

# Design for health

Associate FCSI member **John Reed** identifies the influences, aside from the menu, that are causing a shift in consumer attitudes towards healthy living

**A**s a chef, I have been studying the impact of healthy lifestyles on menu and design considerations. Most of the trends can be incorporated into our menu development from ingredient sourcing, connectivity to the community through sustainability, local sourcing and use of advanced foodservice technology to minimize the impact on energy consumption and natural resources.

In reviewing this trend, it became obvious that future operational factors have an effect on the design. It is the reduction in traditional portion sizes, food made fresh to order and the return of traditional ingredient processing. As Millennials become the primary influencers of dining choices, their obvious concern for healthy living affects how we think about the design of a foodservice facility and the menus that will be prepared. Changes in the amount and types of food on the serving piece, a need for composting, reducing hot holding requirements and refrigerated storage all need to influence design now – not in the future when it will be too late.

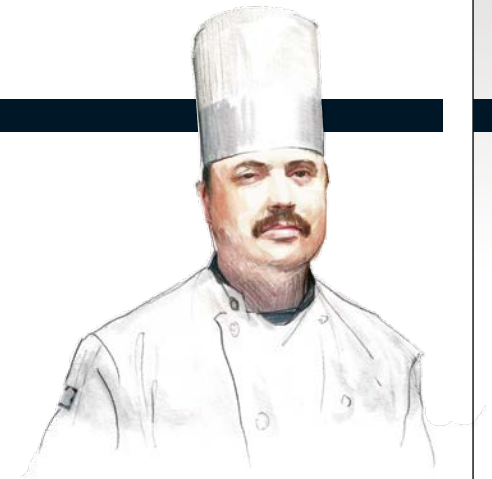
From convenience stores to adult care facilities, the nutritional content and portion sizes of the food we prepare today is radically different from 20 years ago. Super-sized “to go” meals and the chop plate for the 32oz Tomahawk Chop have been put aside for shared plates and portion controlled nutritionally balanced snack packs. Future consumers will want food when and wherever they are.

This “on demand” eating requires us to think differently.

The expectation of “roller” food or the steam table buffet has been replaced with freshly made salads, organic protein-rich snacks and made-to-order hot meals. Consumers are not worried about excessive quantities, preferring a controlled portion of wholesome minimally processed ingredients.

Portion control also translates into the minimizing impact on the environment from the reduction of leftover containers made from non-compostable materials, such as Styrofoam and fossil-fuel-based plastics. This thinking definitely affects the traditional white tablecloth restaurants and the catering segment. The dish dolly is becoming a fossil. Stoneware, wood planks and other non-traditional serving pieces are replacing the 12in dinner plate. Chefs are serving complex, smaller, flavor-rich and nutritionally balanced dishes. The traditional plate of 8oz protein, two vegetables and a starch is long gone. The trends of intelligently raised, controlled protein portions and a greater portion of vegetables and grains are here and not going away. The foil wrapped baked potato has left its golden years behind. The steak houses may say different, but they are aware of the need to offer lighter portions especially with the demand of small prime cuts and “whole animal” cooking methodology.

The following factors should be considered when thinking about the



kitchen design needed to produce that great sounding menu:

#### **Farm to table sourcing**

More frequent deliveries from smaller vendors that need alternative specialized refrigeration or cellaring facilities.

#### **Nose to tail butchering**

Dedicated cold rooms and dry aging equipment for operations committed to utilizing preservation techniques.

#### **Made to order**

Less reliance on hot holding equipment and freezer space in favor of combi and rapid cook technologies.

#### **Nutritionally balanced**

More emphasis on healthier cooking techniques such as sous-vide and the reduction of deep-fried options.

#### **Socially conscious**

Composting, grown on site and recycling are still in high demand.

The cornerstone of great foodservice design starts with the menu, but the consultant must think beyond how the menu reads and identify other influencers in consumer attitudes to healthy living. ■

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