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# UNIT 12 FOOD MANAGEMENT: TYPES OF FOOD SERVICE SYSTEMS

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 10 earlier, we learnt about service systems model and various types of services. These were, as you may recall, conventional, commissary, ready prepared and assembly/serve. Here, in this unit, we shall have a deep insight of these service systems. We will get to know what are these, their characteristics, the food service organizations where these are in operation and how these are carried out.

Next, we shall understand the meal distribution system and service styles in food service systems. This too, you may recall, you have already studied earlier. Here, however, we will have a look at all of these in terms of distribution and service issues.

So let us proceed with our discussion.

### Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand different types of service,
- discuss distribution and service styles in food service system, and
- highlight the factors which are important for the service personnel.

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## 12.2 INTRODUCTION TO FOOD SERVICE SYSTEMS

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New production/service systems for food service organizations have developed in recent years. Characterized by a separation of production and service of food in time and/or place, these new systems have been primarily aimed at increasing productivity, decreasing cost, or strengthening control of operations. Because food service managers assume primary responsibility for food safety and quality regardless of the type of system, complex managerial decisions are required to develop and implement appropriate food service systems that serve quality food at minimal cost. The physical, chemical and microbiological changes occurring in food throughout all stages of procurement, production and service must be monitored and controlled to ensure the quality and safety of the finished products.

Spiraling labour costs and technological innovation in both food and equipment have led to implementation of these new types of systems. Faced with these costs and a lack of available highly skilled employees, food service managers have been receptive to using the new forms of food with built-in convenience or labour-saving features. These foods, in their various forms and stages of preparation, have appeared on the market in increasing numbers each year. Many require specialized equipment for final production, delivery and service.

As highlighted in Unit 10 earlier, four major types of food service systems have been identified – the *conventional* or traditionally used system, and three newer systems, *commissary*, *ready prepared* and *assembly/serve*. A series of conceptual diagrams for food service operations, developed by a regional research group to illustrate food product flow within these various types of food service systems, will be presented and discussed further in this section.

A major distinguishing characteristic of the four systems is the *degree of processing of the foods*, which may vary from little or no processing prior to purchase of the foods to completely prepared foods ready for service. This food processing continuum, deals with the procurement sub-system and the process of bringing into the system one of the most important inputs, *food*. Figure 12.1 illustrates the interrelationship between the inputs of the system and the transformation processes. It also emphasizes the critical role procurement plays and indicates how the types of food used in the system the quality standards enforced and quality assurance programmes affect the nature and characteristics of the entire system and the output.

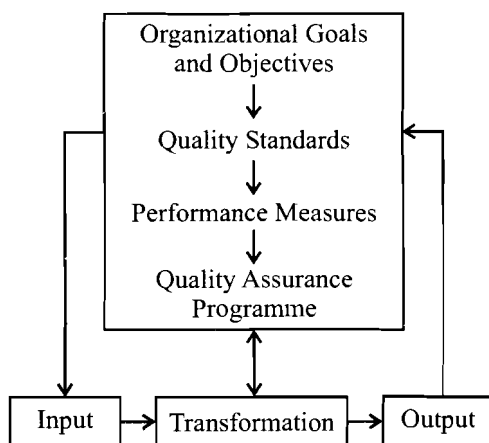


Figure 12.1: Quality assurance in food service model

In many food services, a combination of foods with varying degrees of processing is utilized. Look at Figure 12.2, which presents the food processing continuum. At the far left of this diagrammatic continuum, as you would have noticed, food items receive little or no processing prior to purchase by the food service operation; at the far right, however, the food products have undergone complete processing and are ready for service. Fresh apples, sugar, flour, and shortening for use in baking an apple pie are examples of foods with little or no processing, whereas frozen baked pie is an example at the other end of the food processing continuum.

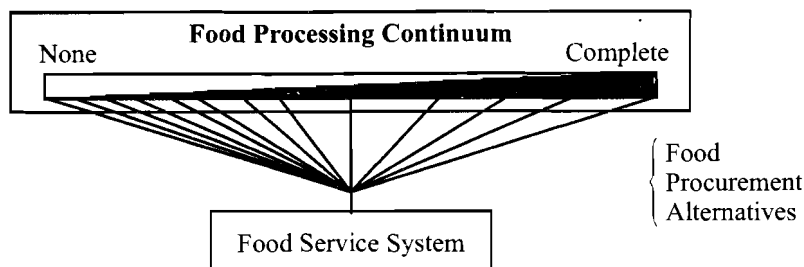


Figure 12.2: Food processing continuum

With a brief understanding of the food processing continuum, let us next review the four systems of food service which as mentioned earlier are distinguished based on the *degree of processing of the foods*, which may vary from little or no processing prior to purchase of the foods to completely prepared foods ready for service.

## 12.3 TYPES OF SERVICE SYSTEMS

You may recall studying about different types of services in Unit 10. Let us have a look at these in detail in this section. We shall begin with conventional type of service first.

### 12.3.1 Conventional

The conventional food service system is the type most establishments have traditionally used. Foods are purchased for an individual operation in various stages of preparation, but all production is completed and foods are served on the same premises. Following production, foods are held hot or chilled, as appropriate for the menu item, and served as soon as possible as illustrated in Figure 12.3.

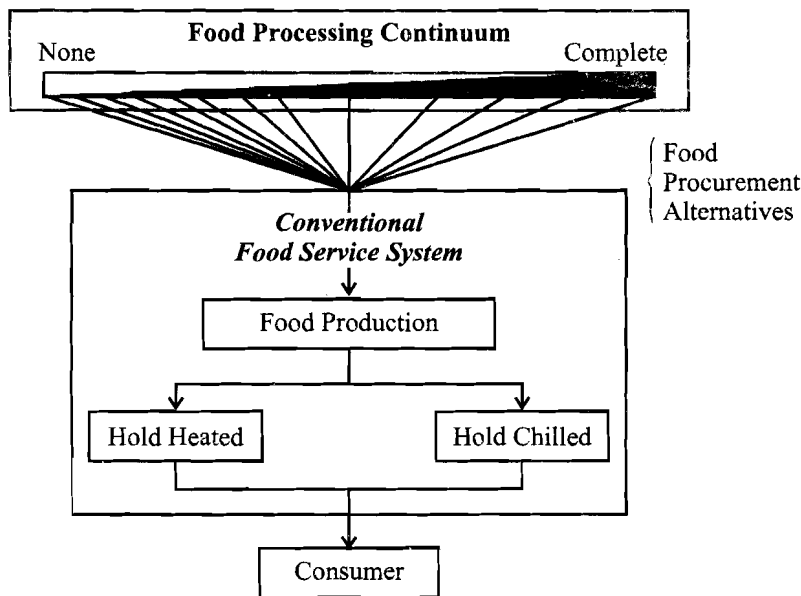


Figure 12.3: Conventional food service system

In previous years, conventional food service systems often included a butcher shop, bake shop, and vegetable preparation unit. Currently, many conventional food service operations use pre-portioned meats, baked goods, and canned and frozen vegetables rather than purchasing all types of foods raw and completing processing on premises.

Although alternative systems have evolved, the conventional system continues to be the dominant type of food service in the United States. Because of increasing labour costs, managers of conventional food services have gradually made changes in ingredients and menu items purchased in an attempt to reduce the labour needed for meal production. Food procured for conventional systems vary from those with no processing, to those with a limited amount of processing, to those processed completely.

Foods with varying degrees of processing are brought into the system and prepared for service in the food production sub-system. As shown in Figure 12.3 some food are merely purchased and held chilled before service, such as milk or butter patties, whereas other menu items are produced in the system from raw foods and held either heated or chilled until time of service.

Following receipt and appropriate storage of food items and ingredients, menu items should be prepared as near to service time as possible. Considerable labour is required

before and during food service periods. Otherwise, food subjected to hot-holding conditions is affected by temperature, humidity and length of holding time, all of which can adversely affect its nutritional and sensory quality and must be considered when scheduling food production.

Foods prepared in the conventional system may be distributed for service directly to an adjacent or nearby serving area, such as a cafeteria, dining room, or lunch counter. In hospitals or other healthcare facilities, as you know already, food may be served on trays, using a centralized or decentralized service approach. In *centralized service*, as you would recall, the individual patient trays are assembled and set up at some central point in or close to the production area. Trays are then distributed by carts or conveyors to patient floors, where they are delivered to patient rooms. In *decentralized service*, food is distributed in bulk quantities to another area in the facility where trays are assembled. In some facilities, a combination of these two approaches is used.

