



CHAPTER II

MENU PLANNING

Learning Objectives : At the end of this unit learners would be able to :

1. explain the types of menu
2. state the principles of menu planning
3. apply the points to be kept in mind while planning menu for various occasions

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a sheet of paper or card on which is the names of all the dishes written in a specific order, which are to be served in succession, at a given meal.

Meaning of the word menu

The word menu is a French word, derived from the Latin word '*minutes*' which means small or minute details (pertaining to any subject in this case - minute details of the meal). The word menu literally means 'Bill of Fare' (to be fed) in English.

II. HISTORY

There are two stories which claim to be the origin of menu card. The first story is about 'Count Hugo de Montfort', at a dinner in

1498 was noticed to have a piece of written parchment (skin of sheep or goat prepared for writing) with him near his plate. When he was consulted he said he had ordered the chef to write on it the various dishes that were being sent from the kitchen.





The other story is about the 'Duke Henry of Brunswick' in 1541, who was seen to have a sheet of paper by his side when he was giving a banquet, to which he occasionally referred. When asked, he answered that it was a 'program' of what they were eating and it helped him to reserve his appetite for those dishes he liked very much.

Then came the idea of providing a 'bill of fare' by the year 1571. The bill of fare was a working menu which provided the instructions to the kitchen staff about the order in which the various dishes (or courses) should succeed one after the other at a great dinner. These were written on gaudily ornamented large cards.

The individual menu, as we know it today, came into use in the early 19th century. It was customary to show enormous posters on the doors and outside walls of restaurants. Once the individual menu cards came into being, every effort was made to make it more artistic and elaborate. Best artists were hired for the purpose.

The menu cards need not be made from paper only. Plastics, cloth and other materials etc. are also being used; and typing, embossing, printing etc. too are also being done.

III. IMPORTANCE OF MENUS

Menu can be very plain or simple or very elaborate according to the type of business, occasion etc. The menu can tell the customer about the kind of restaurant he is eating in and from it he gains his first impressions of the restaurant. If the first impression is not good, it is very difficult to correct them afterwards, and conversely if the menu creates an impression that there is some good food to come then already everything is in favour of the restaurant for the patrons. Sensory signals will tell him/her that there is an eating out experience that starts off in an enjoyable note.

i) Classes of Menu: There are two classes of menus:-

- a) A la' Carte
- b) Table d' hote.

a) A la' Carte: This French term translates as '*from the card*'. An *ala carte menu* is one in which each individual item is listed separately with its price. The customer makes selections from the various courses and side dishes to make up a meal. He can choose from the card as many or as few dishes as one desires.





Dishes are cooked to order and the customer is expected to wait while the dish is so cooked. The term 'à la carte' is also used to refer to cooking to order, as opposed to cooking ahead in large batches. The portion sizes are normally larger than table d' hôte. The portions sizes are normally specified.

b) Table d' hôte: Originally meant a fixed menu with no choices- like a meal you would be served if you were invited to some one's home for lunch/dinner. The French term table d' hôte means "host's table".

Banquet menus are examples of this kind of menu.

Table d' hôte has also come to refer to a menu that offers a selection of Complete meals at given prices. In other words, a customer may choose dishes plus other courses such as appetizer, salad and dessert. There is a single 'package price' for each full meal selection.

In short, table d' hôte is a set menu with a choice within each course- and charged at a set price, whether or not the full menu is consumed. This type of meal is usually cooked in advance and in large quantities.

Many restaurants use a combination of à la carte and table d' hôte selections. For example a steak house may include salad, potato, vegetable and beverage, with the entrée choice while additional dishes like appetizers and desserts may be offered at extra cost.

IV. STATIC AND CYCLIC MENUS

A static menu is one that offers the same dishes every day. These menus are used in restaurants and other establishment where the clientele changes daily or where there are enough items listed on the menu to offer sufficient variety.

A cyclic menu is one that changes every day for a certain period, after this period the daily menus repeat, in the same order, for example, a seven day cyclic menu will have a different menu every day for a week and will repeat each week. This kind of menu is used in such operations as school and hospitals where the number of choices must be kept small. The cyclic menu is a way of offering variety to the repeated clientele.

Some restaurants use a menu that is part cyclic and part static. This means that they have a basic menu of foods prepared every day, plus repeated series of daily specials to offer more variety without putting too much strain on the kitchen staff.





V. FUNCTIONS OF A MENU

Menu is the backbone of the hotel. It gives the basic structure on which the other aspects can be planned. It also gives the operating needs for the hotel organization i.e. it dictates what must be done and how it must be done. It is the key focal point of the entire operation, In terms of selling it is very often, the best salesman in food service.

Menu is a concise, accurate and complete statement or list of all the items or dishes of the meal to be served or offered for sale for the customer and at the same time is hidden a list of tasks (jobs) to be carried out by the hotel staff.

