

# 10 Steps to Creating Enticing Menus

Follow these expert tips to design a menu that reflects your brand and generates bigger sales.

By Linda Duke

An enticing menu is essential to any pizzeria's success. Developing a menu that's simple, concise and yet descriptive—even eloquent—can be a tricky process, but all it really takes is some serious brainstorming and planning. Here are my 10 steps to creating an enticing pizzeria menu:

1. **Get focused.** Before you start writing your menu, have a clear idea of what kind of pizzas your restaurant offers and which ones sell the best. Make sure that the items on the menu make sense for your pizzeria's theme and cuisine. It's fine to throw in some unusual selections for more adventurous customers, but don't stray too far from your theme or you'll confuse your guests.
2. **Start brainstorming.** Review your menu items and determine which ones can be promoted as signature pizzas or dishes. Look for items that you make particularly well and that have been consistently popular with your customers. You'll want to feature these dishes prominently on the menu.
3. **Test everything.** Once you've settled on a number of pies that work well with your concept, invite friends, family members and/or employees to sample them and offer their honest, no-holds-barred opinions. What do they like about these items? What should you be doing differently? Listen to these folks with an open mind, and be prepared for a little criticism. If no one seems enthralled with your signature pie, you'll need to change the recipe or remove it from the menu.
4. **Check out your competition.** Compare their food to your own and look for ways to make yours better. Offer a few items on your menu that are completely different from your competition, such as pizzas that create a unique personal experience for the customer or desserts that show off your chef's expertise.
5. **Think carefully about pricing.** How you price your menu items reflects your brand and position. Your customers usually know what other pizzerias in the area are charging, so your pricing should be competitive yet reasonably comparable. Don't aim too low—that could suggest that your food is not high-quality fare. Signature items should never be discounted or underpriced. If your dish is unique, diners will pay more for it!
6. **Choose your words carefully.** Create a tantalizing description for every item. The goal is to get customers' mouths watering. Use your adjectives wisely, however, and make sure that every word means what you think it means. Keep the language consumer-friendly, and avoid overly complex descriptions that may turn off less sophisticated customers. Before finalizing, show your descriptions to a test group



and get their reactions. Most importantly, make sure that every pizza or dish lives up to its description!

- 7. Focus on design.** Your menu should be well-organized and easy to read. Avoid clutter, keep the background clean and free of distracting patterns, and don't go overboard with pictures (especially stock photography that doesn't necessarily represent your restaurant's fare). Colors and fonts should represent your overall style—a family-friendly restaurant, for example, should use bright, fun colors and fonts. Arrange menu items sequentially from appetizers to desserts in just one or two columns so that the menu doesn't look too busy. Highlight your signature items and specials by using markers, photos, labels and logos and position them to draw maximum attention. Even better, make sure your most profitable items get the most prominent placement!
- 8. Find the right printing company.** It's possible—but more expensive—to order specialty menus from companies that offer catalogs from which you can choose any font, color or paper. It may be cheaper to order your menus from a local printing company. In that case, look for a company that has its own affordable in-house design team. If you've

got a high-quality printer of your own, you can print your own menus as you need them. This is especially helpful if you need to make frequent changes to your menu.

- 9. Educate your staff.** Once you've finalized your menu and written the descriptions, train your cooks to prepare every item consistently. Educate your servers about the ingredients and preparation of each item so they can speak knowledgeably and sell them to guests. Be flexible—if something's not working, be ready to change the recipe, modify the description or toss out an item altogether.
- 10. Analyze and make adjustments.** After a period of time, perform a profitability analysis to determine which items are selling and which ones are duds. Then make changes accordingly. 🚩



Linda Duke is the CEO of Duke Marketing and author of *Recipes for Restaurateurs* (marketing-cookbook.com), a "cookbook" of marketing ideas for restaurant owners, as well as *The LSM Diet: Improve Your Bottom Line, Not Your Waistline* (ismdiet.com), a self-help guide to local store marketing. She publishes a quarterly industry resource, *Restaurant Marketing Magazine*, and an educational program, LSM-U, Local Store Marketing University. Find out more at [dukemarketing.com](http://dukemarketing.com).

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