

Operator's Edge

The Successful Independent Operator's Resource

Breakfast Is Hot All Day Long

Breakfast: It's what's for lunch and dinner too. Patrons want it, and breakfast also represents an easy way to add value and leverage existing products into profitable new menu items--after all, what foodservice operation doesn't have eggs?

We have the economy to thank in part for the breakfast opportunity, as consumers seek less expensive options for dining out with family and friends. Then, too, the growing trend toward the blurring of traditional dayparts throughout the foodservice industry signals a powerful response to the increasingly fragmented lives of patrons. And with demand for comfort food on the rise, there's no denying the comfort factor of items like omelets, pancakes, and other traditional morning fare.



According to a recent survey released by Technomic, 46% of consumers surveyed said they wanted breakfast served all day at full-service restaurants, while 32% wanted it at limited-service restaurants. Significantly, women were more likely to be interested in breakfast foods for lunch and dinner than were men.

Fast Fact: 46% of consumers surveyed said they wanted breakfast served all day. (Technomic)

The Benefits of Brunch

It's a sign of the times: Brunch has become the hottest ticket in town for many upscale and full-service restaurants, offering an opportunity for customers to enjoy a leisurely meal that tends to be lower in price than dinner. (No surprise, here: Technomic reveals that one out of four customers often treat themselves to a large, traditional breakfast on the weekend.)

Time magazine singled out brunch as a trend to watch in these recessionary times, as numerous restaurants added the meal to their roster of offerings. Branch 27, in Chicago, just started offering the meal, on Sundays, with a menu showcasing such items as Chicken Fried Pork Belly, shrimp and grits, chilaquiles, and biscuits and gravy in addition to the more standard eggs, omelets, and French toast.

Ruby Tuesday, the trendsetting casual-restaurant chain based in Maryville, TN, has just launched Sunday brunch nationwide, a four-course meal served from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. designed to "allow plenty of additional time to reconnect with friends and family around the table at the end of a busy week or the start of a new one," according to executives. The menu touts biscuits, a yogurt parfait, and chocolate chip cookies for dessert, as well as a choice of one of five entrees including omelets, steak and eggs, and a Sunrise Quesadilla with California Club, Cheeseburger or Bacon-Avocado fillings.

The trend has even extended to signature morning "eyeopeners" beyond the popular Bloody Mary and mimosa: Allston Yacht Club, in Los Angeles, for instance, serves a Bacon & Egg Martini made with housemade bacon-infused vodka and garnished with a pickled quail egg.

Fast Fact: One out of four customers often treat themselves to a large, traditional breakfast on the weekend. (Technomic)

Stand Out with Signature Items

As with any daypart or segment, success in the breakfast game depends on differentiating your brand from those of

competitors who also serve breakfast. Even though bacon-and-eggs is a time-honored breakfast staple -- and even though consumers tend to be less experimental when it comes to the morning meal -- it's relatively easy to create breakfast items that stand out, just by playing with the basics.

Eggs for example. Distinctive omelets, frittatas and Benedicts are one route that many operators take. Specialty pancakes and waffles are another, as well as their close cousin the crepe, which is just exotic enough to command a premium price. The Crepe Place in Santa Cruz, CA, has been serving brunch every day since 1973, serving more than a dozen different kinds of crepes from simple Cinnamon Swirl to the Zorba the Greek.

Content courtesy of Nestle Professional