

Menu Merchandising

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.

Organisation: A menu should be well organised. 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 specialities 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.

Some examples:

SEACOAST DELIGHTS

OYSTER BAR

DESSERT DELICACIES

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 :

- Table d'hôte.
- A la Carte.
- Carte du jour.

CONSTRAINTS OF MENU PLANNING

- Skill of staff.
- Availability of ingredients.
- Availability of Equipments.
- Type of target market.
- Seasonality of business.