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COMMENT

Modern communication bridges the gap for the industry

The team at Ishcom Publications Ltd. wanders far and wide to bring you, the readers, useful information that you can apply to your businesses. It comes in the form of news stories, operator profiles, new product listings, and feature stories on trends. The tools we use to gather this information are the telephone, the fax machine, the Internet, e-mail, and most importantly, trade shows.

Trade shows allow people in the industry to make contact and it's our way of making contact with you.

From operators, we learn the kinds of information you require in order to compete successfully. From suppliers, we find out the latest products in equipment and services and trends happening within the industry. From associations, we learn the types of issues they battle and the concerns of their membership.

By May of this year, Western Hospitality News (WHN) will have covered two industry trade shows and two industry functions in Western Canada alone.

In January, contributing editor, Colleen Isherwood, participated in FAB 2001 in

Vancouver where she met and mingled with food and beverage professionals in BC in a two-day schedule of educational seminars.

Publisher and editor, Steven Isherwood, made trip to BC as well, in February, to support the Vancouver branch of the Canadian Food Service Executives Association (CFSEA) and to present the first ever award for this publication. Here amongst the heroes of the foodservice industry in the city, Geoffrey Howes of the British Columbia Restaurant and Foodservices Association (BCRFA) was singled out to receive the inaugural Western Hospitality News Newsmaker of the Year Award.



Steven Isherwood,
Publisher & Editor

In March, it was back to BC to take in the restaurant industry show, BC Foodservice Expo, where our director of sales and marketing, Roy Brunner, and

our director of national accounts, Jim Pye, trod the aisles and kept their eye peeled for new developments with exhibiting companies.

Next month, this writer will be attending the trade show sponsored by the Alberta Restaurant and Foodservices Association (ARFA) and will be combing the trade show floor of ARFEX in May.

There will be more trips to Western Canada this year because we feel it's important to talk to our readers and customers in this region. It's how we stay on top of events and happenings in the industry in each province and the significant trends that are taking hold.

This writer often gets asked how can I write a story when I'm writing from another province. It's a fair question.

After all, how many other industry maga-



Natalie Cajic,
Managing Editor

zines have the budget to send a reporter to another city in the province each time a restaurant opens or an event happens? None.

But they cover stories out of their region and they use the tools we use at WHN: the telephone, the fax machine, the Internet, and e-mail. The electronic age really has closed the gap in distance. It's no longer necessary to be in someone's face to get the story right.

Having said that, at WHN we believe meeting people in the industry on their home turf is important. And that's why we fly several times a year to Western Canada to meet and greet and get to know you whether you are an operator or supplier.

If you have any comments about this editorial or any of the content of this publication, I'd love to hear from you. Remember in this electronic age, it's so easy to keep in touch. Our toll free number is 1-800-201-8596, extension 232 or my e-mail address is ncajic@can-restaurantnews.com..

Natalie Cajic

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

Pump up business using displays with eye appeal

By Diane Chiasson

As a foodservice operator, you will never realize how visual food merchandising can substantially increase your sales until you fully understand the concept and you are willing to spend the time to make it work.

Visual food merchandising brings your food and retail products to life through eye-catching displays, where the vision of freshness, colour, quality and quantity is key to any foodservice operation's success. When done properly visual food merchandising can boost your sales significantly.

So what does it take? Here are the ABC's to help you create a fabulous looking and mouthwatering foodservice facility:

Evaluate your space

Before beginning any merchandising project, you must look at the space itself to determine the room you have to work

with, giving special consideration to the fixtures that cannot be moved. For instance, when creating a display around a refrigerator, consider what you intend to do with the top, the sides and the floor area, while assessing impact on traffic flow, lighting available to enhance the display and the proximity of workstations.

Determine the message you want to send

Each fresh food display should have a theme, a product that you want to focus upon or a specific message that you want to convey. The message is integral to the display and must take center stage, not being diluted by superfluous decorations.

List your props

It is often unnecessary to purchase an expensive array of props to create your display. Look at what items you have on hand in the kitchen, pantry and stockrooms that

might add mouthwatering substance to your display. Fresh veggies and fruits, large tins of food items, wine bottles, all of these can be incorporated into your displays.

