

# Menu

## Introduction

Menu is a sheet of paper or cardboard on which, the names of all the dishes that are served in a restaurant are written in a specific order.

## Origin

Menus were first heard of as being adopted for table use in 1541, when at a banquet given by duke Henry of Brunswick, his grace had a sheet of paper by his side to which he occasionally referred. When questioned by one of his guests about what he was looking at, he answered, that it was a program of what they were eating and that it helped him to reserve his appetite for those dishes he liked. The idea was advised so much that it became generally known and adopted.

## Functions of Menu

- A menu **informs guest** as to what dishes are available and the prices charged for the whole menu or a particular dish. It enables to select dishes of their choice.
- It **guides the chef** regarding the requirement of staff, material and equipment, to prepare the items included in the menu.
- It enables the **service personnel to do Mise-en-place**, take the correct order, pick up and serve the correct dishes from the kitchen according to the order, and so present the correct check to the guest.
- It helps the **cashier to price each item** ordered by the guest and to prepare a sales summary of the outlet.
- Menus have been labeled as **working documents** or blue prints, by which food service operations organized their food and beverage procurement, production and service. For the caterer or chef, the menu expresses the catering policy of the establishment.
- It helps the **management to work out the cost** of the food and beverage and analyze the utility of a particular menu, to predict trends and to plan future course of action for the outlet.
- It **creates and promotes an image** of the restaurant in many social gatherings.
- It **identifies the theme** of the establishment. This is especially important for restaurants that offer special cuisines.

## Types of Menu

Menus may be divided into two classes, traditionally called À la carte and Table d'hôte. The difference being the former has a list of all the dishes priced separately and later has a fixed price for the whole meal.

**A La Carte:** À la Carte means “from the menu card”. A true À la Carte menu should provide;

- A choice of dishes within each specific course
- Each dish is priced separately.
- Gives a full list of all dishes that may be prepared by the establishment.
- Dishes prepared and cooked as per order.
- Guests are billed as per the order placed.
- A certain waiting time has to be allowed for dishes.

**Table d’hôte:** The term Table d’hôte means table of the host. It is normally offered at a set price for a set number of dishes.

- The menu has a fixed number of courses.
- There is a limited choice within each course.
- The selling price of the menu is fixed.
- The dishes provided will be ready at a set time.

Table d’hôte menus are used in various forms such as buffet menu, conference packages and for banquets.

À la Carte	Table d’hôte
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Menu is elaborate</li> <li>• Each dish is priced separately</li> <li>• Wide range of choice available within each course</li> <li>• It is prepared once the order is given</li> <li>• It is cooked in small quantities</li> <li>• Silver is laid as per the order</li> <li>• Highly trained manpower is required to take orders and serve</li> <li>• Guest’s likes and dislikes can be taken into preference</li> <li>• Large amount of tableware is needed to carry out the service</li> <li>• It requires printed menu cards to explain the guest about the menu as it is more elaborate.</li> <li>• This menu is suitable for European plan and FITs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The menu is small</li> <li>• The menu is priced as a whole</li> <li>• A limited choice within each course</li> <li>• It is prepared in advance</li> <li>• It is cooked in large quantities</li> <li>• Silver is laid in advance as the menu is known in prior</li> <li>• Less trained manpower is required to do service</li> <li>• Individual guests’ preferences can not be taken into consideration</li> <li>• Limited tableware is needed to execute the service</li> <li>• It can be orally informed as it is simple.</li> <li>• This menu is suitable for American and Modified American plans</li> </ul>

**Carte du Jour:** Carte du jour or Menu of the day is mostly used in operations as an adjunct to the regular menu, whether an À la Carte or Table d’hôte.

- It offers a different choice to regular customer.

- Features a special cuisine.
- Testing the market for future menus.
- Features & tests a particular selling price range.
- Takes advantage of seasonal availability.

**Plat du Jour/** Plate of the Day: It is also used in operations as an adjunct to the regular menu. Only one special dish is promoted under Plat du Jour whereas a set of dishes is offered in Carte du Jour.

Smaller establishments for economy reasons may offer this type of menu in combination with either À la carte or Table d' hôte for a number of weeks to take the advantage of the seasonal availability of any food.

**Cyclic Menu:** These are rotating menus generally used for institutional and volume catering such as in hospitals, educational institution and industrial operations etc. Cyclic menus are designed for a specific period. The average cycle with most institutions is a week or a month, and then the whole menu is repeated back.

Since cyclic menus are repeated, the menu structure and the choice of dishes must be carefully selected. Careful attention to nutritional balance and season of the year should be observed in these types of menus.

## **Menu Planning**

The success of a food service operation is largely in the hands of its menu planner. Work flows more smoothly, guests will be served more effectively, and financial goals will be easier to attain when the menu has been properly planned. The opposite is also true; a poorly planned menu will cause significant operating problems that will affect guests, employees, and ultimately the financial health of the operation.

