

## Making Menus Sell

### KEY POINTS:

- Describe your dishes
- Keep your menu short
- Offer upgrades to your plain dishes
- Include a premium version of high volume dishes
- Don't forget the takeaway drinks

A crucial tool for marketing your restaurant is your menu. Customers use it to choose which dishes to buy and which restaurant to go to. When people want to try something new, they are attracted by interesting sounding dishes. Equally, there are days when we all just want to be reassured the old stand byes haven't changed. At the same time, customers evaluate your restaurant by the overall style of your menu. The key question then, is how best to construct and present your menu so that potential customers are more likely to order, and order more each time...

### Describe your dishes

I know of an Indian restaurant that has a dish called the Exotica Special. When I first read it, I didn't know what it was. However, the dish has a description beside it: Exquisite dish of sustainably caught North Atlantic King Prawns, free range chicken, Scottish beef and organic pork combined with a delicious mixture of just picked garden vegetables and cooked in my family's famous Spicy coconut curry sauce. Mmmm, that sounds very tasty indeed. Despite not knowing what it was at first, I found this dish interesting because of the description. Not surprisingly, this particular restaurant sells a lot of Exotica Specials, both through its website and in the restaurant. Put simply, dishes with descriptions sell much better than those without.

My advice comes with a word of caution though. Don't just list the ingredients. Use words like delicious, sumptuous, award winning, certified, ground by hand, organic, free range, light, fresh or spicy. For your special or "authentic" dishes, stories add to the appeal: "my grandmother taught my mother this dish when she was a girl" or "a famous dish from my hometown" or "served only at festivals". Everyone loves a good story, especially about their food!



### Keep your menu short

I have spoken with dozens of restaurant owners who want to add as many dishes as possible to the menu. They don't want to miss a single order. When I analysed this idea, the results were clear: short menus are profitable menus. Only put the popular dishes on your menu because they're the ones people want to buy. Unpopular dishes just confuse and discourage customers.

Think also about the best way to organise your dishes by category. This is even more important for the website than for your printed menu. Keep it simple and make it easy for customers to find your popular dishes.



### Offer upgrades to your popular dishes

If you offer a dish in two versions, the premium and more expensive version often sells well, especially if you highlight it. So you might offer a Super-Size Nan for 50 pence more than the plain Nan. Equally, take a look at all your popular dishes to see if you can offer an upgraded version. You could offer duck instead of chicken or king prawns instead of prawns and so on. Present both choices, but describe the premium and more expensive one best. Your profits will improve as a result.



Icons and what they mean

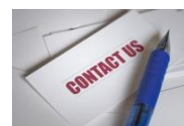
Tips



Warnings



Remember



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## Don't forget the drinks

Customers need to buy extras like drinks, desserts and sauces in addition to the main dishes they were going to order anyway. A small but useful range of these items on your takeaway menu and website will definitely drive up your average order value.

## Making your menu work for you

You just read some ideas about how to improve your menu's performance. Now it's time to put those ideas into action. To refresh your memory, here were the key points.

- Keep your menu short
- Describe your dishes
- Include a premium version of high volume dishes
- Offer upgrades to your popular dishes
- Don't forget the takeaway drinks

## Now go through this ten step plan to get a top performing menu

- Purpose: Revise menu to boost sales performance
- Time required: 60 – 120 minutes
- Supplies: your menu, pen and paper, thesaurus, dictionary, calculator

Step 1 – Start with a copy of your menu, a piece of paper and pencil.

Step 2 – Put a check against the top 3 selling dishes in each menu category

Step 3 – Put an “x” against the lowest 3 selling dishes in each category

Step 4 – Ask yourself “Why are all of the menu items with x's still on my menu?”

If the answer is “because I may miss an order – delete it.

Step 5 – Check that the remaining dishes all have descriptions

Each description must not simply be a list of ingredients

Step 6 – Ask yourself whether you can create a premium version for the top dish in each menu category.

If yes, create it and write a fantastic description for why people should try it.

Step 7 - Price new items at a 5-10% premium

Step 8 – Add little “Try me” bubbles next to your bestselling side dishes and sundries

At the risk of stating the obvious, these DO NOT go next to your “plain” or “standard” dishes

Step 9 – Do you have a drink list on your takeaway menu – yes or no?

If no, add one.

Step 10 – Go to your printer and get a new batch of menus made

Even if that means throwing away your existing menus

I know. This is killing you. Do it anyway.



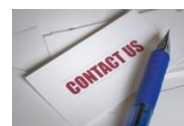
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