The menu tells (the hotel staff) the following:-

- 1) The food or grocery items to be purchased.
- 2) The staff requirement of the hotel, skilled/unskilled etc.
- 3) The equipments needed for the production and service.
- 4) The facility, layout and space requirements of the hotel (kitchen, restaurant, etc.)
- 5) The facilities required in the services area or restaurant and its seating capacity etc.
- 6) The total sales and profit that can be achieved by the establishment.
- 7) The décor and design of the restaurant.
- 8) Establishment of the cost control procedures.
- 9) The financial success and popularity of the establishment.

VI. PRINCIPLES OF MENU PLANNING

It is the term used to denote the planning in advance of a dietary pattern for a given period of time. By planning a menu we can come to know what are the food stuffs that we are going to consume and in what form at scheduled meal times such as breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner etc. Menu planning is an art. It is compiled (collected from) rather than written.

Essentials of menu compilation are to provide:-

- a) A complete, concise and accurate statement of the meal to be served.
- b) A balanced meal so as to ensure proper and appropriate colors and ingredients which should be in proper order.
- c) A meal well planned so that it may be correctly served.
- d) A meal carefully priced to provide the appropriate ratio of profit.





While this is all very true, there are lots more factors to be taken into account when this task has to be accomplished.

VII. COMPILING MENUS

The primary importance is the overall concept of the establishment, its climate and whether the menu product is in keeping with the catering policies of the establishment.

Factors to be considered while compiling menus are:-

1) *Money to be spent*

By the customer and by the hotel (food service establishment). Smaller establishment may not be in a position to cater to the needs of wealthy customers and vice versa larger hotels may not be interested to cater to the needs of average people.

2) *Type of customer (guest)*

Customers preferences vary widely and it is extremely difficult to satisfy them completely. However every effort must be taken to satisfy them to the best of ones ability. Factors affecting meal preferences of guest can be broadly listed as below:

- a. Wants and needs
- b. Concept of Value
- c. Item price
- d. Object of visit
- e. Socio-economic factors.
- f. Demographic Concerns
- g. Ethnic factors
- h. Religious factors
- i. Nutritional factors
- j. Food habits





3) *Type of service:*

Self service/Buffer, Plated/American, Silver/French, Russian, Banquet, Family/English, Gueridion etc.

4) *Type of meals:*

Morning tea, breakfast, brunch, lunch, evening tea, dinner, supper, snack, high tea, marriage party, New Year party, X'mas etc.



5) *Type of Catering:*

Hotels, Star hotels, Restaurants-specialty, Institution- schools, Colleges, Hospitals, Industrial - Canteens, Offices, Factory, Transport Catering- Airlines, Railways, Cruise lines, Mobile vans, Cargo ships, Fast Food outlets, Meal boxes/Tiffin etc.

6) *Type of Menus:*

Static or cyclic

7) *Classes of Menus:*

Ala carte, Table d'hote, etc.

8) *Quality of item:*

Any food which is included in the menu should be palatable and be in conformity to the standards of the establishment. Any new product is tested for quality and approved by experts and then, if found suitable, introduced and normally served in the staff cafeteria first and then in the commercial outlets.





9) Cost (Budget):

Money available for food, cost of raw materials, proper ratio between high and low cost dishes, proportion of food cost to raw material, margin of profit, sale price, subsidy involved etc.

10) Availability and seasonal availability of foods:

Geography: Soil, Climate, season, fuel.

Location: High altitude, desert, hot region.

Transport and food technology: Modern preservation packaging and distribution has extended the market of many foods.

Seasonal availability: Out of season food items are more expensive, lower in quality and their supply is undependable. Seasonal foods, besides being economical (cheap) are also better in quality (prime quality). Use locally available food: they are fresh, easy to get, low in cost too. Food from other parts of the country are expensive compared to local items.

11) Menu requirement and balance:

- Avoid repetition of ingredients, color, texture, consistency, flavor, cooking methods and temperature.
- Nutritive balance and value of the dishes should be considered.
- It should complement (match with) the other food and beverages served.
- Appearance and presentation
- Popularity of the dishes.
- Regional dishes must be included.
- Availability of the raw material.
- Use of seasonally available food.
- Include at least one starch item when planning continental dishes.
- Use of leftovers or trimmings.





- Seasonal desirability of the dishes (cold refreshing foods in warm climate and warm piping hot food in cold climate)
- Proper alternatives for vegetarians.
- Menu balance: Light to heavy and heavy to light.
- White meats to dark meats.
- Variation in the appearance of the food.
- Nutritional Balance.
- Ensure that garnishes are in harmony with the dishes and not repeated.

12) Hygiene concerns:

Menu should be planned taking into consideration whether it could be kept safe and in prime quality till it reaches the guest. All possible provisions should be provided for keeping the hygiene standards (Use of coal, provisions of sugarcane Juice, foods like dates, jackfruits sweetmeats etc which attract flies should be avoided.)

13) Layout/Work Space Concerns:

The lay out and work space should be conducive enough to carry out the production and service of all the items listed in the menu. Before planning menu keep in mind the area available, equipment available, bulk service facilities available, bulk production capability.

14) Equipment Concerns:-

It deals with knowing the capacity of the equipments. Menu should conform to limitation of equipment and physical facilities available. Spread the work load evenly among all the equipment and within the capacity limits.

