



## What's the **BUZZ?**

Being the "talk of the town" is a highly coveted position for restaurant operators and growing ever more difficult to attain in today's crowded marketplace. Restaurants who have harnessed the power of "Secret Menus" are creating a "buzz" that drives traffic in their doors in spite of the competitive noise.

### Secrets for Success

Secret Menus are out of the bag and have patrons and food writers alike buzzing with excitement. Although the existence of these behind-the-scenes menus started a decade ago on the West Coast, foodie consumers today, largely driven by social media, are seeking out and sharing the existence of off-menu specialties.

Secret Menus have evolved into a clever marketing strategy by creating a perception among patrons that they are "in the know" and have secret knowledge that others don't, thus building greater loyalty. These menus also allow patrons to stand out and satisfy their DIY spirit, giving them yet another way to experience the restaurant. And Operators are benefiting because these loyal patrons are using social media to share their experiences generating a buzz with potential new patrons.



Secret Menu Item: Panera Bread - Power Breakfast Bowl

### Uncover the Secret

So what are Secret Menus anyway? Largely created by restaurant patrons, most Secret Menu items are focused around ingredient variations off of the standard menu.



Secret Menu Item: In-N-Out Burger - Protein Style Lettuce Wrapped Burger

Either a combination of two or more existing menu items or a combination of ingredients are put together in a way that is not a regular offering. Secret Menus are not just for the large chains – any type of Operator could offer a Secret Menu.

These "special orders" help Operators reach patrons who have special dietary preferences such as low-carb or low-gluten as well as being a vehicle to attract new patrons. Keeping these "special dishes hidden" reduces investment costs; there is no need to develop marketing or promotional materials. Secret Menus also provide a very economical forum for new menu development. They provide inherent consumer feedback for free. Operators can gauge consumer interest and acceptance without investing in formal recipe development or costly test marketing campaigns.

### It's Not So Secret Anymore

Social media is the catalyst that turns these "secrets" into cult favorites, despite never appearing on an official menu. Some Operators have even begun to "let the secret out of the bag" themselves. They are using their websites or social media sites to promote their Secret Menus. Operators are targeting the nearly 49% of consumers who are making restaurant choices based on personal recommendations or research from websites and consumer-based review sites such as Yelp. This underscores the importance of restaurant operators monitoring and participating in creating their online presence.

## Key P.A.T.R.O.N.® Segments

### Social Butterflies

- Ages 21-34 and 55-65
- Single with a moderate income and living in large metropolitan areas
- Love a lively atmosphere and want to have a good time with friends, family and new acquaintances
- Less health-conscious, desiring more adventurous, trendy and craveable foods
- Restaurants can be like a second home

### Sophisticates

- Age: 35+
- Married couples without children or with grown children
- They have moderate incomes and live in large metropolitan areas
- Focus on gourmet dining experiences
- Care about having fun, having new experiences and bonding with friends
- Less health-conscious and desire adventurous, sophisticated foods

SIDE DISH

## Patron Key Issues

Getting consumers to talk about your establishment can be traffic-driving gold. Secret Menus allow patrons to express their individuality, and that gets them talking about your restaurant. These menus also help keep it interesting for loyal patrons by giving them another way that they can experience the restaurant. The idea of having the "secret code" at a favorite restaurant goes a long way with patrons.

Source: ConAgra Foodservice  
Proprietary Food Away  
From Home Study, 2009

For more targeted recommendations to grow your business, ask your ConAgra Foodservice representative for a customized P.A.T.R.O.N. profile report.



## Top 5 Actions

1. Encourage your patrons to participate in social media sites like Foursquare, Facebook and Yelp by featuring these icons somewhere on the menu or table tents.
2. Start your own buzz; provide your frequent restaurant visitors a "bring a friend" offer such as a card they could give to a friend giving them a special deal if they present it on their first visit.
3. Create an event for select patrons that features dishes from your Secret Menu – perhaps even name the dishes after their creators.
4. Promote your Secret Menu with a link on your website to the Secret Menu – make it easy for your patrons to learn about your dishes available to only "those in the know."
5. Dedicate a social media resource within your restaurant to monitor and respond to what patrons are saying about your establishment.



to go...

Sources: Myfoxny.com/id/22378612 "Secret Menu Items at your Favorite Restaurants," 7/02/13

NRN.com/latest-headlines/bret-thron-nancy-kruse-discuss-secret-menus April 15, 2013

Restaurant Hospitality, Let's Get Social, September 2011

Technomic Consumer Food Trends, Issue No. 1 2013

Technomic Consumer Food Trends, Issue No. 1 2012

Cnbc.com/id/10613281 "Secret Menus," April 6, 2013

Sociologyinfocus.com/2013/04/15/secret-menus-and-social-capital/

For more information on ConAgra Foodservice products, insights and support, call 800-357-6543 or visit our website at [www.conagrafoodservice.com](http://www.conagrafoodservice.com)

ConAgra  
Foodservice

FOOD | SERVICE | SMART.™

© ConAgra Foods, Inc. All Rights Reserved.