

Casino Foodservice No Gamble

By Eric Uhl – October 29, 2019



With the U.S. commercial casino industry posting another record-setting year with consumer spending in 2018, this segment of the foodservice industry remains ripe with opportunity, as more gaming venues seek incentives to attract customers and keep them on site.

“Casinos are rethinking the space, type and food offerings, as they fight to attract a younger and more affluent audience,” says Arlene Spiegel, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates, a consulting firm based in New York City. “They are faced with a changing demographic, as their audience is seeking entertainment along with, or instead of, gaming.”

Casinos must also address the ebb and flow of customers. “Occupancy in the building can swing very far — from light [traffic] days to heavy nights and weekends,” says Spiegel. “This makes it difficult to forecast labor and food prep.” She describes a typical casino kitchen as a commissary that receives, prepares and

distributes food, in various states of readiness, to the many outlets throughout the building.

“It functions like a ‘ghost kitchen’ and supplier to the food venues as well as room service [if there’s a hotel on site], VIP lounges and service bars,” says Spiegel.

Today, the quality of foodservice has gone up in all outlets, as guests are more discerning. “Even typical fast food items need a ‘halo’ i.e. local, organic, natural, fresh, etc.,” Spiegel says. “Another change is the variety of ethnic foods seen in both the quick-serve and fine dining restaurants.”

Like most foodservice operations, casinos are looking to shrink their kitchens, which are ‘cost centers’, and increase the retail and profit centers of the facility. “To meet this goal, operators are seeking combi ovens, blast chillers and mobile cook and hold items,” says Spiegel. “Equipment must be flexible to create efficiencies.” ●