



The Critical Role of Concession Signage at Zoos and Aquariums

Seeing the animals may be the first priority of a visitor at a zoo or aquarium, but the second priority is always food. Food managers and directors use creative signage to show off their menus and bring visitors to the snack stands, restaurants and cafes.

At the Aquarium of the Pacific, the Café Scuba welcomes visitors with menu items listed on digital signs. The signs, provided by Texas Digital of College Station, Texas, are easy to use and changes are made from a computer within the aquarium.

"We have one hanging horizontal, or landscape, sign in the cafeteria that is divided to show the pizza and pasta menu, the deli options and the hot grill foods," said **Derek Basillie**, audio/visual manager at the aquarium. "We started with the digital signs in 2008. At first they just had text, such as the menu items and prices. Then we added the aquarium logo, and then motion where the images turn and spin. The

signs literally come alive, and they grabbed a lot of attention from the aquarium visitors."

According to Basillie, the digital signs serve many purposes. They not only show visitors what food is available, but what specials are available as well. Icons can be added to the signs to designate healthy lifestyle menu choices. Scrolling banner ads run at the bottom of the signs to educate visitors on the aquarium's commitment to sustainable seafood, the café's use of biodegradable utensils, plates and cups and also to advertise upcoming aquarium events.

"The signs have turned out to be such a valued educational tool, and they are so easy to change. We have a software program that makes the changes simple and immediate."

Texas Digital works with many different venues to supply signage needs. The company provides entertainment parks, stadiums, concert venues



Digital signage from Texas Digital at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, Calif. Changes to these signs, at the attraction's Café Scuba, are made from a computer.



A digital sign showing a kids' menu at the Aquarium of the Pacific. Attention-grabbing logos and turning, spinning images have been added to the signs since they were first installed.

By Donna Cavanagh



and other facilities with its proprietary software platform VitalCAST™. The software allows venues to make

changes to their signage on a monthly, daily, hourly or minute-by-minute basis. The digital signage is used not only in food areas of zoos, aquariums and other facilities, but in ticketing areas and for wayfinding purposes as well.

“We work with each facility to assess their needs. With food, the idea is to make the food options as enticing as possible, so customers will find it irresistible,” said **Romney Stewart**, vice president of Customer Services.

Using the Texas Digital content management system, customers can upload photos, images, videos and logos to create signage that is specific to the facility and its needs.

“Signage is not just an extra when it comes to food service at zoos and aquariums and other entertainment centers,” Stewart noted. “Visual communication can be the difference between a guest buying an item and not buying an item.”

While digital signage is finding its way to different venues, many zoos and aquariums still rely on traditional signage to highlight their food and beverage options.

“Signage is not an after-thought for us,” said General Manager **Katie Schumacher** of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center in Virginia Beach. “We put a great deal of effort into wording and our pricing on the menu boards and signs. We want visitors to be attracted to our food, and we want our prices to be enticing as well. We want the guests to buy their food here instead of going elsewhere.”



A digital menu for Café Scuba at the Aquarium of the Pacific. The signs, which can include scrolling banner ads, have become a valuable educational tool.

Show them the fizz and sell them the sizzle!
Sell more with animated graphics and videos on
VitalCAST™
Indoor/Outdoor
Digital Menu Boards

Texas Digital
www.bxdigital.com
ontarionmentsales@bxdigital.com
800.693.2628

RSN 101

SUBWAY
Parks and Recreations Program

Fresh Solutions For Your Location

Become a SUBWAY® franchisee or lease space to one of our experienced franchisees. Either way, you'll be adding a convenience for your customers with a brand that is trusted and recognized. The SUBWAY® franchise offers fresh, delicious portable meals as a healthy alternative to fast food with a simple operation - no cooking or frying and a flexible floor plan to fit almost anywhere.

Call Liz Smethurst: 800.888.4848 x 1398 or +203.877.4201 x 1398
e-mail: Smethurst_L@subway.com
www.subway.com

SUBWAY® is a registered trademark of Oldemark, Inc. ©2010 Subway®. All rights reserved.

RSN 97



**Food Service
Spotlight**

The Virginia Aquarium's food service is operated by Gaithersburg, Md.-based Sodexo, Inc., a leading facilities service and management company, which serves more than 700 venues throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. The aquarium receives about 750,000 guests per year and operates two snack stands, a snack cart and a café.

