

In search of sweet profits? Don't desert dessert

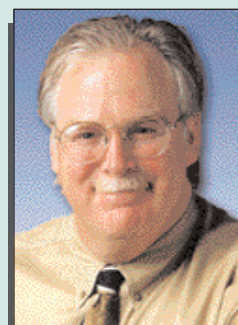
Over the last 10 years, our industry has seen an evolution and a revolution in the appetizer, beverage and entrée categories of the menu, and now it's high time that desserts get the attention they deserve.

There have been huge advances in taste, product, research, flavor and creativity in the dessert arena, and if you haven't been paying attention, your customers certainly have.

Why sell more desserts? There are three key reasons:

Dessert sales raise your sales and profits.

Selling sweet treats — and more beverages — at the end of the meal increases your check average and profitability. Selling an entrée barely covers the cost of buying, storing, prepping and serving it. Selling a dessert and/or a beverage at the end of the meal or an appetizer before it is how you make money.



Dessert sales improve customer satisfaction scores.

PEOPLE,
PERFORMANCE
& PROFITS

Jim Sullivan

What would you pay a service consultant to improve your QSC scores measurably by as much as 35 percent? The answer may lie in simply teaching your waitstaff to sell more desserts. Recent research by NPD CREST shows that casual-dining chain customers who consume a dessert rate their experience higher in satisfaction than those patrons who do not have a dessert. The difference in satisfaction ratings among diners who ordered dessert ranged from 19 percent to 35 percent higher across a variety of casual-dining segments. So even I — a person who graduated in the half of

the class that made the top half possible — can see the connection between a satisfied guest and repeat business. Desserts make customers happy. A happy customer buys more and comes back with his friends.

Dessert sales are an untapped market at lunch and for burgeoning carside/takeout/to-go business. The advances in safe and effective packaging have made desserts much better traveling companions for time-constricted diners at lunch and for carside/takeout customers at night. Those two underserved opportunity zones are ideal for focused and expansive dessert merchandising. Carside/to-go experts like Applebee's

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franchisee T.L. Cannon in the Northeast are a study in best practices in that arena.

While those three reasons seem compelling enough, many operators ignore the dessert zone potential because they believe that turning tables generates more money than making sales. There's merit to that argument only if you're running a wait time in excess of 30 minutes every second you're open. Conversely, if you have desserts on your menu, I presume they're there to be sold, so here are 10 tips to help:

Have the right mix of desserts.

Customer research from dessert companies shows that the optimum number of dessert choices on a menu ranges between four and eight — unless, of course, you happen to be called The Cheesecake Factory.

Have the right mix of flavors. Customers report that their 10 favorite dessert flavors and textures are chocolate, caramel, toffee, peanut butter, citrus, hot, cold, chewy, crunchy and that little dollop of whipped topping.

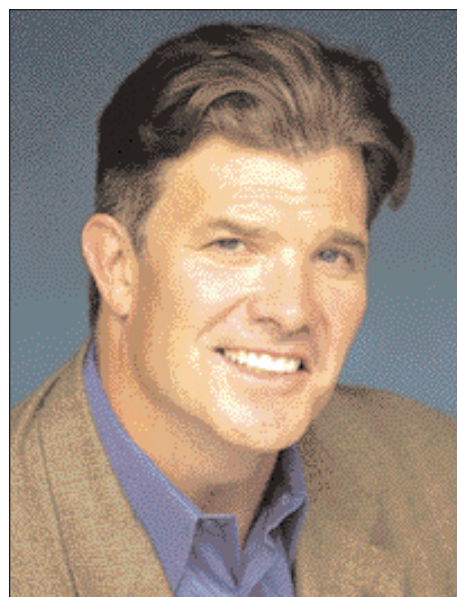
Use your sales props. List your desserts on a table tent or separate menu in addition to your regular menu. Train your servers to use those "props" when suggesting (See *WANT*, page 24)

Q&A

Gen Y workers offer talent, tech savvy

If restaurant managers and owners look past the pierced eyebrows, baggy pants and indifferent attitudes of many of today's younger employees, they may find highly talented and caring workers, according to Eric Chester, an author and business consultant who has addressed nearly 2 million teens in 15 years as a motivational speaker. In the 1990s he started noticing a change in attitude and perceptions of today's youth, those 16- to 24-year-olds who make up the generation demographers have nicknamed Generation Y. So Chester switched from motivating teens to motivating business owners of the baby boom generation now trying to manage a younger work force.

President and founder of Lakewood, Colo.-based Generation WHY, Chester has written two books on managing young people, including his latest, "Getting Them to Give a Damn — How to Get Your Front Line to Care about Your Bottom Line."



Eric Chester

How are today's teens and young adults different from baby boomers when they were teenagers?

They are very blunt and expressive, not a lot of tact and diplomacy. I've watched this latest generation change to be more impatient, much more disengaged and disenfranchised. They seemed very skeptical. But at the same time they are very talented, book smart, streetwise and techno-savvy. They have all the skills, but they are not making the transition, the link from school to work.

So how can a restaurant owner reach them?

The motivations have changed. You can't bark orders at them the way orders were barked at you when you were their age.

Back then, you were happy to have a job because there were other kids in line, waiting to take your job. Today kids realize they are on the demand side of the equation. They can quit today and be employed tomorrow somewhere else.

What motivates them then?

You have to form a relationship and foster that relationship. You've got to get to know as much about them as you expect them to know about your company. If you want them to buy into your world, to some extent you have to buy into their world. They care that someone would take the time to know them, to take an active interest in who they are.

— Dina Berta

NEWS DIGESTS

J&W expands Charlotte campus with 60,000-square-foot facility

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — To accommodate a growing enrollment that is expected to reach 3,000 by September 2006, Johnson & Wales University is expanding its campus here with a new \$2 million facility.

The College of Business building will boast 60,000 square feet on four stories and will provide 15 classrooms, 50 faculty offices and four computer labs. The first floor will house retail space, and the second floor will be dedicated to student recreation and activities.

J&W said it expects to continue to expand the campus with more student housing and parking. The university, which also has campuses in Denver and Providence, R.I., opened the Charlotte campus last fall.

BK franchisees award \$11K in scholarship to high-school students

ERIE, PA. — PEC Management and Fast Food Enterprises, both Burger King franchisees based here, recently presented each of 11 high-school students with a \$1,000 Burger King Scholar Award for their scholastic achievements, work experience and community involvement.

The students are a part of the 2005 Burger King Scholars Program, which presented 1,477 seniors from the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada with nearly \$1.5 million in scholarships through the Burger King/McLamore Foundation. The foundation, named in honor of Burger King's late co-founder, James McLamore, was created in 1997 to provide educational opportunities to deserving youth.

PEC and Fast Food, which together operate 55 units in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Florida, are owned by parent company Patterson Erie Corp.

HR Happenings

San Diego-based Jack in the Box Inc., recently promoted **Mark Blankenship** to corporate vice president of human resources. Blankenship, who joined the company in 1997, was division vice president of training and development and field human resources. . . **Rick Postiglione**, president and chief executive of the Business & Industry division of Charlotte, N.C.-based Compass Group, recently was honored at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I., as the hospitality school's 44th Distinguished Visiting Professor.

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