

HOT TOPICS

A Newsletter for the Foodservice Industry from



100% Employee Owned – Spring 2011, No. 39

food for thought



by David Rolston
President and CEO

Kids

From birth to about age 18, they define a major portion of your life. Then they are gone. But sometimes they come back.

The relationship between parents and children – at any age – is a continuously evolving and generally unpredictable journey. It is a process of mutual education, shared joys, frustration, and, most importantly, love. As the parents of two young men – one currently in college and the other about to graduate high school – my wife, Kay, and I have done our best to provide the encouragement and guidance that will hopefully assist them in making the right life choices. Along the way, we have come to appreciate the lesson that all parents learn: your children are individuals, separate and distinct from their parents and have their own interests and talents. In our case, our older son, Alex, is studying to be a classical trombonist, while his younger brother, Kyler, is considering a career in video game design. Yet as different as both are from each other, there are commonalities that they share as members of our family and of society.

Younger parents especially tend to overestimate the amount of influence that they can bring to bear on their child's life. They feel that with proper guidance they can help mold tastes, inclinations, and behaviors in ways that they consider

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Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner in the "Big House"

An Inside Look at Prison Foodservice

It seems a stretch to jump from bread and water to pancakes and peanut butter. But, if you trace the history of the foods served to prisoners, from the twelfth century into the twenty-first, that's just what you'd find! The first larger-scale prisons were built to house England's criminals – those convicted of anything from misdemeanors to murder – during the reign of Henry II, and their operation and intent remained largely unchanged for nearly 700 years: dirt beds and strict rations. In the eighteenth century, however, the social theories of Jeremy Bentham changed the focus of prisons from mere housing to rehabilitation, and the modern prison system was born. (Interestingly, America's first "penitentiary" was built in Philadelphia in 1790 – and comes from the Quakers who founded it upon the belief that self-examination and *penitence* were the keys to a reformed life.)

Today there are more than 2.5 million people in the American prison system, and every one of them is entitled to – and receives – three nutritional meals per day. It's a challenge to serve – and sometimes, to eat – but it sure beats a slice of bread and a tin cup!

Hittin' the Chow Line

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the logistics of serving the 5,000 or so inmates at Folsom State Prison



Photo courtesy of Folsom State Prison

spotlight

in Folsom, California, is relatively similar to serving other large populations, such as schools and hospitals. The most efficient way to cater to large crowds is, and perhaps always will be, cafeteria style. "There are some big differences from other cafeterias, though," explains Laurie Maurino. Laurie is the Departmental Food Administrator for the entire California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). She plans and oversees menus for 33 prisons including Folsom and San Quentin – and as she points out, "It looks a lot like what you see in the movies, with some subtle but important differences."

One of those differences is the anonymity maintained between the prisoners serving the food, and those receiving it. Laurie talks about the need for cutting down on favoritism: "It's a blind service – pre-loaded trays are passed

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"Hot Topics" is produced by the HATCO CORPORATION.
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Exceptional Diets

ALL ABOUT AL-HALAL

“Diners with dietary restrictions are usually thought of as mere exceptions,” says Maria Omar, “but they can also prove to be a valuable and faithful demographic in a restaurant’s customer base.” Maria is from the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA), and part of her job is highlighting to foodservice operators that “there are more than nine million Muslim diners in America, and they are largely affluent, educated professionals – not an audience to be taken lightly.”

IFANCA is a non-profit organization that certifies and promotes halal (permitted) products in everything from foodservice to packing materials, taking as their certification symbol the Crescent ‘M’.



After a successful seminar at last year’s NRA show, they’ve seen interest in halal increase in a wide range of dining settings, including restaurants, catering, and even frozen dinners.

The Basics

First, a quick language lesson. *Halal* is Arabic for “allowed” or “permitted,” and its opposite *haram* means “not allowed or permitted.” These words (along with *mashbooh*, which means “doubtful or questionable”) make up the basic vocabulary of foods in an Islamic diet. Halal food contains no pork or pork by-products, no alcohol, and if it’s beef or chicken, it must have been slaughtered in an Islamic fashion. *Mashbooh* becomes a useful word in the case of enzymes, emulsifiers, colors, flavorings, and other things added to processed foods. Being careful about processed foods is the simplest step a foodservice operator can take in preparing to offer halal items on their menu.

Halal Foodservice

“Dining out can be challenging in some places, for a Muslim customer,” Maria cautions. “The default is to choose a vegetarian dish, but even then, customers want to be sure that the food is halal.” As a result, most of the halal foods one can find in mainstream dining venues are, logically, in Middle-Eastern and other Islamic ethnic restaurants. “But it’s easy



for any restaurant to offer halal options.” Maria points out that “some of the most mainstream products, including Kraft cheeses, Tabasco® sauce, Heinz ketchup, and Carole’s Cheesecake, are halal-certified by IFANCA. Many restaurants already own a lot of halal ingredients.”

