
UNIT 5 FOOD MANAGEMENT: MENU PLANNING — FOCAL POINT OF ALL ACTIVITIES IN FOOD SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit we were introduced to the concept of entrepreneurship and the characteristics, which are basic for a successful entrepreneur. You might have realized that any project to be successful should be planned properly and every phase of it chalked out meticulously. The work centers should be determined on the bases of the operations involved in the production of a finished product from its raw material. This must have a sequential flow and ensure smooth operations. The activities that are common in any type of food producing and serving unit are:

Menu planning → procurement → receiving → storage → preparation → production → holding/packing → service.

Food management is the ability to manage these activities so that work flows smoothly to the point where the meal reaches the customer(s) and gives them physical, physiological and emotional satisfaction. Menu planning is the “heart” of any food service organization upon which all activity is centered. The menu determines the foods to be purchased, the equipment needed and the personnel required etc. The success of a food service organization is largely dependent on the menu. This unit will focus on the importance of menu planning in food service organizations, the types of menu’s and their applications, as well as, the steps in menu planning and finally evaluation of the menu’s planned.

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the importance and advantages of menu planning in food service organizations,

- apply planning/organizing considerations to the menu planning process,
- identify the various types of menu's commonly used in food service organizations and select ones appropriate for the various need,
- plan different types of menus, and
- evaluate menus to ensure its appropriateness for customer satisfaction and for its efficacy for various types of food service organizations.

5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF MENU AND MENU PLANNING IN FOOD SERVICE ORGANIZATION

Look at Figure 5.1, which outlines the typical operations in a food service establishment. What do you notice? Yes, *consumer needs* and *organizational objectives* are the initial driving force for a food service establishment. Menu is the one essential, critical focal point of all activities in a food service establishment and requires careful planning. As you may have noticed in Figure 5.1, it serves as a control and spells out the monetary prerequisites for purchasing food, personnel and equipment for production and service. The goal of the menu is to maximize resources to produce highest quality products having greatest financial return.

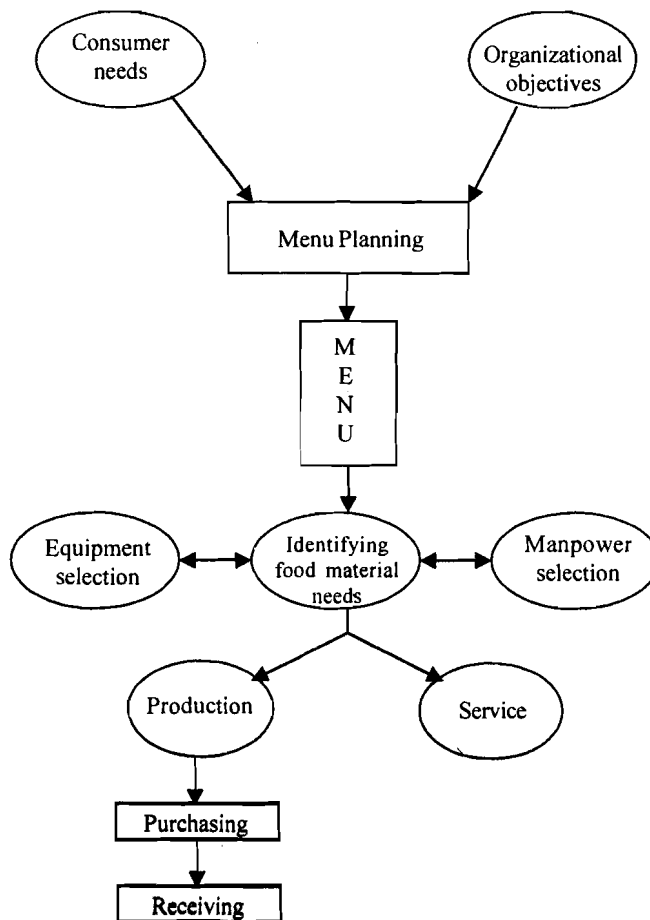


Figure 5.1: Flow chart of typical operations in a food service establishment

Let us then further elaborate on the functions of a menu, but first let us define menu.

5.2.1 Definition and Functions of a Menu

A menu is a list of dishes planned for production in a food service organization and may include full meals, snacks or beverages either alone or in combinations. Planning menu's for the food service organization, as already mentioned above, is the most important activity of food service organizations and based on what menus have to be prepared and in which manner they have to be served will determine the entire planning process of establishing a food service organization.

So then menu lists the items offered for sale. Is there more to a menu! Let us find out next under the functions of menu.

