

FOOD COST

Food cost is the percentage of cost of the ingredients against sales revenue for every dish. The Hotel will have a forecasted food cost for each year that it is in operation. Food cost is vital in determining profit or loss and therefore requires close attention. It is a common misconception that a food cost can only be controlled or reduced by cutting the quality and quantity of food used in the kitchens. Several factors affect food cost and are as follows:

- 1/ Menu Planning
- 2/ Food purchasing – pricing and quality specifications
- 3/ Raw food storage and par stock levels
- 4/ Food handling during preparation
- 5/ Food production volume
- 6/ Par stocks of cooked food
- 7/ Portion size
- 8/ Wastage control
- 9/ Proper training of employees

1/ Menu Planning : When selecting the dishes to be included in the menu, utmost consideration must be given in selecting the right food ingredient according to seasonal availability and price structure of the menu.

- Select seasonal food products which are cheaper because they are in season.
- Select the appropriate food for the appropriate task.
- Before using expensive food products like truffles and caviar, evaluate if it is really needed.
- Use the same secondary ingredients in several dishes as it will increase turnover of food and eliminate wastage.
- Maximize yield of food products by using off cuts from the products in other dishes, if a significant amount of broccoli is used in another dish, add a broccoli cream to the menu in order to utilize all trimmings.

2/ Food purchasing - Pricing and Quality specifications : The cheaper product is NOT always cheaper. The final price will only be known once a conversion recipe has been completed, where the percentage of wastage against net weight is calculated. By using a slightly more expensive product with better quality, less quantity will be used for the same result, thus reducing the overall cost : In using a cheaper cooking wine, more quantity is needed to achieve a mediocre result, whereby in using a slightly more expensive wine, better results are achieved with less quantity. Conversion recipes are very important when investigating highly priced items, such as fish, seafood and meat.

3/ Raw food storage and par stock levels : All food must be stored at the proper temperature and humidity percentage to avoid excessive weight loss and spoilage of the product. Fridges must always be clean to avoid bacteria growth which can accelerate food spoilage. Establishment of proper par stock levels will also avoid food spoilage through rotating the inventory and ensuring that only the freshest products are used. The initial purchase price for overstocked food items is the same as for freshly purchased items, ONLY THE QUALITY IS NOT THE SAME.

4/ Food Handling During Preparation : Through proper food handling in preparation, excessive trimming will be avoided. Food must not be kept out of the fridge for a long period of time. All employee working in the preparation area must be briefed on how to utilize trimmings from food products (ie fish bones for stock, vegetable trimmings for sauces, meat nerves for gravies etc.)

5/ Food Production Volume : Utmost care must be taken in planning the food production for the day and also for the week. Only through proper food production planning, will the following instances be avoided : Over production, resulting in left over food Under production, resulting in last minute preparations, where more expensive food products are used because of lack of time for proper purchasing.

6/ Par Stocks of Cooked Food : It is very important that all food stock is rotated on the first produced first out basis (F.I.F.O.) to ensure constant quality and eliminate spoilage. All cooked foods are to be rotated according to the production date.

7/ Portion Size : Consider the size of the menu, the price and valued for money factor when deciding on the portion size. The portion size should be adequate for the guest to eat and feel satisfied. All plates returning from the restaurant should be monitored to see if any food is left over. This will enable the Sous Chef to readjust the portion size and avoid additional wastage.

8/ Wastage Control : Proper supervision of food handling, preparation and storage is very important in avoiding wastage of food.

9/ Proper Training of Employees : One of the most important factors in controlling food cost is employee training. A properly trained employee is motivated and will take care of his/her kitchen as if it is his/her own. Through proper food product handling training, it is possible to avoid spoilage and eliminate loss.