

Menus That Sell

A restaurant's menu is much more than a list of food options. It is a representation of the restaurant's brand identity and a promise that a restaurant makes to its guests.

Most of all, a carefully developed menu is a valuable business tool that has the capacity to increase sales, attract new guests, and keep loyal patrons. These attributes make the menu one of the most important aspects of a restaurant concept. Follow the helpful tips below to develop a new menu or to polish an existing one.

Develop a menu focus. First of all, a restaurateur must have clear ideas regarding the restaurant's brand. The food and the number of options offered should reflect the restaurant concept. By browsing your offerings, guests should be able to determine whether or not they are likely to enjoy a meal at your establishment. Remember, the menu does not have to please everyone, but it should attract customers who will enjoy the food and the ambience you have to offer.

Promote signature menu items. Creating unique dishes and promoting them appropriately are key ways to generate positive word of mouth, create guest loyalty, and characterize the personality of the restaurant. Signature menu items increase the likelihood that your restaurant will become a destination. Diners will come because it is the only place they can get that one

dish, the one that nobody else can make quite like you do.

Even as the menu changes and evolves with the availability of seasonal ingredients, these distinctive items should remain consistent and "front and center" on the menu. Using a bolder typeface and other visual elements to highlight these items can increase sales by up to 10 percent, according to a Georgia State University study. To increase value perception, signature menu items should not be discounted or priced too low.

Describe items in a way that reflects your restaurant's identity. The Georgia State University study revealed that enticing menu descriptions increase sales by 30 percent. They bring guests further into the world of your restaurant and heighten their expectations. If you have an ethnic concept, use the traditional names. (Be sure to add a detailed translation so that guests know what they are ordering.) If you are an ingredient-focused concept, include details regarding your ingredients' types and origins. And if you make a particular component of the recipe in-house, be sure to note it because the fact that you made it yourself increases its uniqueness and value. The menu at Henrietta's Table in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a good example. The restaurant could have listed a simple crab cake. Instead, the

QUICK TIPS

- Update menus frequently so that they remain spotlessly clean and neat.
- Make the menu available online.
- List restaurant locations, hours of operation, and contact information on the menu.
- Lose the dollar signs. They detract from the dining experience.

menu reads "Maine Rock Crab Cake, Grilled Asparagus, and Housemade Tartar Sauce."

Arrange menu items in a pattern that increases check averages. Place high-profit dishes at the top and bottom. According to the study, sales of dishes placed at the tops and bottoms of columns increase by 25 percent.

Create a user-friendly, aesthetically pleasing design. A thoughtful menu design characterizes the personality of a restaurant and provides clues to the restaurant's price point. Menu design elements include the text's color and font, the quality of the paper, and the number of columns.



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