Functions of a menu

Besides serving as a control the menu is crucial in establishing a food service unit. It:

- 1) introduces the establishment to the customer,
- 2) helps in production of meals in the kitchen,
- 3) is a primary marketing device, which helps to prepare a purchase list for foods and ingredients and forms the basis for establishing purchasing procedures,
- 4) determines the type of equipment, staff skills and the type of supervision required,
- 5) helps to organize spaces and work in stores, kitchens and service areas,
- 6) determines employees work schedule,
- 7) determines the style of service to be set up,
- 8) forms the basis for the calculation of food and labour cost, overhead expenses and desired profits,
- 9) determines the amount of space required for seating, storing, purchasing and preparation,
- 10) reflects the type of customer the establishment wishes to attract,
- 11) satisfies the needs of the customer for adequate nutrition, remove hunger, as well as, fulfill their social and psychological needs, and
- 12) introduces interesting food combinations to customers, and through specialty foods imparts knowledge of the foods eaten in different states, countries and cultures.

Let us now look at the basic need for planning a menu.

5.2.2 The Need for Menu Planning

Planning of menus is essential when food has to be bought, prepared and served in large quantities to people of various tastes, and requirements. The advantages of menu planning are:

- It helps to provide appetizing, nourishing and attractive meals to customers at a fair price. This is only possible if meals are planned in advance so that one can buy in bulk and during peak seasons to get the best price at a reasonable cost.
- Planning menus helps to foresee the requirements accurately, so that advance buying could be done as the quantities required of various food ingredients could be calculated.
- Planning minimizes the food waste; fuel costs and helps in management of leftovers effectively and creatively in the next day's menus. For example, total milk required for the menu can be boiled together and left over milk of the day could be used for setting of the curds and curd leftover of the previous day could be used as starter for curd setting or for making paneer, buttermilk, Kadhi etc.
- Planning saves times and efforts spent in purchasing, receiving and cooking and frequent trips to the market. It helps in distribution of work throughout the day rather than rushing during the peak hours as pre-preparations like cutting and chopping of vegetables, making basic sauces or gravies etc.
- Planning helps to understand the popularity of various dishes on the menu and helps in making accurate estimates of the servings that need to be prepared of each item on the menu.
- Planning also offers an opportunity to serve wide variety of dishes including seasonal varieties well in advance.

- Advance planning removes lot of anxiety of the manager and kitchen production staff as clear cut instructions can be given in advance and kitchen staff is aware of the instructions to be followed which helps to create harmony among people at work. It also helps to continue work even in the absence of a manager, as the staff knows what is to be done in various situations.
- Planning helps to estimate actual cost of the food item and inclusion of profitable items on the menu. It also helps to determine the selling costs of the items and helps in estimation of profits.
- Planning accounts for the seasonal fluctuations in determining the selling costs of various food items throughout the year.

The success of a food service establishment thus depends heavily on those who plan the menus and how it is served to the customer. Good menu planning requires a lot of skills. What are these skills? Let us find out next.

5.2.3 Knowledge and Skills Required for Planning Menu

Before we get down to learn about the skills, can you suggest who plans or determines the menu. Yes, usually it is the management or the owner of the establishment who determines the menu. Other sources may include the cook/chefs or the customers.

The person responsible for planning a menu must be creative and imaginative and must have wide knowledge of food, their availability in different seasons and their cost, various ways in which the foods could be prepared and served and customers' choices and preferences. He/she must have the ability to work within the confines of the budget. Let us review these factors in greater detail.

Wide knowledge of foods

Good knowledge about different kind and varieties of foods, their seasonal availability, nutritional and anti-nutritional factors, presence of toxic elements in certain food varieties, the edible portions obtained for each food, colour, taste and flavour differences and how they can be combined for meals, their acceptability and cost factors. Thus the planner should be able to visualize food and its arrangement and should be able to manipulate food to achieve the desired outcome.

Knowledge of different methods of preparing and serving foods

Knowledge of various cooking methods by which food could be prepared is essential, similarly knowing how best a food could be served, as well as, what foods can be cooked and served in large quantities is important. An awareness about the new products and the trends is useful.

Knowledge of the methods of serving various types of foods

Serving of a meal with an aesthetic appeal is a very important component of food service organization. Good knowledge of how the menu will be served while retaining its colour, texture and appeal is an important consideration for planning a menu.

Knowledge of the customer

A planner should know consumer preferences. Food service organization has to decide what type of customer it will like to attract. The menu thus has to be planned keeping the customers preferences and choices in mind. A general idea of customer's food preferences, physiological requirements, paying capacity, social standing and the reasons for eating out is essential for achieving customer satisfaction.

Remember, there must be sufficient time allowed for menu planning. A good menu planning is described as one where planning is done in advance, preferably two weeks minimum to allow necessary planning and ordering. We shall learn about the

points to be considered in menu planning in a little while from now. Before we move on to the study of the different types of menu's, let us recapitulate what we have learnt so far.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Define menu and list its five functions.

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2) Why should one plan menus. Enlist five reasons.

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3) Mention the types of knowledge and skills required to plan a good menu.

