covid consumers will be more critical of their experiences than ever before.



**A greater appreciation of the value of attractions.** "One of the things that's come out of this is that a greater number of politicians and civil servants, and indeed decision-makers, have fully begun to appreciate the value of tourism and of visitor attractions."



**A more collaborative industry.** "There's been an inspiring explosion of sharing and collaboration within the sector and beyond. Lots of organizations are reaching out to each other, sharing trends and insights. [There is a] realization that we're all in it together."



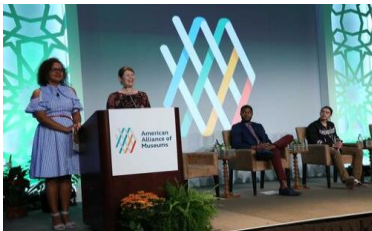
**Recognizing the importance of front of house staff.** "The front of the house staff have been incredibly important. They are not just welcoming people back but managing and, in some ways, policing behavior. The role of Front of House staff, for me, has never been more important."



**The rise of digital.** "We saw the importance of digital as a tool. A tool to complement, to entice and to entertain, but not to replicate or replace the visitor experience. When visitor attractions were physically closed, they were still digitally open."



**A chance to recover better.** "That's in the way that we treat people, the way that we value people and the way that we tell our stories. But also in our appetite for risk, innovation and creativity, and for doing new things in different ways. Digital was a really good example of that."



**A new mandate to tell stories authentically and honestly.** "The challenge, for all of us, is that the confluence of Black Lives Matter and COVID has given us a better mandate, if we ever needed one, to tell the stories of our people and places and collections authentically and honestly. More than we ever have."



**People love visiting attractions.** "We know from all the visitor sentiment research that people were yearning to come back. Visiting their favorite places, whether they're parks or gardens, stately homes or museums and galleries, zoos, palaces or cathedrals, is really important to people's lives."



**The visitor experience is key.** "People want a safe experience. They want a safe encounter. They want a safe and enjoyable place. But they still want to have fun and they still want an enjoyable experience. Because that's the point of visitor attractions."

