

Squeezing Out Profits

Cash in on the popularity of smoothies with these successful merchandising tips

BY DIANE CHIASSON

Perceived as fresh, nutritious and healthy, smoothies have continued to skyrocket in popularity over the past few years. These cool and creamy drinks are typically blends of fruit, juice and ice, and are often also made with sorbet, ice cream, yogurt, soy milk and ground flax seed for extra nutrition and flavour. Some even include herbal additives and supplemental boosts such as ginseng, wheat grass, vitamin C and echinacea. If you serve vitamin- or herbal-enriched smoothies, however, make sure you are using approved, safe ingredients.

Furthermore, your staff must be prepared and informed enough to answer questions about each drink. Some of the most common questions are: "Is the smoothie made with real fruit?" or "How many calories are in the drink?" or "How many grams of fat are there?" Have this information readily available so staff can answer these questions accurately. If you have the room, post all the nutritional information about each drink so customers can read it prior to making their choices.

Here are some additional notes to help you successfully sell smoothies:

- **Keep Pricing Simple.** Try to simplify pricing as much as possible, keeping all the smoothies at one price. This way, customers won't have as many decisions to make.

- **Watch the Ingredients.** To minimize calories, use fruit that isn't packed in heavy syrup and doesn't have extra sugar added. And for best results, fruit should always be fresh.

- **Variety is the Spice of Life.** Vary your menu at least twice a year, updating the listed nutritional information. Keep an open mind to suggestions from staff and customers — they may help you invent the next smoothie trend.

- **Veg it Up!** Vegetables should not be neglected when it comes to smoothies. Virgin Caesars, carrot juice shakes, wheat-grass, spinach, celery and zucchini juices are all healthy and tasty. Customers don't always want the sugary sweetness of fruits, and providing vegetable-based drinks gives them more options.


- **Check your Blender.** The main instrument in creating these concoctions is your blender, so it's extremely important to make sure it can withstand constant use. Always have a few blenders ready to go, and another one available in case of a breakdown. It's also important to consider noise level — not only do loud blenders make your operation less appealing to customers, but long-term use can lead to hearing damage. It's possible to purchase various blender accessories to muffle the noise, but make sure the customer can still see the drink being made.

- **Offer Soy.** Soy milk is a great ingredient to have on hand for customers who don't drink regular milk. By using soy milk that has been fortified with calcium, you can provide customers with the health benefits of soy and their daily requirement of calcium without the harmful allergic reactions that some people have to milk. Soy mixes very well in smoothies — sometimes even better than regular milk.

- **Stand Behind your Product.** Since juices and smoothies are perceived as healthy and natural, make sure your business can stand behind each promise made about your drinks, offering nutritional facts to back up all statements.

- **Display/Merchandising.** You must flaunt your freshness in order for



customers to completely believe your smoothies are made with fresh fruits. Displays should be bright, colourful and must always have flawless fresh fruit on display. Even the slightest bruise gives your customers a bad impression. 



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