Next, let us review the commissary food service system.

### 12.3.2 Commissary

Technological innovations and the design of sophisticated food service equipments have led to the evolution and development of commissary food service systems. These commissary systems are characterized by a *centralized food procurement and production facility*, with distribution of prepared menu items to several remote areas for final preparation and service. The centralized production facilities are often referred to as *central commissaries* or food factories, and the service units as *satellite service centers*. The economies of scale concept have guided the design of these systems. The potential for economies from large-scale purchasing and production in a central facility has been used to justify design and construction of these complex operations with expensive automated equipment for production of foods from unprocessed states.

In commissary food service systems, the foods purchased have received little or no processing, as indicated in the continuum at the top of the Figure 12.4. These foods are generally purchased in large quantities and held after delivery at the facility under appropriate environmental conditions in frozen refrigerated or dry storage. Most menu items in commissary systems are processed completely in the central facility. Because of the large quantities produced, the equipment for preprocessing and production is often different from the equipment used in conventional systems. These large central production centers may be designed using equipment frequently seen in food industry operations, such as canneries or frozen food processing plants. Because of the large scale production quantities, recipes and food production techniques require major modification. For example, the degree of doneness is less for most menu items because of the additional heating or thermalization needed at the satellite service centers to bring the foods to an acceptable serving temperature.

Foods are held after production, frozen, chilled, or heated, for distribution to the service centers as you may have noticed in Figure 12.4. These menu items may be stored in bulk or in individual portions. The type of storage used may depend on the time lag necessary between production and service. In many instances, however, the type of storage for prepared menu items may be the concept guiding the design of the system. For example, a decision to use frozen storage for menu items may be made before proceeding with the design. Many menu items that have been held frozen or chilled require an additional thermal process to heat them to desirable service temperature. Highly specialized distribution equipment may be needed, depending on the type and location of satellite service centers.

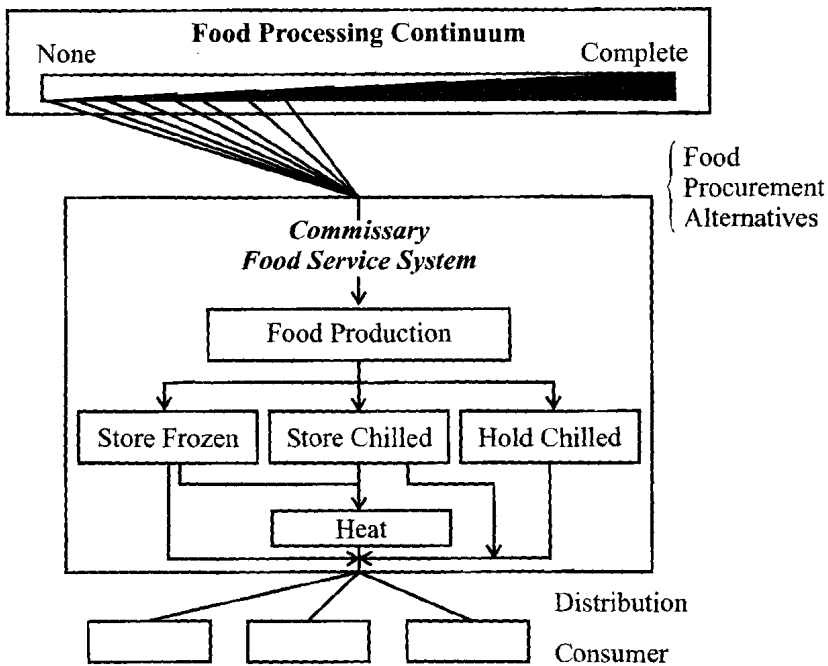


Figure 12.4: Commissary food service system

A modification of the food service systems model illustrates unique characteristics of commissary food service systems. As indicated, the major modifications affecting inputs to the system are the type of food and facilities used. In the transformation element, the nature of the functional sub-systems is vastly different from the convenient system, mainly because of the larger scale production capacity, the storage necessary for prepared menu items, and the distribution capabilities required for transporting prepared menu items to a wide array of satellite service centers.

The packaging and storage of prepared menu items present challenges for control in commissary systems. A variety of packaging materials and approaches is used in systems now in operation, varying from individual pouches or serving dishes, specially designed for frozen or chilled holding, to disposable or reusable metal pans adapted to various types of distribution and transportation equipment. Preserving the microbiological, sensory, and nutritional quality of foods during holding and thermalization at point of service can present problems. Specialized equipment is required for the packaging, storing and distributing of products prepared in central commissaries. In large food factories, a food technologist or microbiologist is frequently on staff, responsible for monitoring quality control.

In food service organizations with many serving units, centralized production and other activities with commissary type systems have been tried in an attempt to curtail labour and other costs. The commissary food service principles have been adopted in systems where service areas are remote from, yet accessible to, the production center. Reducing duplication of production, labour, and equipment that occurs if production centers are located at each food service site has been the objective. Space requirements at the service centers can also be minimized because of the limited production equipment required. The high capital cost for construction of these large central production units and also the high cost for transportation equipment and the increasing expenses for distribution are current concerns in evaluating the effectiveness of these systems.

Commissary systems are adaptable particularly for food service operations with service in unique places. One of the best examples can be found in airline food service, where the commissary system has been applied for many years. Menu items for airlines are produced in ground level facilities according to specifications of the

various airlines, portioned into individual meals for passengers, and distributed in various containers and carts for holding on site in the production facility and on the planes until service. Commissary systems are, in large measure, an outgrowth of airline food service applied to other types of operations.

Commissary systems have long been applied in school food service, although many systems have combined conventional and commissary approaches. In recent years, centralized production facilities located away from schools have been constructed, usually in urban districts with a large number of schools. Often the larger secondary schools have their own conventional systems, so the central production facility only produces meals for the smaller elementary schools in the district. A more common system, however, uses the larger secondary school kitchens as the commissary for producing meals that are transported for service in bulk or portions to the smaller elementary schools. In this instance, the secondary school operation is both a commissary and a conventional system, because secondary students are also served in an adjacent cafeteria. These secondary school operations are often referred to as base kitchens.

In commercial food service in large, multi-unit operations, systems combining characteristic of commissary and conventional systems are found. For example, some menu items may be prepared in a central commissary and then shipped to a variety of operations, often great distances from the commissary. In the individual units, a combination of menu items is served, including both those procured from the central commissary and others prepared on site.

The discussion above we hope presented a good insight into the commissary food service system and its application in the food industry. Let us next move on to study the third food service system i.e., ready prepared.

### 12.3.3 Ready Prepared

Ready prepared food service systems have been developed in response to increased labour costs and to a critical shortage of skilled food production personnel. In ready prepared systems, menu items are produced and held frozen or chilled for service. A key difference between *ready prepared* and *conventional systems* is that menu items are not produced for immediate service in ready systems. Many of the production, packaging and storage techniques are similar to those used in commissary systems; however, the scale of production is not as large because the ready prepared system is designed for a single operation. Generally, ready prepared systems have been adopted because completely prepared foods are not available in the market to meet the needs of an organization. In the healthcare industry, in particular, prepared foods are often not available to meet the specialized needs of patients with varying health problems.

The food product flow in ready prepared food service systems is shown in Figure 12.5. As indicated, foods from the entire spectrum of the food processing continuum are used. Foods brought into the system that are completely processed are merely stored frozen or chilled, as appropriate to the food item. Foods procured with little or no processing are used to produce menu items that are stored either frozen or chilled. A distinct feature of these systems is that *prepared menu items are readily available at any time for final assembly and/or heating for service.*

Menu items such as entries and hot vegetables require two phases of heat processing in ready prepared food service systems, the first occurring during the quantity production of menu items. The second occurs after storage, in bringing items to the appropriate temperature for service to the consumer.