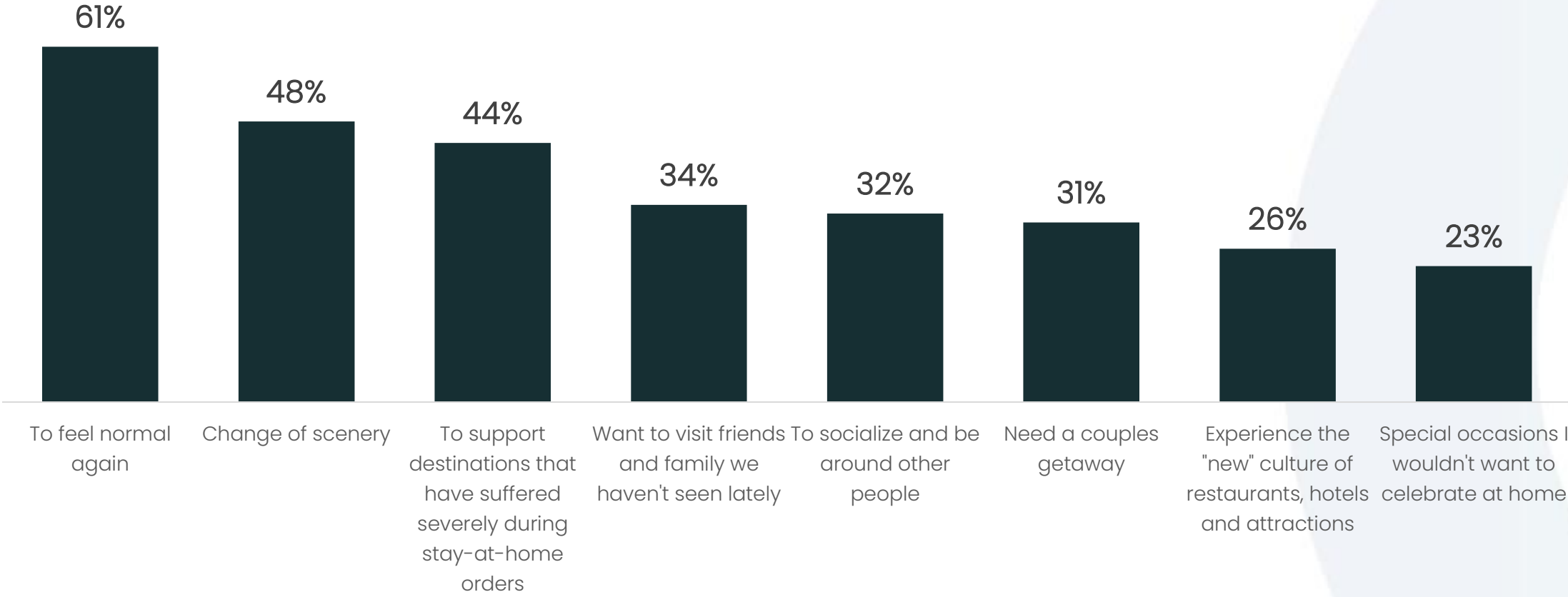


**An opportunity to welcome more people.** "This is also an opportunity to open our doors to people who are different from those we closed them to in March. If we simply reopen our doors to exactly the same people, then we haven't progressed, we haven't learned."



**Attractions create memories.** "In a post-COVID world, there will be an explosion of desire, of people wanting the experience economy."

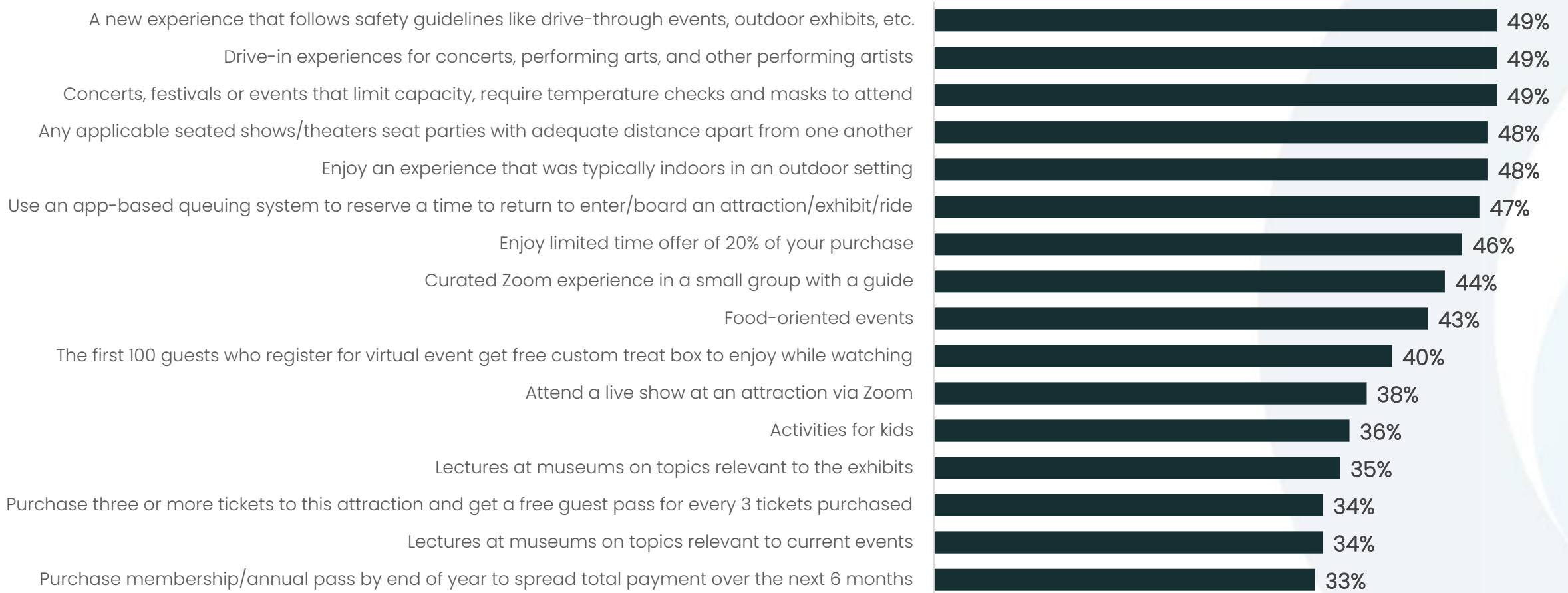
# Besides the need to feel normal and see something other than their homes, nearly half of consumers want to support the struggling travel industry.



