

Unit 304: Contribute to the guest experience

Handout 10: Menu planning

The menu is:

- The prime method of communicating to customers what it is you have to sell.
- The key document for directing and controlling the business, including:
 - the ingredients that need to be purchased
 - the maximum cost of those ingredients
 - the staff and equipment required to produce the dishes.

Developing a menu policy

When developing a menu, you must bear these factors in mind:

a. Competition

- awareness of the local competition
- price, quality and style
- offer something different and be competitive on price and quality.

b. Location

- the area in which the business is situated
- the type of customers you are going to attract.
- what do they want to eat?
- what service do they expect?
- what are they prepared to pay?
- specialty/local foods – include the ingredients for extra menu appeal.

c. Current trends

- traditional dishes are always popular
- regular diners may want to be inspired by something new
- cutting edge food?
- food that is more familiar and comforting?

d. Space and equipment in the kitchen

- only include items that the kitchen can comfortably produce.

e. Supplies

- ingredients you know will be readily available in the necessary quantities. This will ensure you avoid disappointing your customers.

f. Costs

- be aware of your food costs at all times and keep within budget
- analyse menu costs regularly.

g. Food allergies

- the most common food allergies are to milk, eggs, fish, shellfish and nuts, so these items should always be identified on the menu
- waiting staff should be aware of the ingredients present in every dish.

h. Number and capabilities of staff

- staff must be capable of cooking and serving the dishes
- elaborate dishes and gueridon service at the table will require extra staff.

i. Food labelling

- clearly label any menu items containing genetically modified soya or maize
- include all derivatives such as cakes, biscuits, meat substitutes, bread, peanut butter and chocolate.

j. Details of dishes

- The finer details of specific dishes, the major considerations are:

Style

- a menu should have integrity
- stick to what you know, whether it be traditional, modern, fusion
- produce it to the best of your ability
- have a style, and fully research and understand it.

Seasonality

- lighter dishes such as chilled soups and salads in summer
- hearty game dishes and casseroles in winter
- seasonal produce will keep the menu costs down.

Good nutritional balance

- diets should consist of 1/3 fruit and vegetables, 1/3 carbohydrates, 1/6 dairy products and 1/6 proteins and fats
- this advice is worth considering in the overall balance of a menu.

Special occasions

- religious dates, birthdays, other special dates.

Special dietary requirements

- options for vegetarians/vegans
- special diets, e.g. dairy-free, gluten free, low fat, diabetic
- allergens.

Variety of ingredients

- a good mix of ingredients, including cheaper items alongside luxury ones
- a range of seasonings, textures and colours throughout the menu.

Variety of cooking techniques

- dishes cooked in different styles, e.g. roasted, grilled or steamed.

Less is more

- a concise menu of well-executed, simple dishes
- not an extensive list of complicated items, unable to cook consistently well.