

SNACK FOOD & WHOLESALE BAKERY

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Strategies, Formulation and Production for a Changing Industry



Catering to Their Clientele

Hospitality operators service customers through innovative pastries and breads, balancing signature items with their own kitchen challenges.

By Lynn Petrak

Nothing says hospitality like some delectable baked goods and upscale snacks. When it comes to satisfying corporate and leisure travelers, those chefs and caterers who work in hotels, convention centers, resorts, spas and casinos are trying to keep up with the latest foodservice trends and are balancing closely guarded, treasured recipes with convenience-oriented fare.

The hospitality channel is no small market. Lodging-place restaurants account

for about \$25 billion in annual sales, according to the National Restaurant Association, based in Washington, D.C. Moreover, travelers and visitors account for 30% of all tableservice restaurant sales in this \$500 billion industry, the NRA reports.

Unlike quick-serve and many casual dining restaurants, this segment of the foodservice channel is held to especially high standards for baked goods and other food, as

well. Menu offerings from in-room dining and onsite restaurants to events staged for thousands are expected to be top-drawer in taste. In many cases, their clientele demand innovative and visually stunning baked goods delivered in a timely manner.

That's what they call a tall order.

Still, to stay profitable in an ever-competitive climate, bakers, pastry chefs, and suppliers to operators in this industry understand that success is all about customer satisfaction. That means providing guests with culinary fare that meets their needs throughout their stay.

Steadily, those needs are shifting. The notion of a more discerning patron, say those in the industry, is more than an interesting topic of discussion.

"The amazing thing about American consumers, overall, is that their knowledge of foods, flavors and different types of preparation are really at an all-time high," says Hudson Riehle, the NRA's senior vice president of research.

Consumers who are served foods in hospitality settings have a certain level of anticipation, he adds.

"They come in with heightened expectations," Riehle remarks. "There is always

"Operators are masters of speed-scratch convenience, where they will purchase pre-made desserts and garnish them with so much imagination that it appears that a pastry chef is on premise," notes Sharon Olson, president of marketing firm Olson Communications, who has worked with several dessert companies and restaurants.