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THE 24/7 MENU

We have become a nation of demanding eaters. Patrons want food available when they want it – customized how they want it – without regard to traditional meal times. The boundaries of breakfast, lunch and dinner no longer hold true as consumers might order an omelet for dinner, dessert for early morning or a full meal at midnight.

According to Technomic, only 5% of consumers eat three square meals a day. Technomic further reports that the idea of a normal day being breakfast, lunch and dinner is now a myth. Snacking 24/7 has replaced eating at traditional meal times.

This trend is most evident with Millennials, ages 18-25, and these eating habits are turning into lifetime traits. Operators should consider breaking the stereotype of certain foods being relegated to specific dayparts by expanding menus to offer breakfast all day or burgers in the morning per patron demand.

Time-crunched families with children are also part of this shift as they have varied schedules within households. Classic meal times are no longer possible so the grab-and-go snack has become the norm.

Snacks as Meals

Technomic reports about two-thirds of consumers over 25 are replacing lunch with a snack at least once

a week. This number doubles among the Millennial crowd, with snacks being purchased at least twice a week. Among all groups, these snacking opportunities are more significant than classic salty or sweet offerings, with consumers dictating what they consider “snackable.” Recent trends from NPD Group note that snacking between noon and 4 p.m. often includes hearty fare such as nachos, burgers, breaded chicken and sandwiches. Although this sounds like classic lunch fare, the fact that consumers report this consumption as a “snack” is key to this trend. Classifying this meal as a snack leaves room for additional bites throughout the day.

QSRs have been the most progressive in offering smaller, value-priced portions marketed specifically as snacks to appeal to the daytime munchies. These smaller portions leave consumers with the perception that they consumed fewer calories and just had a quick snack that did not qualify as a meal.

Consumers in Control

Beyond consumers redefining meal times, they also are seeking control over customizing their food. The growth of fast-casual has definitely fueled this trend as consumers have had the opportunity to choose the components that make up their finished dish. Mintel reports that 58% of restaurant consumers like to customize their food orders when dining out.

This does not necessarily mean complete customization. It translates to consumers seeking options such as components in a sandwich, choices of sauces and dressings, dishes with or without protein, etc. These options allow consumers to feel the meal was made just for them.

Another aspect of customization is the ability to order a flexible portion size, which appeals to consumer control as well as better-for-you and value. Offering a variety of portion-size options provides your consumers with the feeling of control over the calories they consume and the cost of the meal. Offering a “family-size” option also delivers perceived value.



Key P.A.T.R.O.N.® Segments

Time-Crunched Socials

- Ages 21-34
- Young singles
- Seek convenience but also have aspirational tendencies
- They go to restaurants with extended hours and convenient menu options (all-day breakfast, snacks and late meals)
- They want restaurants to feel like their third place (beyond home and work)

Fretful Parents

- Ages 35-44
- Married couples with families, but skews more female
- Prefer a wide variety of food to satisfy everyone in the party
- Seeking healthful foods in a fast, convenient format to eat on the go
- They are health-oriented, for both themselves and their kids

SIDE DISH

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

Patron Key Issues

Providing consumers with control over their meals can translate into an operational nightmare. However, offering a specified list of choices that allow for various types of customization – from portion control to all-day breakfast – will please consumers and enhance your bottom line by appealing to patron needs. Keep in mind that the next generation of foodservice consumers already are exerting this type of control over what they eat and when they eat it in noncommercial settings, such as college and university dining.

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



Enhancing Consumer Control – Top 5 Actions

1. Extend the availability of a few signature breakfast items to be available all day.
2. Enhance your online ordering system to include the option for consumers to easily include or exclude certain ingredients from their dishes.
3. Offer a variety of portion sizes such as “snack size,” “regular” and “family size” for specific dishes on your menu. This will allow customers to satisfy a variety of needs such as eating healthier, grabbing a quick snack or delivering value for their family in the larger, shareable-portion options.
4. Allow consumers to create a customized meal by choosing a variety of small portions (i.e., cup of soup, small plate entrée, half sandwich, etc.) to create their entire meal experience. Offer various options at bundled price points, i.e., two choices for \$8, etc.
5. Let kids customize their order with options for a variety of burger toppings or different pasta sauces as well as a choice of healthful side dishes, such as soup or salad. This also can be a check-average driver for the add-ons.



to go...

Sources:
Technomic Consumer Trends Report 2011
NPD Crest 2011
Mintel 2011

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