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4) Give reasons as to why is it necessary to know your customer before making menus.

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Now that you have a good insight into the importance of menu planning, let us now get to know about the types of menus and their applications.

5.3 THE TYPES OF MENU AND ITS APPLICATIONS

When was it the last time you dined out? Do you remember, what kind of food you ordered? Chinese, Mughlai, Indian, Continental or was it a pure vegetarian meal. What items did you select and how? Yes, that's right the menu was the guiding factor. A detail list of all dishes, food served and at times also the description of the dishes certainly were a great help. While dining out, you may have also noticed that a menu can be offered in a variety of forms, each written in a manner that is designed to suit the needs of the food service institution. In this section we shall get to know about the different types of menus and their uses in a food service establishment.

5.3.1 Types of Menus

Menus can be planned for commercial operations such as restaurants, cafeterias, buffet, fast foods etc. or for mid day meals or school lunch programmes or college hostels etc. – all welfare operations. The objective of these welfare operations is to provide nutritionally adequate and reasonable priced meals for the target groups and to contribute to better understanding of good nutrition and foster good eating habits. Besides these operations, menus are planned for college and university dining (hostels) and for patients as in the hospital set-up or for employees as in the office canteens etc.

Menus can be selective, static or set as in restaurants, can be *cyclic* or *single use menus* or can be classified as *A la Carte*, *table d'hote* or *du jour* based on the pricing. Basically, you would find that menus are classified as:

- a) A la Carte
- b) Table d'hote, and
- c) Combination of the two
- d) Single use menu
- e) Du Jour
- f) Cyclic

Refer to Figure 5.2, which illustrates a few examples of menus. Let us understand these menus by going through the discussion presented next.

A la Carte Menu (Choice menu)

In Figure 5.2, you would have noticed that a la Carte menu is basically a choice menu and generally offers choice of dishes to customers. The choices can be under various food categories such as appetizers/starters, soups, main dishes, side dishes, staples/breads, salads, desserts, sandwiches, snacks and beverages etc. as also illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Choice menu

Beverages	Sandwiches and Snacks	Burgers/Hot Dogs/Pizzas	Ice creams/ Desserts
Cold Drinks Cold Coffee Mocktails Milk Shakes	Club Sandwich Veg. Sandwich Cheese Sandwich Chicken Sandwich Russian Sandwich	Veg. Burger Cheese Burger Chicken Burger Big Boy Burger Veg. Hot Dog Cheese Hot Dog Chicken Hot Dog	Ice creams Ice cream Sundays Ice cream with hot chocolate sauce Pineapple Souffle Orange Souffle Trifle Pudding

Thus it is clear that in 'a la Carte' menu a list of items is given on a menu card, and a customer can select any item from the list. Each dish is *priced separately* so that a choice can be made according to the taste and purchasing power of the customer. The variety of dishes offered under the above-mentioned categories may vary according to the type of organization, for example a cafeteria may have a very limited choice while a restaurant may have a wide choice. These types of menus are generally offered by profit making enterprises and are suitable for people who want to eat at leisure, as the selected items can take a little long time in preparation because of the wide choices offered in the menu. The advantage of this type of menu is that customer can choose the items as per his own needs, moods and pocket.

Now let us review the table d'hote menu.

Table d'hote Menu (Table of the host)

This is basically a set menu in which the hosts plan number of dishes and food is served and offered at a set price (for entire meal). A typical table d'hote menu, most popular in India is the thali menu as illustrated in Figure 5.2 (c). These menus generally do not provide any choice but slowly these menus are now being planned so as to offer a limited choice to the customer. These types of menus are seen in clubs, hotels, marriage parties, hostels, college canteens etc.

Having gone through the description above you may have got a clear idea about the A la Carte and the table d'hote menu. You may sometimes come across a combination menu. Let us find out what these are.

Combination Menu

The combination menu can take the form of a table d'hote menu with in built choices as far as possible. Generally a la Carte menus with "special for the day" or "today's special". These special may be dishes with an accompaniment or a plated meal offered at a set price. Refer to Figure 5.2(b).

Next, let us understand the concept of cycle menu.

