



# GHRA In Action

OUR MEMBERS ARE OUR MISSION!

VOL. 9 | JULY 2022

## Cigar Association of America Brings Fight Against Proposed Flavor Ban Online

**Strong Demand & Rising Oil Costs Push Gas Prices Higher**



***What Do Reskilling and Upskilling Mean for Convenience Stores?***



# Imamat Day

*On this special occasion of Imamat Day, the GHRA Board of Directors and Staff wishes you and your family Imamat Day Mubarak, with prayers for peace, happiness, good health, and barakat. Ameen.*

REGARDS,

*Imran Ali*

PRESIDENT, GHRA



# A NOTE FROM THE CEO

BRIAN TROUT, CEO

Greetings Members,

The heat and humidity of the summer months are upon us and with this time of the year comes hurricane preparedness. I encourage all our members to take the necessary steps to prepare and train your team on how to respond in the event of a hurricane. The warehouse is building inventory on case water and putting plans in motion to be able to deliver pallets of case water to our members who want and order them.

As you are all aware, the inflation we are experiencing is the highest it has been since 1970. Costs are increasing substantially, and the consumers are starting to react to the high prices by buying less fuel and driving less. The federal government has raised the interest rates in hopes of curbing inflation. GHRA is taking these changes in consumer behavior seriously, and we are working to better understand how these changes will affect our industry so we can adjust accordingly.

We are working very diligently to improve the value GHRA brings to the membership, and starting in mid-July, I will be arranging meetings with members to visit stores and meet with owners in person. I am very much looking forward to discussing the state of the industry, the operating environment we are in, and how GHRA can further support the members and bring programs to the members to help you grow your customers and sales.

I hope you and your families have a wonderful fourth of July holiday.

Thank you for your trust and your continued support and as always, continued blessings!

Sincerely,

*Brian Trout*

OUR MEMBERS ARE OUR MISSION!



# HAPPY 4TH OF JULY INDEPENDENCE DAY

THE GHRA CORPORATE OFFICE WILL BE **CLOSED** ON  
MONDAY, JULY 4, 2022

GHRA WAREHOUSE CASH AND CARRY WILL REMAIN **OPEN** FROM  
**8:30 AM - 6:00 PM**

DELIVERIES WILL BE MADE PER NORMAL SCHEDULE

## WE HAVE A NEW PHONE NUMBER!

To better serve you, GHRA phones have been switched to a new automated system.

**1-844-777-GHRA (4472)**

Both GHRA Corporate Office and Warehouse will use the same number.

*The new number will direct you to the automated voice greeting.  
Please listen to the greeting carefully to be directed to the right person / department, as the menu options have been changed.*

# Cigar Association of America Brings Fight Against Proposed Flavor Ban Online

The organization encourages adult cigar consumers to use its internet portal to submit comments to the FDA.

By Convenience Store News

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The cigar industry is asking adult cigar consumers to let the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) know how they feel about a proposed flavor ban in the tobacco segment.

The Cigar Association of America (CAA) launched an internet portal so that adult cigar consumers can comment on the FDA's proposed tobacco product standard on characterizing flavors in cigars.

"It is unfortunate that in public policy debates, the average adult consumer is often given little say in the matter. We developed this portal to give adult consumers a voice on this important issue," said CAA president David Ozgo.

"The choice of which legal products adult consumers have a right to enjoy should be left entirely to adult consumers. Cigars come in a wide variety of styles, with differing flavor profiles. Adult consumers have different tastes and preferences and prefer to have a wide variety of choices of cigars," he added. "Price is important as well. As a result, for those adults that choose to enjoy a cigar, cigar manufacturers offer a cigar for every taste and occasion, and for every budget."

According to CAA, a significant percentage of all cigars may be considered to have a characterizing flavor. This is true for premium cigars, and even more so for popular priced cigars, where much of the category may be considered to have a characterizing flavor, the association explained.

As a result, FDA's proposal to prohibit characterizing flavors in cigars will fall particularly hard on those who more frequently purchase popular priced cigars, CAA added.

"Flavored cigar youth usage rates are currently at historic lows, less than 1 percent in one recent government survey. Banning characterizing flavors in cigars, therefore, will do little beyond denying adult consumers the right to purchase a legal product," Ozgo said.

## Proposed Product Standards

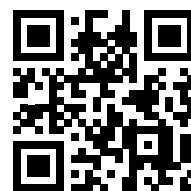
In late April, the FDA released two new product standards, one to prohibit menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes and the other to prohibit all characterizing flavors (other than tobacco) in cigars.

According to the agency, the proposed product standards are based on clear science and evidence establishing the addictiveness and harm of these products and build on the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which prohibited all characterizing flavors — other than tobacco and menthol — in cigarettes in 2009.

