

# Convenience Store Decisions



## Daypart Diversity Depends on Freshness

Retailers don't have to wave goodbye to their roller grills to put a fresh face on lunch and dinner foodservice menus.

By Marilyn Odesser-Torpey, Associate Editor. — One size definitely does not fit all when it comes to lunch and dinner foodservice. Not everyone has the capital to invest in a proprietary commissary or the in-store space to prepare made-to-order meals.

With the proliferation of third-party commissaries, just about any convenience store chain can offer high quality, freshly-made sandwiches, said Tim Powell, director of convenience store programs for Chicago-based Technomic Inc.

"There are different tiers of foodservice. For example, the Sheetz, Wawas and Rutter's are as much fast-casual restaurants as they are c-stores," Powell said. "But we're seeing more and more convenience stores successfully expanding their grab-and-go fresh offerings by using third-party commissaries."

### Driving Sales

One tremendous differentiator between convenience stores and quick-service restaurants and other retailers such as Dunkin' Donuts and Starbucks is that customers come to c-stores for a wide variety of reasons,

Even a roller grill can communicate care about foodservice when the items on it are fresh and appetizing, according to Rachel Tracy, managing director of Chicago-based Culinary Visions Panel, a foodservice research company. Unless the store has its own well-established and well-regarded proprietary foodservice brand, customers like to see brand names they know, such as Johnsonville Sausage, she said. To tempt more adventurous palates, there should also be an interesting and unexpected option next to the more familiar food on the roller grill.

"Next to the standard sausage, maybe you could have a smoky cheddar sausage; this way you can satisfy your regular customer who knows what he wants when he comes in, and can still intrigue a new customer who is not quite as aware of your foodservice offerings and may be looking for something different to try," Tracy said.

It is up to the retailer to read his customers as far as what flavor profiles to add to the mix. In its new Upmarket Café concept in its flagship Chicago store, Walgreens is now selling hand-rolled sushi and sashimi along with wraps, sandwiches and salads. Some c-stores offer Indian food, but Powell noted that