

PREPARING FOR A MENU MAKEOVER

By Julie Mangano

Once you have identified the need you to improve the layout and design of your menu, take advantage of these quick tips to help you prepare for your meeting with our designers.

1. **Less is more.** Too many menu items can overwhelm your guests and make it difficult for them to decide what to order. Low profit items can hinder overall profitability. Cut out the less profitable items and focus on what makes you money. Base your decisions on facts, not on what your palate or your heart tells you. Using Point of Service (POS) reports, start reducing your menu items by identifying and eliminating those items that contribute less than 3 percent to your gross profit dollars.

2. **Focus on menu item placement.** Many people know the value of menu hot spots and how best to utilize them. However, that is only part of this strategy. It is equally important to learning how to use the "less prime spots" to draw attention to other great items on your menu. After all, you want your diners to look at your entire menu, not just the hot spots. It is imperative to learn to maximize the positioning on every page, in every location.

3. **Hire professionals.** If you plan on using photographs in your menu, be committed to hiring a professional food photographer to photograph your selected entrees, salads, and desserts. Although it is more expensive, it is imperative that your photographs be properly staged, lighted, and then captured digitally for optimal results. Poor quality photographs or using photographs that don't resemble what your kitchen turns out creates customer disappointment. This can drive business away and adversely affect the success of your restaurant.

4. **Use high quality graphics.** Whether using

photographs or other art, be committed to using high quality, high resolution graphics. Low resolution, fuzzy pictures of grandma in her kitchen don't always translate well on a menu. Neither does inexpensive clip art cartoonish food items. No matter what kind of a restaurant you are operating, aim for a more sophisticated level of design with your menu.

5. **Listen to the experts.** They are there for a reason, and they have every reason to want to see you operate a profitable business. Menu design experts, for example, can help you avoid the pitfalls of mixing too many fonts, keeping your menu from being too cluttered, helping you maintain white space for easy readability, and more.

6. **Less is more again.** Stay away from using too many decorative elements, highlighted boxes, borders and signature item icons on your menu. Instead of highlighting specialty items, they may overwhelm readers, causing them to lose their focus.

7. **Round up pricing.** Changing the last digit of each price from a zero or five to a nine might not sound like a

big deal, however, by doing this on every item, every day over the course of a year can add several thousand dollars to your bottom line. Take advantage of this simple strategy to help increase the profitability of the restaurant.

8. **Tuck your prices.** Forget about right-justifying your prices, putting them above the menu item description, or highlighting them with a larger font. Instead, tuck them discreetly at the end of your menu item descriptions. This prevents your customers from shopping the menu by price, forcing them to read each menu description before deciding what to order. Using this strategy help your customers choose an item because it strikes their fancy, not because it's the least

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expensive item on your menu.

9. Update your menu regularly. Updating your pricing is just one component of this task. Refreshing the look and feel of your menu, adding new items and removing those that don't sell will help keep your menu fresh and encourage your customers to look at all you have to offer each time they dine at your restaurant.

Consider using menu covers. The best reason for using menu covers is it allows you to update and reprint individual menu pages without having the expense of reprinting your entire menu.

Julie Mangano is the Director of Creative Services of Return On Ingredients LLC and has over 20 years in the restaurant menu design profession. You can contact Julie at (512) 585-4695 or Julie@returnoningredients.com

Mark Kelhofer is the President & CEO of Return On Ingredients LLC and has over 17 years managerial accounting experience including 8 in the fine dining restaurant industry. You can contact Mark at (614) 558-2239 or mark@returnoningredients.com.