If finalized and implemented, the FDA's enforcement will only address manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, importers and retailers, and not adult tobacco consumers who possess or use the flavored products.

The agency began taking public comments on the proposed rules on May 4. It will also hold public listening sessions on June 13 and 15 for individuals, communities, and organizations to share their perspectives with the FDA.

The public has the opportunity to submit either electronic or written comments directly to the dockets on the proposed rules through July 5. Once all the comments have been reviewed and considered, the FDA will decide whether to issue final product standards. ■



Scan QR Code to  
comment on the  
FDA's proposal  
through the  
CAA's Consumer  
Choice Portal



“People are still fueling up, despite these high prices,” said Andrew Gross, AAA spokesperson. “At some point, drivers may change their daily driving habits or lifestyle due to these high prices, but we are not there yet.”

Leading up to the Memorial Day weekend, AAA forecasted that 39.2 million people would travel 50 miles or more from home for three-day weekend. This was an increase of 8.3 percent compared to 2021, bringing travel volumes almost in line with 2017 figures.

Nearly 35 million people planned to travel by car during Memorial Day weekend, up 4.6 percent vs. last year, revealed the AAA holiday forecast.

According to new data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA), total domestic gasoline stocks decreased by 700,000 barrels to 219 million barrels last week. Meanwhile, gasoline demand grew from 8.8 million barrels per day to 8.98 million barrels per day as drivers fueled up for unofficial start of summer.

These supply and demand dynamics have contributed to rising pump prices. Coupled with volatile crude oil prices, pump prices will likely remain elevated as long as demand grows and supply remains tight, according to AAA.

Today’s national average for a gallon of gas is \$4.86, which is 59 cents more than a month ago, and \$1.81 more than a year ago.

The nation’s top 10 largest weekly increases occurred in Michigan (+45 cents per gallon), Illinois (+41 cents), Indiana (+41 cents), Wisconsin (+39 cents), Ohio (+38 cents), Nebraska (+37 cents), Kentucky (+36 cents), Colorado (+35 cents), Minnesota (+34 cents) and Texas (+32 cents).

The nation’s top 10 most expensive markets are California (\$6.34 per gallon), Nevada (\$5.49), Hawaii (\$5.47), Oregon (\$5.41), Washington (\$5.40), Illinois (\$5.40), Alaska (\$5.37), Washington, D.C. (\$5.06) and Michigan (\$5.05).

At the close of the formal trading session on June 3, West Texas Intermediate increased by \$2 to settle at \$118.87. Crude prices rose last week after OPEC+ announced it would increase monthly production to 648,000 barrels per day in July and August instead of 400,000 per day as previously planned.

However, the market is still concerned that supply could remain tight as the European Union works to implement a 90-percent ban on Russian oil imports by the end of this year, AAA explained.

Additionally, prices were boosted after EIA reported that total domestic stocks decreased by 5.1 million barrels to 414.7 million barrels. The current storage level is approximately 13.5 percent lower than a year ago, contributing to rising crude prices. For this week, crude prices could rise again if EIA’s next report shows another decrease in total domestic stocks, the organization added. ■

# Strong Demand & Rising Oil Costs Push Gas Prices Higher

The national average for a gallon of gas surged 25 cents in one week.

By Convenience Store News

WASHINGTON, D.C. — With Memorial Day weekend traffic signaling a strong summer travel season, motorists are facing greater pain at the pump.

According to AAA, domestic gasoline demand rose last week in the wake of a robust Memorial Day weekend of travel. Add to that the rising cost of oil, the national average for a gallon of gas surged 25 cents in one week to hit \$4.86.

The cost of a barrel of oil is nearing \$120, nearly double from last August, as increased oil demand outpaces the tight global supply, the organization said.



# What Do Reskilling and Upskilling Mean for Convenience Stores?

The convenience industry is constantly evolving, and it is important to make sure your employees are well-trained and prepared for anything. Advances in technology, staffing shortages, and any number of events could lead to employees needing enhanced, or entirely new, skills in order for your store to remain successful and competitive. When you implement upskilling and reskilling training programs in your convenience store, you and your staff will be better prepared for whatever challenges may come your way.

*By Ready Training Online*

## What Do Reskilling and Upskilling Mean?

While upskilling and reskilling are similar training processes, they serve two very different functions within your store, and can help you in different ways.

- **Reskilling** means training an employee in a completely new set of skills in order to have them fill a new or different position within your store – such as training a cashier to also work the foodservice counter.
- **Upskilling** means training employees in additional skills to better perform their current jobs. An example would be training a cashier employee in suggestive selling techniques in order to increase sales, or adding leadership training for an employee on the management track.