15) Manpower (skilled/unskilled)

- Kitchen and service staff capability.
- Skill and number of employees, employed.
- Avoid too many last minute processes.
- Avoid too complicated processes or emphasis on use of wrong kind of tools





- Avoid too many long jobs - especially for one cook.
- Allow time for portioning and garnishing.
- Spread the work load evenly among the workers.
- Have a record of time and yield.
- Spread the work load throughout the day. Balance the cooked and to order items against the cooked in advance items so that you don't have to do everything at the last minute.
- Offer items that the cooks are able to prepare and are confident of preparation.
- Do not put items on the menu that are above the skill levels of the staff.

16) Peak volume productions and operating concerns:

The menu should be planned in such a way that peak volume production is both smooth at all times in production and service operation.

17) Finished Product:

Appearance of the final product, palatability and variety should be acceptable hence recipes should be tried out and standardized before you include an item on the menu.

18) Menu planning pattern:

It is necessary to have a well worked out menu pattern which is suitable to clientele and workable as related to the staff and equipment.

19) Recipes to be used:

Have standard recipes for each item so that all the production staff knows the preparation and presentation etc.

20) Policy of the establishment or regulations of the Government:

Certain establishment may not serve certain foods such as non-vegetarian food items, as a policy matter - often it is highlighted, no pork, no beef, no alcohol, no root vegetables, Jain food.

21) Full utilization of food and use of leftovers in hand

You cannot afford to throw food away any more than you can afford to throw money away. Total utilization of foods in the menus must be planned. The success of whole food service operation depends on a thorough planning.





22) Time Available

It refers to the time available for the customer to consume the meal. Especially in case of formal banquets, normally time estimated is 15 minutes per course. Time available for procurement of raw materials and the production of food is also taken into consideration while planning menu.

23) Competition

Menus should be planned in such a way that it gives tough competition with other hotels or food service operations. Planning includes introducing more variety and competitive or attractive prices and services.

24) Writing Menu

It is an art to the imagination and creativity of the people involved in writing it. The names of the dishes should be written in proper sequence of courses. Each dish should have one or two line description underneath the name to elaborate the special features of the dish. It can include the type of cuisine, ingredients used, cooking technique used, garnishes and accompaniments used and the final presentation or appearance it will have after the cooking. This enables the guests to order as per their choice and want. This also creates a fair idea of the dish in the mind of the guests, minimize the chances of confusion about the dishes and satisfies them. The font





size and color of the letters should be bold enough so that its easy to read. The menu card should also have information about related to the charges levied apart from the price of the dish e.g. Taxes charged with rate, service charged with rate etc. Remember-'Menu Card is a silent sales person working for the organization and its profits'.

In order to make optimum utilization of the food following should be taken into accounts:

A) Use all edible trimmings: If establishment is using only portion control meats, poultry and fish and only frozen and canned vegetables, there will be no trimmings and waste. But if fresh available ingredients are used, during processing it will give away trimmings which is edible trim. You can either throw it away and call it a loss, or you can use it. Plan recipes that can utilize these trimmings and put them on the menu for example, use small meat scraps for soups, chopped meat pates, creamed dishes, croquettes etc. use large meat soups, use vegetables trimmings for purees, soups, stews, stocks, fillings for omelet and crepes, use day old breads for stuffing, crumb, French toast, croutons, meat extender, etc.

B) Do not add an item to the menu unless you can use the trimmings: For e.g. do not put chateau potatoes on your menu unless you also plan to serve an item that uses trimmings such as creamed potatoes or croquettes.

C) Plain production to avoid leftovers: The best way to use up leftovers is not to create them in the first place. Handling food twice, once as a fresh item and once as a leftover, is more expensive and time consuming than using it once. Also, handling twice almost always result in a product of inferior quality.

D) Plan ahead for accurate production: Careful planning will result in minimum leftovers However, some amount of leftovers are almost inevitable to avoid running short of portions. Whenever you put an item on the menu that could become a left over, you should have a recipe ready that will use the leftovers, according to proper hygienic disposal and sanitary procedures.

E) Eliminate “minimum use” perishable ingredients: Minimum use ingredients are those that are used in one or two items on your menu. For example, chicken breast topped with sautéed mushrooms but do not use perishable, the result is a high percentage of waste or spoilage. This can be remedied by changing the recipe to eliminate the minimum use





ingredient, eliminate the item from the menu, add other items to the menu using the ingredient in too many dishes. Try to avoid both extremes.

Menu planning is an art systematically planned rather than written. Since menu is the backbone of the hotel, it gives the operating needs for the hotel organization that is it dictates what must be done and how it must be done. It is the key local point of the entire operation and in terms of selling it is very often the best salesman in food service.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- (1) Classify menu and explain in detail.
- (2) Differentiate between static menu and cyclic menu.
- (3) Give the essentials of menu compilation.
- (4) Explain five factors be kept in mind while planning a menu.
- (5) What precaution should be taken to make optimum utilization of the food.