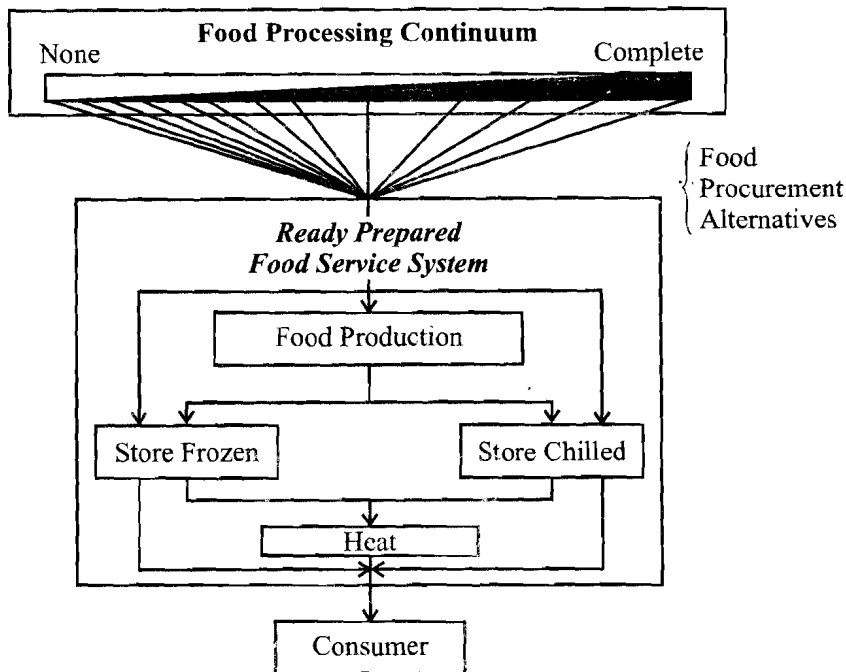


Figure 12.5: Food flow in ready prepared food service system

*Cook-chill* and *cook-freeze* are two variations of ready prepared systems. In cook-chill food service operations, most menu items are maintained in the chilled state for various periods of time. In cook-freeze systems, menu items are stored in the frozen state for periods generally ranging from two weeks up to three months.

Procured foods are placed in appropriate storage conditions, and then produced for holding in one of the two forms discussed above. Careful production scheduling is needed along with accurate forecasting to maintain quality of foods and avoid prolonged holding beyond the planned time. In cook-chill systems, prepared menu items are portioned for service several hours or as much as a day in advance of the serving period. In both, cook-chill or cook-freeze approaches, final heating occurs just before service, usually in facilities near the serving areas. For example, hospitals have facilities on patient floors called *galley's*, where specialized heating equipment is used to finish the preparation for menu items immediately before service. Microwave ovens are the most commonly used heating equipment. Often, minor preparation, such as preparing toast for a breakfast menu, may occur in these galley's. In the initial preparation, menu items should be slightly undercooked to avoid overcooking and loss of sensory quality in the final heating for service.

In cook-freeze systems, special recipe formulations are needed for many menu items because of the changes that occur in freezing. Development of off-flavours may be a problem with some food items. Substituting more stable ingredients, by exercising greater control of storage time, temperature, and packaging, or by adding stabilizers may control some of these changes.

The challenge in the ready prepared systems using either cook-chill or cook-freeze approaches is in *retention of foods' nutrient content, microbial safety and sensory quality*. Prolonged holding should be avoided, and careful control in the final heating stage prior to service is important. In addition to microwave ovens for this final heating process, *immersion techniques* and *convection ovens* have also been proven to be effective. Convection ovens, in which the air is circulated during the heating process, are effective for heating foods held in bulk because appropriate temperatures are reached more rapidly than in conventional ovens. Immersion techniques, which involve immersing pouches of food in boiling water or in steamers, are used for reheating moist food items, such as entrée items in sauces.

The food service systems model, already described earlier in Unit 10, that we are using as a framework for this unit has direct application to the ready prepared system. In the transformation process, however, special attention must be focused on the production and holding of prepared menu items. As indicated above, special systems for heating menu items for service to consumers are required.

Ready prepared food service systems have been adopted in many operations to reduce labour expenditures and use labour more effectively. Peak demands for labour are removed because production is designed to meet future rather than immediate needs. Production personnel can be scheduled for regular working hours rather than during the early morning and late evening shifts that are required in conventional systems. The heating and service of menu items does not require highly skilled employees and thus, reductions in labour costs are often possible. Food procurement in volume may decrease food costs in these systems.

Finally let us review the assembly/serve system.

### 12.3.4 Assembly/Serve

The development of assembly/serve systems – also referred to as *convenience food systems* or systems using minimal cooking concepts – came about primarily because of the availability of foods that are ready to serve or that require little or no processing in the food service operation prior to service. Another factor has been the chronic shortage of skilled personnel in food production and the increasing cost of labour.

The primary objective of assembly/serve systems is to *provide food ready for service while minimizing the amount of labour resources employed within the food service operation*. Food products are brought into the system with a maximum degree of processing as you would notice in Figure 12.6. Only storage assembly, heating and service functions are commonly performed in these systems; little, if any, preprocessing is done and production is very limited.

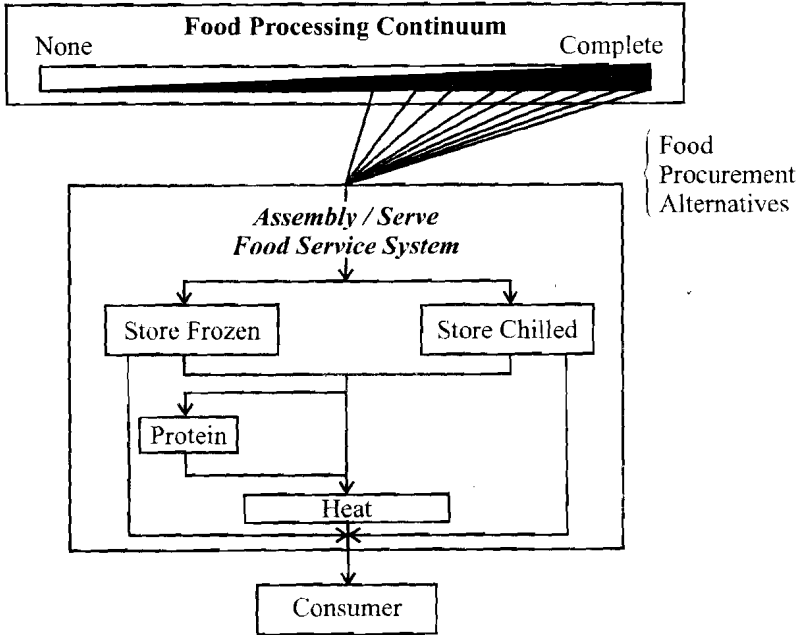


Figure 12.6: Food flow in assembly/serve food service system

The three market forms of foods used predominantly in these systems are *bulk*, *pre-portioned*, and *preplated frozen foods*. The bulk form requires portioning before or after heating within the food service service operation, whereas the pre-portioned market form requires only assembly and heating. The preplated products require only heating for distribution and service, and thus are the most easily handled of the three forms.

in many assembly/serve operations, a combination of foods is used, some requiring a limited degree of processing in the food service operation and others requiring none. Often partially prepared foods are purchased to be combined with other ingredients before heating or chilling. In many operations, completely processed foods may be enhanced in the assembly/serve system as a way of individualizing menu items; for example, a sauce may be added to an entrée. *Glew (1972)*, however, contends that the use of completely processed foods is probably more cost effective than using total convenience foods along with those requiring more preparation in the food service system.

Following procurement, in assembly/serve systems, food items are held in dry, refrigerated, or frozen storage. When menu items are heated in bulk or pre-portioned form, quality control is a particular concern. Foods must be thawed under appropriate conditions if thawing is required prior to heating. The thawing and heating processes must not be scheduled too long to advance of service because of the potential loss of microbial, nutritional, and sensory quality of the food. For this reason, specialized systems for heating frozen foods to appropriate serving temperatures have been developed, in which convection and microwave ovens are frequently used.

The assembly/serve approach to food service systems gained some degree of acceptance because it appeared to offer an easy solution to labour and production problems. However, a readily available supply of highly processed, high quality food products is a prerequisite for a successful assembly/serve operation. As indicated in the discussion of ready prepared systems, the availability of food products is sometimes a problem, particularly in healthcare institutions. Although foods for special modified dietary needs have been developed in recent years, these foods are not always readily available, particularly in rural and small communities. Therefore, if a convenience food system is used for patients or nursing home residents without special dietary needs, food production may be needed to prepare items for those on modified diets.

