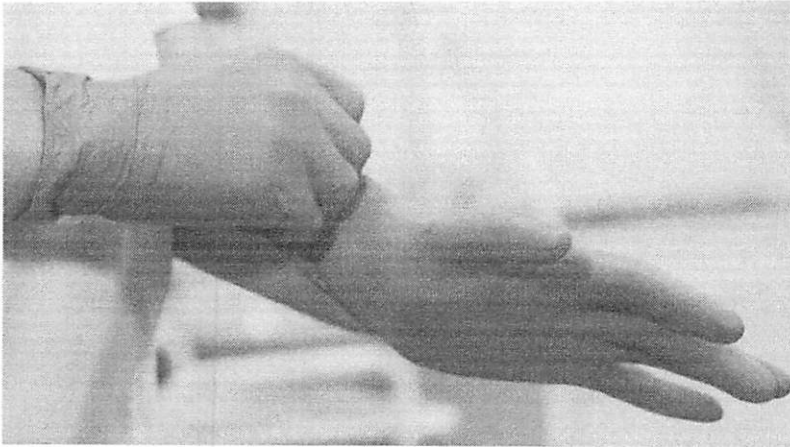


# Understanding The Realities of Today's Disposable Glove Marketplace

By Total Food Service - May 8, 2020



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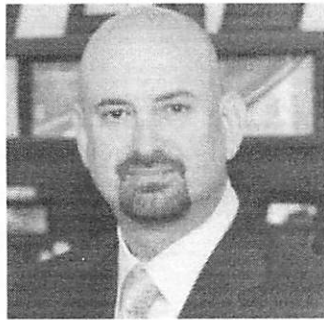
## With Elara Brands' Founder & CEO Dan Grinberg

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the face of restaurants and food service. From the short term fight for survival with Takeout & Delivery initiatives to plans on the horizon to welcome back patrons to dining rooms, the industry is dealing with a new normal.

The centerpiece of that is food safety and the safety of patrons and staff. A priority to accomplishing this goal are disposable gloves. Every segment of the industry is giving us the same input. The

current situation is plagued with sporadic shortages of vinyl, nitrile and latex gloves. With those shortages prices are increasing.



*Dan Grinberg, Founder and CEO,  
Elara Brands*

We searched out one of the glove industry's leading experts, Dan Grinberg, to shed light on how we got here, and what the disposable glove marketplace projects to look like as our industry returns to work.

With 30 years of glove industry experience, Grinberg is the founder and CEO of Elara Brands, one of the nation's leading manufacturers of gloves used by restaurants to safely handle food. Elara's range of gloves, aprons and food storage bags gives operators a variety of options to meet their food safety and budget needs. In addition, through Elara's One Case One Meal program, the company donates a meal for a person struggling with hunger in our area for each case its customer buy.

TFS had the opportunity to visit with Dan and to get his thoughts on the devastating impact of the COVID-19 and how a restaurant/foodservice operators can create a strategy.

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***We are hearing about shortages of vinyl, nitrile and latex gloves along with price increases. Meanwhile, glove use is more important now than ever. How did we get here?***

It began when the coronavirus (COVID-19) was first identified in China. To curb its spread, lockdowns started in February. China produces virtually all of the world's vinyl gloves, which are widely used in foodservice. With factories shut for an extended period, the production of vinyl gloves virtually stopped. While factories are coming back on line, the ramp-up has been slow, and a lot of those vinyl gloves are now being sold within China, limiting exports.

***Aren't there alternatives to gloves from China?***

There are, but these are also affected. When the coronavirus became a pandemic, the global need for gloves skyrocketed. At the very same time, the world's major nitrile and latex glove producing nations – Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia – were hit with the virus. Lockdowns and movement restrictions in these countries resulted in capacity reductions, by as much as 50% at some factories. Surging demand coupled with production cuts is the perfect recipe for shortages. And with shortages come rising prices.

***How long do you expect these glove shortages to last?***

We do not expect the glove market to return to normal in 2020, or should I say a "new normal?" The reopening of the U.S. and other economies could make shortages worse since that will create more demand due to heightened concerns about hygiene and safety and increased glove use in healthcare and foodservice. We are also seeing a lot of disposable gloves being used by consumers, which is new. Gloves are becoming a bigger part of our everyday lives.

At some point you would expect usages to decline and supply to come back into to balance with demand. But this depends on a number of hard to answer questions. How soon will economies reopen? Will there be a second coronavirus wave? Will there be a vaccine and effective new treatments? How quickly can manufacturers increase capacity?

***Can you give us your read on the vinyl glove marketplace?***

Keep in mind that about 95% of global vinyl gloves are produced in China and the supply was drastically impacted by China lockdowns. Most manufacturing shut for at least 60 days, in some cases more. Factories are also grappling with upstream shortages and delays of raw materials and packaging. On top of that, the Chinese government has been purchasing vinyl gloves for domestic use, which is reducing the amount of gloves available for exports. Expect sporadic shortages near term.

***What do you see in the Nitrile and Latex Glove markets?***

It's a similar dynamic as with vinyl gloves. Most nitrile and latex gloves are produced in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. As demand surged, lockdowns cut production and glove factories are also dealing raw material and packaging delays. Some governments are requiring that gloves go for domestic use before exports are allowed. You can also expect intermittent shortages.

***So what are the implications for our industry with these challenges?***

Operators need to be flexible. If you've been using vinyl gloves, there may be times were you have to switch to a different type of disposable glove. Same with nitrile and latex. I know that distributors are working very, very hard to source gloves and give

their customers options. Higher prices are going to be with us for the foreseeable future as well.

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