

## Meeting the Demand for Fresh Foods

Everyone has to eat, but few people have time for the planning, shopping, cooking and cleaning that always accompany homemade meals.

Fortunately for time-challenged Americans, there are plenty of choices when it comes to fast, no-fuss dining.

## Ethnic Eating

Ethnic food sales are expected to grow 20% through 2014, according to Mintel International, the Chicago-based marketing research organization. While Mexican/Hispanic food owns two-thirds of that market, the Asian and Indian segments are growing.

## Do Regional Right

Being known for regional specialties is a great way to keep customers coming back. Just ask Linda Dupont, diner manager at Billy's Mini Mart in Krotz Spring, La., 40 miles from Baton Rouge.

While Billy's sells the usual array of chicken tenders and hamburgers, the diner is famous for its boudin, a southern Louisiana food traditionally made of pork, rice and assorted vegetables that are mixed together, stuffed in sausage casings and fried. A filling meal, boudin is sold by the link and considered by some to be the Cajun answer to burritos. While recipes for boudin vary, Dupont describes her store's version as "real crispy" and "very spicy."

When boudin links are placed in the operation's hot box, "they don't stay there long," Dupont said. "A lot of people eat it for lunch or a snack. Some put it in between bread and eat it as a sandwich."

And when local families go out of town to visit relatives, they always stop by the store for some boudin to take with them. "We've had our boudin go all the way to Nevada, California and Michigan," Dupont said.

## "Locavores" at the Table

A new food buzz phrase is "eating local." Unlike the strict standards for organic foods, which include legal definitions, inspections and labeling, "eating local" can mean anything from growing your own food to eating only produce from your own community or even your own country. People who "eat local" are sometimes dubbed "locavores."

There can be a few hitches in the local-only concept. "Local vendors are not always as streamlined as large vendors," admits Greg Horos, owner of Locali Conscience Convenience in Hollywood, Calif., but it's not a deterrent. In fact, Horos has kicked off plans to franchise the store, and potential investors from



outside the state have expressed interest. "We've gotten inquiries from as far away as the East Coast," he said.

Source: Excerpts, Convenience Store Decisions