

ORIGINAL PANCAKE HOUSE CHATS IT UP WITH MENUS THAT TALK™

Boca Raton Branch Turns to Technology to Reach Out to Demanding Customers; Owners See South Florida as a Template for the Food Industry's Future

April 16, 2008: Boca Raton, Florida—Mo and Carol Sattar, owners of Boca Raton's **Original Pancake House**, face problems common to restaurant owners everywhere—customers that don't speak English, an aging population with less-than-perfect vision, and an active blind community that sees no reason to stay at home.



What these groups have in common is their taste for Original Pancake House fare, a 53 year-old national chain that serves up gourmet-quality breakfast and lunch. But finding experienced servers who are bilingual and don't mind spending extra time with customers is proving to be a challenge for managers of all types of restaurants.

“South Florida is a cultural crossroads,” said owner Mohammed Sattar. “Not only do we get visitors from all over the world who don't speak English, but we've got a large retired population. We simply had to find a way to serve them.”

They turned to **Menus That Talk™**, a Miami company that manufactures a line of talking menus for restaurants, cruise ships, museums and other public places. The menus are compact—about the size of a DVD case; plus they're portable and multilingual.

What co-owner Carol Sattar, right, liked was their ruggedness and ease of use. “Customers simply select a language they prefer, then press a button like *Omelettes*, *Crepes* or *Senior Specials*,” she said. A sweet voice responds, describing the dishes and their prices. When they're ready to order, customers press a *Service* button to summon a waiter.



Preparation for the Pancake House was quick and easy. They sent their printed menu to Menus That Talk who organized it to work with the menu's buttons, then translated it into Spanish. With an approved script, English and Spanish voice actors recorded the menu. A “face plate” was designed, and in less than a week a set of bilingual talking menus was delivered to The Original Pancake House.



Left to right: Legally blind customer using earphone for privacy; Carol instructs an elderly patron; kids love Menus That Talk

“Customers appreciate the practical side,” says Carol Sattar. “This gives them access to the full menu without needing to ask for help.”

Blind and vision-impaired guests at other restaurants appreciate the freedom this brings them. At San Antonio's *Lion and Rose English Pub*, American Council of the Blind chapter president Rosalyn Benavides was thrilled with the idea of having complete and detailed access to her favorite restaurant. “This menu is so easy to use—we should have them all over San Antonio,” she said.

A talking menu can deliver much more information than one printed in Braille, and as Miami Lighthouse President, Virginia Jacko points out, only one in ten blind persons actually reads Braille.

Inspired by a true-to-life experience, Menus That Talk CEO Susan Perry was having lunch with her niece, a young woman with advanced macular degeneration who cannot read a menu from any distance. “When my niece Jessica asked if I would read the menu specials to her, I realized I had forgotten my glasses, and we had a good laugh,” said Perry, “but the incident begged the question, why can’t menus talk to customers?” After nearly a year of development she and partner Richard Herbst showed the first completed menus to restaurant owners.

“Restaurants face some unique challenges,” says Herbst. “They are serving more diverse customers with shrinking wait staffs. Managers are under pressure to get food choices and cuisine descriptions in front of customers. We’re filling those needs with a simple audio device that anyone can use. And,” he added, “Menus That Talk satisfies basic Americans With Disabilities requirements.”

The Menu currently supports two languages simultaneously; the company offers English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Italian and Russian. A version that will offer up to six languages will be ready shortly. A detachable external earpiece provides privacy, also interfacing with modern Telecoil®-equipped hearing aids for added service to the elderly and hearing-impaired.

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