

Colicchio Gets Craftier 50 Big Bucks, Small Spaces 39

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RESTAURANT

HOSPITALITY



Pile Up The
Profits
Marketable Menu Ideas

SUPER FRUITS:
In addition to their great flavor, blueberries and dried cherries offer powerful antioxidants.

Make Super Foods Work for You

By Virginia Willis

Imagine a food—not a supplement or medication—powerful enough to potentially help improve your health, from reducing risk factors for heart disease to lowering your cholesterol, and even relieving arthritis pain! You'd order a truckload. Guess what, it's in your kitchen, right now.

Cherries, blueberries and other deep red or purple fruits and vegetables contain powerful antioxidants called anthocyanins. Antioxidants are substances that seek out and destroy free radicals, the harmful molecules that circulate in the body. Anthocyanins provide the vibrant red color in these foods, and have also been linked to a wide variety of health benefits—from potential protection against heart disease, diabetes and cancer to improved brain function and anti-inflammatory capabilities relevant to arthritis and joint pain.

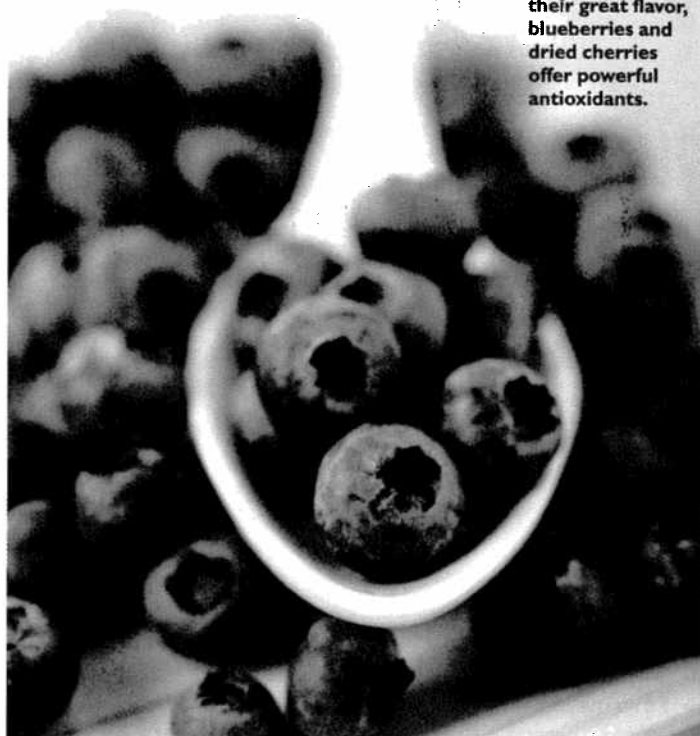
Consumers today are seeking more functional foods, known as "Super Foods," as they become more proactive in disease prevention, aiming to lead longer, better, more active lives. Consumers are less likely to reach for supplements and instead expect their food and beverages to naturally deliver disease-fighting capabilities.

As baby boomers age, dietary issues gain prominence not just for themselves, but also for their children and grandchildren. Given that 60 percent of adults age 65 and over suffer from arthritis, 50 percent of seniors, and 43 percent of "aging baby boomers" have high cholesterol, it's a natural market.

A recent survey by Opinion Research Corporation indicates that seniors and aging baby boomers are more likely eat certain foods if they know that they could potentially limit the type or amount of medication they need to take. With 31 million Americans turning 65 over the next 10 years, the demand for condition-specific products will explode, and it is important to aggressively target this audience in your menu items and menu implementation.

COLOR CODING

One of the cues for foods that deliver health-promoting properties is color. Red, in particular, is on the radar. One means of menu implementation with Super Foods is color-coding. Foods with healthy properties make a powerful menu statement. Health



U.S. HIGHBUSH BLUEBERRY COUNCIL

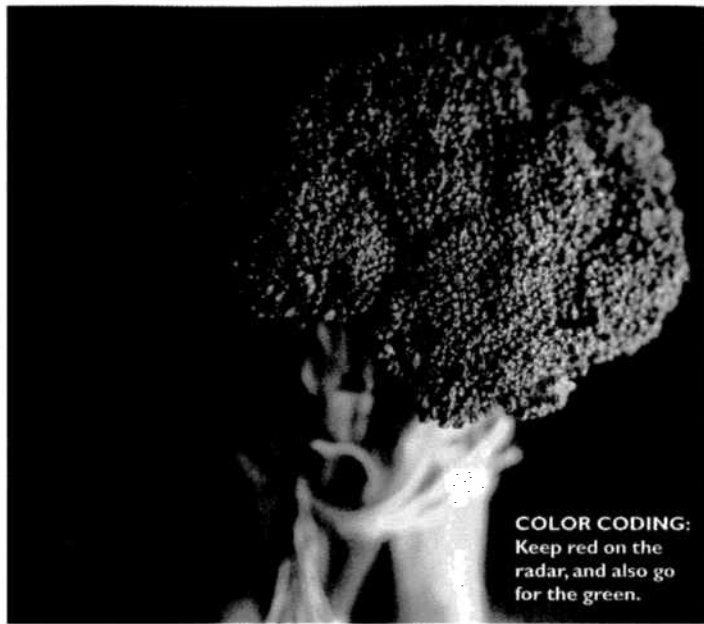
and nutrition experts agree that color-coding with foods rich in certain colors can be a cue for good health. Color-coding combines food science, medical knowledge and nutritional practices to encourage consumer consumption of colorful, healthy foods. Color-coding also allows an incredible opportunity for menu development.

