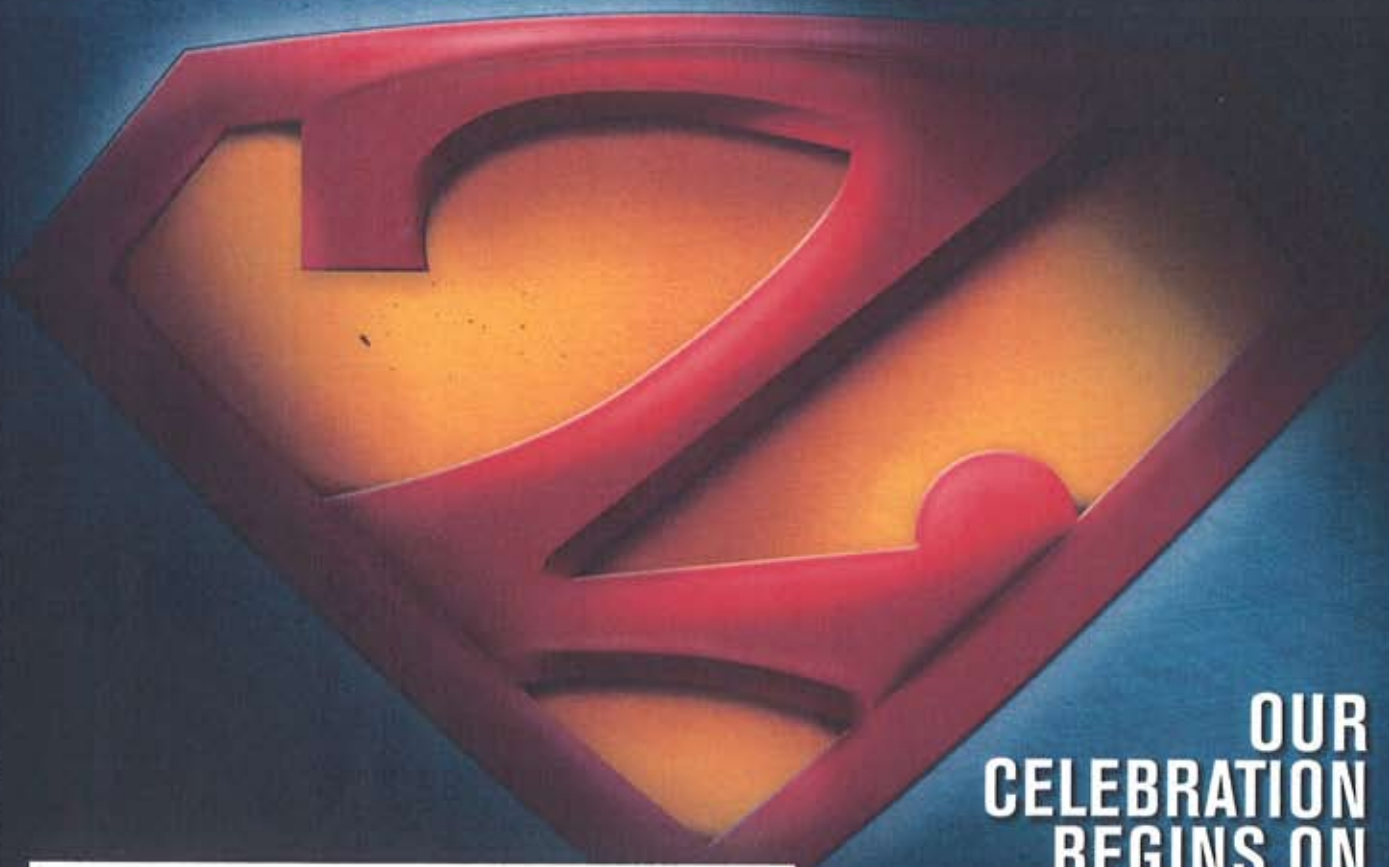


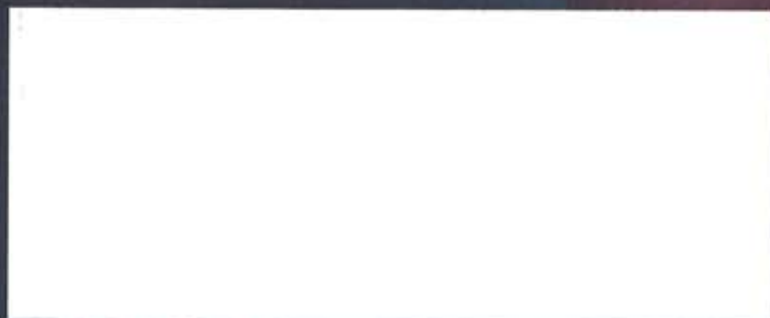
JANUARY 2012

RESTAURANT BUSINESS.

2012: THE YEAR OF THE FRANCHISEE



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PEANUT FRESH ROLLS WITH SPICY TAPIOCA

Small grows

They go by small plates, little dishes, bites, shareables, snacks, tapas, tastes and nibbles. Whatever they're called, we're seeing more of them.

DATASSENTIAL

MenuTrends Direct reports that small plate menus are up across all segments.

The largest gains are at Fine Dining, where **13.1%** of restaurants offer them—and Casual Dining, coming in at **9%**.

