



Happy New Year, Happy New Menu!

Happy New Year everyone. I hope it is a great one for you, your families, and your business. One thing is for certain — if you have not revisited your current menus, now is the time. This makes a great New Year's resolution that will have tremendous impact and ROI in 2018.

Why upgrade?

There are many reasons to evaluate and upgrade your menus. Even if business is good and you are doing well, doing better is always the goal of any business. Modifying your menu to align with changing tastes and trends offers the possibility of additional revenues by enticing new diners and encouraging prior diners to come back to try what's new. An upgraded menu is your vehicle to reflect a rise in your costs. Upgrading can even lead to reduced food, production, and labor costs over the long term. These results alone are important enough to make this effort fruitful.

The first bit of analysis...

...must be a deep dive into your actual food costs, followed by the costs of turning the food into menu items, which is your production costs. Food prices change all the time, and I have seen dozens of restaurants fail because they are afraid of raising menu prices while their cost of goods is going out of control. Making no money or little money for all your efforts should not be an option. If your product is excellent, your service is outstanding, and the food is pleasing to the eye and the palate, then your guests will shoulder an increase in price. Remember that your regular guests see a price jump of a dollar or two as exactly that, a dollar or two. Another



way of thinking of it is that your guests will be deciding whether they want to spend a couple of dollars more. That decision should be easy, again, given the level of hospitality they receive and quality of the food they eat.

Also, shopping around...

...is prudent and recommended. Consider using alternate products from new suppliers. Oftentimes, there are alternate similar (or better) products that will serve you even more.

When honing your menu, consider the current trends in our food world. Vegan options, vegetarian options, gluten-free, highly spiced, and healthy options are being sought and purchased in massive quantities every day. Is your restaurant turning a blind eye to this ever-expanding marketplace? Make yourself,

your menu, and your restaurant increasingly more relevant.

The greatest cost...

...to your business, outside of food, is labor. Now is the right time to analyze what you do and how you do it. Reducing labor may consist of many efficiencies that you currently do not have in place or enforce. However, do not be lazy about that implementation and enforcement. Every point you can shave from overtime or regular labor goes right to the bottom line. Hire to a higher expectation, even if it costs an extra dollar or two an hour, if it pays off in productivity and efficiency. In fact, poorly performing staff are the most expensive commodity you pay for every single day. Don't make one person more important than your business.

Look at other efficiencies...

...that will affect the quality and consistency of your offerings, while helping to reduce your labor costs at the same time. I preach the benefits of pre-cut fruits and vegetables, where and when it makes sense. I frequently help clients through technology demos, explaining the efficiencies and ROI of high speed ovens, combi-ovens, and automatic fryers. These upgrades can help significantly in accomplishing your menu, food cost, and labor goals. Let me know if I can help you!

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