

MAINESENSE

MAKING SENSE OF YOUR FOODSERVICE BUSINESS

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GET A *BOOST* FROM A BETTER BEVERAGE PROGRAM! WITH EXPERT SUPPORT FROM MAINES SERVISOLUTIONS

By Lindsay Ott



Right now, there's opportunity brewing in an unexpected area of your business: your beverage operation. In today's hyper-competitive restaurant industry, expanding and re-engineering your drink menu

just might mean the difference between surviving – and thriving. After all, beverages can provide some of the biggest profit margins on your menu. Plus, you've got the support of ServiSolutions Beverage Expert

Matt Green and his team, ready to help you put a winning beverage plan in place. So what are you waiting for? Drink to increased profit and set your restaurant apart from the rest...

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While the Industry Stagnates, McDonald's Percolates

If you'd like a robust case study of how branching into beverages can boost your business, look no further than McDonald's. It seems counterintuitive to launch a premium beverage line in the middle of a recession, but since the birth of their McCafe beverage line, McDonald's sales have increased at astounding rates. Mitchell Speiser of Buckingham Research Group states, "McDonald's is continuing to outperform" their competition. "Overall the fast food category is flat, but they are still growing," he said.

According to Forbes, when reviewing May 2011 sales, McDonald's identified frozen strawberry lemonade and signature coffee beverages as crucial areas of success. "There has been 'tremendous growth' in McCafe coffee sales," explained Medill Reports Chicago. McDonald's is also enjoying a profound increase in breakfast traffic, thanks to the drawing power of McCafe.

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COFFEE: One Of Your Greatest Liquid Assets

"Counter" Act the Current Economic Landscape

The media paints a dire picture of customer spending, or lack thereof. While customers are holding off on big purchases (home and car sales are down), they're splurging on little luxuries like having someone else make their coffee! In a January 2011 Alterra Coffee Roasters Survey, respondents reported that they spend an average of \$14 a week on coffee drinks outside the home or office. And three out of five of these java lovers have made this a routine! So the question is: how can your restaurant be that business person's daily stop on the way in to work? What can you do to become someone's mid-afternoon wake-up call? Set up a coffee counter.



ServiSolutions has set up coffee counters in countless restaurants, delis, and convenience stores. They have the expertise to assist with everything from equipment selection and set-up to menu creation and merchandising. Quick-service and fast-casual operations have the existing format in place that's needed for a coffee counter, and processing customer orders quickly. But a fine dining establishment can also capitalize on the coffee counter opportunity. The space near the hostess stand can easily accommodate a small barista set-up. Plus, customers already associate your restaurant with upscale fare, so offering gourmet grinds will be a natural extension of your business.



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Going Gourmet – The Profitable Way

Keep the “little luxury” principle in mind when planning your coffee menu with ServiSolutions – whether it’s at a counter or on your restaurant beverage menu. Simply serving basic coffee with powdered creamer is not going to upsell existing customers or attract new ones; however, gourmet coffee offerings will. In fact, specialty coffee sales are increasing 20 percent per year according to the 2011 Coffee Business Statistics Report, with an espresso-based drink averaging \$2.45. ***The report also indicated that almost 1 in 5 Americans drink at least one gourmet coffee drink every day.***



Step #1 Select the Beans

Serving gourmet coffee selections isn’t as complicated or costly as you might think. It starts with selecting different beans and calling attention to those selections on the menu. Just as wine aficionados consider the “terrior” or origin of their wine, today’s coffee drinker cares about where their beans came from, and how they were roasted. Looking to ubiquitous Starbucks, a key strategy in their merchandising is brewing a special house blend. Currently, the “Three Region Blend” is the star featuring a blend from three coffee-growing regions: Latin America, Africa/Arabia and Asia/Pacific. ServiSolutions offers a robust selection of both whole beans and ground coffees from around the world. Consider the Mezzaroma line, with offerings such as the Costa Rican Tarrazu with this accompanying, ready-to-sell verbiage:

“Considered by many to be the world’s finest coffee, Costa Rican Tarrazu is a light roasted coffee characterized by an unusually silky flavor, with a full well-balanced body, alluring aroma and smooth acidity.”

