

front of the house

ELDERCARE

Meeting the Needs of Elderly Diners

Discussion is part of annual "From Mind to Menu" event.

How do you meet the needs of the ever-expanding senior market? Are there differences between today's seniors and the aging baby boomers who will form the bulk of the senior population in the next century? What menu items appeal most to mature customers?

These were just some of the questions tackled by Judy Patton, senior vice president of marketing research for Food Insights, during the "From Mind to Menu" symposium held in October. The event, presented by The Food Group and Creative Marketing Solutions foodservice marketing and advertising firm, is an annual exploration of trends and breakthroughs in foodservice.

This year's program also explored strategies for attracting the loyalty of kids and parents and methods for distinguishing one-

self from the competition. Sponsors included Aramino Foods of Distinction, Lipton Foodservice, MasterFoods Services, Mott's North America, Nabisco Food Service Co., Norwegian Seafood Export Council and Schwan's Food Service.

The program included the presentation of the Visionary Awards, given to operators for accomplishments in menu innovation. Onsite segment winners included Guckenheimer Enterprises CEO George Maciag in the Contract Foodservice category and Zale Lipshy University Hospital Director of Nutrition Services Mary Kimbrough in the Independent Onsite category.

In her talk, Patton offered a series of suggestions based on extensive research of the market



SENIOR INSIGHTS. Judy Patton (l.) shared insights into feeding the over 60 set at the recent "From Mind to Menu symposium."

as to what sort of menu appeals to seniors, and also to what type of seniors:

the existing market or the emerging baby boom market, which often have distinct preferences.

Here are some highlights.

Chicken. "Chicken is universally popular," Patton said. "It is equally popular among males and

females and among all seniors."

Beef. Also equally popular among both existing and emerging seniors, although it tends to be ordered more frequently by males than females.

Seafood. Very popular among both groups, but the demand is for fresh or fresh-tasting product not buried in sauces, not fried and easy to handle (no bones).

Pasta. Much more popular among emerging seniors, it is probably one of the rising stars of the senior menu as the baby boom continues to age.

Salads. Like pasta, a growing favorite with the emerging senior market, who are much more used to salad main dishes than previous generations.

Appetizers. "They look like they are going to grow as a main dish [because seniors like the flexibility of ordering a couple as a light main course], but only if there are enough non-fried options."

Vegetables. "The most requested items to add to the menu are vegetable variety and fresh vegetables. A primary reason for the popularity of buffet concepts among seniors is that they can

upfront



"Our business can be defined very, very simply. Our business is feeding people at work...and that's where the simplicity ends and the complexity begins."

—George Maciag, president & COO, Guckenheimer Enterprises, Inc., speaking at the "From Mind to Menu" symposium.

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get the vegetables they want. They would like to have the same flexibility with sit-down service, but it's often not available."

Dessert. Most seniors describe the desserts they order as home-style rather than gourmet.

Beverages. Emerging seniors have a greater preference for cold beverages, making that a likely growth area in the future. They are also more likely to order alcoholic beverages.

SCHOOLS

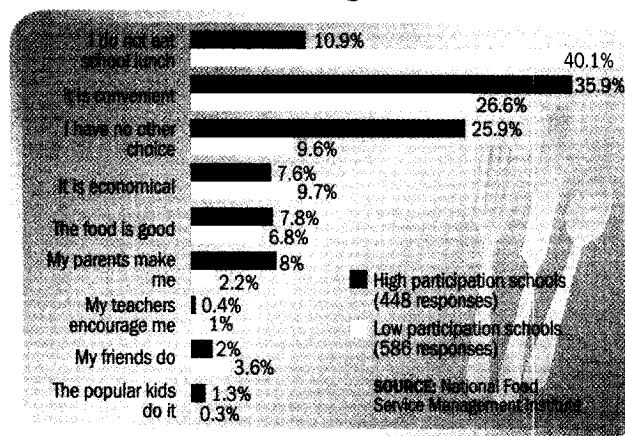
Why Students Eat (or Don't Eat) School Lunch

Convenience is key, but cost is important, too.

As everyone knows, students aren't an easy group of consumers to figure out, but the National Food Service Management Institute recently gained some insight into the student lunch dining habits of school children. NFSMI recently surveyed the lunch habits of 11th graders in Minnesota and Iowa at high schools that offer the National School Lunch Program. In each state, three schools had low-student participation in the NSLP (31%) and three schools had high-student participation (85%).

According to NFSMI, students in the schools that have a high participation in the NSLP ate the school lunch twice as often as students in the schools having low participation in the program (3.7 days per week vs. 1.8 days per week). In low-student participation schools, 40% of students indicated they never eat the school lunch. This

Students' Reasons for Eating School Lunch



compares with only 11% of the students in the high-student participation schools.

Convenience was the number one reason given by students who eat school lunch in both low and high participation schools. Others reasons: no other choice, good value, good food and parental insistence (see chart above for complete list).

Other findings from the study:

students buy food from on-campus vending machines, snack bars or concessions more than one day per week (1.8 days per week in low participation schools vs. 1.4 days per week in high participation schools). Also, students in schools with low participation ate off-campus much more frequently and were most likely to select hamburgers or pizza.



Pies Galore!

For the fifth year, more than 50 Harvard University Dining Services staffers, their families and guests gathered and made 500 pecan and 500 pumpkin pies which were sold to raise money for a local charity. Costa Fruit & Produce and US Food-service donated the ingredients. The massive bake-off took approximately four hours.

bookreview

Age Power: How the 21st Century Will Be Ruled by the New Old

Dr. Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.

PENGUIN PUTNAM, INC. \$24.95

The "graying" of America will continue to be a major trend in the next century. Best-selling author Dychtwald, who also penned *Age Wave* and *Bodymind*, says that after studying the aging population, he is convinced that "Age Power" will rule the 21st century and in many critical ways, we are woefully unprepared...I fear that our avoidance of critical aging related issues could lead to numerous personal and social disasters down the road."

Dychtwald, considered to be one of the nation's leading futurists and age-related trends experts, says that the baby-boom generation is about to transform into the largest elderly population in human history. No business, family or home will work tomorrow as it does today, he says.

Dychtwald also looks ahead to what new products, services and marketing strategies will boom as a result of the continued growth of the "silver set."

In order to be ready for the inevitable changes ahead, Dychtwald offers suggestions on how individuals, businesses and governments can best prepare for this age wave, that may produce, as he notes, "potential for social, financial, political and personal catastrophe." He outlines specific challenges ahead and offers preventive solutions.