Another common complaint about the assembly/serve systems is the lack of individuality. Comments are frequently heard about the "sameness" of the ready prepared foods available in the market place. As we discussed in the section on conventional food systems, a trend toward use of foods with some degree of processing is evident. This trend appears to be more predominant than total adoption of assembly/serve systems. In some instances, however, an assembly/serve system meets the needs of particular operations in which space is very limited for production facilities or labour is not available.

Before we further move on to study distribution and service, let us take a break here and recapitulate what we have learnt till now.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

- 1) Discuss the reasons behind the increased need of new food production/ service systems.

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- 2) What are the four major types of food service systems?

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3) Packaging and storage of prepared menu items present challenges for control in commissary systems. Discuss.

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4) What are the benefits and challenges of using ready prepared systems?

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5) Bring about the drawbacks of assembly/service systems.

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Now that we have a good knowledge of the different food service systems, let us next review the distribution and service in food service system.

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### **12.4 DISTRIBUTION AND SERVICE IN FOOD SERVICE SYSTEM**

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Depending on the type of food service systems, distribution may or may not be a major function. In hospital food service, where patients must be served in individual rooms located on many floors and perhaps in separated building, distribution is a major concern. You would recall reading about this before in Unit 10 as well. Ensuring that the appropriate food is sent to the appropriate place for service to a particular patient is a complex process, further complicated by the need to ensure that the food is at the right temperature and aesthetically appealing. In contrast, in the fast food operation, where patrons pick up the food items directly after production and either carry them off premises for consumption or to a table in the facility, distribution is relatively simple. In fact, the distribution and service becomes the responsibility primarily of the customer, not the personnel.

Service takes many forms in a food service establishment, from that in the upscale fine food restaurant involving several highly trained personnel to that in the many types of self-service operations – cafeteria, vending or buffet. The method, speed and quality of the services provided can “make or break” a food service establishment as already discussed earlier in Unit 11. The quality of food may be excellent, the sanitation of the establishment above reproach, the procurement and storage of food ideal, but if the service is lacking, the operation will be rated poor by the clientele. In some instances, clientele will repeatedly return to an establishment with only mediocre food because a favourite waiter or waitress provides high quality service or because they can depend on being served and back to work in a short period of time.

In this section, the four basic types of systems will be discussed from the standpoint of distribution and service issues. Different types of service in these food service systems/operations will then be outlined. So let us begin our discussion with conventional food service system.

### 12.4.1 Conventional Food Service System

In the conventional system, most menu items are produced on premise and distributed for service to a serving area or areas close to the production facilities. In this system, hot and cold holding equipment is needed to maintain the proper temperature for various menu items between the time of production and service as you may have already noticed in Figure 12.3. Depending on the type of service areas, this holding equipment may be stationary or mobile. Some equipment is quite versatile and can be used for distribution, holding and service. For example, the mobile modular-serving units could be used for transporting food for a catered function in a dining room away from the main kitchen and also for holding the food until time of service. The units then provide a service counter for self or waiter/waitress service.

In a *healthcare facility*, however, patient service may take place throughout the facility, requiring more complex distribution systems than in other types of food service operations. Meal assembly, for example, may be *centralized* or *decentralized*. In a facility with centralized meal assembly, the time between production, assembly, distribution and service can be minimal. The trays are first assembled for service at a central location in or close to the main production facilities. Hot menu items are held in food warming cabinets, usually in cafeteria counter pans, where they remain until placed in hot food serving units during tray assembly; cold items are held under refrigeration. The assembled trays are then distributed to the patient units using a variety of types of carts. Some institutions use heated and refrigerated tray carts, which may be motorized or pushed manually by hospital personnel. A few institutions have an automated cart transport system, which only requires setting a dial or pushing a button to move carts along specially designed corridors to designated service areas. This type of system must be a design feature of the facility during construction.

The high initial and maintenance costs of heated and heated/refrigerated carts have led to development of other methods for maintaining proper temperatures on assembled trays. One of these systems uses specially designed dishes that have been preheated in an infrared oven, and then transferred to an insulated base. The hot menu items are portioned onto the plate, which is covered by a dome designed to fit the base container, thus keeping food warm until service to the patient. This unit is placed on the individual patient's tray, and other menu items that have been individually wrapped are added. The assembled trays are then transported in an unheated cart to patient units for service.

The process of meal distribution in a centralized tray system includes activities to the movement of assembled trays from the point of assembly to the patient area. A method for thermal retention is needed in larger operations in which the time between meal assembly and service to the patient is too long to maintain proper temperatures. Refrigerated support for cold foods may also be needed. We had already described the types of methods that are widely used in healthcare institutions in Unit 10 earlier. These categories include *hot thermal retention/support*, *hot and cold thermal retention systems*, and *no thermal support*. Benefits and constraints of these distribution systems and of few others (such as microwave ovens, convection ovens, infrared ovens etc.) are described for your reference in Table 12.1.

The layout uses mobile equipment, which has been widely accepted because of the flexibility and the ease of facility maintenance provided. This type of set-up can be readily rearranged or moved for cleaning.

Each assembly area requires support equipment to *assemble* the trays. The size of the area and the number of trays to assemble will determine the type of conveyor system required to provide support. *Hysen and Harrison* (1982) outline options for tray assembly equipment, including manual conveyors, such as a tray slide; simple mechanical conveyors, such as a roller type, and motorized conveyors, which may be straight-line or circular. The straight-line lay out illustrates other equipment needed for holding and dispensing food and other items needed for tray assembly.

**Table 12.1: Major meal distribution and service systems along with their benefits and constraints**

Major Meal Distribution and Service System	Benefits	Constraints
<i>Hot and Cold Thermal Retention Systems</i>		
Pellet and sublimation refrigeration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A synergistic heat maintenance effect is achieved.</li> <li>• Simplicity of cart construction and ease of sanitation.</li> <li>• The cart is lightweight, which provides for ease of mobility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The operational cost of complexity of the required carbon dioxide cooling system is consideration.</li> <li>• Patient trays are not completely assembled at a central assembly point. Final assembly occurs in patient areas.</li> </ul>
Split tray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centralized supervision and control of the total assembly process.</li> <li>• Non reassembly of tray components is required in the patient areas.</li> <li>• Good temperature retention of both hot and cold items.</li> <li>• The system accommodates late trays within a reasonable period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cart is heavy and bulky. A motorized version may be required if any ramps are to be negotiated.</li> <li>• The carts are difficult to sanitize.</li> <li>• The initial cost of the cart is high and maintenance costs can be high.</li> <li>• Due to the relatively heavy weight and limited manoeuvrability, carts and wall surfaces are subject to damage.</li> </ul>
Match-a-tray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as described for split tray except that consolidation is required on the patient level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as described for split tray.</li> <li>• Additional labour must be applied at the patient area to reassemble the complete patient meal.</li> </ul>
Insulated trays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains hot and cold zones well without external heat or refrigerant sources.</li> <li>• Simplicity of transport is achieved. It does not require a heavy, enclosed delivery cart. Stacked trays protect and insulated food.</li> <li>• There is a less load on the dish washing facility due to disposables.</li> <li>• There are no complex components to repair, replace or maintain.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purchase of special disposable dishes results in higher operational costs. Food holding time is limited to 45 minutes.</li> <li>• The long range cost could be substantially higher than other systems due to disposable and lease costs.</li> <li>• Hot foods may take on a "steamed" appearance in the hot compartment due to its relatively small volume and lack of venting.</li> <li>• Possible adverse patient reaction to eating from a compartmentalized tray.</li> <li>• Trays can be difficult to sanitize completely due to deep cavity construction.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The top and bottom tray compartments do not nest, more storage area required.</li> <li>• Rigid presentation and placement of dishes is a limitation of the system.</li> </ul>
Insulated components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the dinner plate and food are heated. There are no pellet bases to heat. It is simple in operation, requiring no special pellet dispensers to purchase.</li> <li>• There is no burn hazard to the attendant or patient because there is no hot pellet base or pellet disk.</li> <li>• No special insulated delivery cart is required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional service ware pieces need to be inventoried, stored, transported, and washed.</li> <li>• Attractive insulated components are often taken home by patients as useful mementos of their hospital experience.</li> <li>• Hot food holding time is limited to 30 minutes; cold food items can be held longer.</li> </ul>
<i>No Thermal Support</i>		
Covered Tray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tray is a simple standard unit.</li> <li>• The equipment cost of the system is low.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires an immediate and responsive transportation system.</li> <li>• High labour component is required for transportation process.</li> <li>• No thermal support is available for entrée and other food items.</li> </ul>
<i>Hot Thermal Retention Systems</i>		
Pellet system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support equipment and system operation are conventional and uncomplicated.</li> <li>• There is no requirement for a special plate; any standardized china.</li> <li>• No special insulated delivery cart is required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provisions for maintenance of cold items such as milk, salads, jellies, ice cream etc. are not made.</li> <li>• Hot food cannot be held for a long period of time (more than 45 minutes)</li> <li>• Additional service ware pieces need to be inventoried, stored, transported and washed.</li> </ul>
Insulated components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the dinner plate and food are heated; there are no pellet bases to heat. It is simple in operation, requiring no special pellet dispensers to purchase. There is no burn hazard to the attendant or patient because there is no hot pellet base or pellet disk.</li> <li>• No special insulated delivery cart is required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional service ware pieces need to be inventoried, stored, transported and washed.</li> <li>• Attractive insulated components are often taken home by patients as useful memento of their hospital experience.</li> </ul>
Heat support cart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thermal energy can be controlled to place and/or bowl as required. The cart allows for food to remain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special sophisticated motorized carts and special trays with heaters are required. The potential for maintenance /repair problems is high.</li> </ul>

