

## MERCHANDISING OF MENUS

The success of catering operations depends to a large extent on the way the menus are planned and designed. Menus are the backbone of any catering operation. A good menu should ensure profits. To make the best or most effective use of menus in advertising and selling is called Menu Merchandising.

In order to increase the merchandising value of menus the following points should be considered:

- **Clean:** The presentation of dirty, spotted, worn out and old menu is the poorest way to start a meal. Cleanliness is a must in hotel business. A soiled menu has a very poor merchandising value; it may raise doubts regarding whether the food is being prepared hygienically.
- **Legible:** This means that menus should be easy to read. The font selected should be attractive and easy to decipher. It should be of good size so that most people, including elderly or those with glasses, can read with ease.
- **Format:** The format of the menu should suit the contents of the menu. As far as possible, different pages should be used for different meals. A separate wine list is more advisable.
- **Organization:** A menu should be well organized. Similar items should be placed grouped together and attractive headings may be assigned to the groups.
- **Restricted Menus:** The menus should be as short as possible. The number of dishes on the menu should be limited. Having a long menu is poor merchandising policy.
- **Easy to change:** Even the most carefully planned menus must be changed from time to time.
- **The change may be necessitated because of the change in prices, need to add or drop some items for a variety of reasons.**
- **Type of operation:** To serve good food well and promptly one must have a designed operation to fit the place. It must match the size and kind of equipment, their capacity and also the skill of the personnel.
- **Merchandising effect:** The menu is designed to sell the items that are the specialties of the hotel, or an item can be served fast and is profitable
- **Language:** The language on the menu should be easy for the customer and the staff. Many guests are embarrassed to ask what some terms mean and will pass on to something that they understand.
- **Effective Descriptions with descriptive headings:** Descriptive headings are inserted in the menu for various groups of food which attract the attention of the customer and indicate the nature of the dishes more clearly.

## PRICING OF MENUS

Pricing a menu is a very complicated and difficult task. No one method seems suitable for the purpose. However, a combination of methods may be considered.

- **Cost plus method Pricing -** This method takes into consideration all costs and agreed upon % mark up.

- Return on investment Pricing - All business operation starts with an investment which would have fetched or earned an interest or businesses are started with borrowed capital which attracts interest. Pricing should cover up these expenses (interest).
- Going rate pricing - An easy way to pricing a menu is to copy a competitor's.
- Market Based Pricing - Pricing a menu item should be done after taking the target market into consideration.

## **TYPES OF MENU**

**There are three types of menu :**

1. Table d'hôte- the menu has a fixed number of courses with a limited choice within each course. The menu is sold at a the selling price is fixed and the food is usually available at a set time.
2. A la Carte.- The choice is generally more extensive, where each dish is priced separately. There may be longer waiting times as some dishes are cooked or finished to order.
3. Carte du jour- Sometimes the term 'menu du jour' is used instead of the term 'table d'hôte menu'. One more term used is 'carte du jour' (literally 'card of the day') or 'menu of the day', which can also be a fixed meal with one or more courses for a set price. A 'prix fixe' (fixed price) menu is similar.
4. Tasting menu which is menu degustation is a set meal with a range of courses (often between 6 to 10). These tasting menus are offered in restaurants where the chef offers a sample of the range of dishes available on the main menu.
5. Breakfast menus and afternoon tea menus are offered according to the meal time.

**Basic menu planning is dependent on following factors.**

- The location of the establishment, both in terms of access for customers and for obtaining deliveries. A metro area outlet will have a different menu than the suburb one.
- The available kitchen space and equipment. If space is limited then the storage, preparation and service of menu items will be restricted and a smaller menu will need to be put in place.
- The knowledge and ability of kitchen and skills of staff to ensure they can produce the menu to the desired standard. An outlet without skilled staff will not succeed for long.
- The style of service like formal or informal will decide the menu. Formal atmosphere will demand more work on menu research.
- The opening times of the operation, for eg coffee shop which will be open for 18 to 24 hours will need a menu which can be prepared with ease.
- The number of covers to be served in a specific time. Demand for healthy food needs to be considered and menu can be twisted with innovation with an inclusion of diet food.
- A consideration of religion like kosher food for Jews or Hindus without beef or pork meat can be made available .

## **Suggestive selling and Upselling**

Suggestive selling is when a waiter suggests a particular dish when customer asks for a suggestion. Upselling is when a waiter upsells a comparatively higher priced dish to the customer. Both these strategies help increase the sale. While planning a menu an expensive food and beverage items can be strategically placed

## **Printing of menus**

Menus can be printed by using various ways like printing on both the sides by using dish pictures. The menu can be simply printed to have an informal ambience in the outlet. A formal outlet will have to spend enough money on the menu card to make sure it suits the ambience. Using boxes, various fonts, colour combinations.

Menus with scanning code or menus on electronic pads are the latest trends used in the outlets.

**Menu Merchandising** -The menu is the most powerful marketing tool . The way menu is merchandised to customers it can effect highly on the demand of the food and beverage outlet. We already now that the menu card needs to be presentable, but before the customers enters in the restaurant menu has to be utilized in a way that it attracts the customers.

Following are the ways; a restaurant owner can sell his outlet by using menu as a tool

- Floor stands - Floor stands are effective if used in waiting areas of the restaurant corridors or in the pre function areas. This helps when customers have time to read while waiting for their table or while they are in the hotel for another reason. Some self-service restaurants can be place these stands near entrance, so customers can decide their order while standing in the waiting line.
- Posters - Posters will have a wider scope of circulation and visibility compare to floor stand. They may be displayed near the clock room, elevators. They can be also used for cross promotion. Placement of the poster plays an important role too, as they should be placed at an eye level. Precise and right information about the FNB outlet needs to be written on the posters.
- Wall display - Wall displays used widely by enlarging the pictures of the products. They can be used for wine bars, fast food outlets, lounges. A blackboard with the menu is also very popular.
- Tent cards - They are mostly placed on the tables to promote events, special preparations etc. They can be used to advertise specials of the day. These cards help attract the attention of the customers.
- Clip on - They are used to promote plats du jour , or special food or beverage items , particular wine from a regions to upsell.