The cost of Mezzaroma beans is on par with a standard blend, but the upscale appeal will empower you to increase your margins. Then, it’s time to...



Step #2 Mix Up the Magic

In addition to serving up a house cup of coffee, either to go or in-restaurant, it’s essential to offer at least a few gourmet drinks. You have two options for doing this. First, you can utilize special equipment and products from ServiSolutions that deliver pre-made gourmet coffee drinks using cappuccino, latte, and hot chocolate mixes. In fact, when you purchase these mixes through Maines, the equipment is available. Another option is to prepare coffee drinks in-house. ServiSolutions provides everything you could think of to concoct the perfect, house-made gourmet coffee including flavor syrups, espresso machines, and both to-go cups and in-house glassware.



Step #3 Embrace Customization

When a customer stops in for a coffee drink, it’s their chance to indulge themselves and customize the experience. Keep that in mind when setting up your coffee counter. Display the flavor syrups so customers can request their favorite; set out fresh creamer, 2% milk, and non-fat milk; and include multiple types of sweetener. If you’re creating an in-restaurant menu, list out the flavor syrup options and make a note that you’ll customize their drink however they like it! Also, instruct your waitstaff to remind customers that they can order their gourmet coffee to go. Many customers would order to-go coffee after lunch – if only they knew it was available!

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Now Is The Right Time For Tea Time

Coffee isn't the only beverage with serious profit potential. According to the World Tea Expo, tea sales are expected to almost double, growing to \$15 billion in sales by 2012 from \$8 billion in 2009. **Customers are craving exotic flavor, and ServiSolutions delivers just that**, providing access to the Trescerro Tea collection which features a premium, global selection of teas like China Green, Ginseng Green, Rooibos Chai, as well as herbal varieties. Iced tea is another "hot" beverage choice. In fact, a 2011 survey from the National Restaurant Association ranks specialty iced tea as the number one non-alcoholic beverage trend. You can offer specialty iced tea by making simple changes to your basic iced tea.



Here are some ideas:

-  Infuse teas with flavor syrups. Try a dash of vanilla or hazelnut.
-  Use fresh herbs to create a lavender-lemon tea garnished with an actual sprig of lavender or an invigorating tarragon-mint tea.
-  Muddle fresh berries at the bottom of the cup for a visually pleasing and slightly sweet option.
-  Blend cardamom, anise, and other spices with sugar and sweetened condensed milk to make a Thai-inspired tea. Look for recipes online.

If you're looking for an even simpler approach to providing high quality beverages, ServiSolutions offers B.W. Cooper's prepared iced tea mixtures. Customers will love B.W. Cooper's flavors like Tropical Green Tea with Passionfruit, which come both sweetened and unsweetened. All-natural teas are also available. With a fresh fruit garnish and the right marketing you can charge several times the cost per serving!



When Life Hands You Lemons... Make Flavored Lemonade And Smoothies

If you think of beverages like lemonade and milk shakes as mere add-ons, think again. Mintel reports that 50% of respondents in their 2011 Non-Alcoholic Beverages survey stated they visit a restaurant just for a beverage at least once per month. They also report that in the past three years, there has been a 20% increase in flavored lemonades. Reinventing this classic drink is an easy way to offer upscale beverage options and increase profits. Add a splash of strawberry or blackberry syrup or a few drops of honey to transform ordinary lemonade into a gourmet treat that merits a higher price.

Your menu may already include milk shakes, but do you offer smoothies? These fruity beverages appeal to customers seeking healthful options. Smoothies are a brilliant addition to kid's menus as you can double the price of the order. Parents are willing to pay more for a drink that provides important nutrients and a fun experience for their child. For adults, smoothies are especially popular at breakfast.

Although the price point for most drinks is rarely more than four dollars, these small ticket items can add up to big profit. Plus, an inventive beverage menu will differentiate your restaurant from the competition. Now, that's something to drink to!

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