Updated Reopening Framework For California

On Friday Governor Newsom announced an updated framework for a safe progression of opening more businesses and activities in light of the COVID pandemic. A new color-coded reopening framework for California has big implications for the state’s business and restaurant scene, which has been crushed by the ongoing pandemic and its related economic volatility. The plan creates a four-tier system that runs county-by-county across the state, allowing for those areas with reduced COVID-19 cases and positivity rates to reopen ahead of more heavily impacted neighboring counties. So what do those tiers mean for restaurants? Tier 1/purple/widespread means outdoor dining only….Tier 2/red/substantial means limited indoor dining at 25 percent of capacity (based on certificate of occupancy) or 100 diners, whichever is fewer….Tier 3/orange/moderate means limited indoor dining at 50 percent of capacity (based on certificate of occupancy) or 200 diners, whichever is fewer….Tier 4/yellow/minimal means limited indoor dining at 50 percent of capacity (based on certificate of occupancy) Restaurants at each tier will have to continue with the litany of state/county coronavirus protocols as well, meaning masks and face shields for servers, keeping distance between tables, and more. Things are slightly different for bars, breweries, and distilleries. Those that don’t serve food in addition to alcohol are to remain closed through the purple and red tiers, but can reopen for outdoor drinking in the orange tier, and can reopen indoors at 50 percent capacity in the yellow tier. Wineries are treated as an independent category, and must remain closed through the purple and red tiers, but can reopen indoors at 25 percent capacity (or 100 patrons, whichever is fewer) in the orange tier. In the yellow tier, wineries can jump to 50 percent capacity or 200 patrons, whichever is fewer. Currently, there is no green tier for reopening, which would indicate some broader allowances like fully reopened indoor dining, the return of large in-person gatherings like sporting events and concerts, and so on. The Governor on Friday said, that barring a vaccine, those allowances won’t come until 2021, at least.

