Menu Development & Creative Design

MENU DESIGN

The goal of all menu designs is to direct the customer to the items that the restaurant wants to sell. A menu's prime function is to maximize sales and profits as a communication tool.

MENU COPY

Menu copy should include the following information:
1. Preparation method - *(Grilled, Sautéed, fried, roasted, baked, steamed, broiled etc...).*
2. Main ingredients.
3. How the meal is to be served and with the correct sides.
4. Grades and/or freshness claims.
5. Geographic origin - *(Copper River Salmon).*

MENU STYLES

Remember its Quality not quantity that counts!
1. Ask yourself? Do you need to offer a limited or extensive menu?
2. Your menu style should also be determined by other factors such as … how much kitchen space is available, how well skilled is your kitchen staff, do you have enough storeroom space?
3. Spend some time thinking this through before you start creating your menu. *IMPORTANT*

MENU TYPES

Kids • Seniors • Catering • To Go • Bar and Room are other styles that may need to be considered,

MENU TERMS

A LA CARTE - Price everything separately, including salads and desserts.
SEMI A LA CARTE - Usually include a side (potato or vegetable) and salad with the main entrée, but they price soups, desserts and appetizers separately.
FIXED MENU - Fixed menus don't change after menu is printed, the only thing that would change would be the prices.
SEASONAL MENU - Taking advantage of seasonal products on a menu allows the restaurant ensure the freshest ingredients and helps reduce food cost.
VERBAL MENU - Servers verbally explain the meals to be offered. *(This allows for up-selling).*

TIPS & SUGGESTIONS

Below are some tips and suggestions that may be helpful when creating your next menu:
1. Be able to offer a variety of menu items but, not at the expense of keeping an inventory that is going to be too hard to control and properly keep track of. Always keep in mind the skills of your kitchen staff and the operating equipment that you have to work with.
2. Hiring an experienced chef or line cook (if you are this fortunate) is one of the quickest ways to expand your menu and increase profits. If you are not fortunate enough to have a chef at your disposal, make sure that you work closely with your kitchen staff when creating the menu.   This will help make sure that everyone is working together and knows exactly what is accepted from each menu item that is prepared. *(VERY IMPORTANT).*
3. When creating your menu keep in mind the theme or style that you are trying to create and stay with that theme. Remember you can always change your menu and move specific items that do not sell or are less profitable due to market conditions.
4. When creating your menu it is good to keep in mind your location. You may be close to a great seafood market where you are able to offer a more wide variety of seafood items on your menu. You may be located next to a produce market that offers the freshest variety around. This would be a great way to sell your salads, wraps and signature sandwiches. Always be aware of product resources that may be right in your own back yard.

5. Formatting your menu - First decide your menu groups. Appetizers, entrees, soups, desserts etc... Then decide what categories for each menu group. Beef, chicken, seafood etc... Finally, you must choose on the dishes themselves for each category. Take your time with these choices.

6. If you are using descriptions on your menu try to keep them to a minimum without trying to confuse the customer. *(KFS offers a wide variety of creative menu description words).*

7. Nutritional information if used on your menu must be correct and clear. You may want to hire or consult with a dietitian about menu items before going to print.

8. Food allergies - This can be a very serious and life threatening condition. Symptoms can include hives, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath and anaphylaxis (a severe respiratory reaction). Anyone involved with compiling the menu should be aware of possible food allergies. *(THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT).*

9. Ingredient information - Always make sure that ingredient information is readily available and that all servers/managers/kitchen staff can communicate with the customer.

10. Manageability - Bear in mind the size of your menu should be easy to handle for all customers. Remember, the customer must be able to maneuver the menu around glasses, candles, table tents, flowers etc...

11. Menu coverings - Make sure they are durable enough to with stand spills and abuse.

12. Price placement - Try placing prices right after the last word of the items description. This will help shift the focus away from the price.

13. Always make sure the menu copy is large enough to read. Some restaurants have low light and customers may have difficult time reading the menu. You may want to try reading your copy in under the same conditions before sending them to your printer.

14. A menu with too much text will overwhelm your customers. Always leave some eye "breathing" room.

15. Your menu may want to have the days and hours of operation listed along with your phone number.

16. You may want to have a smaller, cheaper version of your menu available for take-out or prospective new customers to take home with them. *(Curb service menus).*

17. Keep a good history of all menu items so when creating your next menu you will be able to add or delete particular menu items.

18. There are a lot of variables that need to be taken into consideration before you develop your menu. Be thorough and plan careful BEFORE you take any finished product to be printed. *ALWAYS REMEMBER TO CHECK AND RE-CHECK!! PROOF-READ!! IMPORTANT!!!*

19. Remember to keep in mind a children's menu where applicable. A children's menu is a very important tool for your establishment and can also double as a coloring book or another form of "entertainment".

20. The senior & lighter side menu is a type (or part) of the menu that should not be overlooked. This is important when trying to reach your entire customer base.

21. Some menus even offer a footnote pertaining to any special dietary needs that a customer may need prepared because of a health or other concern.

22. Consumptions of raw or under cooked foods may also want to be noted on menu.

23. Having certain menu item's "highlighted" or "boxed" on your menu copy will also help direct your customer's eye's to a high profit or signature item.

24. Never over print menu copy, only print what is needed to operate restaurant for the period of time a menu is to be in place. *(You do not need boxes of menus sitting around this is a waste of your money).*

25. Print the copy using both upper and lower case letters. Use upper case letters for categories and use lower case letters for item descriptions.

26. Try not to use more then three type styles on a menu. This can create a confusing and haphazard appearance.

27. Type size, in general, should be no smaller then 12 points.

28. The size of type is measured in "points". The spacing between letters is adjustable this is called "kerning". The spacing between lines of text is called "leading".

29. You may want to incorporate some art work in your menu.

30. Menu paper color - Make sure that your color choices fit the décor of your restaurant. Use subtle shades that reflect your restaurant's personality.

31. Prices - Don't print all your prices in a row all on the same side of the menu. This will draw the customers' attention to the price rather then the product.

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Updated 8-4-16