

20 Menu Secrets to increase sales and profit!

by menu expert, Lori Tomlinson Tomlinson Design & Advertising



Tips for designing your restaurant menu

As with so many things, your restaurant menu must start with a plan. These are the questions you should ask yourself/your team before getting started.

New or Existing Restaurant

Who is my target audience/customer?

What image do we want to project? (ie cutting edge, fun, comfortable, classic, elegant) Choose adjectives to describe how you want customers to feel when they dine with you.

What are your signature items? (These are selections that other restaurants typically do not carry -- or selections that are customer favorites)

What categories of food will you offer? Entrées, sandwich, salads, soups ...

The optimum numbers of selections per categories is 7 or 8. Keep this in mind when deciding your these categories.

Existing Restaurant

What are your best day parts?

What are your best sellers?

What are your most profitable selections?

What do you have to offer, but don't make much money on or really don't want to offer. You'll want to put these in a bottom corner of the menu.

What are your goals?

If you want to increase breakfast traffic, you may want to put a teaser on your lunch or dinner menu -- for example: Great breakfast menu (see back). Join us for breakfast daily from 6 am - 10 am.



The best menus all have the same quality:

Easy Navigation

Throwing things here and there might be fun, but in the long run it will annoy your customers. Keep it simple. Make the copy easy to read. Make selections easy to find. Use a type size that is readable for all your customers. If you cater to seniors keep this mind, you will want to choose a larger font size. If your restaurant is not well lit, you will also want to use a larger and/or bolder font.

In the example above, the before menu (left) has headers that are too long, they are difficult to read quickly due to the script font selection and the layout is boring. In the revised menu on the right, the headers are short and bold. They are easy to spot. Photos break up the text to make the menu more interesting and appetizing. Beer is added to suggestive sell alcohol sales and increase guest check averages.

Add a graphic on an angle adds excitement. See the rotated box with the soup inside.

If you want customers to choose a selection based on price, line the prices up on the right. (See example) If you want them to choose a selection because it sounds good and appeals to their appetite, tuck the prices at the end of the description.



We always recommend prices at the end of the descriptions for our restaurant clients. Customers are more likely to come back if they like what they ordered. If they order the least expensive item, it may not always be something they love.

It is best to price things with a “9” at the end because most people round down (4.99 becomes 4 ish). If you include the dollar sign and/or include the cents in the price you will be perceived as more expensive 19.99 as opposed to \$20.



Straight numbers without any cents are always perceived as more expensive. High end eateries can use this technique to aid in their perception of premier offerings.

Menu Formats

For most menus the standard menu formats include menu holders, laminated menus or plastic substrate menus. They are available in custom sides and formats including booklet, tri-fold/bi-fold and single sheets.

MENU HOLDERS

New restaurants typically require many adjustments in selections, pricing, etc. in the first few months. Menu holders offer the most flexibility. Holders allow you to reprint one page without changing the entire menu. Holders are available in custom sizes and pages. Choose a booklet or continuous style. Choose 4 or 6 pages. There are hundreds of colors to choose from. Ask for a sample. We recommend the nylon version because they last longer, are easy to clean and less likely to crack than the plastic alternative.

Alex's (shown here) uses a custom 4 page menu holder.



Here's a tip to increase the life of your menu holders: slip a sheet of chipboard between the menu pages to make the menu stiffer and more durable. It will also give the perception of quality. This will keep the plastic from scratching and your holders will last longer.

LAMINATED MENUS

Many restaurant owners choose laminated menus. These are available in gloss or satin laminate. They are available as a single sheet (front/back), tri-fold or 4 page booklet style. The maximum size for a small run/digital imprint is 12.75 x 27.75. We can laminate two or three sheets together for larger sizes. This Timothy's Pub is a single sheet laminated menu. Their previous menu is on the left.



PLASTIC SUBSTRATE

There are new plastic papers available. These are available in sizes of 12.75 x 26.5. These papers are a little pricey, but are a great alternative to lamination.



REGULAR PAPER STOCK

Many restaurant owners like regular heavy paper stock for their menu and just throw them out continuously when they get soiled. Angelo's Coney Island does a big take out business and they use paper printed menus.



Photography?

