

Module Title: MENU PLANNING AND COSTING

Department: Hospitality Management

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Lecture 13: Writing, Designing and Merchandising the Menu

- Once the menu has been costed out and final decisions have been made concerning food selection, the menu planner can begin to plan the **organization and presentation of the menu.**
- Decisions concerning **paper, print, color, listing of items, size, and the cover design** must be made.

- It is important that the menu planner have a basic knowledge about these **menu mechanics** to facilitate communication with the printer and to achieve the best results.

- **Balance, variety, composition, and descriptive copy of food and beverage items, truth-in-menu, and menu labeling** also should be considered before materials are submitted for printing.
- This lecture discusses **the characteristics** of a menu at length.

Objectives

□ At the end this lecture, learners will be able:

- To introduce and explain the characteristics of a menu
- To show how careful attention to menu presentation can help to merchandise menu items more effectively

Issues for Consideration

- The menu planner must pay careful attention to these following items when preparing a menu:
 - Paper • Print • Color • Balance • Variety • Composition • Descriptive copy • Truth-in-menu • Menu labeling • Listing of items • Size • Cover design

1. Paper

- To begin the process of designing a menu, the menu planner selects the quality of paper desired.
- When choosing the paper, the menu planner must keep in mind **how frequently** the menu will be used.
- If the menu is going to be changed daily, then a paper that is **less expensive and less durable, uncoated, and lightweight paper** can be chosen.

- When choosing paper, the menu planner must weigh four factors:
 - 1. Strength
 - 2. Texture
 - 3. Color
 - 4. Opacity (Opacity refers to the property of paper that minimizes the “show-through” of printing to the back side of a sheet.)

2. Print

- The print on a menu should be sufficiently large and in a print that is easy to read.
- There are many styles of type.
- The **three** that will be discussed are: **roman, modern, and script.**

- **Roman type** is characterized by a combination of **thin and thick lines**.
- It is **easy to read** and is used in **newspapers, magazine articles, and books**.
- Roman type should be used in **the descriptive copy on the menu**

- **Modern type** does not have the thick and thin lines that are found in Roman type.
- Its letters are thick block letters
- Modern type can be used for **headings and subheadings on menus.**

- Script type looks like handwriting.
- Script is difficult to read and is used only for headings or subheadings on the menu
- Headings on the menu might be **Appetizers, Soups, Salads, Entrées, and Desserts.**
- Subheadings might consist of the names of the items offered, such as **Stuffed Mushrooms as an appetizer or Sirloin Steak with Hollandaise Sauce for an entrée.**

Three Styles of Type: Roman, Modern, and Script

A

Modern

B

Roman

London Script

Commercial Script

3. Color

- The colors selected for the paper and type on a menu should go together.
- **A red background with yellow lettering, for instance, would clash horribly.**
- **Pink paper with black type would blend well.**
- Professional printers or graphic artists can help the menu planner coordinate the colors of the paper and the type

4. Balance

- A menu is balanced when the number of offerings in each of the categories is **proportionately balanced** based on the restaurant's concept.
- A fine dinner restaurant offering 6 appetizers, 2 soups, 4 salads, 20 entrées, and 8 desserts is considered to be well balanced.

- A greater number of entrées is not only acceptable but also recommended, because **entrées are the focus of the menu and are usually the most expensive food items as well.**

5. Variety

- Variety refers to the diversity of food offerings within each category including **product, food temperature (hot and cold), and cooking techniques (baked, broiled, sautéed, etc.)**.

- Variety is **crucial** to a good menu.
- Variety is important not only in the number of selections offered within a category but also in **the method of preparation.**

6. Composition

- The composition of menu item groupings is important in planning a menu.
- The menu planner must evaluate **how well certain accoutrements go with particular entrées.**
- Sweet potatoes, for example, are excellent with ham, just as popovers are a good choice with roast beef.

- In general, when entrées have a lot of flavor, side dishes should have a less pronounced flavor.
- **Beef Stroganoff** might be served with **peas or carrots**, for example.
- Entrées that are less rich may come with, side dishes that have more flavor.