Q12: What are your primary motivations for wanting to go to a restaurant, hotel or attraction this winter?

# Creating safe experiences like drive-through or outdoor attractions with masking and capacity regulations are some of the the strongest ways to influence attraction patronage.

## % Significantly/Somewhat Increase

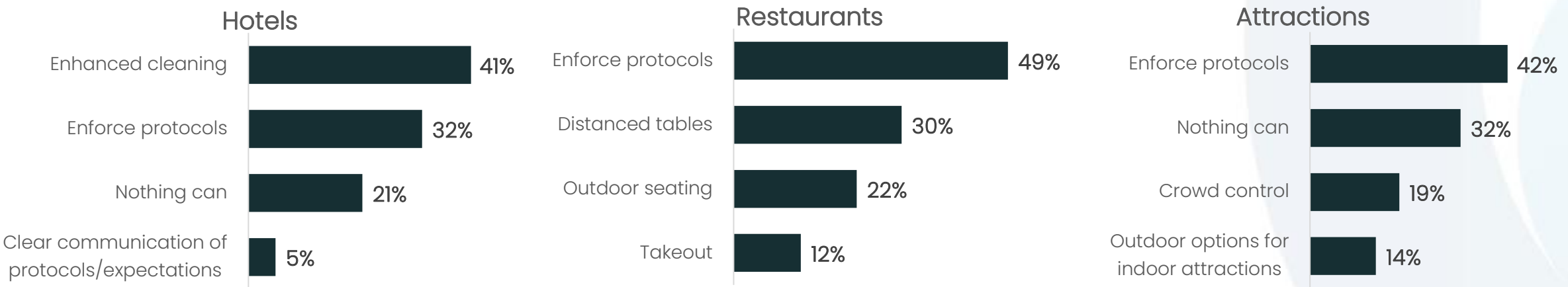


Q20: Please rate how socially distanced versions of the following would increase or decrease your interest in patronizing a particular attraction this winter.

# Top Influencers to Patronize Hotels, Restaurants and Attractions

Despite innovative attempts to continue operating, restaurants, hotels and attractions are suffering nationwide amid the pandemic. While we have discovered that enhancing cleaning procedures and enforcing social distancing is of utmost importance, we have found that certain actions are more influential for one type of business over another. For example, enhanced cleaning measures is the most influential action for someone considering a hotel visit, while social distancing is the most influential for one considering a restaurant. However, there is a good portion of society that claims that absolutely nothing could influence them to visit a hotel, restaurant or attraction at this time.

Those who have ventured out have noticed the creativity that these types of businesses are employing to prioritize the safety of their patrons. One of the biggest trends that is getting noticed is outdoor dining. Restaurants that offer this type of seating are getting creative, especially as the weather cools down. Fire pits, space heaters and personal dining tents or bubbles are all ways that restaurants have been continuing to offer outdoor dining options into the winter months.



Q15: What actions could a hotel take to influence you to stay overnight in their accommodations? Please be specific.  
Q17: What actions could a restaurant take to influence you to patronize their business? Please be specific.  
Q19: What actions could an attraction or event take to influence you to patronize their business? Please be specific.



## STRAIGHT FROM THE CONSUMER'S MOUTH

# What Unique Things They've Noticed During the Pandemic

Consumers are taking notice of the unique experiences businesses are implementing during the pandemic. From individual pods for concerts or dining, to hiring sanitization squads to Zoom concerts – consumers are still able to enjoy their favorite activities.

These are all protocols we've been seeing for several months, and consumers are very appreciative of businesses who still allow them to patronize the business. ***So, if you have an idea to get your business to the consumer in a safe way, try it! Nothing is too crazy right now.***

*"Creating seating pods that are socially distanced for live indoor concerts."*

*"Bring your own blanket dining is different."*

*"Hiring people with sanitation gear constantly walking around sanitizing."*

*"I like the streams of Zoom-filmed plays being available and the virtual concerts."*



*THANK YOU*

# GET IN TOUCH WITH US

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