Make a statement with colour

When considering props, fresh food items and decorations, think vibrant colours. Deep red, vibrant green and yellow will call attention to any display you set up. Colours such as terracotta, coral and sand create an overall warm feeling.

Consider the focal point

Every display should have a main focal point to attract attention. Decide how you will achieve this. It should be noted that items grouped together (i.e. sandwiches and soups) enhance the sales of both items, and ultimately you sell more.



Continued on page 6

Visual merchandising to sell bread

Displays — from page 4**Stir all the senses**

Often times, displays can be more effective if stimulating more than just the eyes. The smell of freshly baked goods, fresh coffee, grilled steaks or delicious soup, can entice customers into your restaurant.

Make everything spotless

Remember, your props will likely be re-used in future displays; therefore, fully clean the intended display area, so that expensive props and materials are not needlessly ruined.

Sketch it out

Make a small sketch as to what you intend to do, and cross-reference that sketch with the fresh food items and materials you have purchased, as a final check before construction.

Build in layers

Start construction with the display items that will be used in the back first. Raise specific items by using cardboard boxes, small crates or fruit baskets turned upside down.

Midpoint assessment

Do not wait until the project is completed to ensure it is taking shape as hoped. If you wait until it is completed, you may have to take additional time to tear the display down and start again from scratch. Remember, you have other important duties you must attend to other than creating displays.

Show and tell

Construct your display with a view to show off certain products and tell customers about them. To this end, you will have to consider signage to complement the display.

Be blunt

If you want the customer to buy a particular item, state it frankly on your signage. Your message should be clear, concise and brief.

Stimulate

Bring the display to life by employing elements of colour, humour, interrupted visual patterns, props, samples and geometric shapes.

Create a theme

Themes, such as Valentine's and Mother's Day will help you get your message across. Also, employ theme elements in other areas such as windows, additional displays and packaging.

Final assessment

Once your food display has come together, stand back and assess it. Is it alive with colour? Does it say the intended message? Is it sturdy and safe? Does it have an eye-catching focal point? Is it appropriately lit? Does it have the potential to attract anyone? Is it consistent with the dining facility as a whole? Is signage neat, colourful and effective?

After following these steps, you can rest assured your foodservice facility will be on its way to considerably higher profits.

© 2000, 2001 Chiasson Consultants Inc. All rights reserved. Diane Chiasson, FCSI, president of Toronto-based Chiasson Consultants Inc., is a foodservice and retail merchandising and marketing specialist who has worked with high-profile independent restaurants, major hotel and restaurant chains, corporate cafeterias, coffee bars, casinos, clubs, hospitals, colleges and universities, in addition to supermarkets, convenience stores, specialty food and gift stores for the past 20 years. You can call her at 416-926-1338 or 1-888-926-6655, fax her at 416-921-6994, contact her via e-mail at chiasson@interlog.com or visit her web site at <http://www.chiasson-consultants.com>.

Alberta restaurant show looks to its 20th anniversary

EDMONTON, AB - Northlands Park Agricom in the capital city is the place where the Alberta Restaurant and Foodservices Association (ARFA) will present ARFEX and celebrate its 20th anniversary of bringing the newest products, services and ideas to the province's foodservice industry.

Presented in conjunction with Connect Logistics Services Inc., the annual trade show and conference gives delegates an opportunity to meet over 350 suppliers under one roof.

A new show time on the first day of the two-day show, May 2-3, give delegates a chance to walk the trade floor from noon to 8 p.m., instead of 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Lindy Rollingson, president and CEO of ARFA, says, "it's a chance for the evening crowd to see the show at a more leisurely pace."

A later grand opening also gives delegates the opportunity to hear the first of a line up of

speakers give a full presentation. David Ray of Kroll Associates kick starts the "education" presentations with a lively interactive seminar on preventing loss in the hospitality industry.



One of the presentors at ARFEX: David Ray talks about loss prevention in the hospitality industry.

