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HEALTHIER OPTIONS MAKE THEIR WAY ONTO MENUS

New 0g-trans-fat fries and appetizers appeal to changing lifestyles

Tim Soufan has noticed a shift in the e-mails he receives from customers of Not Your Average Joe's, a 12-unit "creative casual" restaurant chain based in Dartmouth, Mass.

"I'd say 25 percent of the messages now have to do with health and wellness," says Soufan, the chain's senior vice president of food & beverage and purchasing.

As America's enchantment with fad diets fades, a focus on wellness is taking its place. Almost 6 in 10 consumers are making an effort to eat more healthfully at restaurants,¹ and 75 percent say that restaurants have at least some responsibility to serve nutritionally balanced food.²

New labeling laws for retail foods have cast the spotlight on trans fat. Labeling is not required in foodservice, but as awareness grows, some restaurants are revamping menus and providing more healthful choices for patrons. A 2005 McCain Foods study³ found that 47 percent of operators are extremely or very concerned about eliminating all trans-fat oils.

Trans fat is created by adding hydrogen to liquid oil to make it more solid at room temperature, which improves the texture and shelf life of crackers, cakes and chips, and makes frying oil last longer. Health experts have concluded that trans fat raises levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol, a contributing factor in heart disease.

At Not Your Average Joe's, the deluge of e-mails demanding healthy options helped spur a decision to banish trans fat entirely. "We opted to eliminate it," says Soufan. "But

that's easy to say; it's not easy to do."

One of the challenges for Soufan was finding a new fry. "That was a big one," he says. "People love french fries. We sell cases a day."

Healthier Fries and Appetizers

French fries remain a popular foodservice mainstay, but many brands are made with partially hydrogenated oil. Soufan turned to potato giant McCain, which just unveiled a new line of 0g-trans-fat fries and specialty potato products. After sampling a variety of options, he chose a skin-on, 3/8" fry. "In my opinion, 99.99 percent of our guests can't tell the difference," he says.

For frying, Soufan uses 0g-trans-fat vegetable oil, frequently filtered and changed. "It doesn't last quite as long as a trans-fat oil, but if you're going to do it, you've got to do it right," he says. "It's the old cliché, but ingredients are where it starts—good potatoes and good, clean oil." Now, Soufan says, "I know I'm serving a healthier fry."

Other healthful snacking options also are available. McCain has an expansive range of 0g-trans-fat appetizers and snack foods, including mushrooms, onion rings, onion petals, cheese, empanadas and Poppers® stuffed jalapeños marketed under the Anchor, Moore's, McCain and Brew City brands.

Heeding the wellness call can mean a menu that's good for business and customers' health. "From a menu perspective, eliminating trans fat is a must," says Soufan. "It's not just about the bottom line. If we're selling fried foods, then we have a responsibility to customers to offer a healthier alternative."



Healthful Frying Tips

The new-generation prep kitchen is seeking ways to cut trans fat. Once you've got 0g-trans-fat fries, there are two options for keeping them that way.

- 1. BAKING.** Oven-baking keeps fries from coming into contact with oil that has trans fats in it.
- 2. OIL CHANGE.** You don't need to abandon the deep-fat fryer; just use a 0g-trans-fat oil, such as canola, corn, cottonseed or any mid- or high-oleic oil.

Tips:

- Ask your distributor for non-hydrogenated oil.
- Check the label to verify 0g trans fat per serving, and that "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" does not appear.
- Don't cook 0g trans fat fries in the same fryer with foods that contain trans fat.
- Reduce the temperature of fryer when the restaurant is not busy.
- And practice good fryer oil maintenance for overall quality of oil.

Visit www.mccainusa.com/zerotrans for a wealth of information on McCain's 0g-trans-fat products, promotions and cooking techniques.

¹ R/I "New American Diner Study," 2005.

² R/I Obesity in America Study," 2004.

³ McCain proprietary research, National Food Product Research Corp., September 2005.

⁴ Idaho Potato Commission.

