

ONTARIO

RestaurantNews

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COMMENT

He fears his license could go up in smoke



Supposingsomeone told you that you had to let someone smoke marijuana in your restaurant and, what's more, you had to post a sign saying, in effect, that pot smokers were welcome.

The twist in this case is that the pot smoking is for medicinal purposes.

But there is a possibility you could lose your liquor licence if you allow people to light up joints on your property, medicinal or not.

This is the situation faced by a Burlington restaurant owner.

Ted Kindos, owner of Gator Ted's Tap and Grill in Burlington, has been told by the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal that he must pay Steve Gibson \$2,000 for mental anguish and post a sign saying his establishment accommodates customers with medical marijuana

exemptions, in order to settle a complaint brought to the Tribunal by Gibson.

The two men have been in a three-year battle over Kindos refusing to let Gibson smoke pot in the doorway of the bar. Gibson is insisting on his right to do so because he has a government permit allowing him to use marijuana as a painkiller.

Kindos said he received a letter from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario saying that marijuana on his premises could endanger his liquor licence.

An AGCO spokesperson told the National Post that there are no provisions or exemptions for the use of medical marijuana in the Liquor Licence Act.

And according to a Health Canada official, people who smoke pot for medical purposes are required to abide by all federal, provincial and municipal legislation, including restrictions on smoking in public places.

However, a spokesperson for the Ontario Human Rights Commission told the National

Post that the Ontario Human Rights Code takes precedence over all legislation unless there is a specific legal exemption to the code.

Apart from the legalities, Kindos says his customers have complained about having to walk past someone smoking pot, especially when they're with their kids.

Kindos says he's going to take the matter to Ontario Superior Court. He will ask the court to declare that provincial laws forbid people like Gibson to light up in his bar.

This is an interesting situation, showing that life keeps getting more complicated for operators who just want to keep their customers happy and show a profit at the end of the year.

I look forward to seeing if Kindos does actually take the matter to court, and what the judge decides.

Mike Deibert

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

Merchandise your way to more profit

By Diane Chiasson

One of the hottest trends in the restaurant and foodservice industry today is visual food merchandising—the fine art of bringing your products to life with eye-catching visions of freshness, colour, quality and quantity. When done properly, visual food merchandising and proper cross-merchandising will increase your sales significantly.

Running a foodservice operation takes much more than just displaying the usual information such as the “daily special”. As an operator, you must consider what will lure your customers into your establishment in the first place. Here are some tips to help you on your way to great food merchandising.

If it looks good, they'll want it

You should build your food displays so that customers can see them from all angles of your facility. Use nothing but the freshest ingredients and colourful food items to catch their attention. Display your food items using uniquely shaped plates and dishes with different textures. Use terra cotta and other environmentally conscious colours, and incorporate natural wood and bamboo to create a more modern, clean and sleek image.

Take for example Country Style Inc. in Toronto. The addition of a simple, thick, wooden board placed inside a standard glass display unit for sandwiches emphasized to customers that the sandwiches had just been freshly made. Without the board, the sandwiches appeared stark and left customers wondering if they had been there for days, since a glass and steel display unit tends to evoke a sense of coldness and emptiness. The wooden board added warmth and life.

Tilted European-style wooden racks are also a wonderful tool to display breads, pies, pastries and danishes, so that customers can see the foods from an inviting angle.

Colour is one of the most important factors when dealing with food displays. Because most of the colours in food items tend to be browns and beiges, it is necessary to brighten up your operation with reds, oranges and yellows. Con-

sider looking at what items you might already have on hand in your kitchen, pantry and stockrooms that might add mouthwatering colour and substance to your display.

Cross-merchandising boosts sales

In a cafeteria or market-style setting, cross-merchandising is an excellent opportunity to upsell by placing the right foods together. Soups, sandwiches and potato chips should be placed in the same area, while coffee and tea should be served right next to desserts. Side orders and salads could be split. For example, small containers of salad could be packaged and placed on ice next to the grill, as well as stationed next to the sandwiches.

At Country Style, a variety of potato chips on a high, five-tier metal were displayed next to the sandwiches. This type of cross-merchandising encourages customers to buy a bag of chips to go along with their sandwich.

Coffee is a great partner to bakery items. Sales of beautifully packaged coffee will soar when placed next to bakery items. And don't forget for last minute sales, packaged coffee should also be placed next to your cash register.

A key element to selling your new food products is by sampling. If you are promoting a new specialty bread, for example, cut a few loaves into small pieces so customers can sample them, and place them next to the soup or sandwich station. Also try different varieties of cream cheese next to bagels, or fresh fruit and whipped cream next to cake and ice cream.

When the cafeteria was revitalized at the Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois, the benefits of eye-catching food merchandising displays and cross-merchandising techniques were felt immediately. Although not a single item on the food menu was changed, several customers commented on how the food tasted better simply because they dined in a warmer and more inviting environment. Sales also increased by 15 per cent in the first month. The staff's morale also benefited from the improved lighting, colourful surroundings and satisfied customers.

Proper signage and lighting

It is very important to be clean, concise and to the point when designing the signage for your operation. Make it as easy as possible for customers to purchase food items by providing proper signage that inform your customers about your products so they will buy them. Signage can be displayed in all shapes and sizes, and should be used appropriately. Use branded mini cards to label and price your products, and write short descriptions of the items detailing the ingredients you used or your cooking method. If you insist on handwriting your signs, be sure to make them legible and graphically appealing.

Lighting should be considered at all times when designing your food displays because it helps to sell your products. Do not make key areas of your facility either too dim or too bright. Lighting is meant to add life to your food products, while showing off the details as well. Strive for a warm, comfortable environment that encourages sales.



Diane Chiasson

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