Why Beverage Strategy Matters in Convenience Store Foodservice

Complementing meals with profitable non-alcoholic drinks

WHY BEVERAGES MOVE THE NUMBERS

38.9%

of U.S. c-store in-store gross profit dollars came from foodservice, including dispensed drinks, in 2025

NACS (2026)

51.38%

gross margin on cold dispensed beverages in 2024, and the only foodservice category to outpace foodservice CPI

NACS, via NACS Magazine

56%

of respondents made more than one c-store trip in 30 days mainly to buy a drink

Intouch Insight (2026)

$14

average spend on prepared food and beverages per c-store foodservice visit

Technomic, Q2 2025

WHAT EACH BEVERAGE PLATFORM DOES

Coffee
Builds daily routines that anchor breakfast

Fountain
20–30 valves vs. 8–10 at a typical QSR

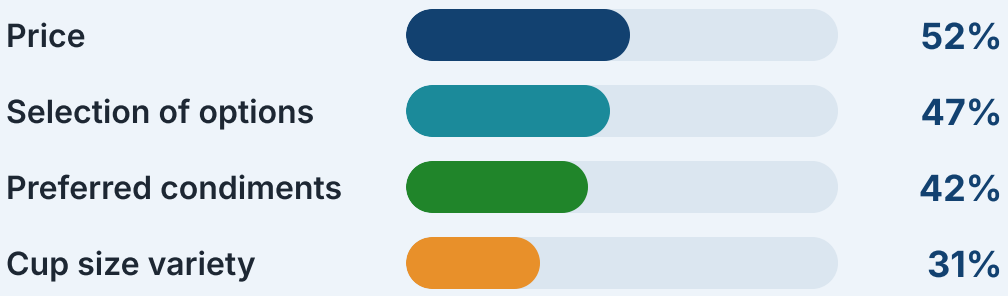
Specialty
Custom and frozen drinks fill the afternoon

Quality
A fresh drink signals care for the food

Value
Price still decides most purchases

What matters most when buying hot coffee

Share of c-store hot coffee buyers citing each attribute



Quality upgrades work best when they protect the value position.

Source: Technomic C-Store Consumer Market Brief, Q2 2025, via CSP

Where c-stores win

- 68% say c-stores match QSRs and cafés on cold coffee quality
- 58% say c-store cold coffee is a better value
- Highest hot coffee purchase frequency in foodservice

Where gaps remain

- Hot coffee trails cafés on freshness, variety, and uniqueness
- 72% have seen bean-to-cup, so it no longer stands out
- Specialty drinks add ingredients, equipment, and cleaning

WHEN BEVERAGES ADD THE MOST VALUE

Align by daypart
Coffee with breakfast, fountain with lunch

Build combos
Pair cold coffee with lunch and snacks

Protect quality
Fresh, consistent, fairly priced

Measure together
Track drinks with the food they support

Sources: NACS State of the Industry (April 2026); NACS Magazine, “Coming Inside for the Cold Beverages” (March 2026); Intouch Insight 2026 C-Store Trends Report, via C-Store Dive; Technomic C-Store Consumer Market Brief (Q2 2025), via CSP. Prepared by It’s All Goods.