



MIX

FOOD | FLAVORS | IDEAS | 2012

Signature Success



Create a Craving

Signature Dishes

Build Sales by Creating Menu Items Your Customers Will Crave

What's the specialty of your house?

Signature food items are the lifeblood of any successful menu—the strategy that sets you apart from the competition—building customer loyalty and allowing the operator better control over pricing and profitability.

Think of how many foodservice brands are inextricably connected to their most iconic and popular specialties: White Castle® its “sliders,” Dairy Queen® its Blizzards®, Outback Steakhouse® its Bloomin’ Onion®.

Other items may come and go, the menu may change and others copy it, but these essential signatures remain so much a part of customer expectation that they couldn’t possibly be taken off and retired. That’s what you call craveability.

White Castle’s marketing strategy, in fact, emphasizes the cravings its customers have for those famous little burgers. The two-bite specialties have inspired both a cult following and an entire new product category that has been copied and adapted in almost every possible iteration, throughout every segment of the industry. In recent years, the 90-year-old chain has leveraged that popularity, branding its customers “Cravers” and its food items “Cravings” (i.e., Breakfast Cravings).

It’s what all menu developers strive for: Creating an item that customers crave, that they’ll seek out above all other available options, thus strengthening the brand and its position in the marketplace. An item that’s as personal and proprietary as a signature.



Pasta Primavera featuring STOUFFER'S® Alfredo Parmigiana



NESTLÉ PROFESSIONAL™

has a full array of signature-ready brands and products including new STOUFFER'S® Alfredo Parmigiana sauce, the full TRIO® line of sauces and gravies, MINOR'S® sauces, flavor concentrates, and Gluten Free Natural Bases. There are also prepared menu building blocks such as CHEF-MATE® entrées and STOUFFER'S signature-making risotto. Other great options include STOUFFER'S Menu Starters™, like pot pie mix and tortilla mix, and NESTLÉ® Branded Ingredients, including NESTLÉ® TOLL HOUSE® and NESTLÉ® CRUNCH®.



Beef Stew featuring TRIO® Brown Gravy Mix

San Francisco based Ink Foundry predicted that signature dishes would play an increasingly important role for restaurants in providing a “wow experience” for customers, generating crucial word-of-mouth, particularly via social media. In addition, menu signatures give prospective customers something to search for online—instead of using generic categories (like “Mexican food”), they’ll look

for specific items like a great margarita or fish taco.

Premium Potential

In addition to creating cravings, signature dishes build sales and profits. Although no single item should be priced significantly out of range of the menu average (an entrée that costs \$35, for instance, when most are in the \$18–20 range) unless it uses extraordinary ingredients—lobster, Kobe beef, and the like—a signature can and should support a premium.

This doesn’t necessarily mean that the signature’s actual menu *price* can be higher than that of other dishes, but that its *profit margin* can be enhanced. Signature items deliver incremental profits not only through increased sales, but also because you can focus on lowering food costs and increasing perceived value with a thoughtfully designed house specialty. That value

DID YOU KNOW?

Top risotto varieties on the menus of U.S. chains and independents:

- Mushroom
- Parmesan
- Shrimp
- Tomato
- Wild Mushrooms
- Asparagus
- Scallop
- Chicken
- Vegetable
- Saffron

—Source: MenuTrends DIRECT, US Chains & Independents, Casual Dining & Fine Dining

perception can even help increase the overall price point of your entire menu if your signatures are truly unique and craveable.

Success with Signatures

Alright, so you want to create some craveable new menu specialties: Now the fun starts. Many operators have had success with taking a traditional, inherently popular item (think macaroni-and-cheese, hamburgers, chili, chicken wings, ice cream desserts) and adding their own unique spin to it with additional ingredients, sauces, condiments, or a presentation that really makes it stand out from the competition’s.

Continues on next page.



Arancini featuring
STOUFFER’S® Parmesan Risotto



For the entire collection of 10 Signature Success recipes, visit www.NestleProfessional.com/SignatureSuccess by 12/31/12, register for NestleProfessional.com and follow the easy download instructions.



How To... Make Arancini



STEP 1 Spread cooked risotto out on a sheet pan to cool.



STEP 2 Form 1 ½-oz. balls of risotto around a mozzarella cube.



STEP 3 Dip rice balls in flour, egg wash, and breadcrumbs, tapping off extra after each breading step.



STEP 4 Deep-fry arancini in hot oil until golden brown and crisp.

Turn risotto into a delicious arancini bar snack.

For the recipe, see pg. 7.



Tamale Pie featuring CHEF-MATE®
Chili Con Carne without Beans

The comfort food trend has really taken off in restaurants—even high-end ones—because of the enduring popularity and versatility of these kinds of items.

This strategy makes particular sense, since the customer is already “pre-sold” on the concept and more likely to try it in the first place—then yours becomes the place they think of when they have a real craving.