In order to go the extra step – and potentially see that extra business – operators have only to spend a little time considering their food sources. “It may mean changing vendors to halal-approved butchers,” Maria notes, “or simply checking for the Crescent ‘M’ on ingredients they’re adding to already-pork-free products.” Such minor adjustments can make your current menu halal-ready with little change in the back of the house.

In the front of the house, the needs are twofold: 1) know and promote your halal products, and 2) educate your staff to do the same. “Once you’re determined which of your products are or can be halal,” Maria advises, “promote them on your menu with the Crescent ‘M’ or a notation.” And just as cooks, servers, and other employees routinely receive training in addressing food allergies, or diners with kosher needs, teach them also to answer halal questions.

According to Maria, “There’s nothing *mashbooh* about this: halal customers are a large, loyal group. Serving them can even do restaurants a good service on their bottom line.”

For further information, go to <http://www.ifanca.org/halal/>. ■

A Letter from Billy Booster



Hello again, friends! Hopefully spring is just around the corner, and as a big fan of water, I, for one, cannot wait for the April showers it will bring! Speaking of spring, I’m sure some of you are wondering about the “blossoming” romance I mentioned in my last letter. Well, I’m not one to kiss and tell, but Tina Toaster and I have been warming up to each other pretty well since fall. We had a great Valentine’s Day dinner of toaster strudel, toad-in-the-hole and boiled vegetables. (My Tina sure loves her breakfast foods!) We also took a romantic cruise – and we’re hoping to get to Door County, Wisconsin, when the weather warms up. I hear they have some great fish boils, and I’d love to lend a heating hand!

Another exciting event in recent months was the hugely successful fundraiser for the Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida. Hundreds of loyal Hatco customers, representatives and employees took part by purchasing commemorative t-shirts for the Hatco Appreciation Party at NAFEM 2011, and raised over \$3000 for a great cause! A big “thank you” to all who helped stock the shelves of Second Harvest!

For more Billy Booster adventures, as well as up-to-date industry info and jokes to “boost” your mood, follow me on Facebook, Twitter, or my blog on Hatco’s website! I hope to hear from you, soon!

Best,
“Billy”

billyb@hatcocorp.com



TRADE EXHIBITIONS

April 2011

- Seoul Food & Hotel 2011
April 26 - 29
Korean International
Exhibition Center
Seoul, South Korea

May 2011

- HOFEX
May 11 - 14
Hong Kong Convention &
Exhibition Centre
Hong Kong
Booth #1B-622
- National Restaurant
Association Show
May 21 - 24
Chicago, IL, USA
Booth #2408
- Thaifex - World of
Food ASIA
May 25 - 29
IMPACT Exhibition Centre
Bangkok, Thailand

...a dish best served (with a) cold (one)...

Sweet Revenge

Greenwich Village, New York, USA

Marlo Scott always wanted her own business – but it took years before she would realize that that business would be New York’s first (and, so far, only) cupcake, beer, and wine bar. “Luckily a long and frustrating path in the corporate world had provided me with two important necessities: strategic marketing skills and a desire to leave.” After nearly two years of late-night and weekend baking for friends, she opened the doors to her Sweet Revenge in July 2008. It’s now one of the most unique and best-known bistros in NYC’s West Village.



Sweet Revenge photography by John Bentham

“At first, the restaurant had a split personality: coffee and cupcakes by day; cupcakes, beer and wine by night.” Within a couple of months, Marlo realized the common thread: “Customers sought both sweets and drinks for the same reasons – indulgence; a getaway from the everyday. So, I took it one step further and started pairing the cupcakes with specific wines and beers.” The unique concept of pairing, for example, a pumpkin spice cupcake with an Italian Pinot Grigio, took off as soon as the menu was debuted for customers.

**specialty
of the house**

“I know I make a damn good cupcake and have amazing imported beers and wines. I’ve always been focused, but I’ve also kept an open mind about the evolution of my business based on what my patrons want.” In the fall of 2010, she expanded her weekend menu to meet the neighborhood demand for a unique brunch spot – and she’ll soon roll out a new lunch menu to help herself “stay busy all day” during the week.

