

COSTAS PROVISIONS



SUMMER PROJECT

by Peter Thor, President, Bellissimo Foods

Getting ready for summer?

Except for those involved in food production or catering to vacationers, summertime is usually a time to slow down, take some time off, and relax a bit. Taking a break from the daily hectic grind often recharges the batteries and helps provide some perspective about how fortunate we all live relative to most others. But this can also be a time to reflect, redirect, and refocus on the important.

In the hectic pace of normal life, it is common to spend more and more time reacting to the urgent, and perhaps put off some more important tasks. Here are some ideas for summertime rebuilding and refocusing on IMPROVING YOUR BUSINESS.

Spend some time outside the restaurant making connections and networking within your geographical customer area. Meet local school, hospital, church and other business leaders to explore ways of helping each other. Visit the local Chamber of Commerce and find out more about the community and demographics where your customers live. Hopefully, ideas will flow about new and creative ways to market to and develop more loyal repeat customers. Find out what positive things are happening in the community and how you can help.

Visit competitors and objectively consider areas for improvement in your own business. Observe what works and how managers and employees interact with each other. Both positive and negative lessons will emerge, together with ideas to improve your own management style.

Refresh your website to make it more user friendly and test it using a smart-phone, as that is how the majority of potential customers access restaurant menus and find new restaurants. Explore the various websites with "reviews", and consider how you might improve your restaurant's image and positioning. If you do not have the experience or know how to get started in this process, find a web developer to help.

They are generally not expensive and well worth the cost, especially given the opportunity cost of doing nothing! If you don't want to be bothered with it, a local developer can usually complete a simple but functional website for about \$1500. Make sure you ask them to make sure it is mobile device ready.

Do you honestly know where you are making money and where you are not? If not, work out a simple system to track expenses and know your costs compared to your pricing and revenue. Assess your progress to date this year, and whether or not you are on track to achieve your financial goals. Identify other objectives and put together a plan to achieve them. Look at the big expense areas of food and labor, and look closely for signs of trouble. Oft overlooked signs include food wastage or missing inventory which are indicative of poor practices or theft.

Employee turnover or absenteeism can also be signs of poor management practices and a lack of training. Are your employees developing as they should? A good place to start is talking directly to employees, sharing your objectives and how they can contribute to the success of the organization. Of course, their main interest and concern is how they will be personally impacted, so be sure to include information on why it is important and how their efforts for the organization will ultimately reward them. If you have time, some one on one training always yields benefits. It can also be a time to bring out and correct any perceived attitude problems. Companies often advertise that "Our people make the difference!". In the restaurant business they truly do. Excellence from front to the back of the house are required for long term success and profitability.

An important concept often used in successful large companies is to identify and focus on "core competencies" which simply means to concentrate on being excellent in those areas critical to your business. A corollary is to let go of tasks which others can do. That may mean to focus on things like special training for the chefs, and engage staff on marketing efforts rather than use limited resources running to the nearest depot store. Outsourcing or partnering certain non-core functions will free up some of your time and best leverage the most critical resource - you! Please contact your local Bellissimo distributor for expert advice and the best value ingredients in the industry. Bellissimo distributors are all locally owned and have the same issues you do. Their experience can help. Nobody knows pizza like Bellissimo. Good luck!





SERVING FOOD WITH *Style*

There are countless factors that affect the overall success of a pizzeria, or Italian restaurant in today's economy. Besides having a delicious menu, bringing a unique flavor, or having a broad variety of items available, restaurants must also be constantly aware of food presentation; and having a flare for style could be the difference between making return customers or not.

With the success of TV cooking shows such as Top Chef and Iron Chef, the average consumer has become more and more aware of the artistry that goes into stylizing top quality food. When a diner is being served their meal, the first sense that is used to judge the arriving meal is sight. A customer reacts to the food based on how the food is cooked, the quality of the ingredients used, how the components are laid out on the plate, etc. Making sure you have hit the major style categories and presented a meal that not only tastes, but looks appetizing is the first step in creating a positive experience for the diner.

Now, we are not saying you need to prepare every meal like an artist would prepare a piece of work, but there are some easy tricks to learn to make sure your food visually makes the mouth water.

Food Buying and Storage: The first step in presenting good looking meals is making sure you are using the best ingredients. Make sure you are diligent in storing food in the proper place and at the correct temperature, and do not leave food out for extended periods of time. Check "best before" or "production" dates upon delivery to make sure your ingredients are as good as your recipe.

Cooking: Whether you are a restaurant owner, chef or server, delivering burnt or severely under cooked food is not an option. Consistent delivery of a perfectly cooked pizza or entree is what your customer expects.

