

Making it work!

Create excitement with promotions to help you take full advantage of Ontario's great tastes

By Diane Chiasson, President, Chiasson Consultants Inc.



From crisp salads, hearty soups and appetizers, to innovative entrées and delectable desserts, seasonal Ontario commodities bring exciting taste, variety and freshness to any dining experience. By effectively promoting your Ontario menu items, you can create excitement, and boost sales.

Ontario's ever-changing array of fresh produce offers plenty of inspiration and opportunity for promotions, all year 'round. Whether you're staging a Strawberry Festival in June, a Salad Extravaganza in Summer, a Harvest Moon Menu in the Fall or simply showcasing your Ontario weekly or daily specials, here are some fabulous tips to help you create impactful promotions that work to boost sales and keep customers coming back for more.

Create eye appeal

An attractive, prominent display of seasonal Ontario fruits and vegetables featured on your menu creates excitement, before customers reach their table. But why stop there! Dress up buffet tables and salad bars with fresh displays, create smaller centre pieces for individual tables, and put your Ontario specials front and centre on a display board — then stand back and watch sales soar.

Look for cross-promotional opportunities

Here's an excellent example — the pairing of Ontario foods and wines. Feature a special Ontario dinner

menu accompanied by an Ontario wine list. Consider sponsoring a wine tasting event. Make sure your staff is informed and confident of their ability to help customers select an appropriate wine to complement their lunch or dinner!

Involve staff

An Ontario menu offers a perfect opportunity to showcase — and sell — appetizers, soups, entrées and desserts. Make sure staff are on-board and enthusiastic about your fresh seasonal Ontario menu items. Offer them a taste of your specials — and watch what happens!

Keep the fresh ideas coming

When it comes to maintaining interest, a little creativity goes a long way — all year long! Theme nights and weekly or month-long events featuring fresh, in-season fruits and vegetables help maintain fresh interest in your menus. Themes such as Winter Comfort Food festivals, Spring and Summer Celebrations, and Fall Fare festivals work to keep you fresh in your customers' minds, no matter what the season.

Diane Chiasson is a Toronto-based food and retail merchandising specialist who has been working with many of Canada's top foodservice and retail organizations for over 15 years.

Storage Tips



Mushrooms are one of Ontario's largest and most popular vegetable crops. Available fresh, all year long, mushrooms should not be stored for long periods of time, and are best used within three to four days of harvesting.

Store at 1°C (34°F), with a relative humidity of 90%. Mushrooms require lots of air due to their high respiration rate, and should be stored dry in a cardboard box, or paper bag — never in plastic. Never wash mushrooms before storing. Handle with care, since they bruise easily.

