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Entry for

The Business of Food: Encyclopedia of the Food and Drink Industry

Edited by Gary Allen and Ken Albala

Published by Greenwood Press, October 2007

Delivery

Delivery is the process in which a business sends a shipment of goods (in this case, food) to the buyer. The buyer can be another business, but it often refers to the actual consumer of the goods. Pizza delivery is the most well known form of food delivery today, although it can range from mail order smoked salmon to Internet-based grocery delivery. Delivery affects the food industry because it enables food to reach a wider range of consumers than stores and restaurants can on their own. This garners more financial gain for food-based businesses and allows consumers to eat more globally. Food delivery is also a signpost for society's technological advancements. As our methods of transportation improved from the first step to the first flight, delivery of food has improved and increased with it. Finally, it stands as an indication of current societal trends, which is a fast-paced society with little free time. Convenience items like food delivery are paramount in such a culture.

When it comes to food delivery in the 21st century, there are several steps to complete the process. First, customers must choose a means of communication to place the order, such as the mail, phone, or Internet. Once they place the order, it is shipped via mail, train, car or airplane. The most common type of delivery is restaurant delivery, which entails placing an order over the phone or Internet and having the restaurant deliver the food within a selected period of time (typically within an hour or two) to the chosen address. The restaurant sets restrictions on the area it will deliver to, and accepted payment for delivery includes a credit card, debit card or cash.

Food Delivery: The Early Years

In the past, food delivery was difficult because transportation was very limited, communication was restricted to mail and storage was minimal at best. Only wealthy citizens could afford to have food sent from another land to their residence, typically by land (foot messengers, wagons) or through various waterways. Travel was difficult, and there was no means to prevent spoilage of food while traveling. Meats spoiled quickly, so they were shipped alive. The invention of the steamboat, the first railroad system and the first gas-powered car in the 1800s helped improve transportation and increased the popularity of food delivery. It was around that time grocery stores started offering deliveries to their customer's homes, which was an appreciated change. This was before individual

product packaging, and grocers had to weigh out and package each order, making it a lengthy process.

The invention of refrigeration in the 1870s allowed for the distribution of perishable food via the railroad system, which helped bring a wider range of foods to the masses. The shipment of butchered meat also helped speed up the delivery process. The year 1876 brought the invention of the telephone, which provided a quicker route of communicating delivery needs. Lhardy, a restaurant in Madrid, Spain, acquired a phone in 1885 that led to one of the first phone delivery systems involving freshly made food. They would send workers with a tray of food on their heads to deliver to local customers. This improvement of transportation, storage and communication in the nineteenth century paved the way for improved food delivery service.

Cooked Food Delivery Services

From the late 1800s into the early 1900s, Americans used cooked food delivery services to avoid the hassle of shopping, planning meals and hiring a cook. This experimental catering service involved outside companies delivering fully cooked, ready to eat meals to a household based on how often they needed it. They relied on specially made wagons with the latest technology in refrigeration and heating to maintain their serving temperatures. Originally, galvanized tin

boxes insulated with boiling water that were kept on a stove in the wagon provided the heat needed to deliver food. Another invention included the “Heat Retainer”, created by George Chamberlain of Massachusetts. It involved an insulated, galvanized iron bucket lined with aluminum. Hot soapstone went into the bucket, along with the plates of ready to eat food, followed by a lid. It was a cumbersome contraption, but successfully delivered hot food one hundred miles via train.

Prices ranged from fifteen cents to one dollar per meal. One of the more popular companies, started by homemaker Bertha L. Grimes of Ohio, charged two dollars and seventy-five cents a week for two meals a day. At her best, Grimes sold up to one hundred and seventy-five meals per day. There was a stigma at the time of eating the same food as everyone else, but convenience won out in the end.

Toward the end of World War I, public kitchens with cooked food delivery services opened for women and their servants doing wartime factory work. With fewer women and servants cooking for the family, convenience services like cooked food delivery became essential to survival. After the war, many women lost their factory jobs and had to return to domestic life, so the need lessened; when inflation hit, the high cost of such services forced many out of business.

