

CHICKEN



TOP PERFORMERS

Tyson Foods Inc.
Chester's International
The Broaster Co.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Krispy Krunchy Chicken
Squawkers (Brakebush Brothers)

FOR SUCH A LITTLE creature, chicken certainly knows how to command a formidable presence on foodservice menus.

To fully grasp this indefatigable bird's share of American stomachs, look no further than this: Each U.S. consumer gobbled up an average of 86 pounds of chicken over the course of 2008, according to the National Chicken Council.

That's a lot of birds in a lot of bellies. For convenience store foodservice operators, that means there's a lot of profit to be had from poultry, a most versatile and menu-friendly item.

There's plenty of room for collaboration between suppliers and retailers, too. Thirty key decision makers from 30 chains participated in the Chicken segment of the CSD 2009 Brand Preference Study, and 67% said they received presentations from just one or two suppliers in the last 60 days.

About 23% of the 30 respondents said they hadn't received a single presentation from a supplier in the last two months, while 7% of respondents had received presentations from three of four companies. Only 3% had been contacted by five or more companies.

Top performers among chicken suppliers were Tyson Foods Inc., Squawkers (Brakebush Brothers), Chester's International and The Broaster Co. An honorable mention also went to Louisiana-based Krispy Krunchy Chicken.

Whether it's cooked, fried, grilled and stuffed into a sandwich or salad, chicken continues to offer illimitable



opportunities to both co-branded and proprietary foodservice programs. Convenience chains big and small are relying on a variety of chicken solutions to help drive foodservice sales and increase in-store traffic.

Oklahoma City-based retailer Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores relies on co-branded chicken concepts to lure customers inside stores, while one-store and smaller multi-store operators are pushing their chicken concepts to create new menus and tastes.

Meeting the demands of local customers has also proven to be an effective strategy, with products ranging from chicken fingers to slow-turned rotisserie chickens.

"Evaluating what the competition is offering is key to developing any menu," said Brenda Jens, director of foodservice for Shop Rite Stores in Crowley, La.

But even menus that target market niches can grow stagnant. At present, 22 of the Shop Rite's 60 stores include delis, and two locations have attached sit-down restaurants. Each of the Shop Rite stores goes its own way when it comes to the menu. "Each one may be different, but chicken seems to be the

common denominator," she said.

More importantly, Jens said, stores need to offer quality, variety and value. "You should always have something that is new and innovative," she said. "If something is not working you need to boot it out and put something new and fresh in. Always keep it fresh."

Fas Mart Convenience Stores, a 205-store chain headquartered in Mechanicsville, W.Va., offers a full mix of chicken products at 74 of its stores, including a variety of bundled and family sized items to encourage bigger ticket rings and meal solutions.

"We offer anywhere from two-piece snacks to 16-piece meals as well as bulk chicken," said Fas Mart category manager Sharon Trow, adding that the bulk chicken orders run high during summer months for picnics and group outings. "We price it out from 25 to 1,000 pieces, and if someone wants more than that, we figure out a price for them."

Fas Mart estimates that it sold a staggering 1.5 million pounds of prepared chicken chain-wide in 2008, a number that lends rich substance to the notion that chicken is a surefire way to boost foodservice sales and grow in-store visits.