

Low Price Points and Customization Could Boost Snack Sales

By Lisa White



Sbarro's stromboli is positioned as a handheld, single-portion snack as well as a meal component.

The snack segment takes many forms in foodservice. In fast-casual eateries and coffee shops, packaged grab-and-go snacks like baked goods are commonplace. "Fifty percent of all food consumed are snacks, and whether people are buying these at restaurants or retail, the real estate and shelving dedicated to snacking is only growing in all areas," says Arlene Spiegel, president of restaurant and hospitality consulting firm Arlene Spiegel & Associates, based in New York City.

Distinguishing Snacks

The definition of snacks in restaurants is broad and up for interpretation. "Fried plantains, empanadas and Brazilian cheese bread are popular snacks we're seeing on menus," says Spiegel. "There's also been an influx of nutritional snacks with nuts, raisins, granola and crudités in fast casual."

Snack items tend to be handheld, portable when packaged and affordable. "Snacks are add-on sales opportunities for restaurants and bars," says Spiegel. "From a demographic standpoint, the Millennials and Baby Boomers and everyone in between are planning what to eat while at home during this pandemic. They're ordering a sweet snack with coffee, savory snacks with cocktails or a salty snack with a beer."

For resourceful operators, snacking can provide an opportunity to diversify revenue by entering the retail

segment. "Entertainment venues, bars and Mexican restaurants are getting creative with their own branded snack lines in jars, such as seasoned nuts, signature pickles or olive mixes, which also could be ordered off the menu as an affordable snack," says Spiegel.

Targeted Equipment

Equipment and tabletop items provide greater opportunities for specialty presentations, including small snacking plates or grab-and-go foods. "Restaurants also can take advantage of point-of-sale displays for proprietary snacks," says Spiegel.

Some business and industry concepts have also seen the potential of the snack segment and have added integral equipment. "I work with B&I accounts, and they're finding they need to put more single-serve snacks out," says Spiegel. "In the current environment, no one wants salad bars or self-serve options, so our clients are being creative and turning salad bar merchandisers and open refrigerated cases into grab-and-go snack stations with prepackaged, safety sealed snacks."

Changes Amidst a Pandemic

In the current COVID-19 environment, kitchens not only need to be re-imagined for meals but also for snacks. "Things like tamper-proof containers are good snack vehicles," says Spiegel. "This also is a good time for selling bagged goods." ●