As director of Western Canada with the investigative and security company, Ray will give tips on how they can avoid

theft and crime from happening at their establishments. His impressive background in law security, with management positions at Shell Canada Ltd., MacMillan Bloedel Ltd. and 14 years with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, give Ray excellent credentials with which to advise operators.

Highlights of the two day show include the competition whereby young culinarians compete for the title of Top Alberta Apprentice. The winner represents the province at the national conference of the Canadian Federation of Chefs and Cooks (CFCC), taking place June 13-17 in Halifax, NS.

Every year the association recognizes the best menus from across the province. ARFA also holds its annual general meeting where it has invited the Minister of Human Resources and Employment to speak on issues such as recent changes to maternity benefits and labour shortages.

Spas — from page 5

Spas have become popular in Canada. The new Westin hotel in Whistler has extensive spa facilities, the Empress Hotel in Victoria will open a \$4.5 million facility this spring, and the Westin Bayshore, which recently completed a \$50 million renovation, is considering a spa as well.

Lisogar-Cocchia and her husband have received over 100 requests to own and operate various hotel spas, and the Spa Canada Association, headed by Pat Corbett of Hill's Health Ranch in 108 Mile Ranch, BC, has 100 members nationwide.

But while spas are the number one amenity worldwide and a spa can be a great draw for a hotel, "it has to be done right," stresses Lisogar-Cocchia, cautioning that three Vancouver spas closed their doors recently. Spas are capital intensive, with facilities costing \$300,000 plus. The equipment, products and staff are all specialized. Labour costs make up 50 per cent of the total budget.

"If you can generate huge volumes and watch your expenses like a hawk, you'll be able to generate 10 to 15 per cent profit," she adds.

Absolute Spa Products, the partners' spa product import/export company helps make the bottom line more attractive, as the margins are greater on spa products. They work with 15 international product companies. Not only do they sell the products in their own spas, but they sell them to hotels as amenities and corporate gifts. "Hoteliers and

others don't like the challenges of importing products," says Lisogar-Cocchia, adding that they have over 200 hotels, corporations and spas on their client list. "It's a strong, proudly Canadian business. One of our most popular lines is Y-Spa for Men, a full line of products for the corporate male traveller."

The original Spa at the Century offers special promotions, including six special "spa rooms" in the hotel, and a chocolate promotion. The Chocolate Suite Spa package consists of a one-bedroom suite, chocolate covered strawberries and champagne, chocolate truffle turn-down service, and choco-

late bath bomb, a chocolate essence t-shirt, a "chocolate indulgence manicure" and use of spa facilities.

The Absolute Spa Group also has a mobile spa facility to bring treatments and home spa products to company offices or movie sets. "It costs about the same as giving flowers on Secretary's Day, and it's appreciated much more," says Lisogar-Cocchia.

She stresses that spas are for health and wellness, not beauty and pampering. "We don't build pink, pampering palaces, and we sell the health and wellness benefits to the employer. We let them know how long the effects of spa treatments last - not only in terms of physical well being but also mental gratitude."



Chocolate products including bath bubbles and sprinkles, lip balm and skin care products are popular among both children and women.

WCB targets restaurants

VANCOUVER, BC - Accidents happen in the restaurant industry too. Most likely they'll happen in a small restaurant.

That's why the province's Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) has funded a project that targets health and safety in the foodservice industry, particularly small businesses.

The British Columbia Restaurant and Foodservices Association (BCRFA) and the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association (CRFA) will be distributing the information package.

It's the first initiative that the WCB's small business service centre, established last year, has undertaken with the restaurant industry.

The information reviews the responsibilities of management and workers and addresses accident prevention such as strains or the safe handling of hot oil or cutting utensils. The data comes from a health and safety program developed by White Spot Restaurants for its operations to smaller restaurants in the province.

Smaller restaurants, up to 20 employees, generate 39 per cent of the claims, says WCB vice-president of prevention, Roberta Ellis. Accepted claims for the restaurant industry as a whole in the province are \$21.8 million and approximately \$8.6 million of that comes from small restaurants, she says.

To order a copy of the restaurant health and safety information package or the Small Business Guide to Health and Safety, contact the WCB Publications and Videos Section at 604-276-3068 or 1-800-661-2112, local 3068.

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