



OPERATORS CREATE CONSUMER COMFORT WITH BRANDS

Hitching the Hellmann's® Mayonnaise logo to the Smokey Bacon Burger sends a compelling message to the guests of Sizzler, a chain of 150 family steak restaurants based in Mission Viejo, CA. "We have found that Sizzler guests identify heavily with brand names that they see in the grocery store and think of as superior quality," says Tamra Scroggins, director of menu culture for Sizzler. "It gives them a comfort level and puts their minds at ease."

Whether it is done by showcasing nationally known brand names on the menu, or by displaying colorful, single-serve packages of cookies and chips at the cash register, branding sends a message of quality that the customers of restaurants and onsite operations find hard to miss.

"It's very opportunistic and smart, because it's a win-win situation," says Arlene Spiegel of the New York-based restaurant consulting company Arlene Spiegel & Associates. "Both the brand and the operator benefit from a halo effect."

At Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX, students are likewise attuned to branded products. "Our students are very brand savvy," says Kirk

Rodriguez, director, hospitality services at Texas Tech. "They expect to find Sara Lee and Coke and the other brands they have grown up with."

Consultant Spiegel notes that a dessert made with an established cookie or candy can evoke positive memories for guests, such as having an after-school treat. "It's part of the soft emotional uplift of eating that dessert," says Spiegel. "It may encourage people to buy it on impulse, so it can be a driver of sales."

Indeed, at Fazoli's, the cheesecake indexed higher than all of the other desserts combined, Howard says. "We saw that and said 'Aha, we're on to something here.'"

Spiegel says she is seeing the growing hybridization of retail and foodservice brands, including more retail packaged products. "You are not just a café or a restaurant; you are also a grab-and-go retail market," says Spiegel. "You don't want to miss that sale."

"There is no such thing as a clear line now between restaurants and retail," adds Spiegel. "Everyone is mixing it up, because no one wants to lose that opportunity." ■