CONNECTING PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOODSERVICE OPERATORS:
TACTICAL STEPS TO SODIUM REDUCTION
A BIT ABOUT US

• Sanna Delmonico, MS, RDN, CHE
  Senior Manager - Culinary Nutrition for Strategic Initiatives

• Brad Barnes, CMC
  Director - CIA Consulting and Industry Programs
POLL #3

What about you?

With whom are you working?
  a. non-commercial foodservice
  b. commercial foodservice
  c. private foodservice provider

How many do they feed at lunch?
  a. less than 50
  b. 50-100
  c. 100-200
  d. more than 200
CAUSING A PARADIGM SHIFT;
TRUE CHANGE

- Clearly defined and understood by all
- A change that positively affects all stakeholders
- Becomes part of the evolution of the goal
- Is permanent and measurable
- Embraces the constant values
“The very first step we took was to look at our entire menu, ingredient by ingredient, and see where the biggest sodium offenders were. We then began to work with the suppliers of those ingredients to get processed foods with less sodium.”
KEY STRATEGY #3
MENU FORENSICS

- Understand the composition of the menu and the ingredients
- The first step to adjusting is having the right information and understanding it
- Create “value driven” adjustments
- Reposition, replace and supplement
**HOW DOES SODIUM “BUILD?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BURGER</th>
<th>MG SODIUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 OZ. BUN</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 OZ. SALTED MEAT</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 OZ. CHEDDAR</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 OZ. BACON</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICKLE</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1495</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BURGER</th>
<th>MG SODIUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 OZ. BUN</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 OZ. SPICED MEAT</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 OZ. CHEDDAR</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 OZ. BACON</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 T GREEK YOGURT MUSTARD</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICE BOX PICKLE</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>940</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value transition
Sodium reduction is widely believed to be a long-term trend for foodservice.

The vast majority of HMC members believe sodium reduction is a long-term trend for foodservice and guests.

Q: Do you believe the focus on sodium reduction is a short term fad that will eventually dissipate or a long-term trend that will lead to changes in guest eating behavior overall?
Among those responding HMC members with a sodium reduction strategy but *not* participating in the NSRI program, more than three quarters are using the NSRI targets as guidelines.

- **Sodium Strategy Outside NSRI**
  - NSRI Participant: 33%
  - Sodium strategy, not participating in NSRI: 54%
  - No: 13%

- **NSRI as Model for Sodium Strategy**
  - Yes: 77%
  - No: 23%

Q: Have you already employed strategies to reduce sodium on your menu? Here we are focused on those strategies that have reached your menu, rather than efforts still in the development stage.

Q: Are you using the NSRI targets as guidelines, even if you are not actively participating in the program?
Sodium reduction strategies are not just focusing on the “low hanging fruit” but are tackling challenging categories as well.

**Perceived as the easiest categories to tackle**

- Sauces, salad dressings, vinaigrettes: 71%
- Soups: 67%
- Chicken: 58%
- Breads/rolls/baked goods: 58%
- Sandwiches (excluding breakfast): 54%
- Deli proteins: 50%
- Salads: 50%
- Pizza: 38%
- Appetizers/starters: 38%
- Breakfast sandwiches: 33%
- Seafood: 33%
- Burgers: 29%
- Fried potato sides: 25%
- Pasta: 25%
- Kid’s menu: 25%
- Sides: 25%
- Mexican entrées: 21%
- Desserts: 21%

**Perceived as the most challenging categories for a sodium reduction strategy**

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**Item Type Focus for Sodium Reduction**

Responding HMC members are addressing both easy and challenging categories when working toward sodium reduction strategies.
HELP OPERATORS IDENTIFY

• The opportunities for alterations in their menus
• Dressings, soups and sauces
• New menu additions
• Remember to acknowledge training and costs associated with these
• Site the reasons others have made these adjustments
SOME EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION

- Canned tomato sauce to fresh and exciting preparations
- Crunchy things on salad bars
- Dressings, dilute with flavor and clean ingredients
The largest share of sodium reduction techniques will focus on altering or reformulating current items. Regardless of technique, HMC members appear to focus and rely upon in-house development efforts rather than value-added products from suppliers.

**Sodium Reduction Techniques**

- **71% will do so using in-house development;**
  - 42% will employ value-added products
- **100% will do so using in-house development;**
  - 33% will employ value-added products
- **Create new menu items to replace existing menu items**
  - 25%
- **Create new menu items to add to menu**
  - 29%
- **91% will do so using in-house development;**
  - 39% will employ value-added products

All %'s are averages based on open-ended responses.

Q: What share/percent of your sodium reduction strategy will employ each of the following techniques?
“In challenging dishes with “taste memory,” our best success has been found in decreasing the portion sizes, or decreasing the portion sizes of high sodium ingredients.”
POLL #4

What have you seen?

