

BEVERAGE CART

Smoothie Operators

The blended beverage has emerged as one of the best menu options for clubs, especially as part of snack bar setups at pool and fitness facilities.

By Kate Parham, Contributing Editor

With the rapid expansion of fitness centers at club and resort properties across the country, it's not surprising that smoothies have become the drink of choice for members and guests. Few things are better than a refreshing smoothie after a tough workout. It's also hard to beat while relaxing by the pool.

Typically made using crushed iced, frozen fruit, a sweetener and often some kind of dairy product like milk, yogurt, soy or ice cream, smoothies have a milkshake-like consistency that's thicker than a slushie—and usually healthier than both. Often marketed to health-conscious people, smoothies commonly include add-ins like herbal and nutritional supplements. But even without the

extras, they're high in dietary fiber, vitamins and antioxidants.

Fitting Right In

Because smoothies, with their sweetness, fresh fruit flavor and nutritional value, appeal to a wide range of age groups, they are proving to be a great, affordable option for many clubs' food and beverage programs. Rob Podley, Food and Beverage Director at Colonial Country Club in Fort Meyers, Fla., started offering smoothies three years ago as part of a new program in the fitness department. "The smoothies ended up taking off, and are still some of our best sellers," he reports.

Colonial CC now offers a variety of smoothies featuring various fresh fruits, juices and proteins. "Some are great for you, and some are just great-tasting," says Podley. Available only at the club's snack bar, which is conveniently situated to serve golfers, poolgoers, tennis players and those utilizing the fitness center, the smoothies containing probiotic-filled yogurts have become especially popular.

Podley aims to be seasonal with the smoothie offerings, serving several options that vary throughout the year. Members can also create their own

C&RB CLUB RECIPE

Strawberry Banana Smoothie

Amt	Ingredient
1 ¼ cup	Crystal Light (10 oz.)
packet	vanilla protein
½ cup	frozen bananas
½ cup	frozen strawberries

Directions:

- Blend all ingredients together and serve with fresh fruit garnish.

RECIPE FROM HILLWOOD CC, NASHVILLE, TENN.

C&RB CLUB RECIPE

Tropical Breeze Smoothie

Amt	Ingredient
2 ozs.	fresh Florida orange juice
1 cup	fresh cut pineapple
1 cup	fresh mango chunks
½ cup	frozen banana

Directions:

- Blend all ingredients together and serve with fresh fruit garnish.

RECIPE FROM COLONIAL CC, FORT MEYERS, FLA.



smoothies with existing ingredients.

After Hillwood Country Club, a private club in Nashville, Tenn., opened a new, stand-alone fitness facility last September smoothie offerings were a natural fit. "We thought smoothies were the perfect low-cost, easy and efficient [food] option," explains General Manager Three Carpenter. To learn the ropes and train his employees, Carpenter shadowed a local smoothie restaurant. "They have great nutritional value, are great for muscle recovery after working out, [and can be] a meal replacement option," he says.

Hillwood offers four smoothie flavors, each for \$6.50: Banana Peanut, Strawberry Banana (the most popular; see recipe above), Purple-WildCat (Mixed Berry) and Chewy Chocolate Brownie. Served at the desk on the main floor of the new fitness facility, the smoothies have spurred a noticeable growth in sales, especially since the start of 2012, says Carpenter.

To outfit Hillwood's smoothie kitchen, Carpenter purchased two Vitamix blenders that, along with 24-ounce plastic cups and some utensils, "are all the equipment we needed," he says.

"We more than covered our costs and are now starting to make a profit."

Podley seconds that notion. After purchasing a high-quality, commercial-grade blender, he realized that the blender needs to be large enough to "contain enough ingredients to make more than one smoothie—otherwise you will burn through blender after blender, and it will be difficult to keep up with demand."

"Selling the smoothies pays off great in terms of providing another service for our residents that they don't have to leave our gates for," Podley adds.

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