

OAKLAND BUSINESS REVIEW

Stage Deli creates special menus for corporate catering crowd

Business is good. In fact, Stage Deli's revenues are up 12 percent over last year's. But there's a customer that owner Steve Goldberg is still trying to snare - the elusive corporate office luncher.

Catering makes up about 33 percent of the business. About 8 percent of the total annual revenues come from corporate catering. "Where would I like to see that go? Up," Goldberg said.

Though Goldberg won't say what the restaurant's annual revenues are, he will tell you that his business feeds about 180,000 people per year, and serves about 60,000 sandwiches a year.

So how is he working to better serve the corporate catering customer? He started by developing special menus, depending on the event. He made a business meeting menu, as well as tailgating, condolence and sandwich menus.

"What's different about the corporate menu is that I know what they like, and what heats well, and honestly, what price point they're looking for," Goldberg said, adding that the average business lunch customer is looking for offerings around \$10.

"I just have to get my food in front of them, and they love it." It has to look impressive, be easy to heat and easy to eat, he added.

"Home parties are not as budget-conscious, but they want more variety," Goldberg said. "They want something special." He plans to develop four more targeted menus in upcoming months.

Among his corporate catering clients, Goldberg says, he has noticed a



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Steve Goldberg

trend away from the fried and cheese-loaded typical options.

"They want something other than pizza. They are ordering a lot more salads and rolled sandwiches," he said. "And where I used to do a lot of deli trays with meats and cheeses, I'm serving a lot more salad trays."

In the past year, corporate catering revenues have remained steady, despite Stage Deli's overall increase in sales.

"When the economy gets weird like it is now, people look for comfort, something steady and reliable, and that's what we are," Goldberg said. "But they may not be doing as many corporate lunches as they used to."

His delivery radius is generally 20 miles from the Orchard Lake site, but for larger orders, he'll deliver as far as 50 miles.

The business has been around for 45 years, started by Goldberg's parents in Oak Park, and at the Orchard Lake Road site for the last 25 years. Goldberg has two other locations: a Stage Deli at the Somerset Collection's food court, and another - dubbed Goldberg's - in Seattle, Wash.

The company also has an Internet presence at www.thestagedeli.com.