

The Savory Connection

Unearthing the Possibilities with Nature's Hidden Treasure



Mushrooms Help Operators Navigate Turbulent Economic Times

With current economic indicators worsening since its last forecast in January, foodservice research firm, Technomic revised their 2008 U.S. foodservice industry nominal growth forecast in May downward from 3.6 percent to 2.2 percent. Technomic indicated that some chain restaurant operators are still turning in solid growth, but on the whole, limited-service restaurant growth has slowed substantially, and full-service restaurants are facing even greater challenges.



Mushrooms offer foodservice operators a way through these difficult economic conditions. Mushrooms can upscale commonplace menu items such as burgers, sandwiches and side dishes. Mushrooms are also a naturally healthy indulgence food that delivers a big flavor impact. **As operators are reducing portion size to control food costs and menu prices, an inexpensive addition of mushrooms achieves a big payback in consumer value perception.** And because too many casual dining chains are presenting the same message and experience, mushrooms provide a way to differentiate menus and entire concepts from the competition.



The Mushroom Brat Bierock Rocks Rock Bottom Sales Up 9%

From September 19 to October 7, 2007 Rock Bottom Restaurants' 42 locations across the U.S. ran a "Rocktoberfest" promotion featuring mushrooms as a key menu ingredient. The mushroom items and promotion exceeded sales expectations and the chain's projected mushroom usage by **9 percent**. Reaching approximately 340,000 customers in Rock Bottom locations, the menu included not only the Brat Bierock,



(a savory stuffed sandwich with bier-poached bratwurst, caraway sauerkraut, roasted mushrooms, sweet potatoes, onions and muenster cheese) but also a mushroom Asiago



Dip With Bier Bread and Bavarian Stew, a slow-simmered flank steak in a mushroom demi.

Under The Cap

- Recent findings from research conducted by Menu Mine indicate since 2003:
 - Cheeseburgers, 28% of total burger sales, are up 15%.
 - Bacon Cheeseburgers, 14% of total burger sales, are up 9%.
 - Mushroom Swiss Cheeseburgers, 6% of total burger sales, have jumped 59%.
 - Angus Cheeseburgers, have exploded with 300% growth.
 - BBQ Bacon Cheeseburgers, Steakburgers and Bleu Cheeseburgers round out the Top 10 and all three have increased faster than the norm of 39%.
- Technomic reports that longer menu descriptions are being used to support higher price points. In Casual Dining, burgers with long descriptions are priced 30% higher than those with short ones.

For example, which would you prefer?:

- Mushroom Burger (Bistro Burger, \$6.49), with sautéed mushrooms
Compared to
- Sautéed Shroom Burger (Red Robin, \$8.99), loaded with fresh, plump, sautéed mushrooms, a hint of garlic Parmesan butter and topped with melted Swiss for that extra Mmmm. A mushroom lover's dream come true.



Casual Dining Burgers	
Menu Description	Average Price
1 to 5 words	\$ 6.21
6 to 10 words	\$ 7.20
11 to 15 words	\$ 7.50
16 to 20 words	\$ 7.66
21 words or more	\$ 7.98

Mushrooms Serve Up A Variety Of Chain Menu Opportunities During 2nd Quarter



Whether a short-term promotion special or a permanent menu item, chain restaurant menu activity during the second quarter once again demonstrated the versatility of fresh mushrooms. From breakfast to dinner and paired with every protein, mushrooms are popping up all over the menu.

Outback Steakhouse Fresh Tilapia With Pure Lump Crab Meat—Fresh Tilapia crowned with crab stuffing, then topped with pure lump crabmeat and sliced white button mushrooms.

Chicken Picatta With Asparagus from Mimi's Café—Roasted chicken breast smothered with garlic mushrooms and lemon caper sauce.

Perkins' Pork Tenderloin—Grilled and sliced pork tenderloin, sautéed mushrooms and Swiss cheese served on scrambled eggs and breakfast potatoes topped with creamy hollandaise sauce and chopped parsley.

Longhorn Steakhouse is offering its seasonal favorite, **Colorado Renegade**—USDA Choice 12 oz. top sirloin topped with grilled portabella mushrooms, fresh asparagus, sun-dried tomatoes and a garlic butter sauce.

Month	Chain	Type	Item
March	Shoney's	New	Mushroom Swiss Sandwich
March	Village Inn	New	Tumbleweed Breakfast Quesadilla
March	Mimi's Café	LTO*	Chicken Picatta with Asparagus
March	Mimi's Café	LTO	Seafood Fettuccine
March	Olive Garden	LTO	Asiago Steak with Mushrooms, Peppers and Alfredo sauce
March	Outback	LTO	Fresh Tilapia with Pure Lump Crab
March	Round Table Pizza	LTO	Milano Roastano
March	Schlotzsky's	Returning	Philly Dilly
April	Longhorn Steakhouse	LTO	Colorado Renegade: Steak with Grilled Portabellas, Asparagus
April	O'Charley's	LTO	Red Pepper Prime Rib Pasta
April	Papa John's	LTO	Rustic Italia Meats Pizza with Portabellas
April	Perkin's	New	Salisbury Steak
May	Quizno's	New	Cantina Chicken Flatbread Sammies
May	Pizza Hut	LTO	Ultimate Veggie Grill
May	Quizno's	New	Roadhouse Steak Sammie

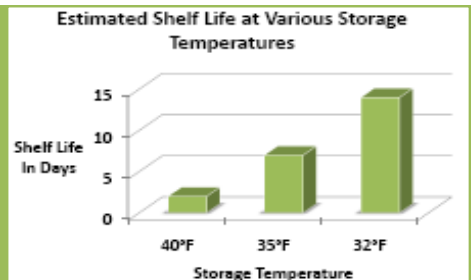
*LTO: Limited Time Offer

Source: Menu Insights



Keeping Time With Freshness

The optimum temperature to store fresh mushrooms is 34°F. Each degree above that can lead to a shorter shelf life. The majority of higher storage temperatures occur at the distribution center and individual restaurant unit. One easy solution: move mushrooms to cold storage immediately at every point of distribution.



The Savory Connection is a publication of the Mushroom Council for professionals in the foodservice industry. Feel free to share this information with your associates.



For more information call 408-432-7210 or visit www.mushroominfo.com/foodservice