

## HOT Button TOPICS

### Labor-saving ideas:

- Take a minute to **check your prep table** design and layout. Save your staff time by making sure that their most frequently used items are within easy reach.
- **Concerned about the labor shortage?** Cross-training is the answer. Today, the value of “generalists” as opposed to “specialists” is more important than ever. Cross-training helps you cover all bases when employees call in sick, plus employees working on different tasks often come up with new (and better) ways of performing them.
- If you're still trudging around to stores when you need equipment, **check out the equipment sales** online at eBay. You'll find just about any item you need at a discount. It's estimated that the B-to-B volume in the restaurant supply area alone on eBay will top \$30 million this year!
- **Consider a “bounty” system** when your labor pool needs replenishing. Offer current employees a cash reward for every friend they recommend who actually joins your team.



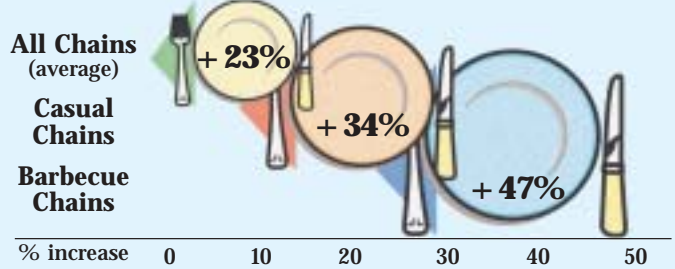
## Barbecue Heats Up Menus

### Barbecue is hot, barbecue is sizzling

There are lots of ways to say it, but the meaning's the same: BBQ items are more popular than ever on restaurant menus. The numbers bear out that fact, according to information gathered by the Foodservice Research Institute, which show barbecued items increasing in number on chain menus.

It is the increasing interest in both regional American and international cooking. In terms of American cooking styles, barbecue figures heavily in Southern, Southwestern, Tex-Mex and even Hawaiian cuisines. Worldwide, barbecuing is an important preparation method in Chinese, Thai and Caribbean cuisine, to name just a few examples.

### Barbecue items on chain restaurant menus from 1997 to 2003



Why the increase in popularity? For one thing, barbecuing is perceived as a time- and labor-intensive preparation method that's at odds with today's time-pressed, low-culinary-skills consumer lifestyle. So, barbecued foods have moved from being an item commonly prepared at home to a treat to be enjoyed when dining out.

Another reason for the upsurge in barbecue's popular-

The bolder flavor profile of barbecue items is also appealing to consumers. The rising number of barbecue-flavor items in retail — from snack chips to ketchup — demonstrates a growing consumer willingness to accept assertive flavors. Consumers now expect to see bold flavor profiles on menus when they eat out, so operators are finding that barbecue-flavored foods fill the bill.

See BARBECUE on page 2 ▶

## PEER® PORK RIBS: Full of Real Smokehouse Flavor



### Operator Benefits

- Convenient Cryovac packaging
- 100% yield
- Available sauced or unsauced

With Peer® Pork Ribs, it's never been easier to serve authentic barbecued ribs. Peer® Pork Ribs are full of that real smokehouse flavor that comes from our more than 135 years in the meat business.

Our tender and meaty loin back ribs are hand-rubbed and seasoned with natural mesquite smoke, then slow-cooked to make them extra flavorful. Since we do all the cooking, you simply heat and serve. Our careful attention to quality control means that every rib will be meaty and juicy, with no waste.

Got an idea for your own special sauce? Talk to us. With our unmatched customization capability, our culinary and production teams can give you a signature rib that'll set your operation apart from your competitors.

Find out how Peer® Pork Ribs can help you expand your menu by visiting our website at [www.peerfoods.com](http://www.peerfoods.com) or by calling Laura Fiorio at 1-800-365-5644.



1200 W. 35th St.  
Suite 5E  
Chicago, IL 60609

For more information about the taste they'll remember  
contact Paul Forde at 1-800-356-5644  
or visit us online at [www.peerfoods.com](http://www.peerfoods.com)



Chef Tim Murray

## Chef's CORNER

**Welcome to the Peer Foods Trendspotter newsletter!** As the Corporate Executive Chef for Culinary Development at Peer Foods, I'm particularly excited to share information about the latest and hottest center-of-plate trends.

First, a bit about myself: I'm a graduate of the American Culinary Federation Chef Apprenticeship Program and hold a Bachelor of Arts in Hospitality Management from Kendall College in Evanston, Ill. I've worked as a chef for over 15 years in a variety of resorts, hotels and catering operations. I was also Director of Apprenticeship /Certification for the American Culinary Federation for four years and was responsible for supervising over 125 apprenticeship programs.

I'm interested in your comments or questions on our products or capabilities, or on anything trend-related or culinary in general. Send them to [tmurray@peerfoods.com](mailto:tmurray@peerfoods.com).

Here at Peer, I interact with our customers in all stages of product development, from conceptualization to final production. We work with our customers to deliver products that not only fit their operational needs but will satisfy their patrons as well. We know how important it is to develop products that will differentiate you from the rest of the pack.

Separating the real trends from the "flash in the pan" ideas and giving you usable ideas is what this newsletter is all about.

## Barbecue (cont.)

There are good reasons why barbecue is popular with operators as well. Patrons no longer assume barbecued items to be at the bottom of the menu, pricewise. In the last five years, the average price of a barbecue baby back rib dinner went from \$11.55 to \$14.43, up about 26 percent.

Another reason barbecue is showing up at the center-of-plate position in so many chain restaurants these days is the ease with which it can be prepared. With ready-made barbecue products so readily

available, barbecue menu items are now a profitable, "heat-and-serve" proposition. There's no need for expensive smokers or hours spent slow cooking. And, fully prepared barbecue items have flavor that goes "through and through," all the way to the succulent bone.

Many chains rely on signature barbecue sauce recipes to distinguish their product from competitors'. Specially flavored sauces using liquor (such as bourbon), fruit (such as pineapple or apricot) or other ingredients make for a point of differentiation and allow for a higher menu price as well.

### Most frequently-mened...

vegetable accompaniments to barbecue entrées or sandwiches:

- Cole slaw
- Onions
- Pickles
- Celery sticks
- Tomatoes
- Salad (lettuce)

starch-based side dishes with barbecue:

- French fries
- Baked potatoes
- Potato salad
- Mashed potatoes
- Barbecue beans
- Potato chips