	<p>heating until tray is removed for service to the patient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each cart has an insulated drawer for ice cream and other frozen desserts.</li> <li>• Heat energy continues to be supplied to food during the transportation process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cart and the trays are dependent on the use of disposable dishes. Disposable dishes could be uneconomical from an operational cost standpoint and could be considered unacceptable from an aesthetic perspective.</li> <li>• No provisions are made for maintenance of cold food items at proper temperatures except ice cream.</li> </ul>
<i>Other Systems</i>		
Microwave ovens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The food is cooked very rapidly. "on-demand" patient feeding can be achieved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food is easily overcooked, and some foods tend to rather malize unevenly, leaving hot and cold spots.</li> <li>• Food does not brown, causing some foods to have an unnatural appearance.</li> <li>• A trained operator is required to re-thermalize all food products. Employee training is essential to the success of the programme.</li> <li>• Maintenance of microwave ovens can be a significant cost factor.</li> </ul>
Convection ovens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oven cavities can accommodate 12 to 30 meals at a time; thus higher efficiency can be achieved in the re-thermalization and reassembly process as compared to a microwave system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The speed is increased as compared to a conventional still air oven; however, the process is not as fast as a microwave oven.</li> <li>• Some food products experience excessive cooking losses; in others, there is a thickened surface layer on the food from the re-thermalization process.</li> <li>• Some food products do not re-thermalize to a uniform temperature.</li> </ul>
Infrared ovens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food is re-thermalized at a faster speed than conventional still air ovens.</li> <li>• Oven cavities can accommodate 16 - 24 meals at a time; thus higher efficiency can be achieved in the re-thermalization and reassembly process as compared to a microwave system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy consumption for re-thermalization is comparatively high.</li> <li>• Soups are not accommodated by the infrared equipment and must be separately handled.</li> <li>• Dishes and covers become very hot in the re-thermalization process.</li> </ul>

<p>Integral heat ovens and carts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum intervention by employees is required to re-thermalize foods.</li> <li>• Efficiency and speed of service is enhanced due to multiplicity of meals re-thermalized at the same time.</li> <li>• Integrally heated dish acts as “pellet” system to continue to provide thermal support to hot food after service to patient.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food products may burn to or stick to the heated dish.</li> <li>• Certain food items, such as soup or hot breakfast cereals, are difficult to re-thermalize.</li> <li>• Dishes must be sprayed with a release agent to prevent sticking when using certain food items.</li> <li>• Ware washing time is increased, particularly for the breakfast service, because of the food that sticks to dishes.</li> <li>• Ongoing operation costs are comparatively high due to replacement to lease costs.</li> <li>• An inflexible presentation of the tray and rigid placement of items when employing the cart-borne system.</li> </ul>
<p>Contact plate heater carts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced pantry labour due to re-thermalizing and refrigerating patient trays in the delivery cart.</li> <li>• Allows pantry to be reduced in size and lowers equipment cost by eliminating need for reheating ovens.</li> <li>• Minimum intervention by employees after assembled tray has been dispatched from main tray assembly location.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cart maintenance may be a problem due to complex electrical components.</li> <li>• Special trays and dishes are required—usually disposable dishes—which can increase operating costs.</li> <li>• Re-thermalization can only be done from the chilled state, not from the frozen state.</li> <li>• The cart is presently being field tested; its performance has not been proven.</li> <li>• Operating cost appears to be high, based on preliminary data available.</li> <li>• An inflexible presentation of the tray and aesthetic limitations of the system.</li> </ul>

Source: Hysen, P. and Harrison J. State-of-the-art review of health care patient feeding system equipment. In *Hospital Patient Feeding Systems*. Washington D C: National Academy Press, 1982.

Let us see how decentralized meal assembly works.

In a *decentralized meal assembly*, the food products are produced in one location and transported to various locations for assembly at sites near patients. Equipment to maintain proper temperatures – food warmers, hot food counters, and/or refrigerated equipment – must be provided at each location. Since, some foods, such as grilled or fried menu items, do not transport or hold well, some cooking equipment may be available in the service units for these difficult-to-hold foods. Even in a centralized meal assembly system, a few menu items such as coffee and toast may be prepared on the patient units.

Since the early 1950s, healthcare institutions have moved toward centralized tray assembly systems, with the early systems patterned after airline food service. The centralized system has the advantage of eliminating double handling of food and facilitating supervision of meal assembly because the activity takes place in one location rather than in many throughout the facility. In addition, it allows for

standardization of portion, uniformity in presentation, and decreased waste. Finally, less staff time is needed and the space occupied by floor kitchens can be used for other purposes. Decentralized meal assembly is still used in some institutions, however, because it offers the advantage of less time between assembly and service to patients, allowing for potentially higher quality food. Decentralized facilities also offer greater flexibility in providing for individual patient needs and in making last minute substitutions and changes.

Depending on the layout and design of the healthcare facility, a combination of meal assembly and distribution methods may be used. Some facilities may even serve groups of patients in a dining room, while others are provided tray service in their hospital rooms. Group service is especially common in nursing homes and other types of extended care facilities, such as psychiatric hospitals.

Next, let us get to know the distribution system followed in a commissary food service system.

### **12.4.2 Commissary Food Service System**

Commissary food service systems are characterized by *centralized production*, with distribution of prepared menu items to several remote areas for service and possibly final production. Service at these areas may be self-service, cafeteria service, tray service, or some other method. The centralized production facility is referred to as the commissary; in this unit, we refer to the service areas as *satellite service centers*.

The commissary food service system can take many forms and may, in fact, be a combination of systems. In school food service operations, for example, a central kitchen may be a conventional food service for a secondary school but may also provide food to several satellite service centers for elementary schools in the district.

Depending on the nature of the operation, distribution and service in commissary food service systems can thus take many forms. The unique feature of distribution in this system is that a method must be provided for transporting food to the remote locations of the service centers. As we pointed out, these facilities may be relatively close, within the same city or country, as is the case for most school food service operations, or they may be located great distances away from the central production unit, which is typical of many large commercial chain operations.

For this reason, a commissary system requires specialized distribution equipment, tailored to its particular needs. Food items produced in the central commissary may be transported frozen, chilled, or hot, in bulk or in individual portions. The receiving area of the commissary and the satellite service centers must be designed to accommodate the distribution equipment. Also, special precautions are necessary to preserve microbiological quality of foods in commissary food service systems because of the length of time between production and ultimate service to the customer. In evaluating commissary systems, the transportation costs must be considered, because they may add materially to the total cost of the operation, involving as they do, purchase, operation, and maintenance of the trucks for distribution.

### **12.4.3 Ready Prepared Food Service System**

In ready prepared food service systems, menu items are produced and held, either frozen or chilled, for service at a later time as we had seen in Figure 12.5 earlier. They may be packed in bulk, in individual portions, or in combination containers. For example, in airline food services, two of these menu items may be portioned into an individual serving dish.

