

Hi, I'm iPad. May I take your order?

February 21 2011, By Bruce Horovitz



The iPad 3G

The first time most folks visit this restaurant, it won't likely be for the food, wine or beer. It'll be for the iPads.

When the new chain Stacked: Food Well Built opens its first of three Southern California units in May - this one in Torrance - sitting atop each of the fast-casual chain's 60 tables will be an iPad that folks will use to design and order their meals.

The two co-founders - who founded the BJ's Restaurant chain - plan to place 100 iPads in each restaurant. Diners will use them to look at meal options; design their own burgers, pizzas and salads and, if they want, use the iPads to pay for the meals.

But, says co-founder Paul Motenko, "We're not going to market it as an iPad restaurant." When Stacked founders first considered a concept with

guests creating their own meals and ordering them on tabletop devices, the iPad didn't yet exist. iPads were the breakthrough, Motenko says.

The future of restaurant ordering and design may be digital. "The printing of menus will fade as iPads - and other devices - replace them," says consultant Dennis Lombardi.

Young people, in particular, want to see more technology in restaurants, says Hudson Riehle, research chief at the National Restaurant Association. In a recent survey, two of three 18- to 34-year-olds said they'd favor restaurants with high-tech gear.

That also explains why the chain's upcoming locations - Torrance, San Diego and Cerritos - are situated near movie complexes in very active malls. That's where young folks congregate.

But, Riehle warns, "I want to see industrial-strength iPads. It can be a jungle on the tabletop."

The iPads at Stacked will be in metal frames that sit about 3 inches off the tabletops. Folks wanting to order burgers will select the type of bun, meat and toppings on the iPad by clicking and dragging icons. The burger stacks visually on the [iPad](#) screen. Ditto for pizzas and salads.

The iPads will have alarms that sound if they're carried out the door.

Others have tried iPads. Restaurants by Delta Air Lines gates at New York's John F. Kennedy and LaGuardia Airport installed iPads at tables that let guests custom-order meals. Bone's [Restaurant](#) in Atlanta uses iPads for its wine list. Co-owner Richard Lewis says wine sales jumped 20 percent since the iPads were added six months ago

Someday, they'll be at all restaurants, Lewis says. "It's the future."

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