



Focusing on Fresh Foods

The grab-and-go business is constantly evolving. Today's customers not only want their foodservice fast, but they expect quality, consistency and healthy daypart options.

Convenience store operators are driving sales of healthy, portable foodservice offerings like packaged sandwiches, wraps, salads and some roller grill items. But, historically, the industry has seldom gotten the attention it deserves for its healthy food options. Changing that perception, and making consumers aware of the healthy items c-stores carry will take some effort.



Fresh Returns

Another major difference between jumping from retail to foodservice that could cause problems for inexperienced operators is handling products with a short shelf life.

“A whole different mindset is required when it comes to working with perishable products. This is an area that convenience stores need to understand and perfect to boost fresh grab-and-go sales,” MacDermott said. “It’s better to throw expired food out, or donate items nearing their spoilage date to a food bank. The loss will be more than offset by growing repeat sales if customers know that whatever they buy is fresh—no more than 36 hours old.”

Letting consumers know about the guaranteed freshness and food donations can also engender confidence, good will and additional repeat business.

To ensure the high turnover that healthy, fresh products require in order to be profitable, the products should be rotated at frequent intervals and kept in a separate, distinctive refrigerated display case, Mac Dermott suggested. If possible, it should also adjoin a display of non-refrigerated healthy products, such as granola bars and the like.

If possible, said Arlene Spiegel, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York City, “list ingredients, sources and method of preparation next to each item. Customer can never have too much information about the quality of the food they are eating.”

While retailers are naturally sensitive to pricing, convenience stores don’t necessarily have to worry about competing with supermarkets when it comes to fresh grab-and-go foods.

“Customers stop at convenience stores because they are convenient, not because they’re bargain hunting. That is a strategy they can use to their advantage,” MacDermott said.
