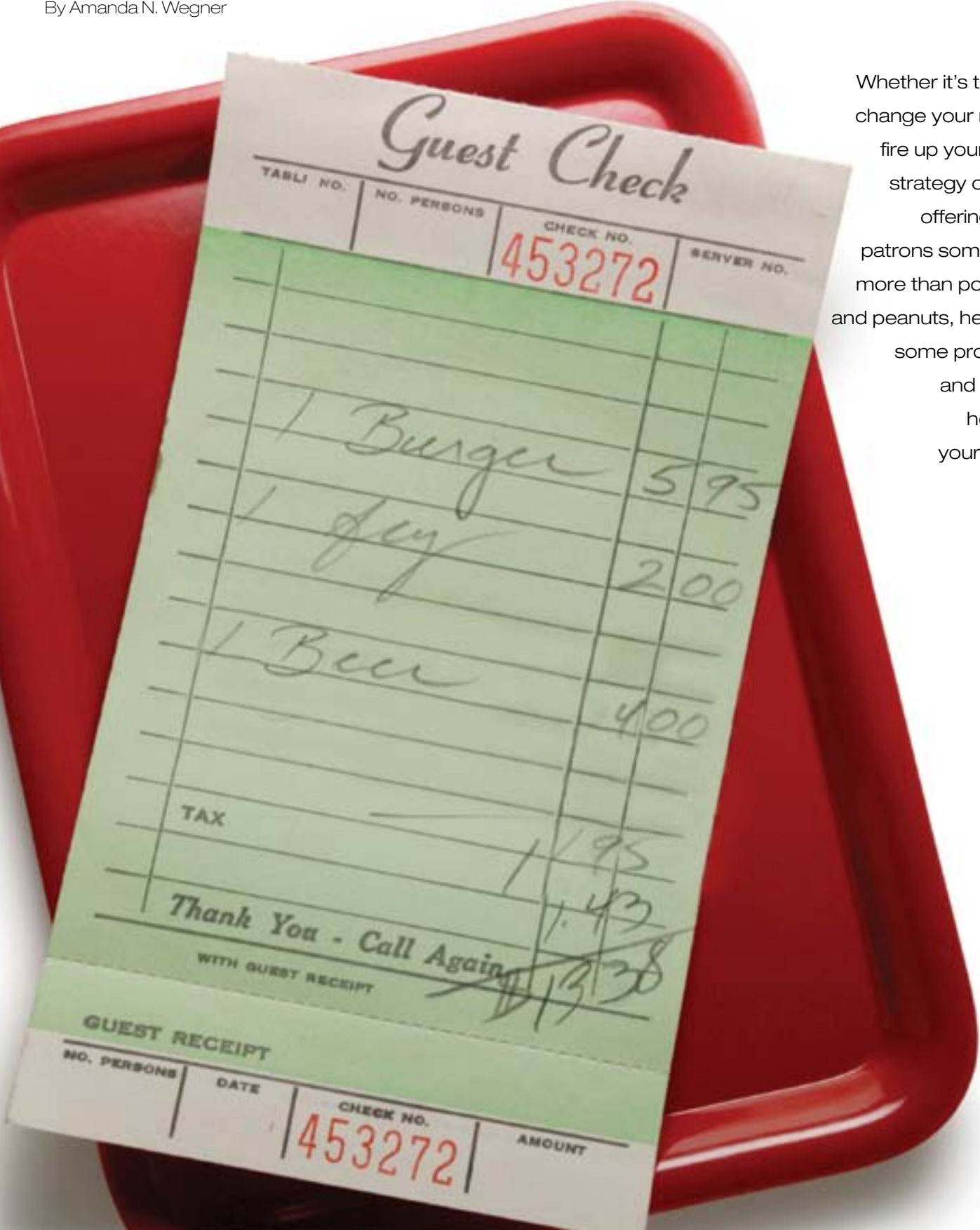


# It All Adds Up!

## Products and Tips to Heat Up Food Sales

By Amanda N. Wegner

Whether it's time to change your menu, fire up your sales strategy or start offering your patrons something more than popcorn and peanuts, here are some products and tips to heat up your sales.