When you implement upskilling and reskilling training programs in your convenience store, you and your staff will be better prepared for whatever challenges may come your way.

## Upskilling and Reskilling in Your Convenience Store

There are many areas within your convenience store where you and your employees would benefit from a strategy for upskilling and reskilling.

- **Technology:** Whether it's your cash registers, fuel pumps, or order screens at the food service counter, technology is becoming more prevalent in your business and it's always

advancing. In order to meet this demand, your employees will need constant training to stay on top of digital advancements.

- **Self-checkout:** More and more convenience stores are starting to implement forms of self-checkouts – either with registers they can operate themselves, or apps so they can scan products with their phone. Not only will your employees need to be trained to help customers use these checkouts, but they may also need to be trained to fill new roles as self-checkout becomes more popular.
- **Staffing shortages:** Everyone has been struggling with staffing. In order to fill the gaps, employees will need training to fill new positions within your store. That may mean taking an employee who usually works on stocking shelves and training them to work behind the foodservice counter or training a foodservice employee to work with fuel customers.

Upskilling and reskilling also encourage employee loyalty. While many convenience store employees may view their jobs as just part-time until they're out of school or something else comes along, many are looking for a career. Offering them the opportunity to learn and grow their skills in your store won't guarantee they stay with your store for their entire career, but it will make them a more loyal and appreciative employee while they work for you. Investing in your employees is also an investment in your customers, as happy, loyal employees will provide better customer service. ■



## Honing the Craft of Convenience

Shoppers give c-stores solid performance ratings, but there is room for improvement

While convenience store shoppers are a loyal bunch — 29 percent say they shop at the same c-store all of the time and 64 percent say they shop at the same store most of the time — there is more that the industry could be doing to attract and retain customers. The 2022 Convenience Store News Realities of the Aisle Study, which surveyed 1,500-plus consumers who shop a c-store at least once a month, revealed the following:

### Performance Ratings for Convenience Store Shopped Most Often

	Excellent/Very Good	Good	Fair/Poor
General convenience	69%	25%	6%
Speed of shopping	66%	27%	7%
Store cleanliness	62%	29%	9%
Employee friendliness	61%	27%	11%
Store organization	60%	31%	
Employee helpfulness	59%	28%	13%
Products needed are in-stock	59%	29%	12%
Store look/feel	56%	34%	
Prepared food quality	54%	30%	15%
Variety of products	54%	31%	14%
Loyalty program	53%	31%	16%
Contactless shopping options	50%	34%	16%
Fun to shop	48%	33%	19%
Price of products	45%	30%	25%
Embraces cutting-edge tech	45%	33%	22%



According to shoppers, convenience stores are performing well in the areas of general convenience, speed, cleanliness/organization, and friendliness. Conversely, areas for improvement include pricing, embracing technology, and being fun to shop.



Although c-stores aren't receiving stellar marks right now for being fun to stop, the channel is making headway in this area. Year over year, the performance rating for this attribute jumped

**4 POINTS.**



Other areas of progress are store organization and store look/feel — each up

**5 POINTS.**

“They have exactly what I need, and it is in stock every time I need it. Things are organized as well and so it is easy for me to find what I need. I don't have to go out of my way for anything.”

— One surveyed shopper



**45%**



LESS THAN HALF OF SHOPPERS (45%) RATE THEIR MOST-VISITED CONVENIENCE STORE AS BEING EXCELLENT/VERY GOOD AT EMBRACING CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY. HOWEVER, THE TIDE MAY BE TURNING AS THE PERFORMANCE RATING FOR THIS ATTRIBUTE SAW A 4-POINT JUMP COMPARED TO 2021.





# C-Store Operators Share Pandemic Lessons at 2022 National Restaurant Association Show

Foodservice leaders from GetGo Café + Market and Kum & Go discussed insights gained.

By Convenience Store News

CHICAGO — After taking two years off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show returned to Chicago to feature a variety of new products, processes and best practices for this current stage of the pandemic and a future that promises to evolve more rapidly than foodservice operators would have ever previously guessed.

Whatever comes next, one thing is certain: convenience stores will have a place in the new foodservice landscape.

Although the foodservice category was already vital to the

convenience store industry prior to the arrival of COVID-19, the early days of the pandemic prompted many consumers to recognize a core aspect of the channel. “We offered solutions,” Farley Kaiser, director of culinary and innovation at GetGo Café + Market, said during an NRA education session titled “Lessons from C-stores: Innovations Driving Customer Traffic.”

By being open and available when many other foodservice outlets weren’t, c-store brands were able to become more well-known in different ways. “We created different behavior habits,” Kaiser reflected.