<u>Poultry Entrees</u>		<u>Sandwiches</u>		<u>Salads</u>	
Chicken Breast	choice of: \$4.50	Award Winning Cuban Sandwich	\$5.00	Bow Tie Pasta Salad	\$1.25
Piccata	Marsala	Deli Sandwiches	\$5.00	Caesar Salad	\$1.95
Parmsan	Teriyaki	Served on assorted breads with lettuce, tomato, and pickles		Carol's Italian Marinaded Salad	\$2.25
Lemon (Breaded)	Mojo Grilled	<i>choice of:</i>		Creamy Colelaw	\$0.95
Baked Italian Chicken	\$3.25	Ham & Swiss		Fresh Fruit Salad	\$2.25
BBQ Chicken Quarters	\$3.25	Oven Roasted Turkey Breast		Garden Salad	\$1.95
Arroz con pollo	\$3.75	Tender Roast Beef		Greek Salad	\$2.25
Spanish Chicken & Yellow Rice off the bone		Chicken Pecan Salad		Greek Salad with Potato Salad	\$2.50
Stuffed Chicken*	\$5.50	Egg Salad		House Tossed Salad	\$1.95
Arbena, Skilton, Tuscan, or Cordon Bleu		Tuna Salad		Pesto Penne Pasta Salad	\$1.50
Roast Turkey with Gravy	\$3.50	~~~~~		Pesto Salad	\$1.25
<u>Beef Entrees</u>				Spinach Salad	\$2.75
Beef Tips with Mushrooms	\$4.95			Tri-Colored Pasta Salad	\$1.25
Beef Stroganoff with egg noodles*	\$4.50				
Steak Milanese*	\$4.75	Deli Croissant Sandwiches	\$6.00		
Filet Saltado*	\$8.50	Deli Sandwich Platter (3/4 pp)	\$3.95		
Meatloaf with Gravy*	\$3.25			<u>Side Dishes</u>	
Picadillo	\$2.95			Garlic Smashed Potatoes	\$1.50
<u>Pork & Ham Entrees</u>				Twice Baked Potato with cheese	\$1.75
Baked Ham with a Pineapple Glaze	\$3.75			Mashed Potatoes with gravy	\$1.25
Roast Pork* Spanish style	\$3.50			Parried Potatoes	\$1.25
<u>Pasta Entrees</u>				Buttered Noodles	\$0.95
Manicotti with meat or spinach	\$3.95			Fettuccine Alfredo	\$2.00
Baked Ziti with meat	\$3.25			Penne with Red Sauce	\$1.75
Pasta Primavera	\$3.50			Rice Pilaf or Wild Rice	\$0.95
Penne Italiano	\$3.50			Yellow Rice or White Rice	\$0.75
with artichokes, sundried tomatoes, & herbs				Pecan Stuffing	\$1.25
Pasta Mimi	\$4.95			Cornbread Stuffing	\$0.95
with grilled chicken, vegetables, & Alfredo sauce				Fried Plantains	\$1.00
Lasagna (Half Pan)	\$30.00				
Lasagna (Full Pan)	\$60.00				
Choose from Meat Lasagna or Vegetable Lasagna					
Half Pan Serves 6 - 10					
Full Pan Serves 12 - 18					
<u>Salad Platters</u>					
Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad	\$6.75				
Grilled Shrimp Caesar Salad	\$7.95				
Mandarin Shrimp Salad	\$7.95				
Pesto Pasta Salad with Grilled Chicken	\$7.25				
European Salad	\$8.95				
Choice of:					
Chicken or Tuna salad	Potato or Pasta salad				
with fruit, vegetables, eggs, olives, & crackers					

*These items require a 48 hour notice

a) A la Carte menu

Diwali Special Lunch For Today

21.11.06

Cream of Potato Soup
Sweet and Sour Soup
Mushroom and Tomato Soup

Vegetable Biryani
Rajma Chawal
Malai Kofta
Mattar Paneer
Tandoori Vegetables
Masala Naan
Gulab jamun
Rasmalai
Rabri Jalebi
Gujia
Shrikhand

Coffee Expresso

b) 'Special for the day' menu



Special Thali Dishes

Vegetarian Thali....Rs. 89
Includes 10 items

Non vegetarian Thali....Rs. 115
Includes 10 items

c) Table d'hote menu

Figure 5.2: Different types of menus

Cyclic menus are menus, which are planned in advance for periods of time varying from five days to one month, which are then cycled or repeated at fixed intervals. In case of hotels, hospitals, homes and institutions, menus are planned in advance for periods of time varying from five days to one month. These are then cycled or repeated. Such menus are termed as *cyclic menus* and are usually combination menus, providing choices within a set framework. A sample of the cycle menu is given in Table 5.2. Such types of menus are used for captive consumers whose numbers do not fluctuate and budgets are limited. But note, short-term cycle menus like five day or seven days menus can be unpopular because of menu fatigue and customers tend to eat on the day their favourite dishes are served and may skip other days. Therefore to improve the popularity of cyclic menus following points should be considered:

- A) Planning should be done for odd number of days, so that a menu does not fall on the same day of the week or same date of the month. Plans may be of 5, 9, 11, 23 days to prevent people from associating a particular menu with a particular day of the week or particular date of a month.
- B) A general menu structure may be set, but dishes changed to introduce variety. For example, for a *thali* one could set a fixed structure like one main dish, two side dishes, chappati, rice, sweet dish etc. but each day different types of these dishes may be given. This also provides for flexibility to the planner, who can mix and match foods and flavours according to stocks, seasonal availability, budget, special occasions etc.

