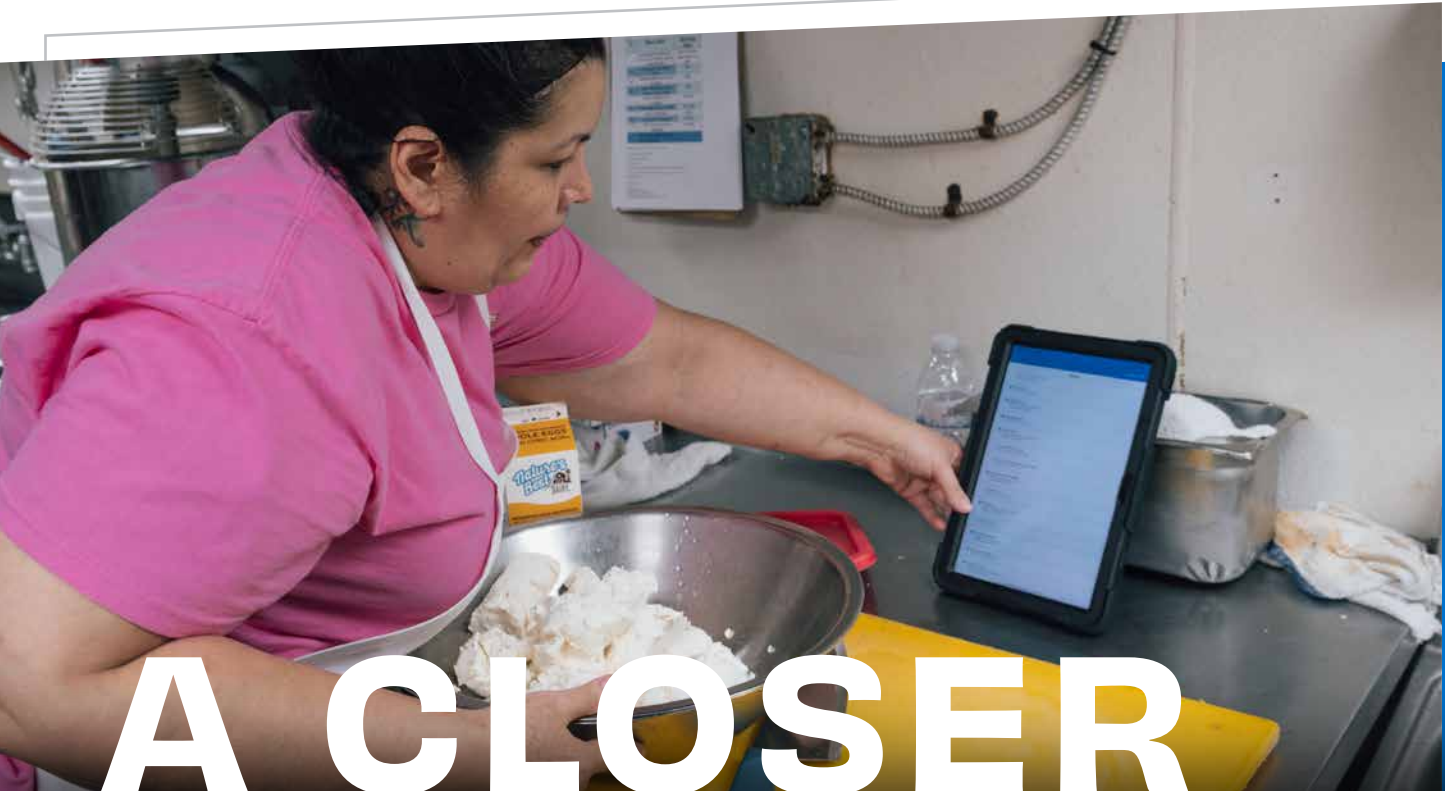




[me]
marginedge



real time way to control food and labor costs

A CLOSER LOOK...

HQ LOCATION

Washington D.C.

CUISINE

Casual Full Service

NUMBER OF RESTAURANTS

1

TECH STACK

QuickBooks, Toast

KEY FEATURES

SmartPrep, Bill Pay, Inventory & Recipes

The goal

Owner Jeremy Pollok wanted to ditch Tonic's slow, manual back office (paper invoices, FedEx runs to the bookkeeper, spreadsheet recipes and handwritten prep lists) for a digital, real-time way to control food and labor costs.

[me] solution ^{*}_{*}

With MarginEdge's Bill Pay, inventory, recipe costing and Smart Prep, Tonic cut invoice processing from days to minutes, gained real-time cost visibility, trimmed waste and labor and has stayed profitable and open for nearly 20 years.

20 years, zero Sharpies:

How Tonic runs on MarginEdge

Tonic at Quigley's, known around town as Tonic Restaurant, has kept its doors open for nearly 20 years under owner-operator, chef and general manager Jeremy Pollok. Before MarginEdge, the back office ran on pure manual muscle: paper invoices mailed to a bookkeeper by FedEx, hand-coded expense sheets and recipes and prep lists trapped in Excel.

"Before MarginEdge, we used spreadsheets. We use spreadsheet formulas, which I never want to do again in my life."—Jeremy Pollok, Owner-Operator

What started as a simple switch to digital invoicing grew, over several years, into a full MarginEdge deployment covering recipes, food costing, inventory and prep. Front of house and back.



Bill Pay: invoice coding in seconds, not days

Coding invoices by hand used to be one of the slowest parts of Jeremy's week. A single five-page vendor invoice could eat an hour, and the paperwork had to travel by FedEx to his bookkeeper before anything counted as official. He noted, "Something that took three days now takes one minute."

