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Monthly Message: The peaceful January slowdown, happy New Year

Welcome to 2026! As the holiday decorations come down and routines settle back into place, many businesses experience a familiar January slowdown. After the rush of end-of-year shopping and celebrations, the New Year often brings a time of quiet and peace, one that can feel challenging, but also full of opportunity and new hope.

This seasonal pause offers businesses a chance to reset. January is an ideal time to review what worked, refine strategies, and plan thoughtfully for the months ahead. With Valentine's Day just around the corner, this slower period allows owners to prepare promotions, refresh offerings, and reconnect with customers in meaningful ways before activity picks up again. For our food service businesses in the community, that may mean finding yourself surrounded by tiny pink and white hearts on the menu items, while others may find themselves eating those candy hearts we all say we can't stand (as our hand reaches for another in the bowl).

The New Year also arrives after what has been, for many, a year marked by uncertainty and rapid change. That businesses are still standing, and have adapted so well, is no small achievement. Resilience has become more than a buzzword ? it is a defining strength. Adapting to shifting conditions, supporting staff, and continuing to serve communities have required creativity, endurance, and optimism.

Adding to that sense of renewal, the year ahead is celebrated as the Year of the Horse. Traditionally associated with success, determination, and forward momentum, the Horse symbolizes progress through perseverance and hard work. For businesses, it's a fitting reminder that steady effort and bold movement can carry them toward growth, even when the path is unpredictable.

While January may be quieter, it is far from unimportant. It is time to regroup, refocus, and move forward with confidence. As businesses look ahead to Valentine's Day and beyond, the New Year offers not just a fresh calendar but a renewed chance to build, strengthen, and thrive.