The type of distribution equipment needed by ready prepared systems depends on whether foods are in bulk quantities or individual portions and or whether they use

a cook-chill or cook-freeze approach. The systems in which foods are portioned into individual servings an assembly system is needed. A unique characteristic of the ready prepared food service system is the *heat processing of prepared item prior to service*. Microwave, convection, and infrared ovens are commonly used in the service unit for this final heat-processing step. Usually, foods are transported in the chilled or frozen state, and this final heating occurs just before service. Therefore, cold temperature support is needed during the distribution process.

Two types of carts are used predominantly for cold temperature support. One type is insulated to maintain temperature during distribution to remote pantry areas where the carts are connected to wall-mounted or floor-borne refrigeration units. *Hysen and Harrison (1982)* describe these carts as light weight and thus easy to transfer; they are also easy to sanitize. In more common use is the roll-in-refrigerator cart. If the cart is the enclosed type, the doors should be opened prior to placing in the refrigerated unit to permit proper circulation of chilled air.

In addition to the type of equipment used for heat processing prior to service mentioned above, two other types of equipment for patient tray service are in use in some institutions: contact plate heater carts and integral heat ovens and carts. The benefits and constraints of the various methods of heat processing for patient services are enumerated in the Table 12.1 above.

The place on the patient floors where final heat processing and meal assembly occurs is generally referred to as a *galley* as we had learnt earlier also. The equipment in a galley includes the cold temperature support equipment, the equipment needed for the final heat processing of menu items, some small equipment such as a coffee make and toaster, a sink, a small storage area and a desk area for the dietetic personnel.

Finally let us review the distribution in assembly/serve system.

#### 12.4.4 Assembly/Serve Food Service System

The assembly/serve food service system uses for the most part foods that are ready to serve or that require little or no processing prior to service. As pointed out, bulk, pre-portioned, and preplated frozen foods are the three market forms of foods that fit into this category.

When foods are served cafeteria style, the bulk form is generally used, the primary requirement being heat processing before service. This heat processing can be done in the service unit or in an auxiliary area, using one of the methods described in the discussion of the ready prepared system. If pre-portioned or preplated items are purchased, heat processing similar to the methods described for ready systems can be used. Cold temperature support equipment may be needed for distribution foods to service areas and for holding prior to heat processing for service.

With this we end our study of distribution and service in food service systems. Let us take a break here and try to recall what we have learnt so far. Answer the questions in check your progress exercise 2. Thereafter, move on to section 12.5, which focuses on conduct and appearance of food service unit personnel.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Discuss centralized meal assembly system in a health care facility.

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2) Distribution and service in commissary food system assumes different forms. Explain giving an example. ..... ..... .....
3) How is cold temperature maintained during distribution system in ready prepared food service system? ..... ..... .....

Now then let us review another important aspect specific to food service i.e. conduct and appearance of personnel involved with food service in a food service unit. You would realize that food service workers can make or break a unit depending on their behaviour, attributes and conduct. Let us review this aspect now.

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### 12.5 CONDUCT AND APPEARANCE OF SERVICE UNIT PERSONNEL

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This section seeks to indicate factors which are important in the personal characteristics, appearance and development of service personnel. These factors are important for us as food managers or dietitians to know and ensure in the service personnel. What are these? Let us read and get to know.

- **Clothing**

A waiter or waitress is usually required to wear some form of uniform. At one time when dress was more formal at all levels of society; the reason for wearing uniform was to distinguish staff from customers.

There are other more relevant reasons for wearing uniforms. Two important reasons are:

- hygiene, encouraging the selection of suitable, protective, washable clothing, keeping the wearer cool and healthy, and enabling frequent laundering and changes of clothing; and
- aiding the merchandising and selling of a meal service by an appropriate integration of staff appearance into a restaurant's theme and décor.

Modern waiting dress for men, especially day dress, is often a neat jacket with epaulets or a blazer-type jacket, including 'themed jackets' to match the surroundings. Commis (assistants) are likely to wear washable white jackets as their work is more likely to soil their clothes.

Modern dress for waitresses should also be washable. Uniforms are usually bright, attractively coloured and 'themed' with the décor. Waitresses rarely wear traditional uniforms of black dress with white aprons except in banqueting, and they seldom wear white caps with this outfit.

Neither men nor women waiting staff should appear in the public part of a hotel or catering establishment when not in uniform or when not wearing full uniform. Waitresses, for example, should put on aprons (and caps, if worn) in the dressing or locker room and not in the restaurant.

Some common rules for dressing are highlighted herewith:

- **Rules of dress**

- Make sure that uniform is neat and clean, is kept in good repair and fits well.
- Change washable clothing frequently and wear freshly laundered. Linen should be immaculately clean.
- Keep suits and shirts (or dresses, skirts and blouses) well-pressed and free from spots. When clothing is not washable, regular sponging is usually necessary.
- Shoes should fit well (with ample room for toe movement), be of conservative design and kept clean, well-polished and always in a good state of repair. Avoid high or pointed heels, or badly supported shoes. Change tights or socks daily.

Although the waiter may be responsible for the supply and upkeep of his clothing, it is customary for many hotels and restaurants to arrange, at the establishment's cost, for laundering his linen.

Jewellery, earrings and rings (except wedding rings) should not be worn.

Good waiters are as proud of their uniforms as they are of their jobs. They show it by an upright stance and by walking erect.

### **Head-dress**

The former requirement for waitresses to wear caps has increasingly declined. One original intention was that caps would confine hair tidily and prevent loose hairs dropping into food. With proper hair styling and grooming, there is no particular reason for head-dress to be worn by modern waiting staff.

### **Personal Qualities**

The desirable personal qualities (as distinct from technical skills) of waiting staff may be considered under two broad headings: one largely concerned with physical matters and hygiene; the other related to attributes and attributes including courtesy, honesty, co-operation and speech.

### **Hygiene**

Waiting staff should have a positive attitude to hygiene, which is about the maintenance of health.

A waiter or waitress needs abundant energy, should have a fresh, wholesome appearance and naturally must not spread disease. Part of this positive attitude to hygiene should involve taking care to eat and sleep properly, being temperate in relation to alcohol, taking proper exercise, sufficient outdoor activity and fresh air.

Because waiting staff deal with food, utmost cleanliness and good grooming is necessary at all times. This applies not only in high class hotels and restaurants but in every branch of catering, however, humble customers may be. Guests are not likely to return to an establishment where they know the waiter or waitress is dirty. Indeed, whenever a guest enters a catering establishment, he judges standards of hygiene and cleanliness by his personal observation. This observation includes the waiters and waitresses.

Everybody in the catering business has to remember that though not frequently expressed openly, all customers expect high personal standards from those who serve them food and drink.

- **Reporting ill health**

Apart from aesthetic considerations of not offending by unclean appearance or unpleasant odour, waiting staff have statutory obligations in regard to health and

hygiene. Any catering employee (including waiters and waitresses) suffering from, or a carrier of certain illnesses must immediately inform their employer. Illnesses include; typhoid fever; paratyphoid fever, or any other salmonella infection; amoebic or bacillary dysentery or any staphylococcal infection likely to cause food poisoning. Many waiting staff may be unfamiliar with the nature of such illnesses; they should look for, and report to their employer such symptoms as:

- Diarrhoea or vomiting
- Septic cuts or sores, boils or whitlows
- Discharge from ear, eye or nose

Some rules for clean products are given herewith.

• ***Rules for clean product***

To prevent germs contaminating food, observe the following rules:

- Ensure scrupulous cleanliness of hands, face and parts of the body which directly, or through touch, may come into contact with food; for example, hair, scalp and forearms (when short sleeves are worn). Avoid touching nose and lips while handling food. Wash hands frequently.
- Keep personal clothing and uniform clean.
- Cover completely (with a coloured, waterproof dressing) all open cuts and grazes.
- Never smoke, or use snuff, while handling 'open' food or while in a room where there is such food even when not on duty.

For aesthetic, as well as, hygienic reasons, waiting staff should avoid touching their hair or face when on duty in the restaurant. Waiters should not, of course, sneeze or cough carelessly (ensure that this is done into a handkerchief). Though always carrying a clean handkerchief, a waiter should avoid using it in the restaurant unless it is absolutely necessary.