You will want to develop an item that can be executed consistently and efficiently; this is going to become one of your top sellers, right? That’s where speed scratch and other savvy operational tactics come in (see page 6).

DID YOU KNOW?

Signature dishes not only generate word-of-mouth but also give prospective customers something to search for online—an important consideration with today’s emphasis on marketing via social media.



Eggs Florentine featuring MINOR'S®
Hollandaise Sauce

Spotlight on...Sauces

A sauce can not only elevate a basic item like steak or grilled fish, but it can also be the starting point for a signature menu platform, such as a selection of Eggs Benedict variations or a beautiful dessert sampler. Some sauce trends to consider:

- Healthier Options (i.e., salsas and other produce-dependent specialties, vinaigrettes used on center-of-plate proteins, lower-fat selections)
- “Cleaner” Labels (gluten free, natural, reduced sodium)
- Flavor Boosters (sauces incorporating chiles, umami-rich anchovies, citrus fruits)
- Global/Ethnic Sauces (from South American chimichurri to Southeast Asian red curry)



Shrimp and Cheese Grits featuring
CHEF-MATE® Basic Cheddar Cheese Sauce



Finally, you want to maximize your new signature's potential in every possible way, boosting its appeal to your patrons as well as its utilization in the back-of-the-house. A unique housemade sauce or salad dressing is a great example. If customers travel far and wide to have it, create an entire salad section to spur repeat visits, or consider repurposing a sauce as a marinade or dip for finger foods.

This strategy also gives customers an opportunity to customize their own meals based on a flavor or food item they crave. Mix-and-match or à la carte sauces have been appearing on more menus lately because they put more of the decision making in the hands of the consumer, without adding undue strain on the kitchen.



Open-Faced Meatloaf Sandwich
featuring MINOR'S® Beef Base



Spotlight on...Comfort Food

Classic comfort foods are a natural for chef-inspired twists, and most experts expect this trend to continue to gather steam as a way of adding value and accessibility to the dining equation. Here are some ways to tap it:

- **Sandwiches:** Put your own stamp on ethnic and regional specialties like the French dip, the bistro-style grilled sandwich known as *croque monsieur*, or a Louisiana-style muffaletta
- **Ethnic and Regional Comfort Foods:** From French-Canadian *tourtière* (a hearty meat pie) to Italian-baked pastas
- **New "Platforms":** Favorites like grilled cheese sandwiches and mac-and-cheese have swept the nation in part because they are so versatile. Next step: other vehicles, like risotto, which not only serves as an appetizer, entrée, or side dish, but can also be made with any number of ingredients, from butternut squash to lobster. Risotto can even be formed into cakes as a bed for different toppings, or into the Italian-style rice balls called *arancini*
- **Classics Reborn:** Many of the most forward-thinking chefs are looking back in time to resurrect classic restaurant fare like baked oysters, beef Wellington, creamed spinach, and more



Crab & Corn Chowder featuring MINOR'S® Crab Base

Marketing Signature Items

Although regular diners will already know about your specialties, it still pays to highlight them at every turn. There are a number of techniques for doing this, depending upon the personality and service level of your concept:

- Create a special menu category touting "House Specialties," "Customer Favorites," or the like
- Highlight signature items on the menu with a box, special typography, color, layout, or other graphic means
- Use an icon that identifies your specialties
- Train waitstaff to discuss specialties with customers, perhaps as part of an introduction to the ordering process—and certainly if the patron asks
- Merchandise signatures via table tents or other POS
- Don't overdo it; if every item is a specialty, what's so special about them?
- Consider special naming: Fatz Café, a Spartanburg, SC, casual chain that operates 49 locations in the Southwest, showcases its World Famous Calabash Chicken and Fatz Famous Fish
- The use of menu language and details can help create signature perception—and pricing. "Grilled Salmon" can only appeal so much, but simply changing the description to read "Wood-Grilled Wild Alaska Salmon with Hollandaise Sauce" sets the item apart and also allows for a price premium of several dollars

The Advantages of Speed Scratch

Building signature menu items around ingredients or components that are already prepared—a.k.a. speed scratch—can be a busy operator's smartest strategy.

Using menu-ready products like bases, sauces, flavor concentrates, or customizable, fully prepared items like macaroni and cheese, chili, risotto, and branded dessert toppings help you get a leg up on both menu-item development and preparation.



Speed scratch gives you the ability to turn standard items (such as prepared desserts) into signatures, by adding an interesting sauce and distinctive branded topping. Fully prepared mac-and-cheese or risotto can be deployed as the starting point for a huge variety of additional ingredients and applications—add additional vegetables, proteins, specialty cheeses, and more to create something uniquely your own.

This strategy lies at the very heart of an effective signature menu item program because it helps you keep up with increased demand for popular specialties without overwhelming the kitchen staff.