- Pairing an entrée of **Baked Chicken with Zucchini Provençale** (zucchini, tomatoes, bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, garlic, and assorted spices) **would work well.**
- **Eye appeal** is also very important in the composition of a menu item.

7. Descriptive Copy

- **DESCRIPTIVE copy** is an explanation of how an item is prepared and served.
- Descriptive copy helps to sell an item on the menu.
- **Entrées should have the most elaborate descriptive copy, because they are the most expensive items on the menu**

8. Truth-in-Menu

- Each and every item described on the menu must be accurately described.
- Truth-in-menu laws exist in several states to deter deceptive advertising on menus.
- **Fines, court expenses, and negative publicity can result if a restaurant violates such laws**

9. Menu Labeling

- In 1990 Congress passed menu labeling regulations under the Nutritional Labeling and Education Act.
- By 1995 all restaurants had to comply with the menu labeling regulations.

- Beginning on May 2, 1997, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) **mandated that all nutrient and health claims** on menus had to be scientifically substantiated as well.
- Once a restaurant makes a nutrient or health claim regarding a menu item, it must substantiate that claim.

- **A nutrient claim** makes a statement about the presence of a particular nutrient in a menu item.
- Words such as **cholesterol-free, fresh, healthy, natural, low in fat, light, and reduced** are terms that are commonly used.

- **A health claim** states that there is a relationship between a food item or meal and disease prevention, for example, fruits and vegetables in relation **to cancer prevention.**

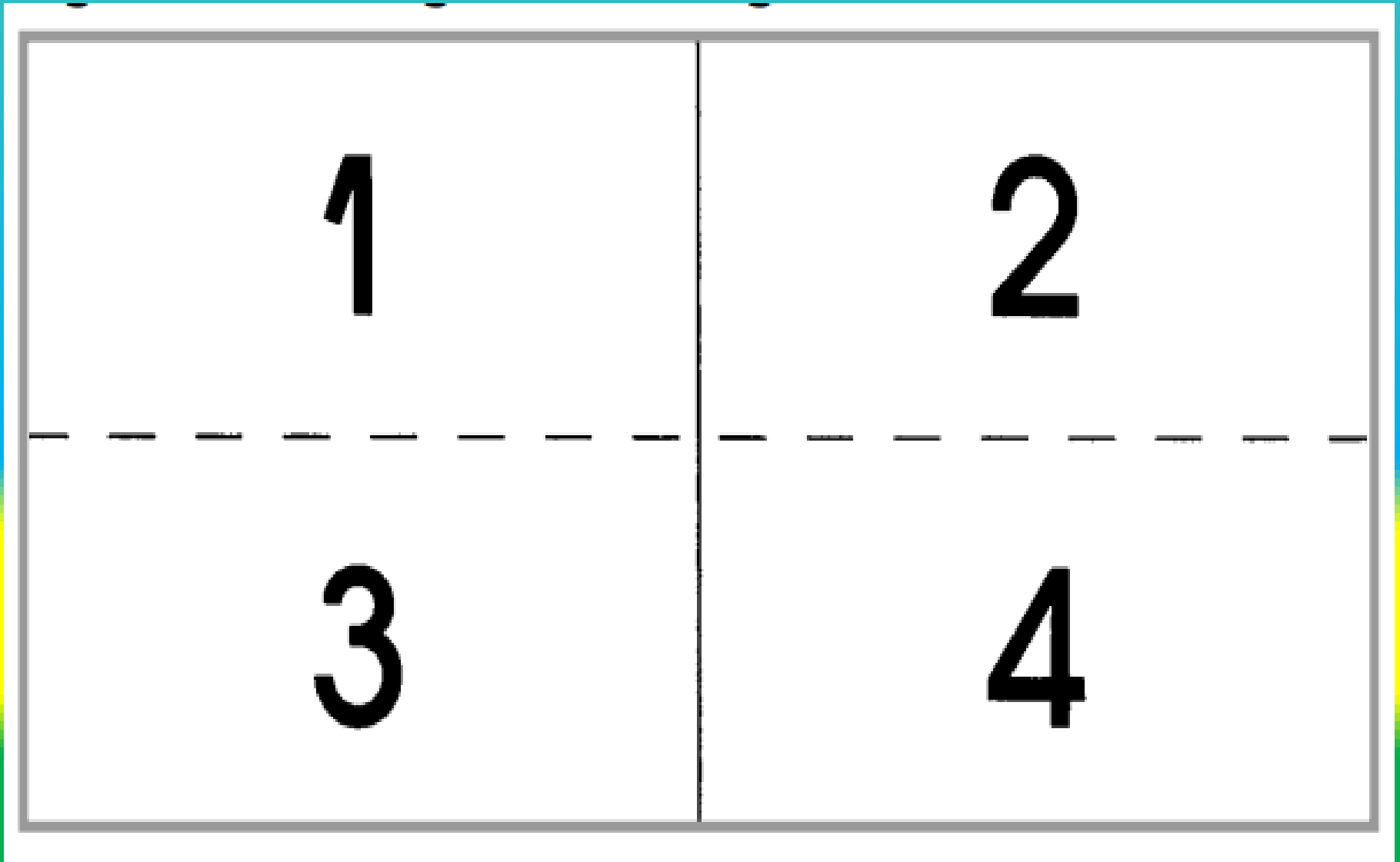
- **Nutrient and health claims** need not appear directly on the menu, but they must be available to patrons through a brochure, pamphlet, recipe file, notebook, bulletin board, or poster.
- Menus that do not make nutrient or health claims need not adhere to these regulations.

