

Customer: Melt Gelato, Temecula, CA



The Challenge:

- Offer Melt Gelato & Crepe Café a fast, cost-effective and flexible option for nutrition analysis.

Executive Summary:

Melt Gelato previously used a laboratory that performed database nutritional analysis. Vice-president Brandon Barwin found the process both time-consuming and difficult. Plus, Barwin discovered he had two days to comply with new menu-labeling legislation for a new location in New York. He turned for help to MenuCalc, a flexible and economical web-based tool that generates instant nutrition results.

MenuCalc Features:

- Online nutrition analysis tool designed to service restaurants and culinary professionals.
- Clients can either elect to license MenuCalc's application for unlimited use and independently perform their nutrition analysis, or to utilize the services of MenuCalc's expert staff.
- Clients can conveniently access their secure user accounts and generate labels from any online computer.
- Concise, export-ready results are delivered instantly.
- MenuCalc's database includes 20,000+ ingredients compiled from USDA Nutrient Laboratory data. It is continuously updated for accuracy.
- MenuCalc automatically recognizes FDA-approved Nutrient Content Claims per recipe.



**Melt Gelato Scoops Up
Efficient Nutrition Analysis from MenuCalc®**

Temecula, CA-based Melt Gelato operates and franchises fast casual restaurants similar to European cafés, serving authentic Italian gelato and sorbetto, French crepes, Italian panini's, salads, smoothies, Italian coffees and a variety of pastries and confections. Sourced from the finest natural ingredients and created in the old-fashioned method of Italian artisans, Melt Gelato's gelato delivers extraordinary flavor and creamy texture with a significantly lower fat content than regular ice-cream. The company's commitment to friendly, individualized customer service creates a unique, appealing and entertaining dining experience. Founded in 2004 with one store, Melt Gelato now has more than 20 franchise-owned stores and is poised for explosive growth into new territories in 2009.

Situation

Melt Gelato's entire concept is based on providing wholesome foods for customers without sacrificing taste. The company's Italian panini's and French crepes are prepared without butter and oil and are a healthy alternative to fast food. Smoothies and sorbetto's are 100% fat free and gelato is made with real fruit, nuts, chocolate, milk and cream for a fresh, intense taste with much less butterfat than ice-cream. Brandon Barwin, vice-president of operations, realized the importance of offering Melt Gelato's customers nutrition information to validate the company's commitment to healthier eating and gain consumer confidence, and also to achieve a strong competitive advantage in the tough economic climate. In addition, Melt Gelato had to observe new menu-labeling legislation in certain states mandating the disclosure of caloric information by chain restaurants.

Previously, the company sent its food labels to a laboratory that used a database to perform nutrition analysis, and then waited some days for the results. For Barwin, the process was both time-consuming and difficult.

“Our whole experience with the laboratory was a hassle,” he noted. “It was stressful having to wait so long for nutrition results and to be at the mercy of someone else’s schedule. Plus, it would have been a huge investment of time and money to use their services for all our locations, especially since our ingredients vary from region to region.”

Time-Saving Solution

Barwin knew he needed to identify a more effective nutrition analysis option for Melt Gelato, particularly when he discovered that he had only a couple of days left to comply with the new menu-labeling mandates in New York. He turned to MenuCalc® founder and CEO Lucy Needham, who claims to effectively slash the prohibitive costs of laboratories, consultants and CD-ROMs in half by utilizing a database of 25,000+ ingredients compiled primarily from USDA Nutrient Laboratory data.

“I discovered MenuCalc to be extremely forward-thinking with a very reasonable pricing structure,” said Barwin. “It made the most sense compared to the other options in the market since it is much more efficient and a huge time-saver. I simply don’t have weeks available to work with an outside service to generate nutrition information.”

Melt Gelato signed up for MenuCalc’s Web Do-it-Yourself plan, which allows users to license the company’s online application for unlimited use and independently perform their nutrition analysis, assisted by training and customer support provided by MenuCalc’s expert staff. A Registered Dietitian plan is also available, whereby MenuCalc’s registered dietitians perform the analysis and assure compliance of all locations under menu labeling bills. Results with both plans are instantaneous and can be customized and exported into programs like Microsoft Word and Excel. Completed nutrition data can easily be printed, emailed and shared via brochures, menus and Web sites.

After a personalized training session with Needham to learn the MenuCalc system, Barwin was ready to tackle nutrition analysis on his own. MenuCalc is easy to use and I’m happy that I can enter the nutrition information myself and get immediate results, he noted.

Flexibility and Customer Support

MenuCalc's most unique feature is its built-in flexibility – after the nutrition analysis is complete, clients can log into their customized online accounts and easily modify recipes for increased healthiness or to qualify for FDA-approved claims such as “low-fat”.

“It’s great that I can make changes to our recipes on the fly and play around with ingredients to bring down calories and fat counts,” said Barwin. “Since our goal is to offer healthy dining choices to our customers, we don’t want to include 800-calorie sandwiches in our menu, for instance. With MenuCalc, I can easily eliminate high-calorie condiments or fillings and view the calorie changes instantly online. It’s a totally flexible application and has made nutrition analysis a lot more fun than I expected!”

In addition to providing skilled, personalized customer service, Needham and lead Registered Dietician Alyson Mar regularly counsel clients regarding regulations, industry issues and developing food trends. In contrast, most laboratories and consultants charge high prices for specialized assistance, often up to \$500 for a single question.

“MenuCalc’s customer service has exceeded my expectations,” said Barwin. “I appreciate having the CEO of the company patiently go through the training with me. And when I have questions, I can always immediately reach someone at the head office – there is no call center to go through and the response time is almost instantaneous. I would definitely recommend MenuCalc to any restaurant looking for efficient, cost-effective nutrition analysis.”

More about MenuCalc

MenuCalc is one of two nutrition analysis applications developed by San Francisco, CA-based FoodCalc® LLC. Founded in 2003, FoodCalc develops unique online solutions for a healthier America. FoodCalc also built LabelCalc®, the only online tool that instantly generates accurate, up-to-date FDA-compliant nutrition facts panels for small-to-medium sized food manufacturers. For more information, visit www.MenuCalc.com and www.LabelCalc.com; email info@MenuCalc.com or info@LabelCalc.com or call (888) 804-0001.

###