Table 5.2: A sample 5-day cycle menu for a college hostel

	Breakfast	Plate Lunch	Tea/Snacks	Dinner
Day 1	Paneer Sandwich Tea/Coffee Fruit	Stuffed parantha and Boondi Raita	Kachori Chutney Tea/Coffee	Vegetable Pulao, Biryani, Pakodi Raita, Green Chutney Sweet
Day 2	Vegetable Cutlet Bread with Butter/Jam Tea/Coffee	Rice, Rajma and Vegetable	Idli and Chutney Tea/Coffee	Puri, Channa, Boondi Raita, Salad Sweet
Day 3	Vada and Sambar Bread with Butter/Jam Tea/Coffee Khadhi,	Uttapam, Dosa, Sambar and Chutney	Dhokla and Chutney Tea/Coffee	Zeera Rice, Mixed Veg. Subji Sweet
Day 4	Poha Bread with Butter/Jam Tea/Coffee	Bun Vegetable/Meat Cutlet Coleslaw/Salad	Cake Tea/Coffee	Plain Parantha, Dry Urad Dal Mint Raita Salad Sweet
Day 5	Bread with Butter Egg Omlette/ Besan Cheela Tea/Coffee	Kulcha Chole Pickle Salad	Vegetable Bonda Tea/Coffee	Onion Rice, Rajma, Aloo Gobi Subji/Cucumber Raita Sweet

Finally, a word about other menus.

Other Menu

Apart from the menus mentioned above, a menu can be a *single-use menu*, where a menu is planned for just a day and is never repeated again in the same format, although certain food items and dishes can be teamed with other food item and can be included later. The *du jour menu* also called as the menu of the day. These menus are planned on a daily basis and serves as a good means of using leftover food. This in turn is a way to conserve money for a food service unit. Refer to Figure 5.1(c), which gives an example of 'Du Jour' menu from a continental restaurant.

So we have looked at the various types of menus commonly used in a food service establishment. Let us next, review the uses of menus.

5.3.2 Uses of Menus

Menus may be used in many ways, according to the requirements of the food service organization. Menu planning requires time and efforts; it should not be changed very frequently. A la Carte menus are not changed frequently as they contain a large variety of dishes that can be offered, but table d' hote menu are changed more frequently to provide variety of set menus within the same price range.

Thus, a well-planned menu can be very effective tool of management, however, it should have some flexibility to introduce seasonal variations, special needs of different individuals and control costs.

Having gone through the discussion above we have a good idea about the types of menu. Next, we shall review the steps involved in planning a menu. But first let us check our understanding about the types of menu and their uses by answering the questions given in check your progress exercise 2.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Fill in the blanks
 - a) A la Carte menu is basically a menu.
 - b) Table d' hote menu is basically a menu in which number of dishes are planned by the host
 - c) Combination menus are the combination ofand menus.
 - d) A la Carte menu is normally served in
 - e) Table d' hote menu is normally served in
- 2) What do you understand by the word cyclic menus?
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- 3) What are the advantages of serving cyclic menus?
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4) Give reasons as to why cyclic menus are not popular.

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5) Suggest ways of improving the popularity of cyclic menus.

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5.4 STEPS IN MENU PLANNING AND ITS EVALUATION

From our discussion so far it must be evident that a menu serves as a guide to organize the work in the kitchen and is indeed a very effective tool of management. Hence, it is important that we plan the menu systematically. The points to be kept in mind while planning a menu are elaborated next.

5.4.1 Construction of Menu

A menu is constructed in a systematic manner according to the following steps:

- Decide the suitable menu pattern, whether one wants fixed menu, a la Carte menu or a selection of both. For example if we are planning a menu for a college hostel, we would need to plan for a 3-4 meals/day pattern i.e. breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner and that too a cycle menu as illustrated in Table 5.1 earlier. In case of a restaurant perhaps an a la Carte menu may be required.
- Decide the degree of flexibility that needs to be kept in the menu.
- Decide on the main dish of the menu and side dishes can be planned around it. The selected dishes should enhance the colour, texture, flavour and taste of the meal.
- For cyclic menus ensure that the same food item or dish does not appear consecutively on two or more days for example avoid using potatoes for a snack, as well as, meals on the same day.

The aim of menu planning should be to create consistent menus in terms of their quality characteristics, costs and their selling prices from day to day. Seasonal variations and price fluctuations should be kept in mind while planning a menu and efforts should be made to plan cheaper side dishes with main dish in which there are likely to be fluctuations in price and vice versa, also care should be taken that the selected side dishes compliment the main dish in terms of flavour, taste, colour and texture. When choices are given ensure that all the choices offered have the same 'value for money', however, variations in terms of different cooking methods, seasonings and garnishing are welcome.

