

Foodservice Ideas in a Flash

From fresh to foodies, experts share big ideas to push foodservice boundaries

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. June 27, 2012 -- It's amazing how much insight one can share about foodservice in 15 minutes. Three speakers at the 2012 Foodservice at Retail Exchange, held this week in Schaumburg, Ill., were tasked to do just that: Share a big idea in that small time frame.

Judging by the results, a

Bill Reilly, GPM Inve

Bill Reilly, senior vice pre on his experience at The big ideas on the future c brand that "screams" fre S.W.O.T. (strengths, wea senses in designing a ne velopment and delivery.

Of course, getting fresh reasons beyond brandin

"Logistics is holding the product safely," he said.

In addition, many retaile can be a tough mental k progress, and it can't be

"At some point, you have foodservice."

Lon Southerland, M

For Lon Southerland, sen Md., and his team, the k food. Customers shared The Courtyard for a qui inside the hotel, without

Over 18 months, the group ran focus groups to determine guests' key needs, and eventually conducted a test lobby from foam core to test run customers on the different layouts. Influenced by the "third place" feel

Sharon Olson, Culinary Visions Panel

Foodies were the big idea for Sharon Olson, executive director of the Culinary Visions Panel, a Chicago-based research firm that provides insights into new products, menu development and emerging trends. The group surveyed 2,000 foodservice consumers over the past year to determine what makes a foodie tick compared to the mainstream customer.

As Olson explained, foodies have a "zest for culinary adventure," and can be defined best by their behavior--always or often wanting to try something new. It's a valuable demographic for retailers to attract, she argued, because foodies are the first to try new items and love to talk about their experience.

Some of the more interesting findings: While the mainstream consumer may be drawn to sweet and salty comfort foods, the foodie consumer is drawn to ethnic foods and those with bitter, sour and umami (savory) characteristics. They value quality, brand names and healthy items on the menu, whereas mainstream eaters tend to place a greater emphasis on price.

At convenience stores, the foodie judges items by quality, past experience as well as a combination of price and convenience. More of these consumers rate healthfulness as an important attribute to see on a menu, but like the mainstream eater, want it on their own terms, reserving the option to indulge.

What is a way to offer both mainstream and foodie customers an attractive item? Take dark chocolate as an option, said Olson, noting it offers not only the sweet for mainstream eaters but also a bitter edge for those with foodie tastes.