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:

1. **Competition**

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

1. **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.

1. **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?

1. **Space and equipment in the kitchen**

* only include items that the kitchen can comfortably produce.

1. **Supplies**

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

1. **Costs**

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

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. **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
* s 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.