

More Food Court memories

We went on a tour to Vietnam this past March. I had my pictures developed at Costco, and stopped at the Food Court. While I looked at the pictures, I noticed a Vietnamese family watching me. I told them about the pictures and the trip, and they joined in to view the pictures. We all had fun sharing memories of that beautiful country, and by the time I was done with the 300 photos there was a whole crowd of Vietnamese people reliving memories of their home.

*Marilyn Campbell
Seattle, Washington*

Our family has a Costco tradition: Every Friday night we go out for pizza at our local Costco in Bayamón, Puerto Rico. It's a great way to end a busy week and kick off what is almost always a good weekend.

*Finees Almenas
Cataño, Puerto Rico*

My husband and I [have been] married 24 years. For the last four years, we have budgeted hard to help our two children with their university tuition fees so they wouldn't finish with a huge debt. At least once a month, we have lunch at Costco. Drinks and pizza for two people [for] under a fiver!!! You can enjoy a bargain, live within your means and still "date."

*Joanne Landon
Edinburgh, Scotland*

As a Costco member, I took my 90-year-old mother on her walker [for] her first visit to do my weekly shopping there. It was around lunchtime when we finished. I was amazed when she fell in love with the pizza combo and chocolate yogurt. Every week without fail we enjoy meeting for lunch for her faves. The employees know [us] by sight and our favorite order. Delicious.

*Madeleine Long
Berwyn, Pennsylvania*

My husband and I frequently go to lunch at Costco during our lunchtime from running our own business. While there we noticed an elderly couple (80ish in age) eating the fruit and yogurt dessert. We started up a conversation with them, and they explained that this was their date. They took the bus everywhere they went, and one stop was Costco for their yogurt treat. They were smiling at each other, and you could tell they thoroughly enjoyed being in the moment, together. My husband and I felt fortunate to have been a part of their day. We hope we can feel as lucky and alive as they did when we get to be that age.

*Gina Dawsey
Clearwater, Florida*

FRANCE FREEMAN



Super value and quality, and a price—\$1.50—that Jim Sinegal says he'll never change.

New dog in town

The arrival of the new Kirkland Signature™ ¼ Pound Plus all-beef hot dog at Food Courts in many parts of the country has prompted Costco members to ask what happened to the kosher hot dog they've been eating for years, and the bigger question: Why did Costco mess with something that wasn't broken—or was it?

Worldwide in 2008, Costco sold more than 82 million quarter-pound hot dogs in its Food Courts. This year that number will be close to 90 million. Going forward, those numbers will continue to rise.

What's not rising is the availability of kosher raw materials and kosher production-plant capacity for making those hot dogs. Clearly the kosher meat industry never anticipated the high demand that Costco's continued growth represents.

Costco, which had relied on the two national suppliers of kosher hot dogs since the mid-'80s, became concerned in 2007 over troubling signs in the kosher meat industry that ultimately led to a decrease in supply. A decision was made to investigate and develop Costco's own Kirkland Signature-brand hot dog.

Timing is everything, because by the end of 2008 three events had coincided: One of the original hot dog suppliers made the decision to quit the kosher meat business; one of the largest kosher raw-ingredient suppliers was closed down; and Costco was ready to test its new hot dog in a couple of warehouses.

Back when the original hot dog carts were conceived, the desire was to deliver a quality product. With hot dog industry standards at an all-time low in 1984, going with a kosher product was the best way to insure consistent quality at that time. Kosher—which literally means "fit" or "proper"—was a good starting point in addressing food safety concerns.

Today's standards for hot dogs have shifted in a positive way, reinforced by stricter product labeling and better-than-ever food safety guidelines.

As with the hundreds of other Kirkland Signature products, Costco has been able to focus on the best processing plants in the industry—all with full-time U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service supervision.

The new Kirkland Signature ¼ Pound Plus hot dogs are about 10 percent heavier and longer than the old quarter-pound hot dogs and are made from 100 percent beef with only fresh USDA Choice or better cuts. This high-quality hot dog has been developed without fillers, binders, phosphates, corn syrup, artificial color and artificial flavors, which are frequently found in other brands, including some of the kosher brands.

Everything about the new hot dog is high in quality. In blind taste tests against the older brands, the Kirkland Signature hot dog won consistently. You owe it to yourself to see if it lives up to your expectations of quality and value.—DW

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