How to Make Serving Desserts Easy and Profitable

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There is no question that desserts have the power to boost add-on sales in quick-service restaurants or even drive customer visits, and premium ice cream offerings are becoming even bigger profit drivers in quick-service restaurants than other types of treats. "The new trend of extreme shakes, floats, and sundaes captures higher profit dollars in relation to what the product costs," says Scott Weller, who leads foodservice marketing at Wells Enterprises. "Beyond casual dining, these expressions are finding their way to different channels. The bigger opportunity for restaurants is to increase check size and satisfaction with desserts."

"Desserts are very emotional, memorable, and represent fun in a social occasion," Weller says. "Ice cream is the number one shared food on social media. Offering unique and fun desserts can increase patrons' posting on social media sites, which in turn increases traffic when their followers seek out the same experience."

Even though desserts may drive sales, however, serving them often comes at a cost. Preparing those after-dinner treats can slow down back-of-house operations and eat up payroll. Freshly made desserts also require the skills of a pastry chef and costly ingredients. Expensive soft serve machines take up floor space and require regular cleaning and

maintenance.

So what's a workable solution? Pre-made grab and go sundaes take the work out of dessert while driving impulse buys, say executives at Wells Foodservice, the parent company of Blue Bunny Ice Cream.

While snacking and portability are key growth factors, Weller says capturing these segments with the right grab-and-go snacks is key to boosting profitability while maintaining operational simplicity.

Load'd Sundaes from Blue Bunny help drive that growth.

Blue Bunny Load'd Sundaes come in four flavors—Chocolate Brownie Bomb, Bunny Tracks, Mint Chocolate Chunk, and Cookie Crunch 'N Fudge—and because they can be purchased to-go, the benefits of this grab-and-go dessert extend to quick-service restaurants, college dining halls, resort areas where people want to eat and get back to play, as well as workplace cafeterias where employees might have a fixed time for lunch, but can still take dessert back to their desk.

Desserts are often habitual or considered "a well-deserved treat," says Joseph Felipe, senior director of distribution and field sales for Wells Foodservice. "Millennials—80 million strong— eat together and meet up to catch up around a good dessert. We have also seen that as new and innovative desserts are launched and communicated through social media outlets, the trial and repeat visits have been outstanding."

Studies show millennials make up an attractive demographic for premade desserts because they tend to eat impulsively, triggering a spontaneous purchase. According to the Culture of Millennials report from The Hartman Group, millennials try not to "really think about it too much ... just eat whatever I want when I feel like it."

Blue Bunny Load'd Sundaes offer restaurants operational benefits, too. Because they are prepackaged, they eliminate some food safety risks that come with making desserts in-house. "Operators get the benefit of not having to clean soft serve equipment," Felipe says, "or worry about cross contamination within a sometimes fast-paced production line."

They also improve kitchen efficiency and cut down labor costs that would otherwise be devoted to preparing and plating desserts. "The labor savings are big—we estimate 25 percent of the labor burden," Weller says. "Load'd Sundaes are an affordable and profitable way to get into serving ice cream, the number one dessert in foodservice, without major ice cream capital expenditures."

By Steve Evans