How Buddy’s Kitchen Upgrades Menu Items with Ease—and How Restaurants Can Benefit
Restaurants have been working overtime to draw in diners with exciting menu items, signature dishes and on-trend LTOs. With ongoing labor challenges, it can be difficult to continuously come up with new menu items, signature dips or condiments and more, but there are some strategies operators can employ to ensure their menus stay fresh and appealing without maxing out the back of house—such as adding a new flavor or ingredient to a familiar favorite to create something new and exciting.

Buddy’s Kitchen, which specializes in preparing and supplying ready-to-eat frozen foods to airlines, convenience stores, big box retailers and restaurants, uses The Oregon Fruit Company’s products to create delicious menu items that elevate offerings and entice repeat purchases.

**Signature Items and Consumer Appeal**

According to Technomic’s recent *Flavor Consumer Trend Report*, 41% of consumers say they are tempted to order a menu item when it is served with an “original” sauce, topping or ingredient they can only get at that restaurant. Signature items are key for appealing to consumers who have more options than ever when it comes to where they dine, and they can be made more appealing if restaurants don’t stray too far from what customers are already familiar with, as 36% of consumers say they are more likely to try a new or unique flavor if it is showcased in a familiar or traditional way. That is, operators can update a menu item to include a signature condiment or dip, instead of having to create an entirely new dish. Other ways operators can appeal to diners seeking signature items is by incorporating seasonal ingredients—37% of consumers say they are more likely to try a new or unique flavor if it features seasonal ingredients, and 34% say their flavor preferences change depending on the season/time of year, according to Technomic’s Flavor report.

**How to Create Signature Items with Ease**

Because many operators are facing ongoing staffing woes, it’s helpful if the signature items can be prepared with ease. By updating condiments, dips and spreads, for instance, kitchen staff don’t need to worry about a long list of new items to prep or cook. Oregon Fruit’s products make it easy to create endless interesting options, and that’s just what Buddy’s Kitchen has been doing.

Joshua Rappaport, CEC, VP of Culinary Innovation at Buddy’s Kitchen and SK Food Group, said, “We look to Oregon Fruit to provide ingredients that we can incorporate into sauces and spreads to update a menu item to include a signature condiment or dip, instead of having to create an entirely new dish. Other ways operators can appeal to diners seeking signature items is by incorporating seasonal ingredients—37% of consumers say they are more likely to try a new or unique flavor if it features seasonal ingredients, and 34% say their flavor preferences change depending on the season/time of year, according to Technomic’s Flavor report.

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enhance our sandwiches. We also use their products as toppings on breakfast entrees and as a way of introducing fruit flavors into baked items.

Buddy’s Kitchen uses both the Velvet and Original Fruit In Hand product lines from Oregon Fruit, and the fruits they’ve used include harvest apple, blackberry, peach and apricot—perfect for seasonal offerings, but delicious all year long, too.

Rappaport noted, “We have had tremendous success using Oregon Fruit in our airline business, both as sauces for breakfast entrees and as components in sandwich spreads. One of the best items we have done recently with their support was a peach bacon barbecue burger, utilizing their Original Peach as an ingredient in a house-blended barbecue sauce.”

Another menu item Buddy’s Kitchen has created using Oregon Fruit is a Ham and Cheese Panini featuring an egg patty, Black Forest Ham, Grand Cru cheese and blackberry bacon compote.

By using Oregon Fruit, Buddy’s Kitchen is able to offer signature, delicious items with ease, and those benefits extend over to restaurant operators. By simply mixing in fruits to various recipes—from yogurt-and-granola parfaits and baked goods to sandwiches, burgers and more—operators can offer their diners new, fun and flavor items without having to overhaul the entire menu or add a lot of work to the back of house.

Rappaport said, “It’s a great product with a clean label, and there isn’t really anything else like it on the market. I love their strong regional identity and their connection with the growers who provide their raw materials. More than anything though, it’s the people. Their passion and belief in the product was obvious and they made me want to find an application just because it seemed like such a cool company.”

Benefits for Fast-Casual and Quick-Service Restaurants

When it comes to creating craveable, signature items without adding work to the back of house, using low-labor ingredients to make high ROI dishes can’t be beat. From customized condiments to delicious fruit beverages, Oregon Fruit makes it as easy as can be for operators to update their offerings.

To learn more about Oregon Fruit, CLICK HERE