

Training Tip – Visually Pleasing Products

Out of the 5 senses that we are blessed with, you would think that the most important to utilize in your ice cream store is Taste: Your Ice Cream has got to taste great right? Well yes, you are right, but before the spoon rises to the mouth the product has got to look every bit as delicious as it is going to taste.

So placing 95% percent of your efforts in taste and 5% into the way that it looks may be a bit misguided. This month we are going to touch on presentation.

This should be one of the primary elements in training your personnel. The menu item must look appealing. Let's start with the cup.

CUP CHOICE

The choice of you cup is important for a number of reasons:

1. First of all you should try to use one cup for a number of your menu items. Remember that each of these cups comes in a box of 500 or 1000. You will need to have room in your dry storage for 1 (possibly 2) of these boxes for every cup or lid you choose to stock. You may think that having 12 different sizes of cups caters to more customers, but remember: you've got to store and count these guys every month. Consider multiple use for cups. For example a Solo SD12 cup can be for a traditional sundae and well and your specialty sundaes. You can also use this size for your regular blizzard type product and a mini shake.
2. Your menu item should look like it suits the cup. We go to an ice cream store close by our home sometimes and they serve a single scoop in a 12 oz drink cup. The scoop looks miniscule sitting in the bottom of an ill suited cup. Make sure there is enough room around the top of the cup for extra toppings: remember they are an up charge so you want to fit them in if you can. You also want to have room for meltage. Small banana split containers make my blood boil when the hot fudge melts my ice cream and all of a sudden, I'm in a balancing act so I don't spill.
3. Cost is also an important factor: but please balance it with presentation. I know wax paper cups are cheaper than your clear plastic, but a well built sundae looks spectacular in a clear cup and can be a great marketing tool. When someone walks out of your store holding a clear cup with a beautifully built sundae, passers by will certainly think "boy, I'll have one of them" Both the Honor company and the Karat company are making clear plastic cups that are up to \$20 cheaper a box than Solo. Also a number of novelty cup companies are doing very well in this business. (eg; www.coconutking.com) Baseball helmet cups and the like are appealing to the little ones but remember the cost of the cup must be built into your food cost. Consider up charging for a unique cup that a customer will keep after eating.

So let's assume you are using a 12oz clear plastic cup for your traditional hot fudge sundae. Having practices like staggering scoops so that there is room for hot fudge to cascade down and around those scoops will ensure the more visually pleasing it will look. Always refer to your hot fudge supplier for correct serving temperatures, but remember that the hotter the fudge the slicker it will be. Dispensing at about 110 degrees will give you a nice even consistency.

Whether you put nuts on before or after the cream, consider a nut topping blend for variety rather than plain old granulated nuts. And... remember that whipped cream is a garnish, and not a key element of the sundae. If you pile whipped cream six inches high in a parfait fashion, by the time the customer gets to your ice cream, their mouth is all "buttery" from the half tub of cream they have consumed.

At the end of applying, push the nozzle down into the whipped cream to create a little cradle for your cherry. Nothing is worse than a cherry avalanche.

You should have a cheat sheet or simple directions to help you staff make each and every one of your sundae menu items, and an "end of the line" photograph as to how the product should look will help them compare. I have some standard ones I can email if you would like.

Good luck and remember – a customer walking out of your store with a fantastic looking treat prepared lovingly by you and your staff has just become your new marketing guru.