

# Food war

## American restaurants, grocery stores vie for public's dollars

AP — If there is such a thing as an appetizing war, it is being waged between grocery stores and eating establishments.

Tantalizing new recipes, special menus, frozen foods for the microwave and low-calorie items for dieters are being hurled at consumers by both sides in this titanic conflict. Billions of dollars are going to the winners.

And right now, according to the latest Agriculture Department figures, that favorite restaurant on Main Street and the drive-in down the road are gaining rapidly in the race for consumer dollars. Unlike real wars, however, both sides eventually will win as the U.S. population continues to grow, the economy thrives and America's appetite sharpens.

In 1985, say department food economists, Americans spent \$343.6 billion on U.S. farm-produced foods. That was more than double the \$167 billion consumers spent in 1975. Those amounts do not include expenditures for imported foods and fishery products.

The share of food spending held by grocery stores and others in USDA's "food-at-home" category was \$219.4 billion in 1985. That was an increase of 89 percent from \$116.2 billion just 10 years before.

In the "food-away-from-home" category — which includes restaurants, snackbars, hospitals and schools — spending rose to \$124.2 billion in 1985, a 144 percent increase from \$50.8 billion in 1975.

Anthony E. Gallo, a food marketing expert in the department's Economic Research Service, says the growth in eating out is likely to continue at least through 1990. He cites the following reasons:

- The percentage of the total population between 25 and 44 years of age, those most frequently eating out, is expected to increase during the 1980s.

- Another category of frequent outside diners are people who live alone. Those one-person households may comprise 25 percent of the population by 1990, up from 23 percent in 1980.

- One- and two-person households may constitute about 57 percent of all households by 1990, up from 54 percent in 1980.

- Further increases in the number of women in the nation's labor force are expected. In 1984, 53 percent of women 16 years or older were in the job market, up from 48 percent in 1970 and 34 percent in 1960.

"Nearly 7 in 10 women age 20 to 44 years are now in the labor force," Gallo writes in the agency's National Food Review magazine. "If most of these women remain in the labor force, and if succeeding generations of women participate at equal or higher rates, the number of working women will increase into the first decade of the next century."

Shifts in population from one part of the country to another are having an effect on how Americans eat. According to Census Bureau projections studied by Gallo, the number of "young" in the Northeast and Midwest should fall from 47.7 percent of the 1980 population to 39.6 percent by 2000. Thus, almost 6 out of every 10 Americans could be living in the South and West.

As these regional shifts occur, it could mean greater opportunities for food service growth in the South and West "and could influence national food purchase and consumption pat-

terns" through the turn of the century.

"Cajun-type fried chicken, southern biscuits, Oriental stir-fry dishes and Mexican specialties, for example, are already popular in every major region and could continue to grow with the population shifts," Gallo said. "Meanwhile, opportunities for expansion should continue in the Northeast and Midwest, since population density will remain relatively high despite slower growth and even moderate declines."

Everyone in the food marketing system will be competing more heavily for the consumer dollar, Gallo said. But nowhere will the competition be keener than in the "food-away-from-home" sector.

"The fast-food industry, for example, has moved in several new directions to build its market share," he said. "It is operating outlets in new locations, such as schools and college campuses, hospitals, military bases, toll roads, bus terminals, retail stores, shopping malls, central city office buildings, recreational sites and international markets."

Menus have reflected health and diet concerns, Gallo said. And many full-service restaurants are experimenting with lighter dishes and emphasizing freshness, quality, regional cooking and seasonality.

But eating places are facing competition from other areas of food retailing, with the microwave oven figuring prominently. Grocers, stepping up their battle for the market share, are stocking more upscale frozen foods ready for heating in a microwave.

"Forty-two percent of U.S. households had microwave ovens in 1985, up from 13 percent in 1980," Gallo said. "Campbell Soup Co. estimates that microwave ovens will be in 70 to 80 percent of all homes by the year 2000."

Convenience stores, with large investments in microwave ovens and other food service equipment, are also expanding food service sales. Many supermarkets have installed salad and soup bars, and some even have in-store restaurants, he said.



Pizza Lovers' Salad is a robust, colorful toss of romaine lettuce and favorite pizza toppings, blended with the tangy zip of salad dressing.

## Pizza-like salad reflects trend toward light meals

Pizza Lovers' Salad is a colorful main dish salad that reflects today's trends toward homey flavors and lighter eating.

This prize-winning salad features favorite pizza toppings — salami, mozzarella cheese, onions, bell peppers, olives and mushrooms — tossed with tomatoes and crunchy romaine. To blend and complement flavors, the creative combo is

"dressed up" with salad dressing.

### PIZZA LOVERS' SALAD

1 cup salad dressing  
2 tsp. chopped parsley  
1 tsp. Italian seasonings  
2 qts. torn romaine  
3 cups chopped tomatoes  
1 cup chopped red or green pepper  
1 cup mushroom slices  
1 small red onion, thinly sliced

1 cup (4 oz.) mozzarella cheese, cubed  
1 cup julienne-cut salami  
1/2 cup seasoned croutons

Combine salad dressing, parsley and seasonings; mix well. Add all remaining ingredients except croutons; mix lightly. Serve on salad plates; top with croutons. Makes 8-8 servings.

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