
The Food of Possibility: A New Way of Thinking About Burgers.

Strange as it may seem, the burger is a living contradiction. Other than religion, politics and Yankees vs. Red Sox, no topic evokes as many ferociously-held beliefs than as to what constitutes the best hamburger (I've experienced enough focus groups to know this is true). So when it comes to deciding what burger is best for a QSR, what's the right answer?

Hitting a moving target.

Burgers are a perennial mainstay of the QSR menu. In fact, approximately 25% of all QSR sales* are burger purchases. As it continues to evolve, we have to wonder just how far QSRs can push the envelope while keeping their burgers popular and profitable.

Initially having made its claim to fame as a ten-cent single patty sandwich without cheese, the burger has transcended through independent burger "boutiques" and celebrity chefs in New York and Las Vegas. Topping a Kobe beef patty with foie gras and black truffles is all well and good in a more upscale setting (not to mention the fact that it might cost the diner a mortgage payment), but QSRs are forced to find more practical means of innovation. So how do you find the balance between novelty and consumer acceptance? How can you fulfill the endless cry for full flavor, but at a reasonable price?

Starting points.

Celebrity burger boutiques, foie gras and all, are actually a great place from which to glean inspiration. Consider new formats or applications to keep the flavor alive such as the use of blue cheese slices instead of blue cheese crumbles. Through innovation, create a beefier patty with all grass-fed beef to enhance this most crucial component.

The burger is indeed a blank canvas, but it takes more than culinary vision to make it relevant for a QSR. It demands you go back to basics. Understand the consumer mindset in that particular location. Understand the limitations of the operation. Remember that there is almost always more than one right answer—and it might not be the one you expect.

Next, follow the money.

Other than flavor, the consumer's most important burger consideration is how much it costs. People want safe, high-quality, fresh flavorful burgers, and they want it for a great price.

So when is expensive too expensive and when is cheap too cheap? With today's dollar burger wars, including smaller chains creating dollar burgers just to compete, is cheap even a viable strategy anymore? How do you stay close to what consumers are thinking and wanting, and what are they going to want next?

Understanding how to convert all of these thoughts into a viable burger offering for your QSR operation is where the challenge—and the fun—begins, and where the real value originates for your customers. Having the best burger on your menu is what leads to more brand appeal, loyalty, and most importantly, those one to two additional monthly customer visits.

Creative solutions for burgers and brands is what we do every day at Food IQ. I truly love talking all things burger—the people who crave them, the next big idea, and how your company can think more creatively about them. Give me a call so that we can find the right answers for you..

Chef Tom Smith / (417)-885-4541 / tsmith@foodiq.net

FOOD
Before it's a great dish,
it's a great idea. 