If you decide to use photos in your menu invest in a good food photographer. Bad food photos can turn off a diner's appetite and discourage return visits. Better no photos than bad photos. Sometimes you can find royalty free photos that look similar to your selections. With good copying techniques, no one will know it is not your photo. We have several food photographers that we can recommend.



See the difference in the before and after for Antonio's in Warren.

Choosing Type.

Choose a serif type for body copy. Serif type is easier to read in small sizes than san serif. (serif fonts have little feet or notches at the tops and bottoms of all the letters.) **This is a serif font.**

Choose a type size 10 point or larger. Again, if you serve a large customer base of seniors, go with 12 point type or larger.

Choose a bold font for your headers. Make sure customers can easily pick out your headers when they look at your menu.

What about color?

As a rule it is better to stay away from blues (particularly light and medium blues) in your menu design. Blue can suggest mold in the food industry. You don't want any misconceptions about your food quality. If your logo has blue in it, keep the blues to the cover and away from any food photos.

Good food colors include reds, yellows, tans, browns, oranges -- warm colors.

Use color for focus. Don't splash color everywhere. If there is color everywhere, there is no focus. Put your headlines and signature icons in color, then highlight a couple of house favorites. Put your description in black or a dark color.

Descriptions?

Generally an item with a description will sell more than one without. Descriptions get the taste buds flowing and the mouth watering. Use this to your advantage. You'll even sell more BLT's with a good description (ie crisp applewood bacon, fresh tomatoes and crisp lettuce on fresh toasted house bread with mayonnaise. Add melted cheese for only 99¢ extra. Are you hungry yet?

Disclaimer

Don't forget to include the disclaimer regarding undercooked foods. The verbiage is different for every area. Check with your local health department. Be sure to include an asterisk (*) before each disclaimer. Reprinting a menu for this reason is no fun!

Be Consistent

Whatever you do, be consistent. Don't use one logo on the front of your building and another in the menu. If you capitalize Mozzarella in one place, capitalize it in all.

Other Marketing To Build Sales

Growing Your Sales

If you need other marketing materials for your restaurant or ideas to grow your sales, give us a call. There are so many tips to build sales, like a gift certificate sign to promote gift card sales. 30% of gift cards are never redeemed. This is like money in your pocket.

We can help with a direct mail program, table tents, drink menus, take out menus, coasters and more.

Table tents are great to build new day parts or new menu items. Direct mail is fabulous to target the households around your location. (See sample below) Every door direct enables you to mail a post card for as little as 18¢.

If you need help designing your restaurant menu, we can help. Tomlinson Design & Advertising has been designing menus for over 30 year. Give us a call. 810.742.0932 or email us lorigator@tomlinsonadvertising.com



BOGO
Buy one coney get one FREE
With coupon, 1.79 value.
313.366.1220
5105 E. McNichols • Detroit
Limit one coupon per order.
Expires Aug. 11, 2015

BOGO
Buy one French fries get one FREE
With coupon, 1.99 value.
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Limit one coupon per order.
Expires Aug. 11, 2015

\$1.00 off
with any order of 10.00 or more.
With this coupon.
Not valid on lunch specials
313.366.1220
5105 E. McNichols • Detroit
Limit one coupon per order.
Expires Aug. 11, 2015

Burger Combo
With fries and large pop
5.64

Corned Beef
Sandwich Combo
with fries and large pop
8.34

Open 24/7
Call ahead & have your order ready

\$1.00 off
any Omelette
With this coupon. Offer valid on our menu.
313.366.1220
5105 E. McNichols • Detroit
Limit one coupon per order.
Expires Aug. 11, 2015

Johnny's CONEY ISLAND

Breakfast Anytime
Johnny's Breakfast Special
Johnny's breakfast specialties
are served from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
on weekdays (except on public holidays)
except on public holidays. Offer valid on
all menu items. Limit one per order.
Expires Aug. 11, 2015

Great Wing Dings
3.99
(15-20 wings)

Daily Lunch Specials
1) Classic QTY 1.99
2) Corned Beef Sandwich 1.79
3) Steak & Cheese sandwich 3.09
4) Fish Sandwich 1.99
5) Hot Wings 6 per 10.99
6) Hot Wings 12 per 16.99