



Marché

By Sally Kral

Airport Concessionaires
Take A Small-Market Approach
To On-The-Go Dining

It's no secret that today's travelers are more food-conscious than ever before: They care about where their food comes from, what it contains, and how it will affect their bodies and the environment at large.

This age of the "foodie" has had a massive impact on the way businesses present food to consumers, as Pat Murray, executive vice president of business development for SSP America, notes: "In every major city in



Madness

America right now there's a **Whole Foods** because consumers are willing to spend a little more to get food that they perceive to be natural, organic and better for their families. There's still a value-for-money equation, but the difference between taking food out of the freezer and throwing it in the deep fryer versus someone actually preparing your meal by hand is something consumers react to."

As street-side restaurant trends move

toward wholesome, freshly prepared food, airports have followed suit with the *marché* – a modern market-style concept offering hand-prepared food items like sandwiches and salads made with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

"The *marché* is our response to the trend of consumers thinking broadly but buying locally," Murray says. "They want products that are from their marketplace or from the

The Strip Market at Pittsburgh International aims to reflect the foodie culture of the city by offering myriad food and beverage options sourced from local purveyors.

Photo credit: Pittsburgh International



Left: Delaware North's Farmers Market @ LAX offers the same local food and beverage products that can be found at the original market's vendors and restaurants.
Photo credit: Dustin Downing

Below: At LaGuardia, OTG offers Food Hall, featuring a variety of dine-in and to-go options from four chef-driven, cafe-style concepts.
Photo credit: OTG



marketplace of the location where they're traveling. Along with that, we're seeing a departure from the baseline fast food to prepared food served over a counter."

Indeed, today's consumers are increasingly savvy in their food purchases and when given the choice between frozen, commercially prepared items and fresh, handmade products, they are increasingly gravitating toward the latter.

"Across the country, Americans are asking for locally produced, healthier food options, especially when they travel," says Michael Levine, co-founder and CEO of **Tastes on the Fly**. "A market environment feels more artisan and authentic than a commercial food court."

Food Court to Marché

SSP America entered the marché trend with the introduction of **Real Food Company** at **George Bush Intercontinental (IAH)** in 2008. "The nuance of the Real Food Company is that it was the Cadillac of these venues that produce everything from rotisserie chicken to barbecue to sushi to baked goods to grilled items. That really started the conversation to do other things

that are similar to that," Murray says.

SSP America is indeed continuing with the trend: The company is in the midst of building two new marchés in **Tampa International (TPA)** that will each focus on local elements and hand-prepared items. "Compared to nationally branded fast-food places, these venues offer consumers something they might find at a farmers market," Murray says.

Tastes on the Fly debuted **Napa Farms Market** in **San Francisco International's (SFO) Terminal 2** in 2011, looking to the city's **Ferry Plaza Farmers Market** for inspiration. "Bay Area residents relish the farmers market experience, where you develop a connection to the artisans behind the products," Levine says. "Our markets replicate the centuries-old marketplace experience, uniquely adapted to the airport environment, offering a wide variety of local, artisanal food products freshly made."

Napa Farms Market features all Northern California purveyors, including **Acme Bread** (from Berkeley, Calif.), **Cowgirl Creamery** (Tomales Bay), **Equator Coffee** (San Rafael) and **Tyler Florence Fresh** (Mill Valley), among many others.

Levine adds that **Napa Farms Market** was such a success that the company expanded

the idea to the East Coast with **Berkshire Farms Market**, which opened at **Boston Logan International (BOS)** in 2014 and highlights New England agriculture with more than a dozen local brands.

"The reason we're seeing more airport venues that resemble small farmers markets or smaller cafes is due to the type of products that are popular among travelers right now: fresh, healthy foods that are easy to eat on the go," says Frank Sickelsmith, vice president of adult beverage and restaurant development for **HMSHost Corp.** "This is not surprising because it aligns with larger dining trends and demands outside of the airport environment."

HMSHost owns numerous marché concepts that meet consumers' increasing demands for all things fresh, local and convenient. "A prime example of this type of dining is **HMSHost's** concept called **The Local**, which focuses on offering locally inspired menus made with as many local products as available," Sickelsmith says. This marché has more than a dozen locations in airports throughout North America. Other **HMSHost** marché concepts include **1897 Market** in **Charlotte Douglas International (CLT)**; **MKT** in

Right: SSP America's Executive Vice President of Business Development Pat Murray credits Real Food Company as one of the first marché concepts in airports, opening in 2008 at George Bush Intercontinental.



Left: Tastes on the Fly's Napa Farms Market concept at San Francisco International aims to replicate the farmers market experience, with local products and brands prominently featured and meals made by hand to add a personal touch. Photo credit: Rien van Rijthoven

Minneapolis-St. Paul International (MSP), McCarran International (LAS), Ted Stevens Anchorage International (ANC) and Tulsa International (TUL); and The Farmers Market with eight locations in airports throughout North America.

Location, Location, Location

A huge part of the current foodie culture is a focus on locally sourced food, which is not only perceived to be healthier, but also means supporting small businesses and leaving behind a smaller carbon footprint.