Marlo believes in the old adage that “living well is the best revenge.” Loving what you do in a career you never saw coming? Well that’s just the icing on the cupcake. For more information, see www.sweetrevengeinc.com. ■



Pure Cupcakes

Makes 24 cupcakes

Ingredients:

Cupcakes

- 1 cup (237 ml) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 cups (473 ml) sugar
- 5 extra large eggs
- 3 cups (710 ml) self-rising cake flour
- 1 cup (237 ml) buttermilk
- 3 Tbs (45 ml) Mexican vanilla extract
- Demerara sugar, for sprinkling

Buttercream frosting

- 1-1/4 cups (296 ml) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 6 Tbs (90 ml) vegetable shortening
- 10 cups (2.36 liters) confectioners’ sugar
- 1/2 cup (118 ml) milk
- 2 Tbs (30 ml) vanilla extract (preferably Mexican)

Instructions:

Buttercream frosting: In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat together butter and shortening. Add sugar slowly, followed by milk and vanilla, continually beating to combine. Set aside.

Cupcakes: Preheat oven to 325°F (162°C). Cut out twenty-four 5-1/2" by 5-1/2" (14 cm by 14 cm) squares of parchment paper. Fit each square of parchment into a standard muffin cup so the edges stick out from the muffin cup; set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat butter until softened. With the mixer on medium, add eggs and sugar; beat until well combined. Change to low speed and add flour in three parts, alternating with buttermilk. Stir in vanilla. Fill prepared muffin cups three-quarters full with batter. Transfer muffin tins to oven and bake for 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cupcakes cool completely in muffin cups.

When cupcakes are cool, frost the top of each one with a thin layer of buttercream. Fill a disposable pastry bag fitted with a 3/4-inch St.-Honore decorating tip with remaining buttercream. Pipe three waves on top of each cupcake, each slightly smaller than the last. Sprinkle with demerara sugar and serve.

For the full “Sweet Revenge experience,” pair cupcakes with a glass of Principato Pinot Noir, or with a glass of Pauwel Kwak, an amber Belgian beer. ■



This issue of *Hot Topics* has been printed on recycled paper with non-petroleum inks.



Photo courtesy of Folsom State Prison

out through a window, so no one gets any more or any less when their cellmate is working in the kitchen. Inmates are extremely particular about it, and as little as two extra ounces of peanut butter can make the difference between a smooth breakfast time and someone causing a scene.”

For just this reason, most of the foods come from large-scale food contractors and are then portioned out in single servings. It’s also easier from a logistical standpoint: “It simplifies tray preparation for the kitchen workers.” As a result, the menu can sometimes sound like a precise scientific experiment. A sample menu for a typical weekday breakfast may include: 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice, 6 ounces of cracked wheat cereal, three 4” pancakes, 2 ounces of syrup (diet syrup optional), 2 ounces of peanut butter or sausage (depending on religious dietary restrictions) and 8 ounces each of nonfat milk and coffee.



Photo courtesy of Folsom State Prison

Three Squares a Day, On the Go

At Folsom, as at other facilities, the name of the game is efficiency. According to Laurie, “Usually, brown bag lunches are handed out with breakfast, so the inmates can eat when and where they choose. That also saves us from that middle meal service, and from asking everyone to come back and go

through the line again.” Prison units often allow inmates to eat in shifts or groups of 50-75 at a time, and it’s important to keep the line moving. Because of the need for speed, restrictions are also placed on how much time the prisoners have to spend in the dining hall. Most units have a 20-minute get-in, get-out rule for mealtime. Part of that rule is based in service time, and part is the social culture.



Photo courtesy of Folsom State Prison

“Aside from the yard, the dining hall is one of the only places where inmates spend time in large groups. And honestly, large groups are not a good idea for most prison populations. Just like in the movies, the disturbances often start in the mess hall.” On rare occasions, those ‘disturbances’ can be intentional. For example, it was in Folsom Prison’s Dining Hall #2 (see photo above) where music legend Johnny Cash performed his infamous prison concerts back in 1968, singing “Folsom Prison Blues” to hundreds of inmates.

Making the Best of Things

As any foodservice professional will tell you, though, efficiency and speed can mean a sacrifice in taste – and food service is no guarantee of food quality. Celeste Johnson, for example – an inmate at Mountain View Unit prison in Gatesville, Texas – points out that the 20-minute rule can make dining problematic, especially when the kitchen is staffed by non-professionals. Too often “the food comes out piping hot, or still half-frozen,” she says, “and 20 minutes is hardly enough time to let it cool down, or defrost – it’s barely enough time to eat.”



Celeste is especially centered in things culinary since she and a group of fellow inmates at Mountain View recently released a cookbook about preparing your own food “on the inside,” entitled *From the Big House to Your House*. In it, Celeste, Louanne Larson, Trena Kemmerer, Barbara Holder, Tina Cornelius, and Ceyma Bina compiled over two hundred recipes for foods from “outside” using ingredients available at prisons’ other food source, the commissary or “canteen.” In Celeste’s eyes, “the selection is very limited at the commissary. It’s comparable to something like a small convenience store outside. But necessity is the mother of invention.”