10. Listing of Items

- Items should be presented on the menu in the order in which they are consumed.
- Most menus list appetizers, soups, salads, entrées and accompaniments, and then desserts

- The most profitable food items should be listed **first and last in a particular category** and the most popular and least profitable food items should be listed in the middle

Diagram of a Single-Fold Menu



11. Size of Menu

- The menu should **be large enough** to merchandise the food items without appearing crowded on the page.
- Too large a menu can be awkward to handle.

- The most popular menu size is **8 inches by 11 inches**.
- Most menus consist of **four** pages.
- The cover forms **pages 1 and 4**, and the list of menu items inside makes up pages **2 and 3**.

12. Cover Design

- The front and back covers offer tremendous opportunities.
- The cover of a menu should reflect **the décor and the theme of the operation.**
- A specialty restaurant, for example, that features broiled steaks and uses **red tablecloths and black napkins** might want a **red menu cover with black print.**

- The front cover should carry **the name of the restaurant and a recognizable symbol or logo.**
- It is also important to remember that the menu cover should be **durable, water-resistant, and stain-resistant, unless the menu changes daily and is disposable.**

Menu Design Software

- Today many restaurant managers and chefs are purchasing software and creating in-house menus rather than using a professional printer, which can **be expensive and time consuming.**

✓ Menu design software offers a number of advantages:

- **Creating a menu is easy because most software packages include predesigned menu styles, an abundance of food illustrations, and built-in spellchecker designed to recognize culinary terms.**

- **Many software packages have built-in databases that store specials and seasonal items for repeated use.**
- **The foodservice manager or chef can print specials daily, allowing the restaurant to showcase signature dishes and high-profit items.**

- **The software allows for easy editing of the menu and changing offerings as needed.**
- **Using the software eliminates the need to hire a graphic artist or a professional printer**

- **Menu covers and table tent cards** that are used to hold desktop-printed menus and specials are widely available from restaurant supply companies.
- It is important to remember that when a menu is printed on a laser printer or a copy machine and inserted into a vinyl cover, the print may transfer to the vinyl.

- **A high-quality laser printer** is recommended for more complex and sophisticated tasks, while a standard desktop printer suffices to print simple daily menus.

- The computer on which the menu design software is run should have sufficient memory to support the software and **to store graphics, illustrations, and photographs.**

References

[1] Paul J. McVety et al (2009), Fundamentals of Menu Planning, P135-154

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[2] Jack E. Miller, David K. Hayes & Lea R. Dopson (2002) Food and Beverage Cost Control, Second Edition,

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End of Lecture 13

Next lecture : Menu Engineering

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Thank you!