In the café, Schumacher relies on slide-in signs, so she can easily post menu item specials plus the soup of the day. There is also a menu board outside the café. The aquarium is home to an IMAX theater with a concession stand as well. A large menu board hangs on the wall behind the concessions stand. Visitors to the aquarium walk a nature trail that leads to a second building that holds reptiles and birds. A snack stand serves visitors at that location. There is a permanent menu sign on the side of the reptile and birds' building as guests approach the snack stand.

"The idea with all the signs is to let people in line see their options before they order. If they know what they want ahead of time, the lines move quickly and our customers stay happy. Signs may seem like a trivial thing, but they are so important to providing good customer service."

At the Capron Park Zoo in Attleboro, Mass., Curator of Education **Melanie Stoehrer** oversees all signage. The 7.5-acre zoo, which is owned by the city of Attleboro, features more than 60 species of animals plus a splash depth water playground. The zoo runs a concessions area with picnic tables. It serves snack food items such as ice cream, slushies, hamburgers and hot dogs.

"We have temporary signs at the concession stands indicating our menu items and prices. We change the sign about every two weeks if menu items change," said Stoehrer. "The signs are easy to see when in line, and they provide a great service to us especially at peak times. If people know what we have available, they will order quickly and allow the line to move along."

COMSTOCK-CASTLE STOVE CO.
119 W. Washington, Quincy, IL 62301
800-637-9188 • www.castlestove.com

LONG LASTING PROFIT CENTER



Counter Pizza Ovens in 3 sizes



Funnel-cake Fryers, 3 sizes
Counter and Floor models



Deep Fat Fryers, 3 sizes
Counter and Floor models



Tabletop combinations in 6" increments 12" to 72"



COMSTOCK-CASTLE STOVE CO.
119 W. Washington, Quincy, IL 62301
800-637-9188 • www.castlestove.com



America's Oldest Stove Co., Est. 1838

RSN 33


For 15 years, **Paula Grimstead** has served as executive director of the Red River Zoo in Fargo, N.D. The 24-acre zoo exhibits 275 animals representing 70 different species and receives more than 70,000 visitors each year. Grimstead operates one concession stand that offers basic snack food such as nachos, taco-in-a-bag, candy, popcorn, Dippin' Dots and fruit bars. On the window of the concession stand is a large, vinyl cling sign that displays all menu items. There is also a sign that sits on the counter.

"We can pop in letters and additions and subtractions to the menu very easily," Grimstead explained. "We also display promotional signs that are given to


us by companies when we serve their products. With only one concession stand, we want people to know what is available as soon as they get into line. We

want them to buy our food and stay at our zoo. If they have to wait too long, they might decide to go somewhere else for food, and that does not help us since all proceeds go back to the zoo in support of our programs."

Whether traditional or high-tech, signs play an important role at eateries at zoos and aquariums. They offer

menu information and help food managers provide efficient customer service. 

(For more information, circle 233 on card.)


 "The signs have turned out to be such a valued educational tool, and they are so easy to change. We have a software program that makes the changes simple and immediate."

- Derek Basillie, Aquarium of the Pacific, Long Beach, Calif.



Ready to Cook Up Some Delicious Profits?

Visit our page on **facebook** | Follow us on **twitter**

NO licensing, franchise, or royalty fees - you control and keep all of your profits!

- Select from 3 models of compact, high-efficiency pressure fryers that cook up to 64 pieces of fresh chicken in less than 10 minutes!
- Produce tender, juicy, and flavorful foods with lower carbs, less fat, and fewer calories!
- Draw upon a complete branded program which includes packaging, P.O.S. materials, training, and marketing support!
- Benefit from our 55 years of success and thousands of locations worldwide!

Contact us today for more info and a free demo!

Source your own fresh foods or use our convenient, delicious  frozen foods!

1-866-747-0244 • lapinfo@broaster.com • www.broaster.com

BROASTER
An American Tradition Since 1954

Broaster®, Broaster®, Broaster Chicken®, Broaster Forder®, and Broaster® are registered trademarks. Usage is only available to licensed operators with written authorization from The Broaster Company.