***Care of the person***

The following require particular attention:

***Finger nails and hands:*** Must be washed frequently. Always wash immediately before service and always following use of the toilet. Nails and cuticles should be neatly trimmed and kept clean by use of a nail brush. Waitresses should avoid nail varnish whether clear or coloured when on duty. Smokers must ensure that they remove all traces of nicotine from fingers (pumice and bleach are useful).

***Body cleanliness:*** Cleanliness of the whole body is essential. Any suggestion of odour or staleness is a most grave offence in a restaurant employee. A daily bath or shower should be the minimum standard for good waiting staff. Underclothing should be changed frequently and deodorants regularly used. Talcum powder for body and face is acceptable but scent (even for a waitress) must be avoided and aftershave used sparingly.

***Hair:*** Hair should be kept neatly trimmed and shampooed frequently to avoid dandruff and odour. Hair should be well brushed, as well as, combed. Men, as well as, women should avoid styles which cause hair to fall over the eyes; for tossing hair away from eyes, especially by hand, is offensive to guests during food service. Waitresses' hair should be no longer than collar length, and waitresses should adopt neat hair styles. Long hair should be tied up and tied back.

***Teeth:*** Sound teeth and a clean mouth are vital both for appearance and a wholesome breath. Teeth should be kept clean by brushing at least twice a day – certainly morning and night. Inspection by a dentist is advisable twice a year and certainly not less frequently than once a year. Dentures, if worn, must similarly be kept clean.

*Feet:* Feet need care both for comfort and cleanliness. Keep toe nails trim and feet well washed. Corns and other painful blemishes may require treatment by a chiropodist; for more serious foot weakness, medical advice should be sought.

*Posture:* Good stance is also important for the appearance, comfort and efficiency of waiting staff. To stand upright and walk erect is to give a good impression to guests and also to avoid the bodily stresses that accompany slouching. Waitresses who require support garments are advised to choose sound quality and properly fitting ones to aid posture and health, as well as, comfort and appearance.

• ***Attributes and Behaviour***

The following personal qualities which a waiter should cultivate, or how he should behave, are in no particular order of importance. Indeed, some types of operation encourage emphasis on some qualities or some styles of behaviour as against others; but all the observations which follow are considered relevant.

*Addressing guests:* Innumerable market studies reveal that an important element in a customer's choice of eating place is friendliness, in welcome and in service. It is also well established that a customer is eager for recognition. He likes to hear his own name for that expresses and establishes recognition. Therefore, the use by restaurant staff of a guest's own name is welcomed by most customers.

Whenever a guest's name is known (through former custom or through pre-booking) it should desirably be used. Many modern restaurants are successful because in the total dining experience they feed a guest's ego as much as his appetite. Ways in which remembering a guest's name can be aided are:

- Listen carefully to the name when it is given.
- Jot the name on a piece of paper (not in the guest's presence).
- Repeat the name mentally several times.

In addition to using a guest's name when greeting or re-greeting, use his name when asking him for subsequent orders or about his satisfaction with food and service. A modern waiter may have greater difficulty in adapting his mode of speech to modern requirements than did waiting staff in earlier generations. In former times waiters were expected to adopt a more formalized style with, for example, invariable use of 'sir' or 'madam'. Despite injunctions to staff that they should be respectful rather than servile, these older styles of speech did, in fact, tend to mark customer/staff distinctions in a way often less acceptable to both parties today.

On first welcoming guests, a waiter should address them by name, for example, Mr or Mrs Patron. But name usage should not be overdone and 'sir' or 'madam' is more appropriate during service period.

Speech is linked with courtesy. Style of speech and mode of manners change.

The points about speech which follow here should be read against its general background; namely that a pleasant, friendly manner (but certainly without undue familiarity) is acceptable today at almost every level of restaurant operation. To achieve an ease and friendliness of manner with giving offence requires sensitivity from staff. From management it requires a lively policy of training whether in college, hotel school or on-the-job.

A respectful manner of speech towards customers still remains appropriate. A waiter is not servile, for he is proud of his skill, particularly if he is a good waiter; but he is a technical salesman of his establishment and a good salesman should aim to please.

*Clear Speech:* A waiter's voice should be clear, low in pitch and natural, if still somewhat formal. He should be able to pronounce words properly and to express his ideas. He should acquire a sound knowledge of good English and be able to converse easily, for customers like to hear a well-modulated, pleasing voice, with well-expressed answers to any questions they may ask.

Knowledge of a second language is a help, particularly to waiters who seek service in large hotels or restaurants or other tourism centers where there are foreign visitors. French is useful, for not only are menus still often written in French, but it is the language used in cookery book and in repertoires of fishes based on 'la cuisine française'.

*Courtesy:* It is the hallmark of a good waiter to be courteous on all occasions. Indeed, a waiter must often go out of his way to be considerate or forbearing to a critical or ill-tempered person. He will certainly be courteous to customers, but should also carry these good manners through to the service room and the locker room. His manners should not be just a part of the 'techniques of the restaurant', but inherent in his nature and a sign of well-bred desire to please those with whom he comes into contact. The aim is to be friendly without being familiar.

*Memory:* Cultivation of memory (and using aids of memory) is essential if customers' likes and dislikes are to be noted and remembered. Sensitive awareness of what a customer wants should also be sought.

If a waiter studies his customers' preferences, even their 'fads' he will find that they will be delighted when they realize that their wishes are known and anticipated.

*Honesty:* In recent years an increasing amount of research has been undertaken into hotel keeping and catering. This has included work by sociologists, and others into practices and attitudes of waiting staff. Some studies have revealed persistent instances of pilfering unfortunately there are still opportunities in some establishments for waiter to seek to defeat checking systems (adding up bills incorrectly against the customer) or to secure privileged treatment or serving over-large portions to guests so as to gain larger tips.

Some waiters fall into dishonest habits, such as taking food from the restaurant for consumption elsewhere in the establishment or to their homes, 'borrowing' silver or linen for similar purposes. All this is stealing and denotes at the very least that a waiter has not acquired a truly professional attitude to his work. Opportunity for dishonesty makes it doubly important for waiting staff to have high personal standards of conduct, and equally when they reach supervisory levels to create conditions which reduce temptation and create a positive morale.

The waiter should take the greatest care of all equipment belonging to an establishment and never think he can deal with it wastefully or carelessly because it is not his own. A waiter must be scrupulously honest in all his dealings; with guests, colleagues and management.

*Co-operation and reliability:* A dedicated waiter accepts unsocial hours, enjoys service to others and is ready to work until tasks are finished. He should not, for example, hurry customers in an attempt to 'clear' his station in order to leave promptly and early. He aims to be a good timekeeper and to carry out his duties without fuss and with minimum supervision.

His personal qualities and his professional skills will all help a waiter to remain courteous even-tempered, able to work under pressure and to summon up a smile even when tired, or under difficult circumstances.

Since an establishment's success depends on effective co-ordination of all staff, a waiter should aim to help his fellow workers. This implies such conduct as: not being

jealous if another waiter has customers who pay higher tips; taking his proper turn in the servery queue; learning and keeping to rules of the house in spirit, as well as, to the letter.

*Receiving gratuities:* A waiter must never indulge in preferential treatment of customers according to, or in anticipation of, tips he may received from them. Indeed, every customer, irrespective of his financial standing, should be treated alike. There should be no fawning on lavish tippers. Tips should be acknowledged graciously; if placed on the table they should not be removed until the customer has left and certainly never counted in front of a guest.

A waiter must never lean against the wall or sideboard, tables or other furniture. He must especially never lean on a chair back (above all no the customer's) when speaking with a guest. When addressed by a customer, a waiter should stand erect and steady.

*Conversing:* A waiter must not converse, far less argue, with other members of staff and emphatically never argue with guests. He should not interrupt a guest's conversation with a waiter, the latter must answer politely and as briefly as possible. The waiter should ask to be excused at the first opportunity, but must use tact to avoid offending. He must never start a conversation with guests.

A waiter never discusses other guests with his customers nor must he give information regarding guests. A waiter must discipline himself not listen to guests, conversation, whether it is carried out loudly enough for him to hear or not. If he has any complaints to make to the head waiter or to colleagues, a waiter must wait until service is over. There should be no quarrelling or horse-play on duty. Waiters should not, of course, talk among themselves or neglect guests by so doing.

