



Photos courtesy Campbell Soup Company

Tomato Peso

# Add Soups and Boost Your Business

By Diane Chiasson

**W**ant to boost profits and generate extra sales? Adding soups to your menu is a great way to do both. To make soup valuable, spruce it up and entice customers to order it over and over again. Think of creative ways to add visual appeal and your soups will not only wet customers' appetites, but also encourage them to open their wallets.

Whether your hotel makes its own soup or has a branded soup kiosk, the idea behind soup is quite simple—it is a versatile food that can be served at any

time of the year and to any hungry customer. So, how can soup boost sales year-round? All it takes is merchandising and marketing solutions and some knowledge of your customer base.

### Make your soup sing

Creating unique soups can separate your hotel restaurant from other operations that sell the same old flavours. Give homemade soups a unique name so you become known for them. Try adding spunk to old favourites such as chicken noodle and tomato soup by adding rice, spinach or zesty cheeses.

Also, be open to creative suggestions.

Allow customers to have the choice of a combination of two soups in a bowl such as creamy corn chowder along with black bean soup. The two soups can be delicately swirled and topped with a dollop of sour cream and salsa.

Ultimately, it is important to give customers a variety from which to choose. They do not want to see the same soup everyday when they enter your dining area. Offer two to three soups everyday for variety so your customers will not get bored, and change the soup menu frequently.

Having a "Soup of the Day" is not enough — at least three soups should be



Chicken Enchilada

sold during high peak eating times such as lunch and dinner. Three soups may seem like a lot to serve, and chefs may be afraid of wasting it, however, is very easy to store for the following day. By adding a different ingredient, you have a completely new soup to serve.

### Chill out

Soups do not always have to burn mouths. Chilled soups like gazpacho are becoming more popular and come in handy when people want something cool to eat. And they do not necessarily need the traditional tomato base. Be cre-

ative by serving variations of the same soup like roasted, salt and pepper, cilantro and cream gazpacho.

On hot days, try using hollowed pineapples or melons for chilled fruit soups. Advertise on your point-of-purchase signs that these unique soups are available.

### Create a visual appeal

Prepare soups where customers can see them bubbling and where they can smell them as soon as they walk in the door. People love to watch their food being prepared because it reassures them about what is going into their food. And, when they do not know what to eat, seeing soup as soon as they walk in will most likely be the first thing they order.

However, what is outside the bowl is also important. Think of bowls from an artistic perspective. Consommé cups, shallow bowls, crock pots, tortilla

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and bread bowls — the shapes and sizes are endless — all add to the food presentation. When serving thick soup in a hollowed-out round loaf of bread, the removed bread can then be cubed for dipping.

Be creative with your bowl selection. Use bowls with interesting geometric patterns or country-style painted vegetables. The bowls' colours should complement the soup served. Having two or three different colours for different soups is advisable. For example, cream of tomato soup looks the best in a pure white bowl topped with fresh green herbs like parsley.

On the other hand, most hearty soups look their best served in heavy bowls. Soups such as minestrone, vegetable, chicken gumbo, goulash, chili and stew should be served in deep earthenware bowls. This gives a rustic, wholesome, homemade appeal to the soup. These bowls are particularly good when olive oil or Parmesan cheese is stirred in. For light or puréed soup, use wide shallow ceramic soup bowls.

Moreover, make sure the soup is accented by the attractively arranged garnishes that surround it. Garnishing individual soups adds to their appeal, enticing your customer to make a pur-

chase. Garnishes also add to the perceived value of soup. If food looks as great as it tastes, orders will increase.

A variety of popular condiments can spruce-up soup and suggest they are custom-made. People appreciate at least two varieties of crackers and the option of topping the soup with grated Swiss and cheddar cheese, croutons and freshly chopped green onions. Keep these on hand and well stocked.

### Painting with soup

Paint plates with contrasting coloured soups to create various decorative effects. Just get a squeeze bottle, fill the bottle with smooth, lump-free soup and pipe design directly over another soup. Multiple designs are possible by varying the soup colour, the size of the opening in the nozzle and blending techniques.

For example, dragging the tip of a knife through the soup garnishes creates magical swirls. Use two different soups with contrasting colours. For example, try cream of broccoli soup with a swirl of cream of tomato soup. Have fun experimenting.

Patterns made with heavy cream are an attractive finishing touch for puréed soups. Use four tablespoons of heavy cream, a knife and a little imagination.

To create a star, put a spoonful of cream in the centre of the soup. Draw the tip of a knife from the centre toward the edge of the soup to form the five points of a star.

To create a ring of hearts, drip cream from the tip of a teaspoon into a circle of drops approxi-

mately one-inch apart from each other and one-inch in from the rim of the bowl. Draw the tip of a knife through the centre of each drop to form a ring of heart-shaped drops. For a flower, drizzle cream from the tip of a teaspoon to form the outline of a circle approximately one to one and a half inches from the rim of the bowl. Then draw the tip of a knife through it outwardly and then inwardly so there are five strikes in each direction. When complete, the cream will resemble a flower floating on the top of the bowl.

### Sales in action

Sell your soup in a combo with foods like a turkey wrap or a Greek salad. Combination selling can increase soup profits as well as that of other food items and makes customers think they are getting a great deal. Use signage, displays and point-of-purchase materials to cross-merchandise these items with a look that will encourage sales.

Train staff to offer soup to every customer they meet. The more soup is offered to customers, the more they will think about it. Also, ensure all staff members know the soup ingredients so when asked they will know right away. ☺



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Asparagus Bisque