

# How Baby Boomers are Changing the Way We Plan Menus



*By Chef Michael Thrash, CEC, CCA, WCEC, PCII*

## Boomers and Food

Baby boomers grew up eating meat and potatoes. Their families ate dinner together at the table. Frequently, dessert was served. When they started their own families, they shifted to fast, convenient meals, often consumed on-the-go, leading to the popularity of fast food chains, drive-thrus, and eating in cars. Their diets contained too much fat, sugar, and salt.

Now baby boomers have become more focused on eating healthy meals. They still want convenience, but want more portion-controlled and ready-to-eat meals. They are interested in foods that are low carb, trans fat-free, sugar-free, and non-GMO. Planning menus for baby boomers can be a challenge. Here are some strategies used by GA Foods for planning menus for our boomer clients that may be helpful for your program.

## Bold Flavors

Baby boomers want “real cuisine” with more pronounced, bold flavors. Plan menus that utilize the tastes of sweet, sour, bitter, salt, and umami. As one ages, the sweet and salt taste buds tend to be the most reliable, so meals should showcase sour, bitter, and umami. If you aren't familiar with umami, it is a savory taste. Umami has a pleasurable effect on the overall satisfaction and enjoyment of a meal. Evidence shows that umami not only stimulates appetite, but may also contribute to satiety. Foods rich in umami components are meat, fish, tomatoes, soy sauce, mushrooms, cheeses, and fermented products. Include items like steak with mushroom gravy or cheesy potatoes on your menus.

## International Flair

Baby Boomers are more well-traveled than previous generations. They are also more

aware and educated when it comes to foods and ingredients. Baby boomers want more pronounced flavors, but they are not necessarily adventurous diners. The challenge is to transform an “exotic” menu item into something approachable and recognizable. In other words, when planning menus for baby boomers, provide them with an interesting dining experience using foods that are familiar. Several meals offered by GA Foods follow this strategy:

- Meatloaf with Sofrito Sauce
- Chicken with Thai Ginger Red Sauce
- Macaroni and Cheese with Chicken Chorizo

### Savory Infusion

While boomers are traditional meat-and-potato lovers, they do not want to eat monotonous meals. Spice up menus with a variety of savory herbs and bold seasonings. For example, GA Foods includes side items like Rosemary Potato Wedges, Cheesy Spinach, and Green Beans with Almonds in their meals to round out the flavor profile.



### About Chef Mike

*Chef Mike is a graduate of Johnson and Wales University and joined GA Foods in 2014. Chef has won many awards, but his most recent accomplishment is receiving the President's Medallion from the American Culinary Foundation in July 2018.*

*Chef uses sensory analysis techniques to create meals with maximum flavor, presentation, and satisfaction. **Chef Mike is our secret ingredient for good taste!***

## BABY BOOMERS

# 28%

of the **population**  
are baby boomers

# 10K

boomers reach  
**retirement age daily**



**1 out of 3 boomers** over 65  
relies on Social  
Security benefits **alone**



**42%** of baby boomers have  
**nothing saved for retirement**



**4 out of 5 boomers** plan to  
live in their **current home**  
during retirement