Sickelsmith points out that consumers know much more about food these days and that includes the people behind the food. "Local chefs, local artisans, brewers and even farms are something people are fans of today – there's a real following for the people and groups making the locavore trend possible," he says. "At HMSHost we feel that the airport doesn't have to be different from this and can actually be a great venue to feature local groups and suppliers."

Eric Brinker, vice president of experience at OTG, concurs that it's important that airport food trends reflect those of street-side

restaurants: "Guests appreciate the ability to find the same quality and variety they're able to find outside of the airport space." With many top street-side restaurants sourcing from nearby farms – or even growing ingredients in house – airport restaurants and concessions have started to do the same. At **LaGuardia** (LGA) in Terminals C and D, OTG offers Food Hall, featuring a variety of dine-in and to-go options from four chef-driven, cafe-style concepts. Menu items feature ingredients from local farms in Manhattan, Long Island, upstate New York and New Jersey.

Kevin Kelly, president of **Delaware North's** travel business, notes that marché-style concepts allow concessionaires to "shape each individual airport into a continuation of that city, showcasing its unique personality, including its food." He adds that this means sourcing locally as much as possible, not only to reflect the local community, but also because local food tends to be higher-quality food: "Food that travels a shorter distance needs fewer preservatives."

Delaware North's **Farmers Market @ LAX** debuted at **Los Angeles International** (LAX) in 2014. "We continue to work on bringing the most interesting and popular

locally influenced options that best reflect the community, and **Farmers Market @ LAX** is a great example of that," Kelly says. The venue is an extension of Los Angeles's historic Original Farmers Market and offers the same local food and beverage products that can be found at the original market's vendors and restaurants.

Alice Cheung, director of brand innovation for food and beverage at **Paradies Lagardère**, adds that cities "with a strong foodie culture and that are known for their cuisine are strong contenders for small, locally influenced concepts." The company's Long Beach Marché concept in **Long Beach** (LGB) features five popular Long Beach food and beverage brands.

"We look at the airport's demographics, its target audience, the local community and the area's influential food trends to come up with concepts that will resonate with passengers, and that usually means seeking out local influences," Cheung says.

Pittsburgh has recently become a foodie-centric city, according to Christina Cassotis, CEO of **Pittsburgh International** (PIT): "Pittsburgh's recent cultural renaissance includes a surging degree of culinary

innovation that led **Zagat** to rate it the 'Top Food City' in the country last year. We make it a priority at PIT to reflect that local flavor from the city's burgeoning foodie scene with locally influenced vendors like The Strip Market."

The Strip Market opened at PIT this August, and Cassotis notes that it has been very popular among visitors, offering them the experience of shopping and dining in the city like a local. The new concept is named for and modeled after Pittsburgh's historic Strip shopping district, where shoppers can find grocers, produce stands, meat and fish markets, and other local vendors.

"Passenger spending has seen a marked increase with the recent resurgence of air travel," Cassotis adds. "With this increased demand, travelers will continue to expect more from their airport concessions, whether that means healthier options or feeling a sense of place at the airport."

The Foodie Future is Bright

Today's travelers indeed expect more from their airport dining experiences, and the marché has been concessionaires' successful solution to this demand.

"The response from passengers has been in the form of higher sales volume,"

Delaware North's Kelly says. "We believe revenues will continue to go up as we begin to change out more of the old national chain concession programs in favor of these marché-style venues."

Tastes on the Fly's Levine also notes high sales revenue at the company's Farms Market concepts: "Sales per enplanement are much higher than at typical food court establishments; the response has been overwhelmingly positive."

Levine believes this positivity will only grow. "Travelers will continue to demand the same quality at the airport that they demand on the street. This means that having healthy choices that are sustainably prepared and which support artisan producers and local economies will continue to be important. In fact, several airports have included marché-style concepts in new Requests for Proposals instead of just refurbishing traditional food courts."

Pascal Jubault, director of culinary and supply chain for food and beverage at Paradis Lagardère, agrees that this trend will remain in strong demand well into 2017 and beyond. "With an increase in foodie culture and people wanting to try foods beyond what they're familiar with, we'll see more airports offering food options that reflect the communities' cultures and culinary trends. You'll see more locally sourced ingredients

and small, community-known producers brought into airports," he says.

SSP America's Murray notes that not only will the trend continue, but that concessionaires will improve the concept over time: "As the trend grows, I think we'll get more creative. We'll get better with the design, we'll get better at the functionality, we'll make it easier for consumers to navigate, and we'll stretch the boundaries."

For OTG, the marché concept is definitely staying. "We're going to continue to bring this boutique approach to the airport space," Brinker says.

Murray adds that SSP America is always constructing new projects and learns from each one how to improve the next project. "It's exciting times, for sure. For foodies in particular, the airport world is a lot better than it was five years ago, and it certainly will be even better in another five years."

Echoing this sentiment, Brinker says that OTG is "constantly looking at new ways to modernize and transform airport dining" and that the future is indeed bright: "The airport experience has come a long way, but the best is yet to come." ■

We'd like to hear your opinion about this article. Please direct all correspondence to Carol Ward at carol@airportrevenue.com.