The cookbook offers small-portion recipes for such down-home delights as Stuffed Peppers, Scalloped Potatoes, and Chocolate Cheesecake – all made using things like saltine crackers, seasoning packets, and powdered milk. Celeste is clear that the recipes “can’t compare to real food from the outside, but being able to make something yourself, especially something delicious, is a small exercise of freedom in itself.” Celeste and her friends routinely skip the dining hall, in fact, in favor of cooking their commissary creations.

Shopping at the commissary is possible through accounts set up for inmates, into which friends and family can deposit funds. It offers foods, toiletries, and even small appliances. Many of the recipes in the cookbook call for the use of a small hot pot, which can warm liquids to below boiling, for safety reasons. (Speaking of safety, the commissary also offers replacement sporks – a hybrid spoon/fork – for those inmates who fail to carefully clean and take care of the one all-purpose utensil issued to them by the prison.)

Meeting the Needs of the Many

For whatever complaints the prisoners have about food quality, Laurie at the CDCR would like to point out that it’s all part of a balanced diet. Calling on her dietitian’s experience, she aims for “a target of 2900 calories per day, with 30% fat content and just 4 grams of sodium. Say what you will, it’s ‘heart healthy.’ And that’s not even exercising our vegetarian option.”

Like all food operations with a wide range of clientele, the prison system must cater to a variety of dietary needs. As early as 15 years ago, the CDCR went pork-free, and today it has vegetarian options and substitutions for Islamic or halal-focused inmates, who carry a special card to show at the tray window. According to Laurie, "We are not short order cooks and do not cater to meal preferences – but in legitimate cases and for religious or allergenic reasons, we need to accommodate people. These folks are already in prison – the food is not intended as an added punishment."



Photo courtesy of Folsom State Prison

The Future of an Old System

Perhaps more than any other foodservice institution, prisons are highly subject to the pressure of feeding a large population while keeping costs as low as possible. Laurie and the CDCR, however, are succeeding: "Even with meals that address dietary restrictions and meet the daily food guidelines, we operate at a cost of about \$3 per day per prisoner – or roughly a dollar a meal. I'm not sure it's possible to do it for much less than that."

With an eye to the future, Laurie continually reassesses the menus and hopes to one day have more vegan-ready meal possibilities – "Because, really, that's a simple way to solve a lot of allergy, religious, and health-based needs in an efficient way."

As for how Celeste and her friends might like to see things change: "It's all canned vegetables here, so I'd love a *fresh* salad more than anything. Every Christmas and Thanksgiving everyone gets an apple and an orange but, in general, *freshness* is the missing ingredient to all our food."



In the twelfth century, "freshness" might have meant, "how stale is this bread?" And while prison food is no picnic, it's a testament to the evolution of both human rights and institutional foodservice that today's prisoners can butter that bread – allergies allowing – with peanut butter.

From more information on the cookbook, go to justicedenied.org/fromthebighouse.html. ■

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worthwhile. As their children grow, parents understand that while they may be the major influence, they're only one of many. Friends, school, the media, the community, music, and multiple other elements all play a part. Likewise, the exposure to all of these elements that only comes through having children, broadens our own horizons and deepens our understanding.

We are fortunate in that our children's lives and educational experiences are not all that different from our own. The first generation of so-called Baby Boomers, who experienced their teenage years in the 1960s and '70s, lived through what was a very real "generation gap." Because of the Depression and the Second World War, many of their parents were older when they married and had children. Though they insisted that their children go to college (something that many of them had never experienced), they became upset at the changes education made. The sons and daughters, likewise, would regard the parents as people from another world,

which indeed they were. The result was a serious divide that could take years, if ever, to heal.

Despite the fact that parents and children today are much more likely to have shared common life experiences, I still fear the possibility of a future generation gap. Ironically, the next one might well be caused by communication devices. Although people of all generations utilize such modern tools as cell phones and e-mail, the rapid proliferation and evolution of technology has resulted in young people who are much more fluent in and receptive to the new media than their parents.

As convenient and effective as electronic communication can be, I personally continue to prize the ability to speak one-on-one with other people. While e-mails and text messages are normally limited to a single subject or an exchange that must proceed in a linear manner, live conversation is much freer and likely to move out from the original subject. Also, there is a subtlety that enables one

person to detect, from pauses or vocal inflections, what the other individual is feeling, as well as what they're saying.

With more information than ever to sift through and more tools at our disposal, it is sometimes difficult to find the time and the opportunity to talk at length – especially with our children. If we are going to remain a part of their lives and a resource for them and their children in the time to come, it is essential that we make that time. I don't think there is anything more rewarding than listening to a young person express their thoughts and feelings and to realize that in some ways, both hidden and obvious, you contributed to their development.

Sincerely,

David Rolston

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product profile

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