



Hungry for Dinner

Convenience retailers eye evening daypart opportunities.

Having solidly staked their claim on the breakfast and lunch dayparts, many convenience store operators are looking to round out their dining experience by tackling dinner service. They do so knowing that they've got convenience and speed of service working for them, but also that they are competing against not just c-stores but restaurants of every description as well as supermarkets.

"The biggest advantage a convenience store (can offer) is, of course, the convenience of ordering ahead, picking up — often through a drive-through window — and getting home quickly," said consultant Arlene Spiegel, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York.

FULL COURSE

Another form of convenience is the ability to get an entire meal in one basket. "In order to be considered a meal solution, especially for the

family, the menu needs to address the complete meal experience," said Spiegel. "For example: protein or grain entrée plus two sides and side salad, plus fresh bread/rolls, dessert and beverage are a compelling offering for the busy homemaker."

The biggest mistake c-stores make in trying to build dinner sales, she added, is offering individual items instead of complete meal solutions. Another is discounting items, which she said implies that the operator is trying to get rid of an item. "This is the antithesis of the freshness messaging."

REINVENTING THE DAYPART

Most dinner decisions are made between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., Spiegel pointed out, so radio, television and 'push' social media messaging should take place during these times of day. "Bounce-back coupons given out at breakfast and lunch with a dinner-time offer are also a good incentive." ■