Plates: Selecting the right plates, cutlery, glasses and linen will enhance the overall appearance of the dish. There are a wide range of shapes and styles of plates that will add interest. For more fun, add some color in your serve ware.

Plating: The easiest way to draw a well styled plate is to start the food presentation by filling from the center of the plate, and adding sides or garnishes to make the main stand out more. Try to add different colors and textures next to your main ingredient to spice up the interest. To add touches of color in your dish, just use herbs or peppercorns. Consider photos of each item in the kitchen to emphasize the importance of both style and consistent presentation.

Finally, but importantly, consider what you would prefer to do within the range of your skills and time availability. Spending time fiddling with toppings or garnish can sometimes be unrealistic, unnecessary and waste the time the food is at its best. Most importantly, enjoy what you are doing, and have fun with it. The more fun you have, the more fun your customers will have.

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Where to Search for a NEW HIRE

With about 13 million people, the restaurant industry employs one of the largest workforce segments in the United States. There are plenty of potential good hires out there; the trick is finding the right one for your restaurant. Here are a placed to look when adding more employees to your restaurant.

Word of mouth: Make sure to talk to friends, family, or even valued customers about the positions you need filled. These networks of people are often the best way to connect with resources you wouldn't normally have access to, and are often trustworthy resources.

Internet posting: The internet is the fastest and most cost effective way to start looking for new candidates. With so many people connected to the internet, it would be beneficial to post job listings to your website, Facebook page, or Twitter.

Newspaper: Frequently, newspapers can not compete with Internet Web sites and other online posting, but with some research into the area in which you want to hire, newspaper ads might be a reasonably inexpensive way to find potential hires.

Signs: Posting signs in or near your location can be useful, although they may end up looking somewhat tacky in your front window. Use your judgment based on current customer demographic, location, and business type. An option close to home would be a local high school or community center. Making contacts with local high schools or colleges and posting in their community areas can be a great way to find part-time or after-school help. Be sure to communicate all posting with school administrators before putting up the signs. Also, local hotspots like coffee shops may also be willing to have you pin ads on bulletin boards or other visible spaces.

Remember that the food service industry has a very high employee turnover rate, so make sure you are prepared for the occasional loss of staff. One effective way to retain good employees is to provide them with opportunities for growth and development. Provide the employee with coaching and feedback. Let them know what they do well and give suggestions for improvement.



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Costas Monthly - July 2013

Pizza Market Industry, Trends & Challenges

By Angelo (Vangelis) Kechris, Purchasing & Sales Manager
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Pizza is the most popular American food. In August 2012, according to Packaged Facts survey, 97% of all adults eat pizza and 93% have gotten food from a pizza restaurant in the last 12 months. The industry reached \$36 billion sales in 2012 (up 3.8% from 2011). The pizza market is mature and will grow slowly in the next few years. The four big national chains (Pizza Hut, Dominos, Papa John's and Little Caesar's) have over 30,000 stores, achieving in 2012 over \$20 billion in sales, with over 50% market share. All chains account for over 60% of pizza sales. They dominate the delivery and carry-out segments of the market and their dominance is expected to grow. Americans are trending away from dining out and towards takeout and delivery foods. Even though the pizza industry is very dominant and huge, it is losing share to other cuisine formats on the restaurant side.

The competitive landscape is different in the Northeast, but it's also changing very fast. The independents have been the dominant force and provided fierce competition to the national chains. The competition was so formidable that some chains had to close a few of their initial stores due to low sales and negative profitability. The national chains have started making slow inroads into the local markets in the last 10-15 years. They had to overcome many obstacles, but slowly they were making progress for a variety of reasons. Today, their market penetration rate and growth rate is accelerating and are starting to create the same problems to local operators that chains had to face when they first entered the New England market.

Today, there are many factors and forces which influence the market and the competitive arena. The biggest and most important is the tremendous competition. Until the early 1990's, the requirements for success were very few: provide a good product to the customer, have a clean store, and work hard. Entry barriers were low level. Competition was mostly from other independent operators and some Chinese restaurants. Today all of these have changed drastically. The competition is everywhere; from all different directions, and are very intense, broad and deep. We had tremendous pizza store proliferation in the last 20 years. There was good market penetration from national pizza chains. Coffeehouse chains, supermarkets and convenience stores began competing in the pizza business. National sit-down restaurants are also concentrating on the carry-out segment. Every kind of

food operation would like to go after the lucrative pizza pie.

