

Foodservice bulletin

Energy conservation for club managers

Some tips on getting the most out of your ovens, without sending your energy bills through the roof:

- Start the day's baking with foods that require the lowest temperatures. It's wasteful to heat ovens to high temperatures, then wait to reduce heat for next item.
- Schedule cooking times to use ovens to capacity. Consider using extra space to cook such items as rice and sauces, not normally prepared in the oven.
- Allow a 2-inch clearance in standard ovens for air to circulate around pans. In convection ovens, you need less space.
- Set thermostats as low as possible to achieve desired temperature. A higher setting will waste energy and won't heat oven any faster.
- Load entire oven at one time, to avoid opening door more than absolutely necessary. For each second the oven is open, interior temperature falls 10°.
- Bake potatoes without foil, adding foil only after they're finished. But if you bake in foil, use it dull side out, as it absorbs more heat.

Labor news for club managers 1977 and beyond

January 1 brought another rise in the federal minimum wage, from \$2.20 an hour to \$2.30. In areas of the club industry where novice or unskilled workers are employed to perform basic tasks, the cost increase will have an impact.

Like 1976, 1977 will be a year of heavy labor/management negotiations. Major contract talks covering some 5 million workers in selected large industries are on calendar. Government officials hope that settlements will range in the vicinity of last year's average 8 percent for the first contract year. Should union leaders press for heftier increases — a likely occurrence — economists will have to trot out that old expression "cost-push inflation" and pray that labor might lend a sympathetic ear.

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Economists are already disturbed by some recent news about labor productivity. The Labor Department reports that in the fourth quarter of 1976 the nation's nonfarm productivity declined 0.1 percent. For all private business, productivity rose in the quarter at an annual rate of only 1.5 percent — a below-average increase which triggers fears that rising unit labor costs might provoke more inflation.

As long as productivity was growing at a healthy pace, manufacturers were generally able to handle their higher labor costs and still maintain adequate profit margins. But if productivity slips and wages keep rising, the producer has little choice but to recoup the loss by raising his prices.

Looking into the future, the Labor Department has released its projections of the nation's employment growth among various occupations in the period 1974-85. Total U.S. employment is expected to rise about 20 percent, from some 86 million to over 103 million workers. The gains for foodservice workers are projected overall at 24 percent, but it should be noted that this figure refers only to various subordinate personnel. By 1985 there should be a need for as many as 50 to 60 percent more managerial people. This reflects foodservice's growing dependence upon individuals who possess the professional skills and strong leadership qualities necessary to cope successfully with the rapid changes in an evolving growth industry.

The many faces of convenience foods

Lest there be confusion that only frozen food is available, it would be well to mention the categories of food products that are or will be available to the club food service industry.

FROZEN FOODS. Usually the first thing brought to mind when convenience is mentioned. There is a huge supply of them now, ready for use.

PRE-FAB, PORTIONED AND READY MEATS. At this time of high labor cost, they return savings unless you have a tremendous volume. Even in huge meat-cutting operations, the constant job of control, testing, and costing can be so expensive that it pays to have meat cutting done by others.

INSTANT DEHYDRATED. Products have forged ahead steadily in the past few years and are becoming more and more useful in the club foodservice industry. Many of us think back quite a few years to the earlier products, but we fail to realize that important advances have been made in the processing of these foods to enhance their quality.

One noteworthy example is instant whipped potatoes. Many of the persons who eat out would be amazed if they knew how many of their favorite restaurants, including some in the more expensive brackets, are using instant potatoes. Here again it is important to point out that a good instant potato, prepared in small quantities freshly as needed and served right, will yield a better product and a more uniform one than potatoes made up in large quantities hours before serving.

FRESH-CONVENIENCE. A combination of preparing your own foods and adding convenience foods to help in areas of trouble. If that good baker you had for years suddenly quits and you cannot find another, perhaps you will consider buying some frozen products to help the situation.

ALTER CONVENIENCE. This means buying convenience foods and adding your own variations, seasonings, and methods of service so that your food will still be distinctive. For example, you can buy a good basic frozen beef stew; thaw and heat; put in an attractive casserole; garnish with some biscuits and finish in the oven; serve it with some fresh peas, and you have a distinctive dish.