As in any other art, menu making requires careful planning and the observance of a few principles that are basic to meeting the objectives of the management satisfying the guests, utilizing the skills and abilities of the available personnel one must consider the following:

**Type of Establishment:** The type of operation is the first consideration in planning menus. The objective or purpose of a hospital will differ from that of a hotel or restaurant, while neither of these will be the same to that of fast-food establishment or university residence hall. For those persons who receive all their meals in a hospital, retirement home etc, and the menus must be planned to meet the total nutritional requirements of the groups to be served.

**Type of customer:** Customers can affect the type of food served because of the following factors: age, sex, religion, climate and health considerations etc. The young boys will need substantial meals, while the young girls would prefer dainty and smaller portions. A group of

labor force, who work in an industry like mines, will need a good quantity of food, and the emphasis will be on palatability and wholesome food.

**Nutritional Principles:** Nutritional principles, as applied to menu planning, are different throughout the life cycle. The activity level and the metabolic processes vary with individuals depending on age, sex, and activity and therefore calorific requirements differ. Persons with physical illness may even require a modified diet.

The basic supplements of food are carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals and vitamins. Carbohydrates and fats provide energy to your body while the proteins are body building ones. Breads and rice provide carbohydrates; meats, fish, eggs, dairy products, peas, beans and lentils are the rich products of proteins. Vegetables and fruits provide minerals and vitamins to the body.

**Ingredients Availability:** Ingredients required to prepare dishes should be available in the market. One should not consider including asparagus, artichoke, brussels sprouts and kohlrabi in the menu if they are not easily available in the market. Most restaurants have lengthy menus, but many of the dishes are not served to guests as the raw materials are not available in the market. It ruins the brand image of the restaurant and leads to repeated losses. Seasonal foods are, besides being economical, also better in quality.

**Budget:** The budget will forecast the projected income and the amount of income that can be used for the purchase of food. Food sales, the major source of the income must cover food cost, labor cost and operation costs.

**Personnel:** The skill and size of the kitchen staff would affect the number of selections that can be offered on the menu. A wise menu planner will always avoid overloading an individual or a department with a large number of menu items that require time-consuming tasks and last-minute preparations.

Even the skills of the food service staff are taken into consideration here, while planning a menu. Flambé dishes, like Crêpe Suzette, Banana Flambé require the service staff that is highly skilled and well trained to perform the service in front of the guest. If the waiters are untrained, the selection of the dishes should be simple such that, pre-plated service can be offered in the restaurant.

**Physical Facilities:** The facilities available will influence the menu pattern. The amount of space available, the type and the capacity of the equipment will determine the variety of products that can be prepared and the number of persons that can be served.

For example, to have idli on to the menu card, one should have an *idli steamer* and to prepare Chinese dishes, the outlet should have woks.

**Type of Service:** Menu should be planned in relation to type of service for example, Cafeteria or buffet service etc. When a food service operation offers fork buffet service for a cocktail party, the menu should be composed of dishes that can be easily eaten with the help of a fork rather using a knife.

One supposed to consider, the distance over the food must be transported after the preparation, should consider while planning a menu. In case of planning room service menus, the foods such as dals, wada, kichdi that retain the heat for long time should be considered.

**Food Habits of the Customer:** The life-styles of the customers must be considered. The methods of preparation and the seasonings must be harmonized to suit their tastes. Food habits are sometimes the result of family culture, ethnic backgrounds, regional preferences, religious traditions and restrictions.

One can find, in modern days, many food service operations are regionalizing international menus to appeal to a larger number of local guests' preferences.

**Meal Period:** The menu should be designed according to the meal that to be served for the customers. So it is necessary to know whether the meal is required for breakfast, lunch, and dinner or for supper.

The breakfast menu must supply instant energy through simple carbohydrates. It should consists of soft and light food items like fruit juice, fresh fruit, cereal with milk, and egg etc., whereas the lunch menu should be heavy with food items such as pasta, chicken, pork, veal and beef, that supplement balanced diet to the diner.

**Supplier and Storage Facilities:** The supplier network, frequency of supply, quantity and quality of materials supplied should also become the criterion to be considered while plan a menu. The size and type of the storage space in the organization should not be forgotten before taking a decision.

**Menu Balance:** If many courses are to be served care should be taken to see that they vary from dishes of a light nature to those of more substantial (heavy) nature and finish up with light dishes. The following points must be considered to affect a fine balance in any menu;

- The ingredients forming one course should not be repeated in another course.
- See that method of cooking is not repeated.
- Sauces or gravies used must be distinctly different in color, taste, flavor and texture.
- Colors of the dishes should not be repeated.
- Importance should be given to the texture of courses i.e. crisp, soft, crunchy etc.