

## TASTY TRENDS !



Traditional hot dogs sales are not slowing down at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, says Jeramie Mitchell, the stadium's executive chef. But the stadium's SportService concessions definitely has broadened the menu options for customers, with some success.

What's motivating Mitchell to place healthy, non-traditional items on his menus?

One word, he says. Demand.

"The trends are people are starting to look at healthier foods," Mitchell says. "You're not going to make a ton of money off of it, but I think in two, three or five years, it's going to be a better seller."

For now, though, "for those who want something healthy, we have it," he says.

For fans sitting in the bulk of the stadium's seats, the venue offers the AuraPro Burger, a soy and wheat protein patty that Mitchell helped develop.

"Actually, it's selling," Mitchell says. He says they sell on average between 60 and 70 AuraPro Burgers each game.

"Compared to a hot dog, its sales are not good," he says.

"But we are pretty pleased."

St. Louis Cardinals fans looking to break away from more traditional concession items also can find another alternative burger on the menu, a patty formed from fresh fish, Mitchell says. The chef touts not only the burger's seaworthy flavor but also the fact the sandwiches are low in cholesterol.

"They're selling well," he adds.

One highlight of Mitchell's menu is an organic lamb chop offered for those dining in the 300-seat members-only stadium club. The lamb meat is bought from a local Missouri farmer, which he says helped popularize the dish and start an exciting conversation locally about local products and sustainable organic farming.

That conversation—and more organic, health-conscious products—will eventually trickle down from the stadium club even further into general concessions, Mitchell predicts.

Healthy eating, even at places that are not traditionally linked to it like ballparks and waterparks, is "absolutely" here to stay, Mitchell adds.

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"It's not going to be a top seller, but it's increasing in popularity," he says. "We have a lot of repeat customers in St. Louis. They don't want to eat a hot dog" every time they visit the ballpark.

Repeat customers in the form of season-pass holders prompted Sandcastle waterpark near Pittsburgh to add a barbecue chicken salad and house salad to their pizza stand. Waterpark concessionaires also added a salad bar and fruit salad to their Tidal Wave Café, the park's all-you-can-eat restaurant.

The results have been nothing short of staggering, says Tom Radovic, Sandcastle's food and beverage manager.

"The season-pass holders were tired of eating the same old fatty foods," Radovic says. "They asked for salads."

Sandcastle answered by adding them to the menu in July.

The fruit and salad bars at the Tidal Wave Café are "going really fast," Radovic says. About 40 salads are sold daily off the pizza stand, which Radovic says they are pleased with.

"We tried this about five years ago, and we couldn't give those things away," he says of the salads. "This has been a great season with the [hot] weather. The season-pass holders were asking for something other than amusement park food."

Radovic says the park would evaluate at the end of the season if they would be expanding their healthy offerings next year.



Healthy Food Menus ! [ SODA Concessions Series-09/05 ]