



Foodservice Technology SOLUTIONS

Digital Everything and Everywhere!

by Mike Tash

I just returned from a three-day customer meeting at the Mohegan Sun Hotel and Casino in Connecticut.

Talk about the use of technology in the restaurant areas! They are taking digital menu boards and signs to a new level and bringing the customers in.

I think when most people think of digital menu boards the image that comes to mind is a fast food restaurant listing all the combination meals on a screen. While that is a use, the restaurants I saw using this technology went much further.

As I walked through the casino (as you must to get to any of the restaurants), they had digital boards in front of each restaurant. When you have 20+ choices to eat in one complex, the purpose of these digital messages is to motivate the customer to choose the restaurant whose display the customer is viewing at that very moment. In real life, this means choosing your restaurant over the one across the street.

Most of the displays did show the menu – they used LCD panels to replace the mounted printed copy of the menu. This gives so much more flexibility and allows the restaurant to show as much or as little as they want. Most of the displays showed a different screen for each course. Not very easy to do with a mounted printed menu! Along with the item descriptions and prices there were pictures of the food. The menu would rotate between courses. In most cases the manager chooses to showcase differ-

ent items for each course. Once you have the customer looking at the food, it's that much easier to get them into your restaurant.



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One of the areas where this technology shined was with the dessert menus. The restaurants were able to capture extra business from customers walking by who noticed the delicious looking desserts on the screen. This worked well for customers who may have dined at other restaurants and saw the images as they walked by.

Now, going even further away from the standard mounted menus, were screens showing videos of entrées being created, pastries being made, smiling servers placing food in front of customers and wines being poured. It was like an ongoing commercial for each restaurant right next to the front door!

My favorite restaurant at Mohegan is a steakhouse/sports café named after a very famous basketball player. Not only is the menu on the screen, but sports highlights play in the background while the different course menus alternate. I watched as potential customers became customers after watching a couple the menu clips for a few minutes. I overheard them say "This is so cool" and then "They have ribs" as they walked into the restaurant.

The last restaurant I walked by on my way to the meeting had an interesting setup. They had 2 screens, one showing menu and pictures of the food and a second with pictures and text showing the history of the restaurant. The history took about 3 minutes to cycle through. It was long enough time

to tell the story but short enough to keep the customers interest. I thought it was a great idea and would work well in restaurants that have a long wait.

After spending the couple of days walking around looking at the great and varied uses of this technology I'm more convinced that this is not the future of restaurant displays, it's here now!



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