### Guest Check

TABLE NO. NO. PERSONS CHECK NO. 453272 SERVER NO.

1	Burger	5.95
1	Fry	2.00
1	Beer	4.00
	TAX	1.43
Total		13.38

Thank You - Call Again

WITH GUEST RECEIPT

### GUEST RECEIPT

NO. PERSONS DATE CHECK NO. 453272 AMOUNT

In a stumbling economy we are all looking for ways to increase our bottom line. Strong food sales can support establishments that have, in the past, offered only free peanuts at the bar. Westfield's Brakebush Brothers, Medford's Pep's Pizza, Wisconsin's Riverside Foods, and Legend Larry's are some of the companies offering products locally with sales strategies that will inspire you!

super-premium product, says Wojcik, is "the next best thing to getting pizza right from a pizzeria." Weighing in between 26 and 30 ounces, the Big Ben features a raised crust and sizable toppings, like chunks of Italian Sausage. Varieties include Buffalo Chicken, Chicken Alfredo, Five Meat, Double Sausage and Double Pepperoni, the latter of which is the brand's bestseller. "For a bunch of guys at a tavern watching football,

"Working with Pep's and Benetti's is an easy way to get into the food business without a huge investment."

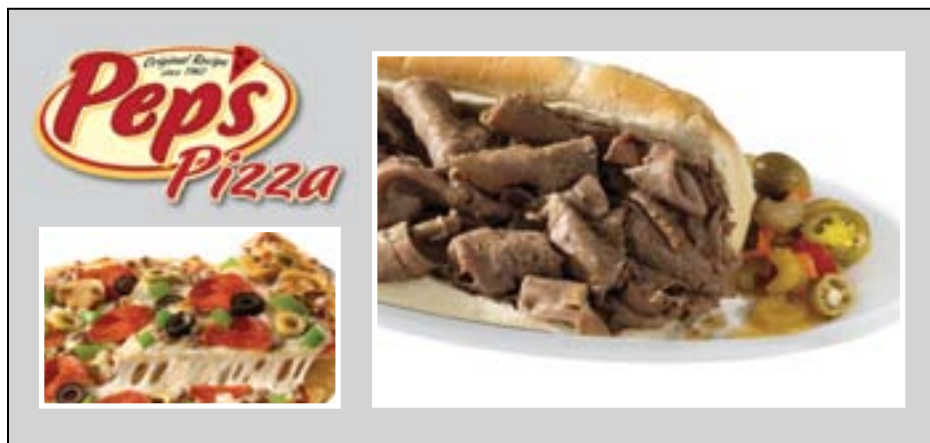
## WESTFIELD'S BRAKEBUSH TERRITORY

"The thing is, there are only a few bars out there that get by without serving food," says Don Maes, Territory Sales Manager for Westfield's Brakebush Brothers, a third-generation Wisconsin company providing premium chicken products. Serving food both pulls in patrons and keeps them longer, resulting in incremental revenue you can taste.

"The hottest thing in the industry right now," says Brakebush's Maes, "is boneless chicken wings." Chicken wings have long been popular, but hard on the wallet. Boneless wings use breast meat, which is less expensive.

"You can sell them at almost half the price of regular wings," says Maes. Plus, there are social factors driving the growth of boneless wings. "A lot of people, especially women, find bone-in wings messy and greasy with the bone and fat," notes Maes. "And guys say they like boneless ones too." However, he doesn't recommend dropping traditional wings from the menu: "Enhance your menu by adding boneless."

Aside from less mess and more profit, another perk of boneless wings is that they are multifunctional; cut them up and add to salad or pizza.



