

Candid Cameras

**Security systems involve technology and training to keep foodservice "acceptable losses" at a minimum.
- Restaurants and Institutions**

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Lell dressed with elegantly coifed hair, the middle-aged woman blended perfectly into the dinner crowd at City Limits Diner. After a brief stop at the front desk to ask the evening's host to let her enter the dining room in search of her husband, she was gone and never seen again.

That is until Nick Livanos, partner in New York City-based Livanos Restaurant Group, which operates three City Limits Diner locations, checked the security-camera footage that had captured the woman snatching a guest's purse.

"No one noticed her leave," he says. "But the camera caught her walking in and then walking right back out with the purse."

Theft is an unfortunate element of any retail business. Restaurant operators say that combating its effect on the bottom line requires not only dependable surveillance systems but also creativity and solid staff communication.

Livanos' security cameras have picked up more than just purse snatchers. "We came in one morning to find that someone had smashed into the building," he says. "It turns out that a delivery service we used had done it very early in the morning. They caused \$70,000 worth of damage and our surveillance system caught it all."

Strategically positioned cameras on the indoor and outdoor perimeters of his operation have allowed Livanos to effectively dispute specious claims, including an instance where he was shortchanged during a beer delivery.

"We ordered 15 cases of beer and only five were dropped off," he recalls. Despite a signed receipt claiming otherwise, Livanos says he turned to his digital camera footage and learned his suspicions were correct. "The signature ended up being forged," he says.

Livanos' investment in upgrading cameras from videotape to digital recording formats has paid off. Where the former system required management staff to change tapes every few hours, the digital recording demands little maintenance and archives footage for up to two weeks.

"Digital is the way to go," he says. "We're a high-volume restaurant and it really helps to have that kind of technology."



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