



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE SHOW NOTES

Episode Title: Rakuten Takeout

Episode # & Date: Episode #27 – April 30, 2020

About this Episode: Judy discovers an amazing San Mateo company who transformed their software platform almost overnight to enable local restaurants to accept online takeout orders in reaction to COVID-19 restrictions—at *no cost* to restaurants or consumers, who also get 20% cash back.

Episode Web Page: <https://sanmateofocus.com/rakuten-takeout/>

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

I'm Judy Gordon, and *this* is San Mateo Focus.

Before we begin, we've noticed that many of you are listening to San Mateo Focus episodes right on our website or social media posts—and that's great—but there is no automatic notification method that tells you when a new episode has dropped. So, I am asking you—please—go to the Podcast App on your smartphone, or to iTunes on your Mac or PC...search for "San Mateo Focus" and click SUBSCRIBE. Now onto this week's episode.

We've spent the last few weeks talking about the past in San Mateo, and decided to jump into the present this week with a story about a global company that's based right here in San Mateo, and its plan to help small local San Mateo restaurants continue to operate during this challenging time. We think that it's important for local restaurants and their customers to have this information.

Rakuten is one of the largest ecommerce companies in the world. I've passed it hundreds of times coming off 101 heading west on 92, and wondered what is Rakuten? Founded in Japan 23 years ago by Mickey Mikitani, Rakuten means Optimism, and now has over 70 business units. Not all of their businesses are involved with ecommerce. Rakuten Medical serves as an incubator to solve some of the world's biggest health issues. Rakuten America is headquartered in San Mateo, with 600 employees working here. Because of both their international and local presence, the Warriors chose Rakuten as the sponsor for their Jersey patch in 2017. Cathy Novelli, VP of Marketing at Rakuten Ready, one of the US business units, told me how Rakuten Takeout started and what they're doing to roll it out first in San Mateo.

Almost as soon as local residents found out that their favorite restaurants were going to have to close or turn to takeout only, they started trying to figure out ways to help out. Spreadsheets were circulated to let people know which restaurants were open for takeout. People were posting pictures of their food orders on Facebook and Nextdoor, with encouragement to their friends to support the



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

restaurants. At the same time, restaurants had to figure out a new business model, and to decide whether it made sense to move to takeout only.

Meanwhile, at Rakuten Ready, they took a look at the platform that they're building for ecommerce apps and online websites. They felt that it could be re-engineered to allow local restaurants to set up takeout ordering online overnight. Their plan was to help even the very smallest restaurants, who might have less experience with technology. When they started talking about takeout and helping local merchants, founder Mickey Mikitani said that it was exactly why he started the company 23 years ago, to enable mom and pop retailers in Japan to get on an ecommerce platform. He told Cathy's team that he would fund it, but it needed to be built fast, like 'two weeks' fast. Cathy says that two amazing engineers worked with her to help her get it ready to be used by San Mateo restaurants. If restaurants need help setting up, they provide an operations team free of charge to give them that help.

Rakuten Takeout is a platform that allows restaurants to immediately stand up an online ordering system. It gets a restaurant online and gives them their own website with online payment, so that customers can order their food, and pick it up. Through November, all of it is free to the restaurant, and customers get a 20% cashback on their order. Every cent of an order goes to the restaurant. Rakuten is piloting Takeout in this area, because they are headquartered in San Mateo and many of their employees live here. They wanted to make sure it was controllable before expanding the service to the rest of the Bay Area and the country. They have about 20 restaurants on the platform now and are onboarding 20 to 30 more soon. Takeout is always free to the customer and will be free to the restaurant until at least November. Rakuten thinks that picking up food for takeout is going to become much more popular because there's more control for the customer, and there is less contact in the entire transaction.

After I spoke to Cathy at Rakuten, I contacted a few restaurants using the Rakuten Takeout ordering system to make sure that it really worked for them. Kobeya on 25th Avenue said yes, it was working well. They don't have to pay anything until at least November and their customers get 20% cashback on each order. Lynna Martinez, who owns Cuban Kitchen on El Camino was able to give me some more perspective on why Rakuten Takeout is good. She said that restaurants normally have to pay up to 30% of the customer order to online delivery apps. The Rakuten cashback incentive for the customer, along with the 17,000 current Rakuten members in this area should drive more business to the restaurant.

Since Rakuten Takeout is being piloted mainly in San Mateo restaurants all over the city, you'll see familiar ones being added each week. *Here's the Deal:* at least through November it's free for the restaurant and every customer who uses Rakuten Takeout will receive a 20% cashback, which is paid quarterly. If you want to let your favorite restaurant know about it tell them to search for Rakuten Takeout.



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

Okay, that's all the time we have for this episode. Have a great week. Thanks to Jack Radsliff for the original music to this podcast. And please don't forget to Subscribe to San Mateo Focus on your favorite Podcast app or iTunes. As always, if you'd like more information about our sponsor or the topics in today's episode, visit sanmateofocus.com.

HELPFUL LINKS:

[Website: Rakuten Takeout - Find Local Restaurants](#)

[Website: How Rakuten Takout works for restaurants](#)

<https://www.rakuten.com/takeout/restaurants?lng=-122.30508229999998&lat=37.5349925>

[Website: Rakuten Ready Company](#)

[Blog Post: How Rakuten Takeout Works](#)

[Webpage: Rakuten CEO Mickey Mikitani](#)

[Website: Rakuten Medical](#)

[Webpage: Golden State Warriors](#)

TAGS:

#smcstrongfund #sanmateostrong @rakuten @rakutenready @rakutentakeout #sanmateo #sanmateoeats #shoplocal #shopsmall

— end of episode information > podcast show notes below —

SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT



PODCAST SHOW NOTES

Podcast Name: San Mateo Focus

Logo:



Description: Whether you're new to San Mateo, California, or a long time resident, the San Mateo Focus Podcast is the place to learn about local history, good eats, and things to do.

Website: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>

Email: info@sanmateofocus.com

Host & Founder: Judy Gordon

Producer/Co-host: Peter Radsliff

Where to listen: [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Google Podcasts](#) | [Spotify Podcasts](#) | [Stitcher Podcasts](#) | [TuneIn Podcasts](#) | [iHeartRadio](#) | [Facebook](#) | [San Mateo Focus Website](#)

How to listen:

- 1) On the San Mateo Focus **website**: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>
- 2) On your favorite **iPhone** or **Android** smartphone podcast app:
i.e. Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, TuneIn Podcasts, Spotify Podcasts, iHeartRadio Podcasts
- 3) On your favorite smart speaker:
 - For **Amazon Echo**, say: *"Alexa, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*
 - For **Google Home**, say: *"OK Google, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*
 - For **Apple HomePod**, say: *"Hey Siri, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*
- 4) On an **iPhone**, say: *"Hey Siri, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*
- 5) On an **Android** phone, say: *"OK Google, play the podcast, San Mateo Focus."*