



The Foodservice Market

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With the fast pace world of today, it is very difficult for a full meal to be prepared with little effort. As more and more women enter the workforce, the traditional role of cook is shifting away from the women of the world. The foodservice industry has been more than happy to step in and provide delicious, well-rounded meals for those deprived of time. A large portion of fruits and vegetables grown today end up in the foodservice industry. The foodservice market is one that everyone in the produce industry is well aware of, although not everyone is mindful of all areas that fall within the foodservice realm. One area of foodservice that is of particular interest is that of corporations providing fine cuisine for executives and other personnel. This concept can be seen mostly in California, but companies everywhere are beginning to develop these eateries within their own building or complex. Having six of the largest cities, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin, El Paso, and two of the fastest growing cities in the United States, Austin and Laredo, makes Texas a prime area for producers to take advantage of the B & I (business and industry) market.

Corporate America is attracted to produce-based dishes and the concept of in-house dining for several reasons. The most

obvious is the health aspects that fruit and vegetables provide. America, in general, has moved to a more health conscious mind set. Also, these upscale dishes and menus appeal to the more educated audience that can be found in these larger corporations. A reason larger corporations are moving to in-house dining is that lighter menus translate to employees that are not as likely to be slowed down by heavy meals and their sleepy effects. With lighter meals employees can return to the second half of the business day more energetic. Also, employers find the in-house feeders convenient because having employees down stairs instead of across town will cut down on lost time from the commute to and from a restaurant.

Gourmet menus packed with tasty produce also offer as a sort of recruiting tool. Because most of the meals in this type of restaurant or cafeteria are offered for five dollars or less, employees, or those considering employment, see this as a benefit for working with that company. To employees of these large international companies, corporate image is everything, and sitting down to a meal with exotic foods from around the world is a perk. How employees view the company and the image of the company is very important.

Siemens Business Communication Systems Inc. is a large corporation in Santa Clara, CA that houses approximately 1,600 employees and offers a restaurant, The Café, that seats 300 people, and offers breakfast, lunch, and snacks between meals. Available to customers is a buffet featuring meatless dishes, pasta, stir fry, and steam vegetables. They also offer a make-your-own salad/sandwich combination. The average per person lunch ticket amounts to around \$3. A spokesman for Siemens admitted that their corporate feeder is fairly traditional, but that they are interested in expanding their produce base.

Koch Industries, whose headquarters are in Wichita, KS but have a large branch in Houston, is the second largest privately held U.S. company. Koch has a 718 seat cafeteria with a deli, several ethnic foods, and light or grill stations. The chefs are instructed to have three of every type of large salad offered mixed and ready to be served during peak hours due to the high demand.

Closer to home, USAA is a large company that specializes in insurance and investment consulting. Their main building, which houses around 13,000 employees, has 3 separate B & I programs offering a wide variety of produce and produce based meals.

B & I markets are not just a fad, but a trend that is catching up with corporate America. Texas has large metropolitan areas, as well as some of the fastest growing cities in America, which entails large companies residing here. It appears that these large corporations will soon have a need to provide employees with healthy, and produce filled meals. B & I markets offer producers in Texas a new opportunity to promote locally grown goods to home state firms.