

Menu Planning and Design

Menu Planning & Design – Quick Reference Notes

1. Why Good Menu Planning Matters

Goal	How It Helps
Profitability	Controls food cost, labor, and waste
Customer Satisfaction	Meets dietary preferences, trends, and expectations
Operational Efficiency	Streamlines purchasing, prep, and service flow
Brand Identity	Reinforces concept, theme, and positioning
Regulatory Compliance	Ensures allergen labeling, nutrition info, and safety standards

2. Core Steps in the Planning Process

1. Define Concept & Target Market

- Cuisine style, service format (a la carte, buffet, prix fixe)
- Demographics, price point, dining occasion

2. Conduct Market & Competitive Research

- Local food trends, seasonal produce, competitor menus
- Guest feedback, social media listening

3. Set Financial Targets

- Desired food cost % (usually 28-35% for full service)
- Portion cost = $(\text{Ingredient cost} \times \text{Yield}) \div \text{Portion size}$

4. Develop Menu Architecture

- **Categories** (e.g., Starters, Salads, Mains, Sides, Desserts)
- **Sequence** (light ? richer, cold ? hot)
- **Balance** – protein, veg, grain, palate cleansers

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5. Select Recipes & Standardize

- Test for taste, consistency, and execution time
- Write **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**: ingredient list, measurements, prep steps, cooking times, plating guide

6. Costing & Pricing

- **Recipe Cost** = ? (Ingredient cost × % used) ÷ Yield
- **Menu Price** = Recipe Cost ÷ Desired Food?Cost % (plus labor, overhead, profit)

7. Nutritional & Allergen Review

- Identify major allergens (PEANUTS, TREE NUTS, DAIRY, EGGS, WHEAT, SOY, FISH, SHELLFISH)
- Provide calorie/ macronutrient info if required

8. Design Layout & Visuals

- Typography, spacing, color palette aligned with brand
- Use icons for vegetarian, vegan, gluten?free, spicy, etc.

9. Print/Deploy & Train Staff

- Digital (tablets, QR codes) and/or printed copies
- Conduct menu briefings, upsell training, allergen protocols

10. Monitor & Revise

- Track sales mix, waste, guest comments, cost variance
- Quarterly or seasonal refreshes

3. Menu Engineering Basics

Item Type	Characteristics	Typical Strategy
Stars	High popularity, high contribution margin	Promote, keep visible
Plow?horses	High popularity, low margin	Reduce cost or replace
Puzzles	Low popularity, high margin	Re?market or reposition

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Item Type	Characteristics	Typical Strategy
Dogs	Low popularity, low margin	Delete or revamp

Use a 2-axis matrix (Popularity vs. Profitability) to plot each dish.

4. Design Principles for Readability

Principle	Application
Hierarchy	Headings > Sub-headings > Dish names > Descriptions
White Space	1.5–2 line spacing; margins separate sections
Consistent Formatting	Same font (e.g., 10-pt serif) for body, bold for