## MEDFORD'S PEP'S PIZZA AND BENETTI FOODS

"Food just makes for a full-service environment. It's part of the overall offering; you get fun, friends, drinks and great food, and not have to drive far down the road to get it," says Mark Wojcik, President of Medford's Pep's Pizza and Benetti Foods. Plus, food has a higher profit margin than beer and mixed drinks.

Fifteen years after selling his successful Tombstone Pizza to Kraft, Pep Simek, who has been a member of the Tavern League since the 1960s, is back to selling his premium Original Recipe pizza with traditional and double-crisp crusts.

"Pep still retains the original recipe," says Wojcik. "This is a premium product, no shortcuts, no fillers, nothing but the good stuff."

The Pep's line offers 9- and 12-inch pizzas, with 13 varieties in the larger size. These aren't small pies either.

"Our Four Meat double-crisp pizza, for example," says Wojcik, "weighs in around 25 ounces. Almost all our products have a pound of toppings."

Pep's goes beyond the normal toppings as well; varieties include a Spicy Sausage, Pepperoni, Jalapeño & Onion; Philly Cheesesteak; Mexican and Bacon Cheeseburger.

If Pep's brand pizzas are hefty, the company's new Big Ben line of pizzas is the heftiest. This

this pizza is heaven," says Wojcik. "We developed this pizza because of the tavern business, so they would have something to stand above what competitors are serving."

Pep's has its own route system across the state and is available through Holiday Wholesale. In addition to pizza, Pep's offers the Benetti's line of meatballs and Italian Beef. "These are



not like the kind you'd buy in a grocery store," says Wojcik, "but what you'd find in an Italian restaurant."

Benetti's offers two oven-baked meatball varieties, one with Romano cheese and one with Parmesan. The Italian Beef is lean and tender, perfect for sandwiches.

"We are a pizza company first," says Wojcik.

Of course, it's the sauce that makes a good wing, and Brakebush's Wild Turkey Bourbon Sauce is a hit. Since the company's specialty is chicken, Brakebush, which works with over 30 distributors in Wisconsin, only sells wings and sauce together.

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Another hot item is boneless chicken breast strips. A user-friendly item, especially for bars and grills that don't have a chef on staff and don't have the space or time to deal with whole chickens, they can be pulled apart for wraps, salads, quesadillas, chicken and gravy, flatbreads and more. Or spice it up with one of Brakebush's seasoned varieties, including Bold Italiano, Tuscan and Moroccan.

"These products really take the worry out of food service," says Maes. "Just heat and serve or use to enhance your dishes."



job with them." Among Coenen's favorites are the Homestyle curds with white cheddar and the Italian Crusted White Cheddar.

Make no mistake—Riverside Foods remains the state's primary purveyor of breaded perch and walleye, in addition to its fine cheese curds. But the company also offers its Kettle Brau line of products, and fryer-ready appetizers beer-battered with Wisconsin's own Leinenkugel's. Included in the Kettle Brau line-up are beer-battered brat slices; it doesn't get much more Wisconsin, which is a fact Riverside Foods is proud of. In addition its partnership with Leinenkugel's, the com-

pler is conveniently in one bag, with one fry time. Coenen's top Super Sampler seller is the Brew House, which features Leinenkugel's beer-battered onion rings, mozzarella sticks, shrimp, mushrooms, breaded cream cheese jalapeño snappers and chicken strips. There are eight varieties in all.

"If you want to do a combo platter yourself with three or four different items, they all have different cook times and someone always over-ports," says Coenen. "With Super Samplers, you know your exact cost and you know each is an exact portion. No fuss, no muss. It's a beautiful thing."

### LEGEND LARRY'S

When you have a good thing, make the most of it. That's the story behind Legend Larry's national award-winning wing sauces. When owner Larry Schaefer opened his first bar in Sheboygan in October 2001, there were no places selling wings, so he got to work, crafting a recipe.

