

These 5 menu fixes could make your seafood sales soar

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By Rob Corliss

Seafood provides year 'round menu opportunities for operators. Being on trend is important — but being relevant is even more impactful. Building a strategic connection with consumers via menu verbiage and relevancy is an art. Menu descriptors need to entice and drive sales, as well as fit the tone of your brand. With menu space being a premium — here are a few basic strategies to help you maximize words to leverage success.

Strategy 1 – Key Descriptors

Concise, telegraphing menu descriptors are just as important as the food. Targeted crafted words sell and set the stage well before the first bite is enjoyed.



Keep it simple, says Corliss. Click to enlarge. Photo: Seafood International

Skip anything fancy or excessive in length, and focus on the most important simple, relateable connection points. A few topical descriptors are:

- **Techniques:** Grilled, pan roasted, charred, seared, broiled, steamed, glazed, ceviche
- **Health:** Omega-rich, protein packed, fresh, herb encrusted, local
- **Indulgence:** Golden fried, beer battered, hand breaded, tempura dipped
- **Value:** Value can be created with both lower priced items and higher priced premium offerings. Focus on enticing adjectives with lower priced items and the quality of ingredients with higher priced menu items.

Strategy 2 – Tout Feel Good (vs. better for you)

Consumers have been shifting towards an appreciation for “feel good” food vs. better for you offerings. It’s more about lifestyle and how food makes us feel with our mood of the moment

versus nutritional benefits. This creates seafood menu opportunities for both wellness and indulgence. Craft your menu words to tap into emotional cues:

- Freshness cues are more noticeable (and desirable) than ever to discerning consumers. Fresh can be literal or denote handcrafted or made to order.
- Indulgence still has lasting appeal and craveable power. To make this connection stronger, tout the quality aspects of the seafood, its preparation and complementary ingredients.

Strategy 3 – Use Pictures as Words

If a picture is worth 1,000 words, then why not optimize the opportunity.

- If your menu merits – showcase a captivating picture of the finished dish, the beautiful fresh seafood or where it comes from in place of words. This would be a great lead in for a webpage menu section.
- In our media-soaked, cluttered world, consumers process information at a rapid pace. A strategic picture may grab attention and create a lasting (and shared) impact.

Strategy 4 – Food With A Story



When it comes to certification, if you've got it, flaunt it, says Corliss. Photo: Seafood Watch

If you are proud of your sourcing practices, communicate that with your guests in your descriptions. Transparency and the story behind your food is one of your operation's most valuable tools. Pull out a key word or two from your food story and use it to help describe a menu item. Feature the rest of that content on your website, phone applications and social media outlets. Most importantly – be real and don't try to be something you are not. Some examples:

- Line caught, troll caught and other best practices
- The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program Green and Yellow ranked identification on your menu, marking them much like menu items are marked with GF for gluten free or V for vegetarian
- Specific species names, specific brand/partner names, grades

Strategy 5 – Bundling Opportunities

Typical space allocations on menus, menu boards and limited time offer (LTO) signage are finite to say the least, and the verbiage needs to immediately catch a guest's attention. Don't restrict your audience just to your menu, as those words have limited reach. Create extra menu space through the use of social media. These communications can tout additional features of the item or promotion, as well as re-enforce key selling attributes. Communications can also help to generate interest days prior to a new menu launch and continue the food story after a promotion is over.



Chef Rob Corliss

Chef Rob Corliss is a 3x James Beard House guest chef with over 20+ years of experience across multi-disciplines that include running world class resort hotels, launching new restaurant concepts, working in top foodservice marketing agencies and currently owning his own culinary consulting company ATE <http://www.7ate9.biz>. With an energizing passion for food ATE is focused on flavor innovation; with the daily goal of connecting people to their food, environment & wellness. For more information contact Chef Rob at: robcorliss@7ate9.biz

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