Selection of desserts should generally relate to the main course of the menu. For example, if the main course is light, the dessert chosen can be rich and vice versa. Various types of desserts which are normally included in the menu are: Fruity, hot and cold puddings, cream or ice cream based, cakes, gelatins or pie based, souffles (egg based), custards, Indian sweets like *Kheer*, *Gulabjamuns*, *Halwas* etc. The selection of the dessert in the menu could be related to the rest of the menu and season of serving should also be covered, for example, hot desserts are preferred in winters while cold desserts are preferred in summers.

For a food service establishment serving full meals, meal timings can be specified for serving main meals; however, all food service organizations do not serve meals. Small cafeterias, canteens, mobile vans, fast food joints may not serve full meals but may offer fixed mini meals, snacks and beverages. These types of food service organizations are more popular in today's times as people are now interested to have a quick meal while working or traveling. Similarly, some menus served by an organization may be same every day as these are most popular items and people love to eat the same thing again and again. For example chat corners in India, where three four fixed chat items are served everyday, or fast food joints like pizza hut or Mc Donald's etc.

Menu planning is thus an art involving knowledge of not only the types of foods but also their popularity amongst customers, creativity to use various types of service styles to attract customers, initiative to plan something innovative etc. It is also important to note that commercial food service (restaurants, cafeteria's etc.) do not need to be considered about meeting the nutritional needs of the clients. Profit is the primary objective. But in resident or welfare food service (such as school lunch programmes, hostels etc.) menus must be so planned to meet the nutritional needs of the clients and may/may not generate profit.

5.4.2 How to Plan a Menu?

Menu planner must be able to visualize the presentation of the food on the plate, sense the taste and aromas and judge texture and consistency in his/her mind. Before planning a menu, the following basic points need to be considered:

A) The situation of the food service organization

The basic factors to be considered here include:

- a) Location of the organization in relation to the market
- b) Space available for storing food safely
- c) Size of kitchen and service areas
- d) Number of staff and their skills
- e) Equipment available in kitchen and service areas
- f) Policy of the food service organization in terms of the:
 - types of customers it wishes to attract, based on the pricing policy will have to be determined, higher the clientele one wants to attract, higher will be the pricing and vice versa
 - the extent to which the organization wants to invest on catering as compared to other areas of expenditure such as furniture, décor, equipment etc.
 - degree of automation and labour saving devices desired
 - personnel in terms of trained staff or cheaper unskilled labour
 - profit margins
 - type of service, i.e. whether the food will be served or pre-plated, handed over or packed and delivered.

B) The Customer

Customers of an organization could be from varying ages, activities, occupations, sex, physiological status and backgrounds. They would also belong to various religious and cultural backgrounds, some perhaps having rigid religious beliefs and habits. The following illustration demonstrates how various requirements of a customer form the basis for menu planning. For example, if a menu has to be planned for a fast food joint the factors that will have to be considered will be:

- a) The kind of customers one is likely to have will be youngsters or young office going executives so the menu planned should cater to the liking of this group
- b) The service should be fast
- c) Menu must give variety, as well as, interesting cost effective combinations could be offered
- d) The menu should offer special dishes for special days like during Christmas varieties of cakes, cookies etc. as desserts could be offered

Now that we have a good knowledge about how to plan a menu, can you suggest what would be the characteristics of a good menu? Write down these characteristics and compare them with the characteristics enumerated next.

5.4.3 Characteristics of a Good Menu

Generally, you will find that planning menus requires a little time and effort, but will save us much time and effort later and it can save us a lot of worry or stress. A little planning helps us to enjoy cooking and serving meals rather than regarding them as tiresome, necessary chores. Remember, a good menu is one which considers the following:

- Preferences of the customer or guest for whom it is planned, and provide a wide variety to choose from that will help the customer derive pleasure and satisfaction.
- The cook incharge of making the menu is able to cook the menu in an attractive, palatable and nourishing way within the resources available.
- The cooked food adds vibrancy and energy to the meal by ensuring that the right colour, texture, consistency and flavour combinations are included and the food is served well and at the right temperature to the customer. For example, a menu should avoid including meals where all the foods have similar textures. To illustrate, avoid serving a creamed soup followed by a chicken in a bland sauce and end with a vanilla ice cream or creamy pudding. The menu should try to match crisp or piquant foods with bland ones and combine soft textures with crisp ones.
- The dishes/meals are prepared using a variety of preparation methods.
- Balance costly ingredients with low cost ones within a day.
- Include garnishes, which add to the presentation and are appropriate to the item they are garnishing, and
- Management is able to satisfy the customer, as well as, earn profits for the organization.

Besides the factors mentioned above, a good menu may also consider the portion sizes, i.e. are portion sizes of food in proportion to one another.

Now that you are familiar with the basic characteristics of a good menu, surely you would be able to plan one for any occasion. The next aspect which we would like to cover in this unit is how to display a menu. Read the next sub-section and find out.

