

How to Create a Successful Grab-and-Go Sandwich Program

Customers count on grab-and-go menu items when they are on the move, and convenience store foodservice consumers—particularly younger patrons—want more fresh/prepared foods to choose from, according to Technomic's 2022 C-Store Foodservice Multi Study.

Sandwiches continue to be a favorite in convenience stores as they are already made and consumers don't have to wait for them. Keeping up with the demand for them means offering multiple varieties and ingredients that will keep customers coming back for more.

E.A. Sween Company offers a variety of on-the-go food options for retailers from sandwiches and burritos, to baked goods and snacks for any time of the day. The brand's individually wrapped products are convenient, quick meals or snacks for busy consumers.



Sponsored content from our partner

EAS
E.A. SWEEN COMPANY

READ MORE



Deli Express® sandwiches from E.A. Sween are assembled by hand, and made with quality meats, cheeses and custom-formulated breads. On-the-go sandwiches such as classic sandwiches, hot-to-go and sub sandwiches are available for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Market Sandwich® offers a variety of individually wrapped sandwiches made from high-quality meats, cheeses and breads. E.A. Sween's premium sandwiches, such as wraps, King's Hawaiian® Sliders and their Artisan Style sandwich are good for on-the-go.

Other E.A. Sween offerings include: San Luis® on-the-go, easy-to-eat Mexican food options such as burritos and quesadillas; and Simply Delicious® Bakery muffins.

But simply stocking a variety isn't all that's required for grab-and-go success. There are various aspects of creating a successful grab-and-go sandwich program, including category management, knowing the best selling items, incorporating trending ingredients, mastering consumer appeal and product placement.

Tips on Category Management

The three key factors that should shape product and brand mix are sales data,

industry data and manufacturers, and when it comes to category management, a good, better and best product mix is a good way to reach a cross-section of consumers and provide variety according to E.A. Sween.

David Hendrix Jr., president of Big Red Stores, said the way he determines product mix is by using a mix of value lines and higher quality products. "During COVID, it was all about availability," he said. "Now we like a mix of value line and higher quality." He also suggested carrying wraps, burritos and flatbreads.

Kristen Monahan, category manager, Commissary & RTE Prepared Foods, has another approach. "Generally, I will work with a 4-to-1 ratio—four classic sandwiches, and one on-trend or higher-end sandwich."

Knowing What the Hot Sellers Are

According to Technomic's 2022 C-Store Market Annual Report, the top categories

for sandwiches/wraps are turkey, mixed protein, ham and club. The fastest-growing categories are chicken Caesar, pastrami, barbecue (beef, chicken, brisket), buffalo chicken and tuna salad.

Monahan said their best sellers are their sausage, egg and cheese croissant and Italian sub, which rank number one in breakfast and lunch, respectively.

For Hendrix, pre-packaged burgers and chicken sandwiches are performing well in 2023. Artisan sub-style sandwiches are at the top along with chicken salad, and the classic "wedge style" sandwich with ham and turkey offering is popular.

"Customers seem to be looking for something that is close to fresh and high quality," said Hendrix.

Monahan said, "We are seeing customers lean towards classic sandwiches with a twist. We recently launched an American sub with peppers that is really gaining traction. Also, sandwiches that can serve as both

lunch and breakfast are showing steady increases."

Trending Ingredients and How to Offer Them

Forty-three percent of c-store consumers say c-stores should offer more prepared foods made with unique ingredients, according to Technomic's 2022 C-Store Foodservice Multi Study.

The top ingredients paired with sandwiches and wraps, according to Technomic's 2022 Sandwiches and Wraps U.S. Menu Trends Report are: tomatoes, lettuce and chicken; the top sauces paired with sandwiches and wraps are buffalo sauce, pesto sauce and marinara sauce; and the top cheeses paired with sandwiches and wraps are provolone, Swiss and mozzarella.

"Our customer base is leaning towards anything chorizo, as well as everything bagel seasoning as an ingredient in sandwiches," said Monahan.

Hendrix said bread quality seems to be important. "Artisan style sandwiches, handheld wraps and flatbread options have been newer hits," he said.

How to Appeal to Consumers With Fresher, Healthier Options

According to Technomic's 2022 C-Store Foodservice Multi Study, 48% of c-store consumers said they would like c-stores to offer more healthy foods and beverages.

Operators can appeal to consumers by emphasizing natural ingredients, which can help highlight quality in dishes and meet consumers' expectations; menu-labeling to underscore nutrition facts; and having clear explanations of ingredient benefits, according to Technomic's 2022 Healthy Eating Consumer Trend Report. Claims that highlight natural ingredients—"fresh," "real," etc.—are strongly associated with healthfulness and more associated with improving

an item's taste, compared to traditional nutrition claims—"low-sugar" and "low-fat"—according to the report.

Food Placement

As far as where to place sandwiches in stores, and which locations increase sandwich sales, Hendrix said, "We like to use our open-air cooler to merchandise these items."

Monahan places sandwiches in different areas. "Sandwiches are generally placed with the classics near the back, new and on trend, sandwiches are in first position, as well as bundle placements near pickles and side snacks," she said. "Our larger footprint stores have stronger sales due to higher traffic volume. Our legacy or smaller stores sell more sandwiches if other hot offerings are not available."

By adhering to these various aspects and suggestions, c-store retailers can set themselves up for success with their sandwich programs.



EAS
E.A. SWEEN COMPANY

For more information
about E.A. Sween, visit
EASWEENFOODS.COM