



Brewing Up Hot Dispensed Sales

As retailers look to grow hot dispensed beverage sales in 2022, sprucing up the coffee bar offering can help lure coffee and tea customers back.

Having weathered the dip in sales caused by the pandemic and withering of the morning daypart, hot dispensed beverages are staging a comeback.

The best-selling hot beverage items tend to be single-origin coffees, flavored coffees and syrups with a natural element such as honey.

Interestingly, stores are seeing stronger sales behind decaffeinated varieties, suggesting a possible consumer movement away from caffeine, and/or that more consumers are choosing to consume hot beverages later in the day.

Ripe For Upselling

“C-stores are ripe for upselling specialty hot beverages,” said veteran foodservice consultant Arlene Spiegel, Foodservice Consultants Society International (FCSI), and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York City.

“Customer counts are up, and it’s the perfect time to establish your brand as having premium products through beverage offerings,” Spiegel says.

Spiegel recommended a few simple steps:

- “Make the customer journey special, easy and memorable,” Spiegel said.
- Showcase the origins of the coffee beans, and describe the roast and flavor profiles. Display a sign on each dispenser, and add-ons.
- Showcase the blends of the tea selections, and offer fresh lemon wedges and ground spice.
- Offer dark, milk and spiced hot chocolates in a hot beverage dispenser with choice of marshmallows or flavored creamer.
- Provide hot beverages in two or three sizes in branded, compostable cups with lids.
- Include an app-based loyalty/frequency program – for example, “tenth cup on us.”
- Implement order-ahead, with pickup service similar to Starbucks.
- Sell ‘home sizes’ of whole bean/ground coffee as a retail upsell.
- If traffic warrants, develop a barista program with the coffee supplier to supply equipment and training.
- Bundle coffee, tea and hot chocolate sales with breakfast offerings.