5.4.4 Display a Menu

The menu, we know is the most fundamental ingredient in a food service establishment. In the unit so far we have learnt about the types and characteristics of good menus. Here we shall also focus on how to display a menu appropriately. Read the following considerations regarding menu display:

- Menus can be written out with names of dishes in a following order as illustrated in Figure 5.3.

- Menus must be written in a form that is simple, legible, and attractive to draw the customer's attention.
- Names of the dishes should be clearly understood. If unfamiliar terms are used, descriptions should follow the name so that customer knows exactly what is being ordered.
- Sauces and accompaniments create a feeling of good value for money and must be indicated on the menu .
- Care is necessary in word selection and correct spelling of the dishes, particularly if they are written in foreign language.
- Some indication of portion sizes or number of servings should be written.

Menus can be written in many ways according to the purpose for which they are intended. In food service where a waiter style of service is offered, the menu is generally presented in the form of a folder. Menu card also introduces the organization to the customer hence very often it includes information about the address, telephone numbers, service timings along with the list of dishes and their cost.

We end our study on menu planning by highlighting the importance of constant evaluation of menu .



CHINESE DRAGON RESTAURANT

Soups		Seafood	
Egg Drop	25.00	Butter Prawns	189.00
Wonton	24.00	Deep Fried Prawn	200.00
Mixed Veg	22.00	Kung Pao Shrimp	178.00
Hot and Sour	27.00	Lobster Cantonese	225.00
Chicken Yaka Mein	30.00	Shrimp with Lobster Sauce	240.00
Appetizers		Egg	
Egg Rolls	25.00	Shanghai Style Fry Egg	150.00
Spring Rolls	30.00	Fu Yung Egg	107.00
Chicken Wings(4)	60.00	Stir Fry Egg with Shrimps	165.00
Dim Sum	75.00	Colorful Stir Fry Eggs	
Fried Shrimps	80.00	Guangdong Steam Egg	
		Soaked Egg in Tea	
Fried Rice		Desserts	
Chicken	40.00	Sweet Rice Gruel	55.00
Vegetable	30.00	Custard Egg Tart	40.00
Shrimp	95.00	Mashed Taro With Ginkgo	60.00
Gourmet Fried Rice	108.00	Stewed Papaya With Swallow's Nest	75.00
Chow Mein		Doughnut with Red Bean Paste	80.00
Chicken	45.00	Red Bean Pudding	40.00
Vegetable	30.00		
Shrimp Won Ton	155.00		



Figure 5.3: Menu display

5.4.5 Evaluation of Menu

Menu evaluation is a critical and essential part of the menu planning process and should be a ongoing process. Constant evaluation is a necessity and it involves the following:

- Watch tray/plate returns
- What is new on the market?
- What is the competition doing?
- What are the customers saying?

Periodic assessment of the menus is valuable as they not only guide the management but also provide insight into what plans and policies to adopt for the success of the operation. A handy guideline/checklist can be adopted for evaluative purposes. The points to be considered include:

- 1) Do the menus satisfy the nutritional needs of the clients?
- 2) Does the menu meet the organization objectives?
- 3) Are the foods in season, available, and within the budget?
- 4) Can the food be prepared by the available personnel and equipment?
- 5) Are garnishes used appropriately?
- 6) Do the foods offer contrasts in:
 - Colour
 - Texture
 - Temperature
 - Consistency
 - Size, shape and form
 - Preparation methods
 - Flavour
 - Lightness
- 7) Is the repetition of flavour or a food item(s) within a day or meal?
- 8) Do flavours complement one another?
- 9) Do the combinations make a pleasing whole some meal, and will they be acceptable to the client.
- 10) Are costly ingredients/meals balanced with lower cost ones?

Evaluation as mentioned above may be done based on the plate waste or through informal customer comments or through formal customer feedback obtained through customer feedback forms.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) What are the steps for constructing a menu?

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- 2) What are the points to be considered with respect to a food service organization before planning a menu?

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3) How will you check that the menu is well planned for the type of organization?
4) What care will you take to display a menu?

5.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we focused on menu planning. We learnt that a menu is a list of dishes planned for production in a food service organization and includes full meals, snacks or beverages either alone or in combinations. It is most important activity of a food service organization.

Menu Planning, we learnt, has wide variety of functions and has many advantages. Good menu planning requires knowledge and skills for planning a good menu. It requires a wide knowledge of foods, different methods of preparing and serving foods, customer's preferences etc.

There are basically three types of menus, namely A la Carte Menu, Table d' hote menu and combination menu. These menus are widely applicable in the whole world. Similarly, cyclic menus all commonly used in institutions like hostels, hospitals etc, and have many advantages as it helps in better planning of resources and personnel.

