

”Breakfast is an under developed market”

Touted as the most important meal of the day, breakfast has been getting a lot of attention in the food industry lately, especially from fast-food restaurant chains serving breakfast sandwiches and premium coffee.

Mintel, a market research company in Chicago, says fast-food breakfast sales have risen nearly 44% since 2001, to nearly \$15 billion; meanwhile, Technomic, another Chicago research firm, puts that number closer to \$24 billion.

“Our on-the-go society is really tailor-made for buying breakfast on the way to work,” said David Morris, an analyst at Mintel. “Combine that with an under penetrated market, and we see a strong trend that should last at least two or three years.”

Since major chains are actively attempting to boost breakfast sales, the American Egg Board (AEB) has come to their aid with egg menu ideas, research information and tools to help them succeed in their pursuit of breakfast.

Starbucks has opted for an eggs Florentine sandwich with spinach and Havarti cheese as well as a turkey, bacon and egg sandwich offering in 700 stores nationwide. Wendy’s International has rolled its breakfast menu out to nearly 500 stores nationwide with expansion continuing to 750 units by the end of the third quarter. Burger King Holdings has also re-vamped their breakfast offerings to include a bacon, egg and cheese sandwich. Yum brands will test a bacon and egg taco, a Southwest sausage burrito, and an egg, bean and cheese burrito, as well as a bacon and egg crunch wrap at Taco Bell, and even Papa John’s is testing a breakfast pizza omelet.

McDonald’s, the fast-food outlet with the largest share of the breakfast market, reports their breakfast offerings account for one-third of their U.S. revenue with the Egg McMuffin continuing to be one of the country’s best sellers.

The items seemingly in the most demand are eggs and coffee. Yet analysts disagree on what factors contribute most to breakfast’s success.

“What generally decides these battles are consumers’ feelings for a particular product,” Miner said. “Wendy’s and Burger King are looking for the kind of product magic that will do what the Egg McMuffin did for McDonald’s. But if they come out with just another egg-bacon-cheese combo, it’s going to be tough.”

