

How C-Stores Are Equipping Themselves for Success

By Howard Riell, Associate Editor

Foodservice is becoming increasingly integral to c-stores, and key to any foodservice program possessing and maintaining the right equipment for the job.

In the face of traditional thin fuel margins and flagging cigarette sales, foodservice has continually grown as a way for many c-stores to maintain decent profit levels.

“The newest pieces of equipment are those that allow for full-menu cooking without traditional ventilation,” said veteran foodservice consultant Arlene Spiegel, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates of New York City. Labor-saving units are also invaluable, she added. “Considering the highest cost of doing business in a c-store is labor, any equipment that allows customers to ‘help themselves’ is a winner.”

Equipment has also come a long way in helping operators keep track of their products, Spiegel explained, decreasing waste. “Refrigerators warn the manager when temps go below 38 degrees. Fryers have quick recovery sensors and continuously filter oil.”

Common mistakes that c-store operators make when purchasing foodservice equipment include being sold vending solutions by salespeople that rarely deliver a good return on investment.

MINDING MAINTENANCE

Savvy, hands-on operators are less interested in shiny equipment with lots of bells and whistles than with preventive maintenance to lengthen their units’ useful life and maximize return on investment (ROI).

Spiegel said she advises convenience store clients to do their homework before purchasing any major pieces of foodservice equipment.

“Work with experienced foodservice consultants and not just suppliers of equipment offering to design the store for free. You get, and save, what you pay for,” Spiegel said. ■

