

## FRIDAYS AT FOUR

### Volume One Issue Six

Fridays at Four is back after two weeks away for Easter and a Canadian visit.

News from Tracy Millin , President and CEO of the National Retail Federation. Speaking about change, she reports on companies that are making it easier for shoppers to make their purchases. Shop and Stop Supermarkets has come up with a “Shopping Buddy”, table sized PCs that mount on shopping carts and display information for shoppers. Shoppers want to invest in merchandise that means something to them, merchandise with a personal touch.

Have you heard about the latest fashion item at Gap Stores? The “hoodio” children’s sweatshirts, that offers a radio power pack that snaps into the chest pocket, and a built in tuner and volume controls on the sleeves.

Then there is Krispy Kreme. Everyone knows about this company that was riding high just two years ago. Many say the firm expanded too fast. Yet, the real reason might be found in a news item from Chain Store Age. Calling it a cultural lapse, Krispy Kreme used to turn on a neon light when a fresh hot batch was coming out of the oven. The firm had gotten away from the thing that made it different and unique.

The latest concept from contract feeder Aramark is the Just4U concept. The idea was to make the customer choice easier. Aramark's plan features hundreds of healthier menu choices tagged with easy-to understand nutritional information and bold menu identifiers. Customers can determine meal options consistent with six different diet approaches: low carb, low calorie, low-fat, “heart healthy”, vegetarian and vegan.

Tea Sales... Specialty teas represent a growing beverage category. Since 1990 tea sales have grown more than five times to \$5.1 billion in 2003, and sales are expected to grow to \$10 billion by 2010.

This from Time Magazine. A franchisee from McDonalds has now set up a call center for customers at his seven stores. The orders are keyed in at a call center and not by the employees at the store. This lets the in store employees focus on food prep. A survey was taken and found that drive through time decreased by more than a minute and friendliness as measured by a series of questions rose 11 percent, and order mistakes were virtually wiped out. Corporate McDonalds and Hardees are running tests.

Leafy produce is the latest trend in the stores and in the restaurant. Gone are the days of a wedge of iceberg lettuce. Now you are seeing huge growth in the pre-packaged organic spring lettuce mix. The latest green to watch for is mache, known as lambs lettuce or corn salad. A California firm called Epic Roots is shipping the mix to more than 3000 stores

nationwide.

And this from Yoplait, the yogurt firm. Yoplait Healthy Heart, is the first yogurt to serve up plant sterols, naturally occurring substances that scientists show may inhibit absorption of cholesterol. This is known as the growing **FOOD WITH A BOOST Phenomenon**.

**Functional food sales were up 5% from 2003, compared with a 2.6% growth rate of supermarket sales.**

Think customized ringbones on cell phones are just a small market. Think again. Gartner research estimates that \$1.2 billion was spent last year on ring tones and other “personalization” services and added \$1.4 billion on cell-phone games and other entertainment

Quote of the Week from Forbes Magazine...Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed.

-Michael Pritchard

Remember to contact us if you are seeking more revenues from your food and beverage program

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