FOOD-TRAK®
Food & Beverage Management System

CASE STUDY: CAJUNDOME & CONFERENCE CENTER

CONTROLLING FOOD COSTS THROUGH IMPROVED ACCURACY & PRICING

Background



Artisan Creative Catering is the exclusive caterer for the Cajundome and Conference Center in Lafeyette, Louisiana. The Conference Center boasts nearly 100,000 square feet and contains 22 luxury VIP suites. From sit down dinners for 2,000 people to their festive Mardi Gras Ball, the chefs use only the freshest ingredients to create innovative presentations and authentic Cajun cuisine for hundreds of events.

The Catalyst: Difficult Cost Control & Inaccurate Inventory

Prior to implementing The FOOD-TRAK® System, all of their business was conducted using Excel spreadsheets. From sales and food costs analysis, to recipe costing and inventory, they were relying on Excel to maximize their bottom line. With 60-70% of their business being generated from custom events, it has always been imperative that accurate menu pricing was set for F&B in order to achieve the highest profit. The turning point finally came in 2008 when the management team at Cajundome decided that a more sophisticated tool was needed to handle their F&B volume. "Food costs were 34% every month and inventory counts were not reliable, so our management team wanted to find a way to improve controls in this area" states Executive Chef Gilbert DeCourt. Chef DeCourt played an instrumental role by introducing FOOD-TRAK at the Cajundome. Having worked with FOOD-TRAK previously, he knew of the system's many strengths and was confident that this tool would help them better control their inventory and menu pricing.

The Solution: The FOOD-TRAK System for Accurate F&B Cost Control

Chef DeCourt knew that he needed a system that would allow him to get fast, accurate information and control all of their F&B outlets in order to reach their budgeted goals. He was spending too much time doing labor intensive tasks that a system could easily automate for him. Implementing FOOD-TRAK, Chef DeCourt would have more time in his day to dedicate to higher priority tasks and maybe even get a few days off now and then! After seeing what the FOOD-TRAK system could do to enhance and automate existing procedures at the arena and within the conference center, Cajundome selected the FOOD-TRAK® Food & Beverage Management System in December 2008.

"The FOOD-TRAK system paid for itself in 8 months and has saved us $40,000 in labor and food cost a year!"

-Gilbert DeCourt
Executive Chef

The Results: Lower Food Cost and Accurate Reporting

As part of the implementation process, System Concepts, Inc. built their initial database so Cajundome could begin using the system immediately. "Since we started using FOOD-TRAK we are better organized now for inventory which shows in our inventory extensions. Transfers which used to be done manually now are entered into the system. FOOD-TRAK has enabled us to be very accurate and disciplined which has resulted in realistic end of month figures that we can rely on," says DeCourt. Shortly after implementation, Chef DeCourt reported a reduction in food cost from 34% to 28%! This 6% decrease was due to the tighter controls that were put in place and the accuracy of banquet menu pricing with FOOD-TRAK's up to the minute costing on all the ingredients.

According to DeCourt, "the retail price of my banquet items is now being calculated based on the current cost of my ingredients. Yield factors are included in recipes and prices are updated constantly based on my purchases. This has led me to achieve higher profits and better control over banquet pricing."

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FOOD-TRAK's vast reporting options have also provided Chef with the information he needs to give management the answers they are looking for each month. "I always say that if you want answers, the only way you can get them is with numbers," says DeCourt. Prior to FOOD-TRAK, they didn't have any reports to review other than P&L statements. "Now we are our tracking beginning inventory, purchases, performing transfers and counting our ending inventory. We are doing this on a daily basis, and if the numbers are being entered correctly, then FOOD-TRAK gives us accurate answers in our reports." DeCourt runs a series of reports and provides them to the accounting department. Reports such as the Purchase Recap, Cost of Goods, Transfer Activity, Waste Activity and Inventory Extension supply critical information that the staff now relies on in order to evaluate their profitability each month. According to DeCourt, "FOOD-TRAK continues to help make each and every event as profitable as it can possibly be through additional cost savings, better understanding of the recipe and better accuracy with yields."

The Future: Expanding Usage & Sharing Knowledge

Chef DeCourt plans to add 3 more Profit Centers in 2010 and automate additional areas of the Dome and the convention business by incorporating beverages, concessions and suites. Chef also plans to train other managers at the Dome on better ways to control their inventory through the use of FOOD-TRAK. DeCourt is also sharing what he's learned with other friends in the business. "How many chefs out there really understand accounting?" asks DeCourt. "Very few. We chefs are a very strange breed of people. We need to see it in order to believe that it can work for us. Show me how you cost a menu and now watch how I do it in FOOD-TRAK. You'll be suprised to see how much difference there is between your cost and the FOOD-TRAK cost." Chef DeCourt believes that knowledge is power, so he's always willing to help others be more successful by sharing his wisdom and illustrating how much more accurate things are when you have the proper tools in place.

About Cajundome & Conference Center

The Cajundome & Conference Center is a 12,068 seat multi-purpose arena in Lafayette, Louisiana. The arena was first built in 1985, with the addition of the $16.7 million dollar Conference Center in 2002. The Cajundome is host to the city's high school and college basketball teams, regional concerts, special events such as World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) events and the annual outdoor Cajun Heartland State Fair, which attracts over 175,000 visitors. Notably one of the most recognizable landmarks of the city of Lafayette, the Cajundome & Conference Center is the complete source for entertainment in Louisiana.

About System Concepts, Inc.

System Concepts, Inc. (SCI) offers a wide range of services to assist clients control food and beverage costs. Developer of the FOOD-TRAK® System, SCI is one of the world's leading specialists in the field of food and beverage cost control and management. Since its founding in 1980, more than 10,000 clients worldwide have turned to SCI for consulting services, software automation solutions, system implementation and support. SCI is headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona. For more information, visit www.foodtrak.com.

"I use FOOD-TRAK every day and without a doubt it has been an incredible tool to the success of my operation."

-Gilbert DeCourt
Executive Chef

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