GetGo Café + Market, the Pittsburgh-based operator of more than 470 c-stores throughout western Pennsylvania, north central Ohio, northern West Virginia, Maryland and Indiana, doesn't plan to cede any of the ground it has gained in the foodservice space.

GetGo's culinary team has a "symbiotic relationship" with its parent company and supermarket operator Giant Eagle Inc., working together closely to plan for the future before branching out in different ways.

Kaiser noted that innovative supplier partners within the foodservice category should balance looking at the trends of the future while staying quick and nimble in the present.

*"Being flexible is very important to our business because we move fast," she said.*

Fellow presenter Jac Moskalik, vice president of food innovation at Des Moines-based Kum & Go, discussed how the c-store chain worked with external parties to determine what was missing in their trade area and what their value proposition should be.

With the goal of being a "fun and funky brand" that also offers quality food, Kum & Go learned a great deal in the midst of the pandemic before rolling out its new fresh food menu last fall.

Today, Kum & Go stores with the new program offer craveable items such as grain bowls, sandwiches with premium meat, and cold brew frappés — all made with clean ingredients. The retailer is even ready to ditch the roller grill in favor of other offerings at its "healthy brand activation" stores.

*"Our thought process is trying to democratize healthy while making craveable food," Moskalik said, advising foodservice operators to think in two different timeframes. "You have to understand what people need now and what people are going to need in five years."*

In today's competitive market, food-focused convenience stores are looking at quick-service restaurants and fast-casual outlets as their core competitors, not traditional c-stores. Moskalik pointed out that it even helps to divide competitors by core categories, as methods of gaining share of stomach may differ for breakfast sandwiches vs. beverages, for example.

### Lessons & Changes From the Pandemic

It's widely known that the usage of mobile apps for ordering food dramatically increased during the pandemic. It is expected to stay high.

However, this is not just because of the convenience factor. The consumer perspective on delivered food itself has changed, according to Kaiser. Today's consumers no longer

think only of options such as pizza and Chinese food when they think of delivered food.

"There's options everywhere," she said, noting that GetGo has realized that consumers want a good and consistent offer, not necessarily a broad one, so the retailer scaled back its menu options in order to provide the right experience to guests.

The consumer perspective on food safety is another one that has changed, likely for good. "When you live and breathe food, you know about food safety, but COVID highlighted it for the consumer who is not necessarily informed," Moskalik said.

From offering wrapped cutlery to new packaging options to touchless equipment, these changes not only ensure customer safety, but they also send the message that a retailer prioritizes doing so.

The labor crunch that everyone is facing is a major challenge having an impact on foodservice innovation. New concepts should be planned in multiple ways based on the state of labor when they reach the market, Kaiser advised. Availability of products, ability to execute, and the amount of staff all play a part.

While retailers can't predict the future, they must always remember that what they're planning may not be the ultimate reality.

"A great idea looks awesome on paper until it's in the stores, which is a totally different dynamic," Moskalik said.

The 2022 National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show was held at Chicago's McCormick Place May 21-24. ■





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# we're hiring.

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FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT US AT [WWW.GHRAONLINE.COM](http://WWW.GHRAONLINE.COM)



## TCEQ MANDATORY UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK (UST) A/B OPERATORS TRAINING

**GHRA IS EXCITED TO PROVIDE THIS ONLINE TRAINING FOR ONLY \$65**

- Members purchasing the online training will receive a unique code from GHRA.
- This training takes about 4-6 hours and must be completed within 30 days from start.
- Pay by money order or credit card.

*Registration form is available at: [www.ghraonline.com](http://www.ghraonline.com)*

# Welcome Members

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff at GHRA,  
please welcome our new members:

SWIFT ELLA	JULIA'S #6	COLE STOP #2
ROADSTER #24	RUSH #11	ZK FOOD MART
KINGWOOD MART	RATTLERS	H. K. FOOD MART
FUEL MART	FANNIN EAGLE MART	FRESH MART #4
FUEL DEPOT #45	OST FOOD MART	FRESH MART #5
SUNRISE MART		BELLFORT BUZZY BEE



## NACS TRADE SHOW 2022

**October 1-4, 2022**

**Las Vegas Convention Center | Las Vegas**

**Deadline to register September 23, 2022**

*The GHRA discount code for registration is: **tus62rll***

GHRA will give members **\$100** reimbursement (2 per store) that will be included in your Q3 Rebate in November of this year. You will need to send your NACS Confirmation to [anisa@ghraonline.com](mailto:anisa@ghraonline.com) in order to receive your reimbursement.



Scan QR Code for step-by-step guide to register