

N.Y. distributor promotes clients with website, signage

Consumers finally are responding to out-of-sight gas prices and pressure on disposable income by staying home. So restaurants need all the help they can get to drive traffic. On Long Island, help is coming from what some might consider an unlikely place: a foodservice distributor. J. Kings Foodservice Professionals of Holtsville, N.Y., has created a consumer website that provides a handy list of area restaurants for diners looking for a new place to eat. The site, www.greatrestaurantsny.com, covers four areas on Long Island right now, but chief executive John King reports the company will be expanding that selection soon.

This program is the result of partnerships. The restaurants listed are loyal Kings' customers. King believes that high fuel prices have made it even more imperative for operators to select one broadliner as their primary distributor. Distributors have had to levy fuel surcharges on deliveries. If an operator receives four or five small deliveries thinking he has saved a few pennies by buying on price, he actually will be paying four or five surcharges that could far outweigh any amount he might have shaved off the order.

It's time for operators to "pick their partners," King says. The Great Restaurants program is a way for J. Kings to thank their customers for their decision to use his company as their primary distributor.

To market the program, J. Kings has imprinted pint glasses and cocktail napkins with the names of all the restaurants and has given

them to each operation on the list to use for beverage service. The sides of four trucks also have lists painted on the sides. The marketing message is "Great Restaurants: Visit them all." However, on the

website, the only reference to J. Kings is a tiny logo on the bottom right section of the home page that is a link to the distributor's own home page.

Right now, the locations covered on the site include The North Fork, The Hamptons, Shelter Island and Fire Island, all popular summer destinations. A consumer looking to find a good place to dine simply refers to the lists, which describe the cuisines and provide links to each restaurant's website and e-mail.

The site also has information about Long Island farms, vineyards and wineries. J. Kings is a big proponent of local produce and purchases all kinds of fresh items for its customers during the season. Fifteen farms are profiled on the site, with descriptions of

what they grow and when it will be in season. From the Long Island Wine Country tab, a consumer can locate a winery to visit.

J. Kings is known for the creative services it provides customers, including Designing Hospitality, a J. Kings company, from which an operator can choose from a design menu ranging from concept development and kitchen design to menu development, field management or choice of lighting, uniforms or tableware.

— **Caroline Perkins**

The site provides consumers with a handy list of area restaurants, all of which are loyal Kings' customers.