

## MENUS THAT TALK™ ADDS MORE LANGUAGES

### Electronic Menu Maker Says Restaurants Leaving Big Money on the Table

**August 6, 2008: Miami, Florida**— Menus That Talk speaks to a lot more people these days. The electronic menu for restaurants that caused a stir two years running at the National Restaurant Association expo speaks to guests in five or more languages simultaneously.

For all their cultural differences, cities like Miami, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Seattle have at least one thing in common—their restaurants can't get along on English only. In New York City, 3.9 million people speak English but 3.5 million don't. The most widely spoken languages in San Francisco (besides English) are Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese, just to name a few. Chicagoland's top five English alternatives are Spanish, Polish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian.



**Menus That Talk** president Susan Perry points out, “Foreign visitors as well as immigrant families have a challenge on their hands when they enter a *Denny’s* or *Ruby Tuesday*. If restaurant staff can’t translate for them, they’re out of luck and end up in ethnic restaurants. The industry,” says Perry, “does not have to leave that money on the table.”

The company sees language barriers as critical to local economies that depend on tourism. “The key to a successful tourist industry,” says Perry, “is service.” The rise of currencies like the Canadian dollar, the British pound and the Euro makes tourist travel to the United States more attractive than ever before, but the widespread shortage of servers is stopping many visitors at the door. *Que voulez-vous manger? Vous avez un menu Français, n’est-ce-pas?*

“Menus That Talk crosses language lines,” says Vice President Richard Herbst, “and it also streamlines operations. Guests enjoy browsing this menu, and when their server appears, they know what they want to order.”

New Orleans famed downtown district was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 forcing the evacuation of much of the city’s restaurant workers. Although this section was rebuilt and tourists returned, the scarcity of workers has resulted in long lines outside restaurants, not for any lack of tables, but because *there simply aren’t enough servers*.



Thousands of ethnic restaurants just can’t find English-speaking servers, and as good as the food often is, English-speaking customers want menus and service they can understand. This takes a significant cut out of foot traffic in Miami restaurants.

**Description:** Originally designed to address the needs of **low-vision** restaurant guests, Menu That Talk is a *smart guide*, a *digital concierge* the size and shape of a DVD case with prominent back-lit buttons representing restaurant food categories like *Appetizers*, *Steaks*, and *Beverages*. When a button is pressed, the Menu explains, in the selected language, choices available, descriptions and price. Descriptions originate with the individual restaurant's menu and are recorded by professional voice actors, along with character voices like Elvis or Crocodile Dundee.

**History:** Menu That Talk uses voice as a full-fledged alternative to printed menus. Recognition came quickly from blind foundations enthusiastically crediting the product for its use of both audio and Braille to reach out to that community.

**Americans With Disabilities Act:** Menu That Talk complies the Americans With Disabilities Act, Title III requirement for reasonable access, and is eligible for tax incentives under that law.

**Languages:** The first version permitted switching between either of two languages, typically English and Spanish. After starting the menu, the user chose a language and browsed. This is a popular feature in bilingual cities like Miami and Los Angeles.

**More Languages:** According to VP Engineering, Richard Herbst, "As Menu That Talk gained traction in the industry, the bilingual format was seen as a *partial solution*. Cruise lines reminded us that their passengers speak English, Spanish, French, Brazilian Portuguese and German, to name a few." The company's R&D went to work and came up with a solution that puts as many as five or six languages at restaurant guests' fingertips. "There is literally no language that can't be spoken by Menu That Talk," Herbst said.

Restaurants with previous versions of the Menu that provide two languages can upgrade their software without replacing the physical units.

**Applications:** Menu That Talk is presently installed in restaurants in the US and is being evaluated by a major fast-food company for its value to handicapped customers and compliance with Americans With Disabilities regulations. It is under review by an international cruise line, as well as a food service equipment distributor in Great Britain. Several US museums are evaluating Menu That Talk as a portable tour guide.

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