



Growing the Food Menu

Get the basics down pat to build a strong food menu foundation.

Stores have a core menu but can include other items that suit their customers' purchasing preferences. And ideas for foodservice expansion also come from other sources including store general managers and customers.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Before embarking on any level of fresh foodservice, retailers have a lot of homework to do, said New York-based restaurant, retail and hospitality consultant Arlene Spiegel.

"Find out the board of health rules, what food-handling certifications are required for your state or states and insure the proper equipment is in place for merchandising and food safety," said Spiegel.

Every municipality has public records regarding the demographic makeup of each trade area so it's easy to find the number of homeowners vs. renters, ethnic and religious ratios and economic status.

But, she noted, that information is only part of the picture that will guide operators to the food concepts and items they should offer.

"The deep dive into the communities' lifestyle drivers and what they value is just as important," she added.

Spiegel recommended that retailers look around at competing fast-casual and quick-service restaurant concepts and see where the parking lots are full.

That's your competition and what your customers want," she pointed out. "The store's location in relation to the drive-by times — going or coming home from work or school — will also be a factor."

Spiegel also suggested that retailers consider partnering with other food producers such as local bakeries and caterers to support their local communities and increase the breadth of products in their stores. ■