Economic factors are having a profound effect in the industry. Consumers have less disposable income. All their other expenses are rising without a corresponding income increase. They are demanding better value and better product satisfaction. Their tremendous carry-out options make them less tolerant to lower product and service quality, therefore reducing their loyalty to a pizza store when not well satisfied. Skyrocketing food costs and significant increases in insurance, packaging materials, and pizza delivery costs have squeezed operating margins with no relief in sight. Price increases are minimal by local operations due to the tremendous promotional pressure and fierce competition from national chains.

Consumer trend is another important factor. American consumers are becoming more aware about nutritional facts and their impact on their health. They are demanding healthier, more natural, more wholesome, less fatty and lower cholesterol products. Product offering is another challenging issue. Consumers want increased diversification and more flavors.

Social and technology factors are the latest developments impacting consumer demand. The proliferation of the social media has changed completely the way consumers communicate and how this is influencing their choices and preferences. It creates a whole new and very different communications media for pizza restaurants to use to communicate with their customers. The latest technological developments have created new ways for the customers to express their preferences and make product choices. All of these force pizza restaurant owners to adapt to the new way of communications and business.

What options do local operators have? What type of action do they need to take? In following issues, we will review, analyze, and suggest survival strategies for the independent pizza operator.





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Costas Monthly - July 2013

Imported Food: CHANGE FOR THE GOOD

By Elias Tsismenakis, Purchasing Department
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Change – a word most of us do not like. But change can be good; it can create new opportunities and open doors. We are undergoing such a change with our category of imported food products, and we think that you'll love it!

What are we changing?

Quality

Your recipe is as good as the ingredients that you use, and your customers can tell the difference. With competition and sluggish demand, manufacturers and packers began changing the quality of products that they offered to lower their costs. You noticed this and so did we, and we decided that it was time for a change. We are committed to offering you what you need to succeed and differentiate yourself from your chain-store competition – at a value.

- Our canned sliced olives (**Costas Code #570000**) are from Spain – and they actually taste like olives. If you're looking for a step above these already great olives, try our Greek sliced 4/1 gallon olives: Kalamata (**Costas Code #570008**) or Green Halkidiki (**Costas Code #570026**).
- Our canned red and green pepper strips (**Costas Code #570012**) are vibrant and crisp. If you didn't know any better, you would think that they are fresh peppers: they taste that good. They are just as good for pizza topping and steak sandwiches as they are in your signature pasta dish.

These are only a few of the products that we have upgraded while still working hard to provide you with the best bang for your buck, so there is more to come!

Direct Purchases

We have been busy working with our fellow distributors nationwide as well as the head office at Bellissimo Foods to leverage our years of experience and know-how in the imported foods category. This has put us in a position to be direct buyers: going right to the source to get you your product instead of working through a middleman. We are buying multiple containers of products directly from the plants, anything from peppers to tuna, and making sure it meets or exceeds the quality you demand.

Market Review & Thoughts

By Louis Lipman, Purchasing Director
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The chicken market has been incredibly strong for the last couple of months. Over the last few days, we finally have seen reduced pressure on the tenderloin and boneless breast market. We hope that this is indicative of supply catching up with demand. There is also a hope and expectation that we will see a lot of acres committed to corn production this year (which is a primary food for chickens). If that is supported with good yields per acre, we could see a significant drop in the cost of corn and a significant drop in the cost of feed for the chickens, thus easing of prices of breasts and tenders.

Typically, the grain market moves in some form of unison. If we see corn continue to drop (we were trading at \$8.20+ per bushel in August of 2012, currently trading at \$6.68 per bushel and forecasted to drop in the low \$5.00s), we expect to see wheat and flour follow suit.

We feel as though we may be at a summer low for pork products (including ham, bacon, pepperoni, salami, and sausage). There is typically a big demand for pork trim as the summer grilling and hot dog season gain momentum. This demand typically drives the cost of the raw materials higher. We have seen the raw material for bacon rise \$0.08 per pound in the last few days. While hams have yet to take off, it is anticipated they will show strength in the next few weeks. Both pineapple and mushrooms are increasing in cost.





