

Foodservice is a lot like show business. No matter the catastrophe — take today's exorbitant food costs, for example — the meal must go on. No wonder then that chefs, restaurant owners and foodservice operators are stoic straight through to dessert in their determination to maintain quality amid dramatic daily economic uncertainties that hearken Depression-era predictions.

Compromising on ingredients, menu size or portion isn't an option most restaurants say they're willing to take heading into 2009. Given consumer confidence landed on a year-

Is Your Business Shrinking?

end low, and menu inflation jumped sharply in the fall of 2008 (by 3.2 per cent, according to the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association), raising prices may not be a solution to combat soaring food costs either.

So what's the answer? Give diners more value. Work harder than ever. Pinch pennies and put on a smile, because when you're trying to attract customers in a very tough economy, a positive attitude goes a long way.

"We have to be careful not to paint ourselves into a sky-is-falling scenario," says Geoff Wilson, founding partner, fsSTRATEGY in Toronto, who doesn't see relief on the consumer confidence side of the equation coming anytime soon. "We've got to look for opportunity in the circumstances we're facing."

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*Food shortages, cost increases
and a struggling economy — how the
industry will cope in 2009*