

HEALTHY FLAVORS



# Right-sizing

## THE MENU

When it comes to portion sizes, less can definitely be more

Diet fads come and go, but portion control continues to be a fundamental strategy for consumers concerned about health. Studies have consistently shown that maintaining weight is not so much a matter of *what* you eat — the human body requires its share of protein, carbohydrates and fat, no matter what — but *how much*.

Consider the following: Research published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* has shown that most people will eat as much as is on their plate; subjects who ate a standard-size portion, however, were just as satisfied as those with portions 50 or 100 percent larger.

It's no secret that the "watchdogs" — including the FDA — are urging the restaurant industry to offer smaller and healthier options. The surprise is that smaller portions may also spell big business, appealing to those who don't want to give up foods they love. A few hundred calories of something satisfying like french fries, onion rings or dessert is not what kills a diet; in fact the satiation factor of eating what they want may help keep dieters on track. A recent Keystone Center survey of more than 500 adults revealed that 47 percent thought restaurants should serve smaller portions, saying they couldn't resist the larger portions, while only 8 percent said they liked large portions and wanted a lot of food for their money.

Even if operators have made the switch to trans fat-free foods, they can also help patrons by helping to maintain portion-control goals. In June, The Cheesecake Factory — a chain normally known for its big portions and selection — not only started testing a trans fat-free menu, but

also began offering smaller-size portions of popular items, at reduced prices.

A number of smaller-portion strategies abound. At Rachel's Osteria in Portland, Maine, small plates consist of a center-of-the-plate protein as well as sides, such as seared calamari on a bed of roasted peppers and greens. As many as two-thirds of all customers make a meal of small plates, allowing them to try several things while keeping a handle on portions.

Martini's, an Italian restaurant in Northampton, Mass., offers half-portions of select entrées. McDonald's has introduced a snack-size chicken wrap aimed at lighter eaters and between-meal sales while Arby's has a large menu of Sides & Sidekickers, including two varieties of fries, potato cakes and onion petals.

As with any health-oriented initiative, portion-control programs need to be low-key and nonjudgmental. Better to emphasize price or light appetites than to imply that any patron is — or should be — on a diet.

McCain products fit right in with this trend. Not only are many of the company's products trans fat-free, but their finger-food format lends itself to the right-sizing concept. A couple of onion rings can be positioned as a value-added garnish to sandwiches and entrées. A small portion of indulgence foods like mozzarella sticks or mini potato pancakes can be paired with a salad. And appetizers and sides such as fries can be menued as shareable portions. ☺

## Small

IS THE NEW BIG



### Big ideas for small portions:

- ▶ Offer smaller portions of popular items — not just easily portioned items like salads, pastas and sandwiches, but also entrées
- ▶ Convert a senior or kids' menu to a "smaller-appetite" program
- ▶ Increase satiation in smaller sizes; offer a dipping sauce for finger foods, or a variety of different ingredients and textures
- ▶ Offer sandwiches in different size breads, such as 6- or 10-inch tortillas, or mini and regular rolls
- ▶ If appropriate, institute by-the-ounce pricing for salads, prepared foods, finger foods and other items