Are any operators that you are working with promoting healthy menu approaches?
  a. Yes
  b. No

Are any operators that you are working with specifically promoting sodium reduction?
  a. Yes
  b. No
HMC members are driving reduced sodium strategies out of a belief that there is a problem and a solution is needed.

Q: Why are you engaging in a sodium reduction strategy or plan to employ a sodium reduction strategy in your operation? Select all that apply. 

- Believe there is problem overall/ want to be part of solution: 92%
- Believe sodium levels are high and need to be reduced: 71%
- Creates good will among guests, even if weak sellers: 63%
- Strong guest demand: 38%
- Want to be a first mover: 33%
- Intense media focus is forcing us to change: 33%
- Provides us with a good marketing story: 25%
- Some of competition has already reduced sodium levels/ offered lower sodium options: 17%
- Peer pressure: 4%

Reasons for Employing Sodium Strategy

HMC members are not pursuing a reduced sodium strategy out of competitive activity or peer pressure. Rather, these activities are based on the perceived need for a solution and the desire to be a part of the solution.

Participating in sodium reduction strategies are also perceived as generating good will among guests, though generating good will ultimately will require messaging to guests.
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Participating in sodium reduction strategies are also perceived as generating good will among guests, though generating good will ultimately will require messaging to guests.
Less than 40% plan to or currently communicate sodium reduction strategies to guests

Given less than 40% communicate sodium reduction strategies, any benefit to generating good will is likely to be minimal overall.

HMC members should stay on top of consumer perceptions regarding reduced sodium items and the impact – primarily on overall perceptions of the operation versus reaction to specific items – on an operator’s image.

Q: Are you or do you plan to communicate your sodium reduction strategies to your guests?

n=24
“You can’t talk about what it doesn’t have – you must talk about what it does have.”
SPEAK TO THE DELICIOUSNESS

• Designing menu items for flavor, craft and value
• Increasing plant based value, fresh and well prepared
• Seasonings and flavor profiles, cultural highlights
• The paradigm is shifted to what the dish attributes are
SOME HOT IDEAS

- herbs
- asian spices
- BQ
- tropical fruits
- spicy
- obscure citrus
- fire char
- black garlic
- agave
- salts
- fermented
- good fats
- cruciferous
- Central America
- chocolate
- micro origins
MARKETING THE MENU

• Speak to the way the menu is changing
• Plants taking a bigger role
• Addressing ethology
• Learning to cook and menu plants
• Fun approaches, phytochemicals, eating by color
MENU MARKETING

• Grilled Chicken and Kale Salad with Red Onion, Oranges, Goat Cheese & Balsamic Vinaigrette

• Winter Kale Salad Pickled Red Onion, Oranges & Goat Cheese Spiked with Herb & Spice Grilled Chicken
Measuring Success of Reduced Sodium Strategy

Q: How are you going to measure the success of your reduced sodium initiative?

n=19

“1. guest comments and satisfaction 2. actual amount of sodium reduced in menus 3. actual amount of sodium reduced in food purchases.”

“Consumers acceptance, better flavor profile and sales.”

“Our goal is to gradually reduce sodium over a period of time, basically train our guests to enjoy our food with less sodium. As long as our guests don't notice a difference we are going in the right direction.”

“By using our purchasing patterns as a benchmark and then multiplying the # of cases/lbs. purchased times the amount of sodium reduction.”

“No customer complaints on reduced sodium items.”

“Perceived Value by management against food cost increases if not ameliorated ENOUGH through creative use of ingredients Scratch Protein VS RTE sodium reductions, against labor pro models.”
Flavor development beyond adding sodium will be the primary tool in sodium reduction strategies.

Use of Sodium Reduction Tools

Beyond flavor development without sodium, HMC members will incorporate a number of tools from increased produce use to new preparation techniques and supplier products.

Salt replacement products and sodium chloride enhancers do not appear to play a significant role at this time.

Q: Which of the following will your sodium reduction strategy employ or impact? Select all that apply. n= 24
KEY STRATEGY #4
CONTRIBUTE TO SOUND BUSINESS DECISIONS

• Everything operators do is to make business better or profits higher (meet or exceed budget)

• Help them to create positive business decisions that achieve our goals

• Remember that every change for an operator must be based on a sound business decision
TALK ABOUT THE TEAM

• Culinary teams put a great deal of effort into the food

• Customer service strategies can make an important impact on new ideas in a business

• Focus on the experience, the meals we are creating
“You can’t underestimate the impact of seasonal, delicious produce in a dish to bring up the natural flavor and sweetness, and enhance the experience!”
Thanks for joining us!