Red foods, for instance, can be incorporated into the menu at large. Panera Bread includes a Tart Cherry Scone on its Artisan Pastry menu, filled with cherries, baked with cream and topped with powdered sugar. Tart red cherries in particular have functional benefits and a wide range of applications and are emerging as one of today's hottest Super Fruits.

Joan Scharff, the executive director of brand and menu strategy for Garden Fresh Restaurant Corporation, the parent company of Souplantation and Sweet Tomatoes restaurants, exercises the targeted monthly option with dried cherry specials. She explains, "the impact of featuring cherries in a targeted month builds customer expectations." One of the more

popular menu items during the monthly special is a Cherry Chipotle Spinach Salad with dried cherries and Mandarin oranges. Scharff continues, "It's very healthy and a power-packed salad that is a customer favorite." Other menu items in the company repertoire for the monthly special include a traditional Cherry Nut Muffin with tart cherries and walnuts in a buttermilk batter; and Warm Cherry Apple Cobbler, a homey sweettart combination served with frozen vanilla soft-serve ice cream. In 2008, Sweet Tomatoes is looking toward additional prepared salads including a Cherry Cole Slaw, certain to be a customer favorite.

Cherries are also one of the few known food sources of melatonin, a unique antioxidant that allows for deeper and more restful sleep—and may even aid with jet lag! Quoted in *The New York Times*, Dr. Russel Reiter, a nutrition researcher and one of the world's authorities on melatonin, said, "Tart cherries contain melatonin, which is then absorbed into the blood stream influencing your biological clock." Furthermore,



COLOR CODING:
Keep red on the
radar, and also go
for the green.

LEFT TO RIGHT: CHILEAN FRESH FRUIT ASSN.; DUNCAN SMITH—ARTVILLE

sleep problems increase with age. Nearly half of baby boomers and 56 percent of those 60 and over are concerned about getting enough sleep. With a growing concern over allergic reactions and driving when using prescription sleep aids, the market is shifting to more natural solutions.

FOOD SYNERGY

Some companies are already ahead of the curve. The Westin hotel chain announced in 2007 a rollout of a menu featuring foods from the “SuperFoods Rx” list. “SuperFoods Rx” is the product of SuperFoods Partners, a company at the forefront of the movement to reverse the unhealthful trends in diet and lifestyle. Their team consists of doctors, nutritionists and scientists who have studied the most current nutritional science. These studies have led to the publication of two bestselling books, *SuperFoodsRx*:

List of Super Foods

Westin Hotels & Resorts has joined forces with SuperFoods Partners, owners of the SuperFoodsRx brand, in creating its SuperFoods-focused menu. These health-enhancing ingredients are featured in Westin signature dishes. The initiative was introduced last year in 25 Westin hotels in the U.S. and Canada, with the intention of going global this year. The book *SuperFoods Rx: Fourteen Foods That Will Change Your Life* by Steven Pratt, M.D. and Kathy Matthews identifies the following:

- Beans
- Blueberries
- Broccoli
- Oats
- Oranges
- Pumpkin
- Soy
- Spinach
- Tea
- Tomatoes
- Turkey
- Walnuts
- Salmon
- Yogurt

Fourteen Foods That Will Change Your Life and *SuperFoods HealthStyle: Proven Strategies for Lifelong Health*. The Westin initiative will go global in 2008 with the introduction of the Westin Signature Breakfast, to be offered at all Westin properties.

The key to the Westin menu and Superfoods Rx is food synergy. Food synergy refers to the interaction of two or more nutrients and other healthful substances in foods that work together to achieve an effect that each is individually unable to match. In other words, when certain foods are paired together, they are even more nutritious than when eaten separately. Examples include spice combinations such as turmeric and black pepper. Turmeric contains an antioxidant, curcumin, and black pepper may boost curcumin absorption. Curcumin has been linked to a lowered risk of some cancers and Alzheimer’s disease.

Not all synergy patterns are overly complex. The Mexican staple of corn tortillas and beans is an example of food synergy. Both foods contain amino acids, which are used by the body to make protein. The

amino acids that the tortillas lack, the beans contain, and the amino acids that the beans lack, the tortillas contain. Combined together, they make what is known as a “whole food,” allowing the body to create complex proteins. It can’t get much simpler than the lunch-box special, peanut butter on whole wheat bread. Packed with nutrition, both wheat and peanuts eaten together make a whole food. Another example: combining avocado and red tomatoes containing anthocyanins increases the absorption of the antioxidant lycopene. Studies indicate lycopene may help protect against prostate cancer, breast cancer and heart disease.

With increased education and awareness, customers will respond to menu items clearly designated as a Super Food, Super Fruit or a food synergy combination. It’s time to get Super Foods on your menu. Understanding whole health will result in your greater wealth.

Virginia Willis, a graduate of L’Academie de Cuisine and Ecole de Cuisine LaVarenne, is a cook, teacher, author and culinary television producer.