

Showcase: food & beverage service

Expand your menu—and your revenues—with convenience foods

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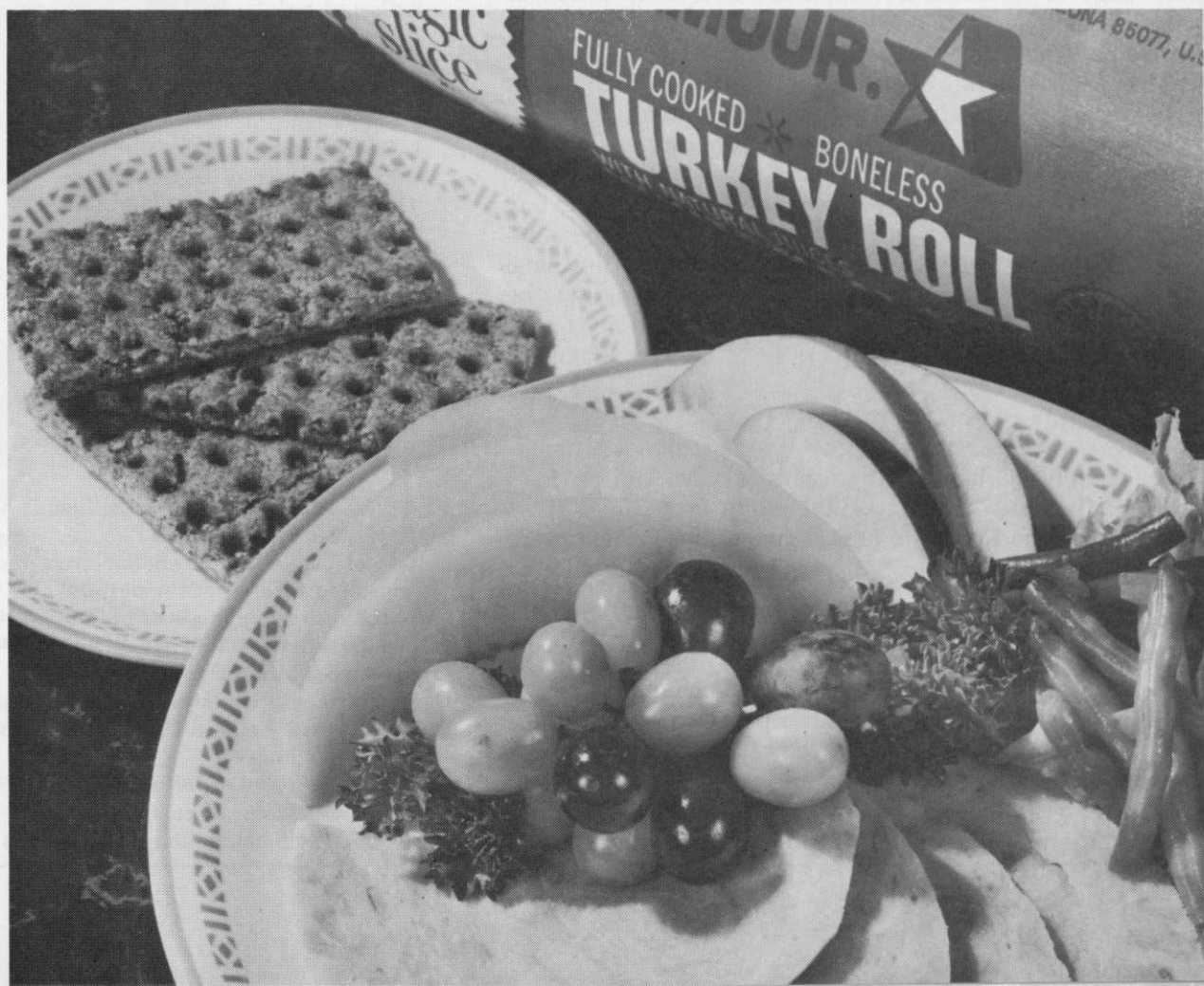
How can convenience foods help you?

First, you can expect to minimize your present labor problems by changing the pattern of work load. Second, you can offer a more varied menu with fewer skilled hands. In fact, with frozen, freeze dried, canned, and irradiated convenience products, you can offer year-round many foods that were not possible at any price just a short time ago. But perhaps the greatest benefit of all is the standardization of food quality with convenience foods. Let's take a closer look at this important forward step in foodservice. Important from your standpoint as a foodservice operator, and important to your members and customers from nutrition and aesthetic standpoints.