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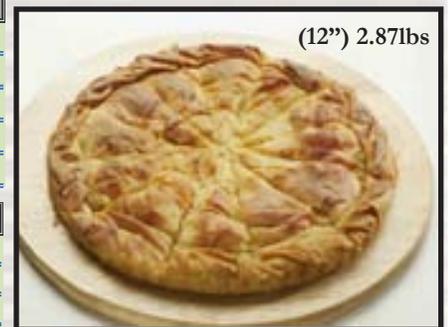
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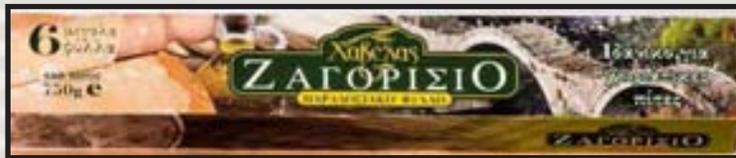
(1oz)

CODE	WHOLE PIES	PACK
680043	CHEESE PIE (Τυροπιτα)	7x45.9oz
680041	SPINACH PIE (Σπανακοπιτα)	7x45.9oz
680047	LEEK PIE (Πρασοπιτα)	7x45.9oz
680045	PUMPKIN PIE (Κολοκυθοπιτα)	8x45.9oz
680049	VARIETY PIE PACK (Ποικιλια)	6x45.9oz

CODE	MINI PIES	PACK
680044	MINI CHEESE PIES 1oz (Τυροπιτακια)	19.8lbs
680042	MINI SPINACH PIES 1oz (Σπανακοπιτακια)	19.8lbs
680048	MINI LEEK PIES 1oz (Πρασοπιτακια)	19.8lbs
680046	MINI PUMPKIN PIES 1oz (Κολοκυθοπιτακια)	19.8lbs



(12") 2.87lbs



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Whole Wheat Fillo Dough Sheets Σιταρενιο Φύλλο

(680055 - 20x15.9oz/cs)

SAVEUR

Phyllo Finds ~ by Ben Mims

<http://www.saveur.com/article/Techniques/Phyllo-Finds>

“Finally, there's country-style phyllo, the thickest of the bunch; it's perfect for hearty, rustic pies like the feta-and-greens-filled hortopita (Zagorisisio brand is the best).”

sky

Must-See in Greece ~ by Jason Oliver Nixon

<http://deltaskymag.delta.com/Blogs/Jet-Set/February-2013/Greece.aspx>

“Discover Epirus for a hidden, unspoiled Greece. Located in northwestern Greece, Epirus's charms include the lovely city of Ioannina on Lake Pamvotida, the Zagoria (a group of traditional stone villages surrounding Vikos Gorge), culinary delights such as pitas (pies) filled with vegetables or meats and the pristine landscape of mountains, gorges and rivers.”

Food Facts

Parmesan vs. Romano



Named after Parma, Italy, the city it originated from, Parmesan is the most well known of the hard cheese family. It has a sharp, nutty flavor that intensifies with age. In Italy, it is often served as a dessert, with fresh figs, walnuts and a sweet red wine. In America, Parmesan is mainly used for grating on pasta and salads, and including on pizza.

It can be purchased in two basic forms: (1) fresh, and (2) dehydrated or dried. The richest flavor comes from fresh Parmesan. Parmesan is light yellow and has a hard, granular texture. It is aged over ten months. For smooth sauces, buy block Parmesan or freshly grated 100% cheese. Some commercially grated Parmesan blends contain anti-caking ingredients that prevent it from incorporating into sauces. Parmesan can be used as a table cheese, either in a shaker or portion control packet, shaved over salads and pastas, and sprinkled on pizza.

Romano is also named for its area of origin, the countryside surrounding Rome. Romano is another hard, grating-type cheese used on pizza and pastas. It has a creamy white appearance and sharp, piquant flavor. Italian Romano, named Pecorino is made from ewe's milk, but domestic versions are made from cow's milk which produces a milder flavor. Like Parmesan, Romano comes in both fresh and dehydrated form. Fresh Romano has a higher moisture and fat content than Parmesan and is aged for five months or longer.

Operators looking to diversify flavor profiles in their pizzas and

pasta dishes need look no farther than Parmesan or Romano cheese. The question remains....Parmesan or Romano? Which one is tastier and which one do you use on your pizza and pasta, if either? Romano's taste is stronger and it is saltier, making it a wonderful flavor-enhancing agent in soups, pasta dishes, and pizza. Commonly paired with mozzarella, Romano gives pizza an extra punch. Not everyone enjoys the sharp, salty taste of Romano and prefers a slightly milder Parmesan. Whichever cheese you choose, your customers will definitely notice that there is something unique and more flavorful in your pizzas.





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Costas Provisions Corp. is a proud member of La Famiglia Bellissimo, the largest national network of foods distributors, specializing in authentic Italian foods.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Summer Project
Pg 1

Serving Food With Style
Pg 2

Where to Search for a New Hire
Pg 3

Distributor News
Pg 4-6

Food Facts: Parm vs. Romano
Pg 6

See Page 4-6 for News & Information That Could Affect You

