

Steak Houses Gain Popularity

CHICAGO, Ill. — Media coverage for the beef industry is sizzling these days, as major publications document increased consumer interest in steak chains. The thrust of coverage is a 5 percent traffic increase at casual, mid-scale steakhouses in 1992 — a time during which sluggish sales were the norm throughout most of the foodservice industry.

According to esteemed publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, a current rage for steak is fueled by diners who are eating more moderate portions of beef at home, but who want to splurge on juicy steaks at restaurants. Furthermore, steakhouses offer 30- and 40-year old patrons the meat-and-potatoes meals they grew up with and a decor that appeals to a growing consumer interest in the country-western lifestyle.

The Beef Industry Council (BIC) is now planning to build on these figures and trends by featur-

ing these steak chains in advertisements placed in prominent foodservice trade publications.

Some new steakhouses have enjoyed significant growth over the past year, including Tampa-based Outback Steakhouse, Inc., Atlanta-based Longhorn Steaks and Wichita's Lonestar Steakhouse and Saloon, Inc. — all of which went public this year. The *Journal* reports that each of these venues regularly has a two-hour wait at the door, and each plans to open 20 to 60 new outlets in 1993.

This success is inspiring some long-standing steak chains to revamp their marketing strategies and update their decor, according to the *Journal*. These include Metromedia Steakhouses, Inc. (responsible for the Ponderosa and Bonanza chains), Steak & Ale and Sizzler.

Such national media coverage has increased consumer awareness of steak's role in contempor-

ary dining, according to Larry Oltjen, Kansas beef producer and chairman of the Beef Industry Council (BIC) Foodservice Subcommittee.

"These articles fill an important, objective niche in placing steakhouses within current dining trends," Oltjen says. "New steakhouses differ from the past in that they offer a wider range of flavor profiles, such as Cajun or Mexican-style steaks. They also offer a variety in portion size, which appeals to a broader range of customers. And, finally, they provide a perceived value that is critical in today's consumer climate."

Attesting to steak's popularity from a trade perspective, *Nation's Restaurant News* and other foodservice publications also have also featured the success of steak chains. In addition to the segment's 5 percent traffic increase, a 1992 foodservice market survey

by Consumer Research on Eating Share Trends (CREST) notes a 5 percent 1991-92 rise in sales for upscale steakhouses versus an average 0.6 percent sales decline for other upscale outlets.

"These recent, major articles are helpful in lending a third-party credibility to the growing profitability of beef," says Maurice Lambe, BIC director of foodservice programs. "Articles about the increasing popularity of steakhouses help restaurant operators realize that a lot of people are making money selling beef."

Beef foodservice programs are checkoff-funded promotion programs managed on behalf of the beef industry by the Beef Industry Council of the National Livestock and Meat Board. The Beef Industry Council is a federation of 44 state beef councils that work to build demand through programs of promotion, research and information.

Farm Women

Berks Society 4

Berks County Society of Farm Women Group 4 met at the Bechtelsville home of Charlotte Mauer with five members and a guest, Joyce Greenman, present.

President Mary Fizz reported all groups were asked to help in a raffle as a fund raiser for the county. An item of canned or packaged food is needed for Ag Days to be given to the Reading area food pantry.

By-laws and rules were read and discussed during the social hour.

The next meeting will be a Valentine party at the home of Evelyn Becker in Boyerstown on February 2. A \$2 gift will be exchanged. Red must be worn or pay a fine. A red food item is to be brought by each member for refreshments.

Calcium Linked To Controlling, Preventing Hypertension

KINGSTON, N.Y. — Good news linking calcium consumption to hypertension prevention is spreading to consumers through the efforts of American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, Inc. (ADADC), Mid East United Dairy Industry Association/F.O. 36 Agency (Mid East UDIA) and Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program (PDPP). The promotion agencies extended a national media campaign organized by UDIA to spread the word about a new report reaffirming calcium's important role in the diet.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's Report on Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure, released in late October, points to diet as a controllable factor in the prevention and treatment of high blood pressure.

The report recommends that people get adequate calcium, magnesium and potassium in their diets — nutrients found individually in many foods, but together in meaningful quantities only in dairy products.

"The key message is that if you

are not eating the right foods to meet your RDA of these important minerals, now is the time to start," said David McCarron, M.D., spokesperson for the media campaign from Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland — the leading medical center exploring the link between calcium and hypertension.

McCarron helped spread the word that dairy products are naturally rich in these essential nutrients as the main objective of the campaign. News releases sent to consumer media by ADADC, Mid

East UDIA and PDPP quoted McCarron's recommendations and gave consumers tips on increasing dietary calcium. A recent presentation by McCarron at the American Heart Association annual meeting in November spread the word to health professionals. This was followed by satellite media interviews with news stations around the country, including the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre market. The three promotion groups helped coordinate the interviews, and arranged local interviews by area dietitians in

Pennsylvania's major markets.

In coming months the promotion groups will extend the hypertension/dairy story further with feature articles and recipes for the news media, and information to health professionals.

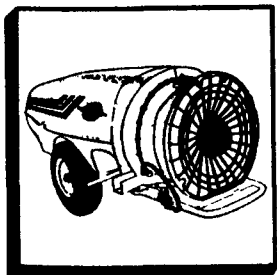
"Most Americans don't get enough calcium, magnesium and potassium," said Peggy Pettingell, nutrition education director for Dairy Council. "They can turn to dairy products for an easy and delicious source of these nutrients."

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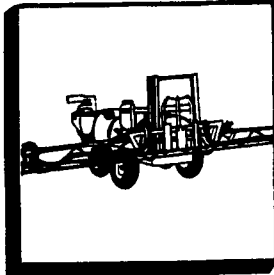
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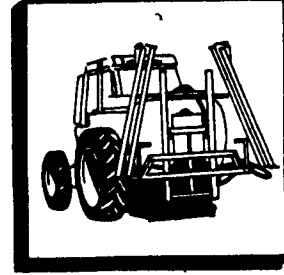
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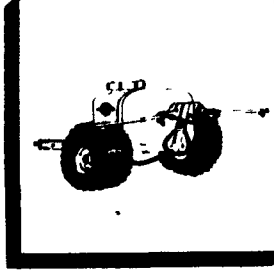
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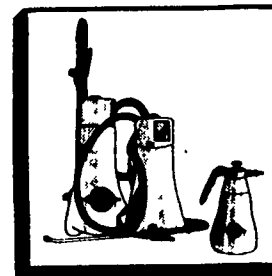
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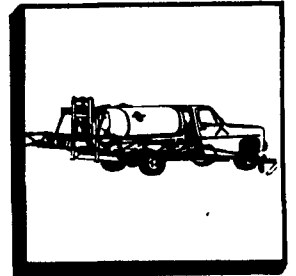


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