The number of items on appetizer menus has steadily increased, showing a **21%** jump from 2008 to 2011, according to Mintel Menu Insights.

Samplers are the most menued appetizer in the Mintel Menu Insights database, reinforcing the importance of shareability.

46% of snacks are consumed in mid-afternoon, reports Bonnie Riggs of NPD.

A nation of nibblers

Starters + snacks = today's eating style

Remember when dinner at a restaurant always meant sitting down to a multi-course meal of appetizer, entrée and dessert? Not any longer. More and more Americans are patronizing restaurants differently these days, opting to make a meal of shareable appetizers, small plates, inventive bar food or coffee and a snack. According to Chicago-based market research company Technomic, only 5 percent of consumers are now eating three square meals a day.

The shift can be attributed to several trends:

- Four in 10 Millennials—those 18- to 34-year-olds who are avid restaurant customers—snack more than once daily, reports Technomic.

- Small plates have been a big deal for a few years. Mintel Menu Insights found that people opt to order small plates to create a more varied meal or look to the appetizer list for snacking options throughout the day.

- The lackluster economy is boosting appetizer orders. Starters are priced lower than entrees and many menus offer shareable samplers for the



table, both of which defray the cost of dining out.

- A joint survey by Citysearch and Harris Interactive found that bar business and happy hours are on the rise—especially in the under-35 crowd. Bar food is becoming as important as bar drinks.

Restaurants are feeding this evolving eating style by broadening appetizer lists, adding more snack options and creating entire menus devoted to small plates and shareables.

See how these operators are embracing the shift.

Black Angus

Los Altos, California

To capture the more casual sports bar crowd, this 46-unit steakhouse recently created a concept-within-a-concept, installing Bullseye Bars in 29 of its locations. "Small," "shareable" and "finger food" are the emphasis on the Bullseye menu, points out Dudley McMahon, director of product innovation, although

M1. Foodservice Buyer: Downsizing starts here

M4. Recipes: Good libations

M5. Ideation: Rib eye's double life

M6. Seasonal: Winter greens and roots



NEW FROM BLACK ANGUS: CRISPY BABY PORTABELLA MUSHROOMS

steak quesadillas are hearty apps that also fit the western theme—plus they cross-utilize choice Angus beef from the steakhouse menu. Cross-utilization is especially crucial in light of continuing high beef prices.

“Guests are very pleased to have a nice

alternative to a big meal when they come to Black Angus,” reports McMahon. “Bullseye allows customers to dictate what they spend. And for under \$10, they can have something special and come away plenty full.”

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guests can also order from the main menu. Nachos, wings and quesadillas are among the top sellers, but McMahon has developed more adventurous items as well.

Several veggie-centric appetizers are gaining fans. Taking off from a longtime favorite, panko-crusting Crispy Fried Zucchini, McMahon introduced Crispy Baby Portabella Mushrooms as an LTO this month. “There were two reasons behind this dish—guests have told us they like portabellas and these mushrooms are a product we already have in house, offered as a side with our steaks,” he says. The fresh panko and choice of “fancier” mushrooms upgrades the item from standard breaded mushrooms. A grilled fresh artichoke with lemon aioli and basil pesto is another newer entry on the menu. “An appetizer list should have a nice balance that appeals to all tastes—a combination of fried and non-fried items; proteins and vegetables,” says McMahon.

In keeping with its “American West” theme, BBQ is a popular flavor profile at Black Angus. Cajun Cowboy Wings take the theme to the next level, by incorporating on-trend Cajun spices into BBQ roots. The fillet sliders and

**PS 7's
Washington, D.C.**

As soon as lunch service is over at 2:30 p.m., this trendsetting indy flips over to its lounge menu. Guests can order from a selection of beer, wine and hand-crafted and skinny cocktails, accompanied by modern takes on comfort food. “Happy hour is no longer just an hour,” says PS 7’s chef-owner Peter Smith. Since he opened the restaurant five years ago, the lounge menu has expanded to deal with more traffic and increased hours.

Crowd-pleasers such as tuna slid-

ers—tuna tartare on house-made Parker House rolls with cucumber-sesame salad—have been on the menu all along, but new items have been added under several headings: Enticing Starters, Artisan Cheese, PS 7’s Burgers, Favorite Sandwiches and Untraditional Topped Flat Breads. Smith refers to the fare as “fat kid food”—“things we may have been forbidden to eat but are decadent, fun and served in small enough portions to not feel gluttonous.” A good example is the OMFG Dip (\$12), a porchetta sandwich layered with roasted pork belly, caramelized onions, gruyere cheese and smoked jus on rustic artisan bread. It’s dripping with delicious ingredients and big enough for sharing. Chicken & Waffles are a buzzworthy version of Southern comfort—chicken liver mousse on black pepper waffles and plum jam (\$8). There are also homemade half smoke mini hot dogs, salami jalapeno poppers and seasonally changing flatbreads.

“We use techniques from fine dining but adapt them to more casual food, playing with new items rather than just adding appetizers from our regular menu,” explains Smith. Sharing is encouraged, as items like the sliders and mini banh mi sandwiches can be ordered in increments of three, six or nine pieces (\$12, \$18 and \$24 respectively). The lounge menu has been a boon for both food and cocktail sales.



TUNA TARTARE SLIDERS ON HOUSEMADE ROLLS STAR AT PS 7'S