Rolling Stores

From the 1930s through the 1960s, the rolling store, or a traveling store made out of a vehicle to sell goods, became the next form of food delivery. These autos would travel set routes in rural towns whose residents did not have the means of getting to a grocery store. Constructed out of large trucks and old buses, the stores were simple in design and barely had room for the workers inside. Customers would purchase groceries, clothing and tools from these stores, often paying on credit or trading farm goods for their purchase. For example, some rolling stores kept a chicken coop on board for those who wanted to trade live poultry for their week's groceries. Rolling storeowners had to pay taxes to the government for every county they sold in, which made it difficult to sell in multiple counties. Many of the mobile super marts died out by the late 1960s, but William King ran a successful rolling store from 1963-1994 in Russell and Macon Counties in Alabama. There are a few surviving mobile stores today, the most common being the ice cream delivery truck.

Pizza Delivery

Pizza is the most popular kind of delivery in the American food industry and has significantly contributed to improvements in the field. The first official pizza delivery was made in 1889 by Rafaele Esposito of Pietro il Pizzaiolo (renamed

Pizzeria Brandi) in Naples, Italy. Queen Margherita di Savoia requested a pizza from Esposito but could not eat it among the lower class citizens, so he personally delivered a tomato, basil and mozzarella pizza that he later named after the Queen.

Modern pizza delivery picked up after World War II, when pizzerias started popping up all over the United States. This was due to the increased usage of cars and the soldiers' newfound cravings. Domino's Pizza founder Tom Monaghan was the first person to focus on quality delivery in the 1960s, when no one thought it was profitable. Today, 93 percent of Americans eat pizza at least once a month, and pizza delivery continues to play a large part in it. A person delivering pizza transports the pizza via car in a bag (sometimes insulated or heated through the car's cigarette lighter). Most drivers in the United States make minimum wage and rely on customary tipping to make a decent living. In 2000, many companies began implementing a delivery charge to all orders.

Pizza delivery can be dangerous, especially when going to an unfamiliar house or neighborhood while carrying a lot of money. Robbery and even death can occur while on the job. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics lists pizza delivery as the fifth most dangerous job in the country. Pizza delivery drivers have started their own union to protect their rights and wages. Jim Pohle, a Domino's Pizza

delivery driver who was felt all drivers deserve to make fair wages, started the American Union of Pizza Delivery Drivers in 2006.

Modern Delivery

Food delivery in the 21st century has such variety; it is difficult to find something that cannot be delivered to your home. This is due in part to America's fast-paced society. It is common to find families that have both parents working or are one-parent households, so convenience products and services are more than welcome. The Internet helps give people access to more food delivery services and shortens the amount of time it takes to place an order.

Internet Delivery

Fast food establishments such as McDonald's or Taco Bell do not offer delivery services, but thanks to the Internet, that is slowly changing.

VTLateNightFood.com is a new Internet-based food delivery service started at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. This service allows students to place fast food orders on the Internet between 6 p.m. and 3 a.m. and have the food delivered via car to their dorm room for a small fee. This convenience service saves students a trip across town after dark, allowing them more time for studying.

Although grocery delivery has existed since the 1800s, it has had resurgence in popularity through the Internet. Customers simply pick the web site of their choice, select the groceries they need, and wait for delivery. There is a difference in the quality of grocery-delivering web sites. For example, NetGrocer.com will only offer non-perishable goods and ship through express delivery services that can take up to a week to arrive. Others, like Peapod.com, will ship orders to a local grocery store and have the food delivered by someone that unloads the groceries directly in the customer's home. These services let the customer choose the time they would like their delivery, while the less flexible web sites will ship the delivery whenever they can.

Another form of Internet delivery involves ordering specialty foods and wines off the Internet. These products are typically items that are not available in your local stores, and can range from nostalgic (candy you ate as a child) to gourmet (a rare olive oil from Italy). This service typically ships all perishables, and most companies list on their web sites their method for keeping the food fresh during transit. Some state laws restricted the shipment of wine from other states after Prohibition was repealed in 1933, although most laws are not strictly enforced.

Charity Food Delivery

Many organizations use food delivery as a form of charity. Meals on Wheels moved in 1954 from England to America as a food delivery service for those in need, although their current focus is on senior citizen health. Moveable Feast is another organization that donates and delivers food to HIV/AIDS and breast cancer patients and their families. This service allows patients and their caretakers to focus on staying healthy and worry less about cooking nutritional, diet-specific meals. These charity, nonprofit food delivery services rely mainly on donations and volunteers to succeed.

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