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Catching THE AGE WAVE



2020 — The number for perfect vision and a good year to choose for looking at foodservice trends for an aging population. In 2020, members of the Silent Generation, born between 1925 and 1945, will be 75 years or older and comprise 17 per cent of our population. Their children, the Baby Boomers, born between 1947 and 1959, will be our Junior Seniors over the age of 60.

Nutritionally speaking, in addition to a few shifts in nutrient requirements, the needs of adults 50+ is largely influenced by their overall health and attitude. According to a trends report by Information Resources Inc., baby boomers are fixated on health and vitality like no generation before. This means that they are turning to food, beverages, vitamins and supplements to increase longevity and quality of life.

The growing numbers of seniors present opportunities for foodservice professionals. In a recent survey by the Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition, 89 per cent of respondents aged 65+ stated they often or sometimes select foods based on amount of whole grains; 89 per cent look for fibre; and 81 per cent check for total fat, salt or sodium. They are also watching sugar, calories, and may be dealing with medication side effects. Organic eating was also reported as important to baby boomers. Consider some of these tips to capture the senior market.

EASY – easy to read, easy to eat, easy to digest. Make menu fonts larger. Offer comfort foods that are flavourful and gut friendly.

MORE – Older adults tend to eat less food overall. They need to get the same amount of nutrients as before but packed in fewer calories. As people age, they often experience a diminished sense of taste and smell, due to medications or health conditions. Perk up the flavor of recipes with more herbs, spices and lemon juice – not with sugar or salt.

SMALLER – portion sizes. A common comment from seniors is that restaurant portions are too big. If they don't wish to eat the whole meal, offer a take home package so they may enjoy it the next day.

ZOOMERS – boomers with zip – may become more assertive when dining out to meet their dietary and medical needs. Here are some insights which foodservice professionals can use:

WEB SAVVY – Nutrition savvy customers check the restaurant's menu on the website before heading out. This helps them plan their meal in advance.

Make sure you identify healthy options, with nutritional information on-line to help make informed dining choices.

ORDER SAVVY – Customers may ask the server for a grilled entrée, instead of fried. Seniors may request two appetizers and a salad, or might prefer sharing a meal. Consider customization whenever possible.

MENU SAVVY – Zoomers are looking for healthy choices that are nutrient rich.

- Offer lean meat that is grilled and prepared with very little oil.
- Serve dressing, sauces and gravy on the side.
- Offer lots of seasonal vegetables and fruit on the menu.
- Serve whole grain breads.
- Offer mini desserts or treats that can be shared.

Don't let the nutrition needs of boomers become 20-20 hindsight for your business. Catch the wave of the future Zoomer generation with visionary menus and services.

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