A menu has to be constructed systematically for its optimal use. The aim of menu planning is to create consistent menus in terms of their quality, characteristics, costs and their selling price from day to day. Before planning a menu some basic points, have to be kept in mind related to the location or situation of the food service organization and the type of customer it proposes to target. Similarly, evaluation of the menu planned is important, as it helps us to understand whether the planner has a thorough knowledge of the requirement of the organization.

Displaying menu is also equally important, as the customer has to be attracted to your organization. Display has to be aesthetically designed and should be written out in a logical and clear manner and the information should be complete giving details of selling cost, brief details about the dish if the dish planned is uncommon.

Thus, to conclude, this unit has helped us to understand the functions, advantages of menu planning and has detailed the steps and the knowledge and skills that are required to plan a good menu. It has also helped us to critically evaluate a given menu.

5.6 GLOSSARY

- Menu** : a menu is a list of dishes planned for production in a food service organization and may include full meals, snacks or beverages either alone or in combinations.
- Cyclic Menu** : menus. which are, planned in advance for periods of time varying from five days to one month, which are then cycled or repeated at, fixed intervals.
- A la Carte Menu** : choice menu.
- Table d' hote Menu** : fixed menu (A menu ordered by the host).

5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) A menu is a list of dishes planned for production in a food service organization and may include full meals, snacks or beverages either alone or in combinations. Functions include: a) Introduces the establishment to the customer b) Helps in production of meals in the kitchen c) Helps to prepare a purchase list for foods and ingredients and forms the basis for establishing purchasing procedures and d) Determines the type of equipment, staff skills and the type of supervision required.
- 2) The reasons for menu planning include:
 - a) It helps to provide appetizing, nourishing and attractive meals to customers at a fair price.
 - b) Planning menus helps to foresee the requirements accurately.
 - c) Planning minimizes the food waste; fuel costs and helps in management of leftover effectively and creatively in the next day's menus.
 - d) Planning saves times and efforts spent in purchasing, receiving and cooking and frequent trips to the market.
- 3) In order to plan a good menu one should have the following basic information on:
 - a) Wide knowledge of foods
 - b) Knowledge of different methods of preparing and serving foods
 - c) Knowledge of the methods of serving various types of foods
 - d) Knowledge of the customer
- 4) It is necessary to know the customers before menu planning because it helps to provide meals according to the customer's food preferences, physiological requirements, paying capacity, social standing and the reasons for eating out and for achieving customer satisfaction.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1)
 - a) choice
 - b) set
 - c) A la Carte, Table d' hote Menus
 - d) restaurants/hotels
 - e) clubs, marriages parties etc.
- 2) Cyclic menus are menus, which are planned in advance for periods of time varying from five days to one month, which are then cycled or repeated at fixed intervals.
- 3) The advantages of a cyclic menu include
 - a) Once a basic menu pattern is established, the menu planner can use his/her own creativity to attract customers in case of holidays, special occasions, or during staff shortages, delays in service etc.
 - b) It helps the staff (both kitchen and service) to get better organized, because they know futures needs and can do the pre preparation.
 - c) It helps to standardize the recipes and making food service most cost effective for both the management, as well as, the customer.

- 4) Cyclic menus can be unpopular because they could be planned for short term i.e. for five day or seven days, which leads to menu fatigue and customers tend to eat on the day, their favourite dishes are served and may skip other days.
- 5) The popularity of cyclic menus can be improved by planning for odd number of days, so that a menu does not fall on the same day of the week or same date of the month. Further, a general menu structure may be set, but dishes changed to introduce variety.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Steps in constructing a menu are:
 - a) Decide the suitable menu pattern, whether one wants fixed menu, a la Carte menu or selection of both.
 - b) Decide the degree of flexibility that needs to be kept in the menu.
 - c) Decide on the main dish of the menu and side dishes can be planned around it.
 - d) The selected dishes should enhance the colour, texture, flavour and taste of the meal.
- 2) Points to be considered with respect to the food service organization before planning a menu are:
 - a) Location of the organization with relation to the market
 - b) Space available for storing food safely
 - c) Size of kitchen and service areas
 - d) Number of staff and their skills
 - e) Equipment available in kitchen and service areas
 - f) Policy of the food service organization.
- 3) The menu is considered to be well planned when :
 - a) Preferences of the customer or guest for whom it is planned is considered and a wide variety to choose from is provided to them.
 - b) Cook in charge of making the menu is able to cook the menu in an attractive, palatable manner.
 - c) The cooked food is served well and at the right temperature to the customer, and
 - d) Management is able to satisfy the customer, as well as, earn profits for the organization
- 4) The care to be taken while displaying a menu include:
 - a) Menus must be written in a form that is simple, legible, and attractive to draw the customer's attention
 - b) Names of the dishes should be clearly understood. If unfamiliar terms are used, descriptions should follow the name so that customer knows exactly what is being ordered
 - c) Sauces and accompaniments create a feeling of good value for money and must be indicated on the menu.