"About three years into it, my mother started ribbing my father to enter into a national buffalo wing competition," says Dane Schaefer (Larry's son), who does marketing for the company. "We didn't have huge expectations, but we competed with three sauces and took two firsts."

From there, the family researched what it would take to get those winners into bottles and people's mouths. Today, there are nine sauces available for public consumption and is

### WISCONSIN'S RIVERSIDE FOODS

"You have your fixed costs, and you can only sell so much beer and mixed drinks to cover that. By offering food, you're not only holding people longer, you're adding profitability to the bottom line," says "Musky Mike," Vice President of National Sales & Marketing for Wisconsin's Riverside Foods. "Appetizers, sandwiches, they have a greater gross than drinks and beers. It's percentage versus actual dollars to the bank. When you add food, you add dollars to the bank."

Started as a family business in 1961 focusing on fresh fish, Riverside Foods, based in Two Rivers, has evolved to sell just about anything you'd want to eat in a tavern.

"Our original premise was fresh fish, perch, walleye, blue gill," says "Musky Mike" Coenen. "Then we started coating. That was pretty much our bread and butter, until we got into appetizers."

Including cheese curds.

"Those we're pretty proud of," says Coenen. "They're a mainstay, and we do a really fine

pany has a close relationship with the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board and only uses Wisconsin-made cheeses in its products.

"We are a Wisconsin company, and we buy Wisconsin when we can," says Coenen. "That's



huge to us, and customers can be satisfied that the Riverside Foods product they're enjoying benefit more than the tavern owner."

Riverside Foods offers another product line that's a no-brainer for tavern owners: Super Samplers. This pre-portioned appetizer sam-

served in 11 locations around the state.

Schaefer explains the arrangement: By using Legend Larry's sauces and the company specifications for perfect wings, taverns can use the

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# BEST ADVICE FOR MAXIMIZING FOOD SALES FROM OUR FOOD PROS

## 1. Set yourself apart.

Become known as the place with the best burger, the best pizza, something that sets your place apart." Dane Schaefer of Legend Larry's suggests doing some market research, even if that's simply visiting every tavern in a ten mile radius of your own. **"Offer something unique to your customer base or your area," says Schaefer. "That's where we found our success originally."**

## 2. Build your business quality.

"Good operators are busy and getting busier often because they're beating their competition that are focused on low cost and low quality. Once you start cheapening things, that's usually the beginning of the end."

## 3. Use "leaders" and combos to draw people in.

"Lead" people in with All-You-Can-Eat Wing night, \$1 hamburgers or other specials during off-peak times, such as weeknights. "When you get people in on a leader, you might break-even on the special at best," says Maes. "But you make it up at the bar with people shooting pool, doing shots, drinking on a night that is otherwise slow."

## 4. Create Food and drink combinations that patrons can't resist.

For instance, combo up a bucket of Leinekugel's on ice and Riverside Foods' Super Sampler, which is beer-battered with the Chippewa Falls brew. **"Make it easy and interesting for the consumer to buy," says Coenen. "Don't give away the farm, but set it up so you're making money and holding people."**

## 5. Get the word out.

With any strategy, says Maes, "you have to be willing to promote it." Many vendors provide point-of-sale materials, including coasters, table tents and posters, and some offer contests and incentives to help promote sales. Legend Larry's is offering a promotion for places serving their wings; patrons can enter a drawing for tickets to the August 12th Milwaukee Brewers-Chicago Cubs baseball game. One winner from each location gets two tickets and entry to a tailgate party featuring Legend Larry's products and drinks. "Use what's available to help get people in the door and push product," says Schaefer. **"Getting the word out" also means having a descriptive, easy-to-find menu.**" A menu board on the wall can easily be overlooked. Have something on the bar people can pick up."

