

# Weekly Profit

A publication of Hawkeye Foodservice Distribution, Inc.

Hawkeye  
Foodservice  
Distribution

Continuing my theme from my last article which was the rising trend of smaller portions and shareable plates, I want to reinforce my point on where we should look for inspiration for additions to your menus.

The core of Hawkeye's business is a single unit operator either owning or managing one property. As I have said before, this type of operation has limited resources for research and development (R&D) of new menu ideas. You look for guidance through outside means whether it is our articles in the Weekly Profit or the industry's myriad trade magazines and online resources. In my effort to help you with your operations I spend a lot of time reading and researching. I just finished an article in which the author cites that six of the countries larger chains in the casual dining segment have added shareable appetizers of smaller portions of their main menu offerings to: "Drive traffic with the options of a lighter meal or even an afternoon snack". This falls in line with a recent survey showing that people are planning on dining out more this year but they are planning on spending less per visit.

As a lawyer friend of mine always tells me; "When you are looking to solve a problem you should follow the money". In this instance, the money is in the R&D departments that the national chains have at their disposal and where they chose to direct their efforts for menu development. If they are investing their money in this area, they are seeing a trend that they deem worth an investment of a substantial amount of both money and time. Most products at this level take a year to go from concept to menu deployment. Your customers are more than likely to dine at one of the restaurants that were listed in the aforementioned article.

Our business is built on a core of repeat customers. Unless you have history and tradition on your side that makes your restaurant a destination, you will always need to innovate to capture new customers. A first time visitor to your restaurant can and will become a repeat customer if they are treated well (service) and given a choice of foods both known and new. The large chains, for better or worse, shape the culinary culture of the U. S. and you can take advantage of their foresight by folding into your operation the new ideas that they are unveiling on your customers.

I think we are in the midst of the beginning of a change in the way our culture eats. There is a shift in the dining habits that are slowly rippling through all segments of the industry. From the operators standpoint, the emphasis is on trying to capture incremental dollars to make up for lost sales. Those incremental dollars seem to be in the menu section where the money can be spread between two or more diners, which would back up the statistics of the study I quoted earlier; people are dining out more but spending less. It seems to reason that they are splitting the dollars spent amongst their friends and family by sharing dishes. This trend is growing and, as far as I can tell, the new generation of diners prefers this type of causal grazing and sharing of dishes. It leads to a more intimate and communal experience when dining out. So, make sure you are giving your customers what they are looking for and they will be your customers for a long time.

**Doug Goettsch**

National Account Executive

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An intensive one day training seminar designed for your key employees to help them maintain profitability and thrive in today's workplace environment. There will be training seminars focusing on Center of the Plate, Social Media, Foodservice Trends and Marketing. There is no cost for this seminar. A \$50 gas card is available for each attending account. Space is limited so contact your Hawkeye Sales Representative to get your spot reserved!

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