In addition, speed scratch components provide:

- Convenience
- Consistency
- Labor Savings
- Food Safety/Quality
- Just-in-Time Prep
- Ability to Offer Made-to-Order or Customizable Options



get recipe



Mini Dessert Parfaits featuring NESTLÉ CRUNCH®, BUTTERFINGER®, and WONKA NERDS® Candy Pieces



Arancini
featuring
STOUFFER'S®
Parmesan Risotto

Arancini (Crispy Risotto Balls)

Yield: 4 ¼ lb (32 risotto balls)
Prep Time: 35 min

Servings: 16 (2 each)
Cook Time: 5 min

INGREDIENTS	WEIGHT	MEASURE
STOUFFER'S® Parmesan Risotto	48 oz	1 package
Parmesan cheese, grated	8 oz	2 cups
Mozzarella cheese, fresh, diced into ¼ inch cubes	6 ½ oz	1 ½ cups
All purpose flour	7 oz	1 ½ cups
Eggs, beaten	12 oz	1 ½ cups
Breadcrumbs, dried, Italian	5 ½ oz	1 ½ cups

PROCEDURE

1. Cook Parmesan Risotto according to package directions. Add Parmesan cheese to hot risotto and stir with wooden spoon until well combined. Refrigerate risotto on a half sheet pan for 2 hours or until completely cold.
2. Form 1-½ oz (weight) balls out of the cold risotto. Press mozzarella cubes into the center of each risotto ball. Re-form balls so none of the mozzarella cheese is exposed. Refrigerate risotto balls for at least a half hour prior to breading.
3. Gently roll risotto balls in the flour until completely covered. Pat off excess flour. Gently roll the balls in the egg wash until completely covered. Let excess egg drip off. Roll risotto balls in breadcrumbs until completely covered. Pat off excess breadcrumbs. Repeat the egg wash step and breadcrumbs step. Once all of the risotto balls are breaded, refrigerate them until time of service.
4. To cook, place arancini in a 360°F deep fryer for 3–5 minutes or until golden brown.

Tamale Pie

Yield: 3 lbs 12 oz Servings: 12
Prep Time: 20 min Cook Time: 20–25 min

INGREDIENTS	WEIGHT	MEASURE
Vegetable oil	1 oz	2 Tbsp
Onions, diced	8 oz	1 ½ cups
Green Bell Peppers, diced small	4 oz	½ cup
Garlic, minced	½ oz	2 cloves
CHEF-MATE® Original Chili Con Carne without Beans	48 oz	5 ½ cups
Tomatoes, canned, diced, drained	12 oz	1 ½ cups
Corn, frozen	6 oz	1 cup
Jalapeño Cornbread, prepared	36 oz	12 pieces

PROCEDURE

1. In a medium sauce pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and bell pepper; cook 3–4 minutes, stirring frequently. Add garlic; cook an additional 1–2 minutes.
2. In a medium size bowl, combine onion mixture, Chili, tomatoes, and corn. Pour into half steam table pan. Bake in a 325°F convection oven for 20–25 minutes, or until it reaches 160°F.
3. To serve, portion tamale pie into a bowl and top with jalapeño cornbread.

CHEF'S TIP: Garnish with cilantro.



Tamale Pie featuring
CHEF-MATE® Chili Con Carne
without Beans

Exclusive Recipe Offer



get recipes

Download all 10 Signature Success recipes at:
www.NestleProfessional.com/SignatureSuccess

Here's a list of the new recipes available for your enjoyment and key ingredients you can use throughout the day in recipes of your own.

RECIPE NAME	KEY INGREDIENT
Beef Stew	TRIO® Brown Gravy Mix
Pasta Primavera	STOUFFER'S® Alfredo Parmigiana
Arancini	STOUFFER'S® Parmesan Risotto
Mini Dessert Parfaits	NESTLÉ® CRUNCH®, BUTTERFINGER®, and WONKA® NERDS® Candy Pieces
Eggs Florentine	MINOR'S® Hollandaise Sauce
Tamale Pie	CHEF-MATE® Chili Con Carne without Beans
Open-Faced Meatloaf Sandwich	MINOR'S® Beef Base
Crab & Corn Chowder	MINOR'S® Crab Base
Shrimp and Cheese Grits	CHEF-MATE® Basic Cheese Sauce
Seafood Stew	STOUFFER'S® Vodka Cream Mix without Pasta

*This is real food.
Crafted from the very best ingredients.
Capturing honest, authentic tastes and true reliable performance.
Food whose value lasts years, not weeks.
Because with real food, you will see real results.*



*Prepared with new
STOUFFER'S® Parmesan Risotto*

Real FOOD

Made from 100% Arborio rice, accented with real cream, Parmesan and Asiago cheeses, lightly seasoned, and always delivering a firm yet tender texture. This is authentic risotto—without trans-fat or artificial flavors—that you can serve in just minutes. Discover the delicious taste of scratch-made risotto turned pouch easy.



As the recipient of the Food & Beverage Product Innovations 2012 Award presented by The National Restaurant Association Restaurant Hotel-Motel Show, this risotto will elevate your menu and bottom line.

Real RESULTS



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