## 6. Get creative.

Coenen, who was a menu engineer for five years and a chef for 13, says it's important to "make the best use of everything you have." Don't just serve cheese curds in a basket; put them on a hamburger. Try throwing cut-up boneless wings on a pizza. Get creative! **"Figure out different ways to use your product," says Coenen. "You have to turn inventory. No one wants something that's been sitting in a freezer, and people appreciate things outside the norm."**



## The Heat Is On to Grow Your Sales, We're Here to Help!

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Menomonee Falls, WI 53051  
800-285-2442 262-251-9600  
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brand name, get extra exposure through the company's website and participate in promotions, such as the wing-eating contest Legend Larry's sponsored during the football season.

"When they sign on with us, it gives them the

*"You have to give people a reason other than good beer to stay at your place. If they get hungry and have to go someplace else for a sandwich, you're guaranteed that they're not coming back."*

— Don Maes

ability to say they're using our product," says Schaefer. "For most of our customers, their business has grown exceptionally since taking on our product."


Sauces are also available wholesale, but don't come with the extra perks. "Restaurants and

taverns can buy it and use it however they want in their own products like chili or sandwiches, but if they want to be able to feature the branded product, then they would go the other route."

Legend Larry's offers five traditional buffalo-style sauces, which have a cayenne pepper

base: Mild, Medium, Hot, Scary Larry and DOA. Flavored soy-based sauces include Teriyaki, Honey BBQ, BBQ and Hot Garlic, which is a bestseller. There's a tenth sauce in the works for bottling, Spicy Bacon BBQ, but Schaefer doesn't have a timeline on it yet.

"I've learned in business to not set hard deadlines on things like this," says Schaefer. "But know that this was the first year we took it to competition ... and it took second place."

Want to try Legend Larry's for yourself? While the sauces are privately distributed, you can hit up one of the company's external locations, or stop by one of their company-owned restaurants, including the latest set to open in Green Bay this summer. 

*Source List:*  
**Brakebush Brothers**  
 N4993 6th Drive, Westfield, WI 53964  
 Don Maes • 800-933-2121 ext 1368  
 dmaes@brakebush.com

**Pep's Pizza / Benetti**  
 PO Box 522, Medford, WI 54451  
 Mark Wojcik • 888-802-7377  
 mark@benettifoods.com

**Riverside Foods LLC**  
 2520 Wilson St, Two Rivers, WI 54241  
 "Musky Mike" Coenen • 800-678-4511  
 musky@riversidefoods.com

**Legend Larry's**  
 1632 Michigan Avenue, Sheboygan, WI 53081  
 Dane Schaefer • 920-458-0605  
 dane@legendlarrys.com

## CERTIFICATION FOR FOOD MANAGERS



Any establishment that serves food must have a license to do so. The state requires a minimum of one certified Food Manager on staff, though some counties have more stringent requirements. Certification lasts for five years. Anytime during the fifth year, individuals must complete a Recertification Course.

"What people don't realize is that you can recertify any time within the fifth year," says Dana Skillrud, TLW food course instructor. "It's like when you renew a magazine subscription; you can renew early, and your recertification is valid from the day your last one expires."

There is a six-month grace period. Failure to take the Recertification Course (TLW's Recertification class is just three hours) in time requires that a person retake the initial full-day Certified Professional Safe Food Handler Course.

The TLW Certified Professional Safe Food Handlers Course and recertification course are offered throughout the year at various locations. The organization's instructors have taught over 27,500 hospitality employees over the last 14 years.

To find a schedule of classes offered by TLW, visit [www.tlw.org/public/food\\_course.asp](http://www.tlw.org/public/food_course.asp).



Back in the early 1960's Pep Simek and his brother Ronald introduced a great pizza to the patrons of their Medford tavern, the Tombstone Tap. The business thrived and was later sold. Now Pep is back with his "original recipe" pizza. Your customers will love it, again.



**Pep's Pizza,**  
 Medford, WI  
**888-802-7377**  
[www.peppizza.com](http://www.peppizza.com)