"So before, the coding [of an] invoice, for example, from US Foods, that's five pages long, could take an hour. Now it takes one click of my phone. One click on my camera, on my phone, and it's all done. It's downloaded."—Jeremy Pollok

The change won over Tonic's bookkeeper too. Jeremy says he was one of the people who pushed the restaurant to adopt MarginEdge in the first place, after seeing how much time Bill Pay saved on his end.

Inventory: from several hours to a few, on a phone

Inventory counts used to carve a big chunk out of Jeremy's week. With MarginEdge, the whole shelf-to-sheet process happens on his phone: bar, food and every inventory the restaurant has ever run, all in one place. "It does make it so much easier. In regards to taking inventory, I get to do it right here on my phone. No spreadsheets, no anything... it has taken the

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Jeremy Pollok

Owner-Operator

inventory process [from] what used to take, you know, several hours, and brought it down to just a few hours, and I can do it right here on my phone.”

That speed doesn’t just save hours. It changes what the numbers are for. As Jeremy puts it, instead of spending hours pulling the count together, “now you’re using that information to make real changes.”

“Once I take an inventory again, saved, send it right off to my bookkeeper. I have those numbers in real time. And it’s just, again, you have the confidence of the numbers being correct.”

Recipe costing: catching price swings before they hurt margins

Because Tonic’s recipes are built directly in MarginEdge and tied to scanned invoices, food costs update automatically as vendor prices move. That gives Jeremy a live, accurate read on margins instead of a monthly guess. He said, “We noticed that the price of chicken jumped up a couple dollars over a two-week period. So seeing that in MarginEdge, when I see the report in the morning that gets emailed to me, it allowed me in real time to make some changes.



So instead of 12oz coming in [for] a particular recipe, we dropped it to 11oz, which got our food costs back on track.” Jeremy describes the old way, recipes costed by hand with a calculator, as “a much slower process and not as accurate.” With real-time costing, Tonic can reprice or reformulate a dish the same day a vendor price changes, rather than discovering the damage weeks later.

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Smart Prep: less waste, less guessing, less payroll

Smart Prep replaced Tonic's paper prep sheets and hand-labeled containers with a system that forecasts what the kitchen actually needs each shift.

"We use a tool called Smart Prep from MarginEdge. Every morning it generates a sales forecast and turns it into a prep list that tells my team exactly what to prep and how much. I'm not guessing anymore. We prep the right amount each shift so nothing gets wasted at close or 86'd mid-service."

Smart Prep is making Jeremy's team more efficient, saving on waste and putting more money in his pocket. "When something's prepped, we can print a label right there with the time and expiration date. No more Sharpies scribbled on tape." (And no, Jeremy's money saving is not just from no longer buying Sharpies in bulk!)



Beyond waste, Jeremy points to labor: "With MarginEdge, the Smart Prep helps us cut down on waste and also makes us more efficient... and it helps us cut down on labor." He also flags a compliance upside: printed labels with QR codes look far more buttoned-up to a health inspector than the old masking-tape-and-Sharpie system.

Protecting institutional knowledge, and making it bilingual

Ada, Tonic's lead prep cook, once had to take time off for personal health reasons, and the kitchen felt it. "There was a lot of eyeing and a lot of institutional knowledge, which is great until someone's not there," Jeremy says. "We were down there and we figured it out, but there was some starts and stops... there was some over-prepping and under-prepping because we were relying on her institutional knowledge."

Smart Prep changed that math: "Now, with the Smart Prep and the software that it uses, if, God forbid, she's not here for a day or a week or a year, we should be able to be okay... What is up in her head is now in Smart Prep and in MarginEdge."

One detail Jeremy calls out specifically: the one-click language toggle. "One of the great things about Smart Prep and MarginEdge in general is, by a click of a button, it switches from English to Spanish or Spanish to English."



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Ada, who has worked at the restaurant for years, uses the Spanish version daily, both to run her own prep list and to train new hires:

"Antes de tener esta aplicación, era un poco más difícil saber qué era lo que tenía que hacer en el día. Con esta aplicación es mucho más fácil, porque cuando yo entro y hago la lista, el mismo sistema me dice qué es lo que tengo que hacer." ("Before having this app, it was a bit harder to know what I had to do each day. With this app it's much easier, because when I log in and make the list, the system itself tells me what I have to do.")

"También lo puedo poner en español, y se hace mucho más fácil... con ellas, al entrenarlas, es más fácil, porque también las puedo entrenar con el sistema en español. Así yo puedo recomendar este sistema, este programa, al 100%, es muy bueno." ("I can also switch the system to Spanish, and it makes things much easier when I'm training new staff in Spanish too. I recommend this system, this program is 100% very good.") — Ada, Lead Prep Cook

The bottom line

Across invoicing, inventory, recipe costing and prep, Jeremy credits MarginEdge with turning food and labor cost control from a reactive, once-a-month scramble into something he manages in real time. And with keeping Tonic open after two decades in business. "It's the difference between being an open and closed restaurant. I mean, it allows our food costs to stay correct, it allows us to stay profitable, it allows us to be here for 20 years."

"If I hadn't heard of MarginEdge, I'd still be in the previous century, doing spreadsheets, doing formulas, ripping my hair out, trying to figure out why things don't make sense. And spending more time figuring out what my food cost is, as opposed to knowing my food cost and acting on those things. That is the biggest difference."

"The elevator pitch on MarginEdge is: you'd be crazy not to use it, and it makes you more efficient. And maybe you'll get to go home before midnight." We couldn't have said it better ourselves, Jeremy! 🍷