How convenience improves quality

It might be a good idea to start with a general definition of maximum food quality: the peak of perfection in all food preparation which is established and maintained when maximum (optimum) standards are applied to selection and purchasing of raw materials; skill in handling, technique of production, and attention given to presentation of the finished product.

A particular definition of food quality is: the standard



which is established in every food service by the food operator and which is dictated by management's tradition of merchandising experience and food knowledge, and by the purpose of the particular food operation.

Successful food operators have always recognized the importance of establishing standards of food quality control: careful purchasing specifications; properly designed equipment and restaurant layout; tested recipes; explicit service instructions; and proper selection of qualified employees and well-organized training programs for all levels of food production and service employees.

With rising food costs and a reduced labor force, it has been necessary to discover new ways to maintain these high quality goals. That's where convenience foods help.

Quality-conscious manufacturers are your allies

These manufacturers have spent millions of dollars re-searching the best methods of obtaining and preparing food

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in order to achieve a particular result. The raw materials which are used are selected and prepared with the skill and knowledge of scientific development. Sanitation practices in food handling are supervised throughout production and packaging. The nutritional value of food is guarded carefully, and the aesthetic elements protected with methods not available to the individual commercial kitchen.

That raises another question: Who determines the standards for convenience foods?

You do, just as you always have, by the products you buy and the manufacturers you patronize. But now these manufacturers are your partners in preserving quality. They have taken over the processing and preparation that used to be done by our own kitchen staff. By testing convenience foods, just as you would any new food or recipe before making it standard in your operation, you keep manufacturers aware of your quality requirements.

Convenience foods are meant to be adapted and modified to meet individual preferences of service. That's where the final flavor — the individual stamp of personality — comes in. But so far as quality is concerned, convenience foods represent the greatest forward stride in foods in many years.

How to program convenience foods into your menu

The most dramatic adaptation to the total convenience food concept is made when a brand-new operation is set up with foods and equipment synchronized. However, it is much more common for a successful on-premise operation to switch over gradually, replacing old equipment with modern convenience-oriented equipment in a normal phasing-

out process. This conversion is often a “by guess and by golly” one, and therefore not as satisfactory and economically successful as it could be.

To clear this hurdle smoothly, it is necessary to follow a prescribed routine of programming. To start, evaluate your situation realistically. See where you stand now. Define the goals that you want to achieve, the areas where you want improvement. Then proceed to implement them.

The following outline will assist in a program of evaluation leading to a successful changeover. □

I. Analyze the present system of operation realistically.

- A. Menu pattern planning
 1. Cycling
 2. Adequate selection
 3. Item popularity
 4. Customer satisfaction
 5. Relationship to equipment
 6. Labor productivity
 7. Product availability
 8. Standard quality
 9. Price range and average check
- B. Food costs
 1. Purchasing specifications
 2. Ordering system
 3. Receiving and storage practices
 4. Item costing
 5. Inventorying
 6. Portion standardization and control
 7. Utilization of leftovers
- C. Labor costs
 1. Accuracy of figures
 2. Fringe benefit costs
 3. Productivity goals
 4. Cost of training and turnover of employees
- D. Equipment and space conditions
 1. Location of equipment
 2. Maintenance of equipment
 3. Sanitation procedures
 4. Depreciation value
 5. Expected cost of replacement
- E. Overall morale of operation
 1. Job satisfaction

II. Define improvements indicated and where increased use of convenience foods would help.

- A. Menu improvement
- B. Food cost goal changes
- C. Labor cost goal changes
- D. Equipment purchases or relocation cost
- E. Sanitation and standardization goal changes
- F. Overall morale improvement

III. Plan how to meet new goals. Decide how new problems will be handled.

- A. Use of available information from food companies, consultants, reference materials
- B. Check efficiency foods availability
- C. Comparative testing of efficiency foods under premise-controlled conditions
- D. Use of food processors to help in programming
- E. Use of purveyors to aid in training of personnel in use of new methods
- F. Indoctrination plan for employees
- G. Check of sources of reliable supply
- H. Put plan into action and check results