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BLUEPRINT TO FOODSERVICE: BREAKFAST OPTIONS FOR SUCCESS



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By Meline Beach

A Convenient Breakfast — Options for Success

90 PER CENT OF CONSUMERS SAY THEY DRINK COFFEE AT BREAKFAST, 60 PER CENT OF WHOM DRINK COFFEE BEFORE GETTING TO WORK.

Deemed the most important meal of the day, eating breakfast keeps our body's rhythm in check and leads to good health. However, our busy lifestyles with limited time to prepare meals, dual income families and longer commute times have done away with what was once known as a leisure breakfast. As a result, more consumers are grabbing breakfast on the go – be it from cafes and bakeries to convenience stores. It is one of the fastest growing categories, breaking over \$30 billion, and a major focus in the foodservice industry.

It only makes sense that c-stores, who are relied upon and known for their convenient location and speed of service, would want to gain market share in this category.

It's never too late to boost your profits with an effective breakfast foodservice offering for your customers. If you've ever wondered how to go about it but thought it was more effort than it's worth – you're wrong. An effective breakfast program can range from simple to complex and just depends on what you're willing to put into it to further meet the needs of your customers.



How to launch an effective breakfast foodservice offering:

A simple hot beverage program with quality coffee and tea is a good starting point.

Designate an area of the store where you can dedicate a counter to brew coffee and tea with applicable condiments. A self-serve barista station can be low maintenance. However, the area must be kept clean and free of clutter, with a clear and intuitive path within the store that naturally directs and welcomes foot traffic.

According to the *Packaged Facts* report, 90 per cent of consumers say they drink coffee at breakfast, 60 per cent of whom drink coffee before getting to work. A quality coffee and tea program, tailored to serve the needs of its customer base, including perhaps cultural options and a variety of flavours, can attract market share and open opportunities for breakfast food sales.

Low-cost, express breakfasts appeal to on-the-go consumers.

A variety of prepackaged breakfast items, such as sandwiches, croissants, and danishes can speed up service and sales.

"Our everyday value pastries are great prepackaged breakfast items," says Kathy Rowland, director of sales – Eastern Canada at Maplehurst Bakeries Inc. Distributed through Core-Mark International, Maplehurst pastries, such as Annette's Honey Buns, serve as a successful grab-and-go item, especially when paired with a coffee at a promotional price.

Pairing, location, and applicable equipment serves as the perfect storm for an effective breakfast foodservice program.

"From countertop warmers to display cases and coolers, our findings show that hot and ready breakfast sandwiches achieved higher sales than traditional cold sandwiches from a cooler," says Marc Rex, director, Fresh and Foodservice-Canada at Core-Mark, one of the largest distributors in North America, which carries an assortment of packaged and bulk baked goods; frozen, thaw and serve sandwiches; fresh breakfast sandwiches and wraps; fresh whole fruit; cut fruit; yogurts; bars; and breakfast beverages. "While it's not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution, breakfast items displayed within reach of the coffee offering always shows positive sales results."

In addition to location and prominence, McCain Foodservice Director of Marketing Greg Boyer advocates simplicity with familiar brands that are craveable, have mass appeal and are easy to heat, hold and serve as advantageous to c-store operators.

"Be it hash brown sticks, French toast sticks or potato bites, our products are very versatile and most perform well in the fryer and all types of ovens, including Turbo

Chef and Rationale ovens," says Boyer. "Many convenience stores have developed coffee programs over the last 10 years and offering customers on-the-go breakfast and snack options is a natural extension for both the c-store operators and their customer."

The next level up: Made-to-order, customized breakfasts offers the greatest choice and fulfills a perception of fresh.

One way to go about this is to partner with a recognizable brand that provides experience, expertise and strong operational support. A retailer's role would be to ensure available space and a commitment to quality and professional execution.

Country Style, which has over 400 express kiosks across Canada, offers coffee and fresh food programs designed specifically for gas stations and c-stores.

"Our Country Style Express locations have a reduced breakfast menu compared to traditional Country Style locations," says Karen Weldman, vice-president, new business development – Express Brands. "A tailored menu with a reduction in skewers ensures the program is profitable and waste is manageable."

Siva Theeban, who owns and operates two gas stations in Ontario, one with a Country Style kiosk and one without, appreciates the turnkey solution a branded foodservice supplier offers and the opportunity it creates to cross promote.

"I find it easier to promote sales both ways," says Theeban. "When customers come in for gas, I use this as an opportunity to promote sales at the Country Style counter. And when customers come in for Country Style, I'm able to advise them of special offers at the gas station." Theeban recognizes that while the two entities may be different, they work in tandem. "The only downside is if we fail to provide exceptional service, we risk losing customers on both sides." Having said that, Theeban doesn't find the risk prohibitive. "We make every effort to deliver exceptional service at both counters and follow franchise standards."

While convenience is a c-store's strength, consistency is equally important. People appreciate consistency. If your coffee is good one day and bad the next, there's a risk you'll lose that customer. If the counter is clean one day and dirty the next, no matter how good your coffee is, there's a chance you'll lose that customer. Even with the advantages a c-store holds, like location, convenience and speed of service, if the service delivery and experience are not consistent, there's a good chance your foodservice program will not survive. Consistency is key – as in consistently good, consistently clean and well-stocked and consistently fast and friendly. ☐