*Mistakes and Complaints:* If a mistake is made by the head waiter or by one of his assistants, a waiter should never remonstrate with or criticize him in the restaurant. First, he should remedy any fault (for example, bring the customer the dish he states he ordered). Any explanation that may be necessary to present an error recurring, or to apportion the blame for it, should be made outside the restaurant, preferably at the end of service. Tact, courtesy and a sense of responsibility (informing superiors of complainants) must be brought to bear on complaints as in all customer contact.

*Technical skill:* In addition to cultivating social qualities and modes of conduct to support his sales function a waiter uses technical skills. He must be hungry for knowledge, know and like food and be eager to learn service methods. The skills and knowledge that a waiter needs are listed herewith:

- 1) Knowledge of the catering trade, of which he is an important member.
- 2) Knowledge of foods that he will serve, menus and cooking times.
- 3) Layout of restaurant or dining room and its preparation for the service.
- 4) Actual method of serving, for example, generally on floors and in lounges, or in canteens and bars.
- 5) Service of tobacco, cigarettes and cigars.
- 6) Service of liquor (wines, spirits, etc)
- 7) A good groundwork, general education and attitude, ability to speak a foreign language or understand French terms used in catering.

Remember an informed knowledgeable waiter sells more. Refer to Figure 12.7 which highlights this aspect.

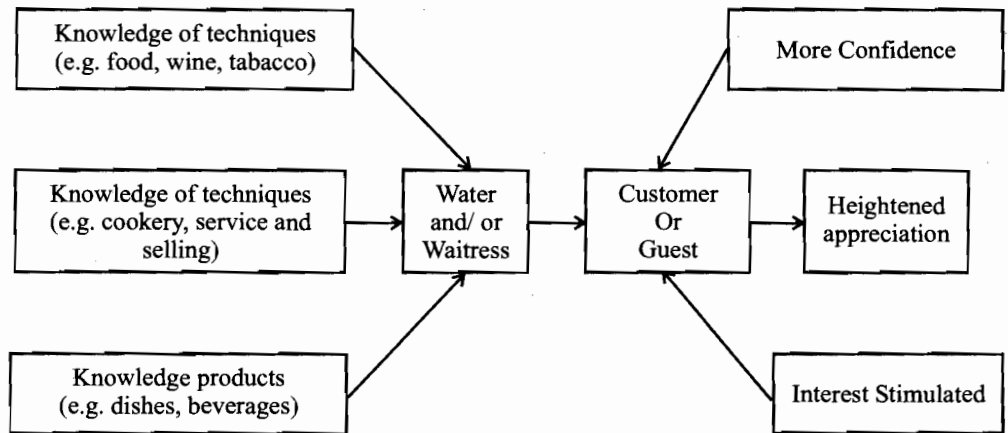


Figure 12.7: Informed knowledgeable waiter sells more

*Personality and Professionalism:* A waiter's personality merges with, and is part of, his professionalism. He needs to integrate social skills and attributes with technical skills and knowledge. Many personal qualities have already been touched upon, and the technical skills needed have been indicated.

A waiter should be proud of his work and not treat it as an ordeal. He must always be in good humour, seeking to please and oblige customers without servility.

Developing personality and professionalism should involve: attitude, attentiveness, alertness leading to an ability to anticipate customer's needs and to be able to cope with customers and colleagues in varying situations. Waiters should avoid airs and mannerisms, but should certainly cultivate personality. This is particularly important for a head waiter. Reading and an interest in current affairs, sport and constructive recreation can help. The waiter, it is re-emphasized, is in essence a salesman, operating in a venue generating sector. He is part of 'the show'. He is always during service 'on show'. His dexterity and skill controlled by a restrained personality can add to a guest's idea of value and also increase his enjoyment. Therefore, a waiter's 'showmanship' is positively useful.

However, in selling, simple skills and speed are as important as elaborate techniques. Speed is particularly important, for example, when serving hot food.

Some things that efficient service personnel should avoid are enlisted herewith.

#### Things that efficient service personnel should avoid

- A surely greeting or not greeting a guest at all or ignoring a guest deliberately.
- Letting guests seat themselves, inspite of being present near the table and not otherwise engaged.
- Refusing to assist a guest or seating a guest at a dirty table.
- Serving from the wrong side, when it is possible to serve from the correct side.
- Note setting tables properly. Placing empty sugar bowls/cruet sets on the table.
- Forgetting to say 'Pardon me', or 'Excuse me, sir/madam'.
- Being too familiar with guests. This could lead to embarrassing situations.
- Gathering in groups in operational areas and talking loudly and showing signs of irritability with other members of the staff.
- Leaving fingerprints on crockery/glassware or making a noise by clattering the service equipment.
- Keeping the side station dirty or using torn or stained linen.
- Forgetting a dish that has been ordered, or serving wrong accompaniments.

- Overfilling water glasses or leaving them empty or leaving dirty ashtrays on an occupied table.
- Being inattentive to a guest's needs, for example, forgetting special instructions from the guest such as less chilies or no onions in the food.
- Using cold plates for hot food and hot plates for cold food.
- Touching food with one's hands.
- Not following the rules of quality waiting at table.
- Soliciting the tips or questioning the amount of tips.

We hope you enjoyed reading this section on conduct and appearance of food service personnel.

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## **12.6 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit we learnt that production and service of food being individual processes is the basis of classification of food service systems. Ensuring quality food at minimal cost means that the physical, chemical and microbiological changes that occur during procurement, production and service must be monitored and controlled, effectively. Then, we saw that there are four major types of food service systems that have been identified. These included conventional, commissary, ready prepared and assembly / service. A major distinguishing factor among the four systems is the degree processing prior to foods, which may vary from little or no processing prior to purchase of foods to completely prepared foods ready for service.

Next, we got to know about the delivery and service in these food service systems. Major meal distribution and service systems along with their benefits and constraints were also highlighted.

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## **12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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### **Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

- 1) Characterized by a separation of production and service of food in time and/or place, the need for the new systems have been primarily aimed at increasing productivity, decreasing cost, or strengthening control of operations. Spiraling labour costs and technological innovation in both food and equipment have also led to implementation of these new types of systems.
- 2) The four major types of food service systems include: Conventional Food Service System, Commissary Food Service System, Ready Prepared Food Service System and Assembly/Serve.
- 3) The packaging and storage of prepared menu items present challenges for control in commissary systems because a variety of packaging materials and approaches is used in systems, varying from individual pouches or serving dishes, specially designed for frozen or chilled holding, to disposable or reusable metal pans adapted to various types of distribution and transportation equipment. Preserving the microbiological, sensory, and nutritional quality of foods during holding and thermalization at point of service can present problems.
- 4) The challenge of using ready prepared systems is in retention of foods' nutrient content, microbial safety and sensory quality. The benefits include reduce labour expenditures and use of labour more effectively. The heating and service of menu items does not require highly skilled employees and thus, reductions in labour costs are often possible. Food procurement in volume may decrease food costs in these systems.

- 5) In the assembly system the availability of food products is sometimes a problem, particularly in healthcare institutions. Another common complaint about the assembly/serve systems is the lack of individuality. Comments are frequently heard about the “sameness” of the ready prepared foods available in the market place.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

- 1) In a healthcare facility, meal assembly, may be centralized or decentralized. In a facility with centralized meal assembly, the trays are first assembled for service at a central location in or close to the main production facilities. Hot menu items are held in food warming cabinets, usually in cafeteria counter pans, where they remain until placed in hot food serving units during tray assembly; cold items are held under refrigeration. The assembled trays are then distributed to the patient units using a variety of types of cars. Some institutions use heated and refrigerated tray carts, which may be motorized or pushed manually by hospital personnel. In a decentralized meal assembly, the food products are produced in one location and transported to various locations for assembly at sites near patients. Equipment to maintain proper temperatures – food warmers, hot food counters, and/or refrigerated equipment – are provided at each location.
- 2) The commissary food service system can take many forms and may, in fact, be a combination of systems. In school food service operations, for example, a central kitchen may be a conventional food service for a secondary school but may also provide food to several satellite service centers for elementary schools in the district
- 3) Cold temperature is maintained during distribution system in ready prepared food service system by using carts. Two types of carts are used predominantly for cold temperature support. One type is insulated to maintain temperature during distribution to remote pantry areas where the carts are connected to wall-mounted or floor-borne refrigeration units. The other is the roll-in-refrigerator cart.