Chapter 4
Operational areas, equipment and staffing

Aim

To outline key considerations in the planning, design, equipping and staffing of food service operations.

Objectives

The chapter is intended to support you in:

- Developing a systematic approach to the planning, designing, equipping and staffing of food service operations
- Identifying the factors to be considered when making operational choices and decisions
- Ensuring compliance with health and safety, and security requirements
- Equipping food production areas
- Equipping food and beverage service areas
- Managing staffing.

4.1 Key influences on operational design

Creating new operations, or renovating existing ones, means being involved in developing new concepts or rethinking old ones. This can include activities such as developing new menus, beverage lists, rethinking approaches, introducing new technology to production and service, reviewing the sustainability position, as well as concepts and design ideas which can be innovative and creative in approach. This in turn leads to reconsidering plant, and equipment such as crockery, glassware, and cutlery, through to staff uniforms, and so on.

Throughout the industry, work is underway to re-establish the future of food service operations following the Covid 19 pandemic. Manging food and beverage operations in the new industry reality, is supported by the principles and good practice covered in this book, with more emphasis now required on some aspects. These include:

- Developing low touch service systems to help to reduce the physical contact between people and between people and equipment and maintaining physical distancing of workers and customers.
- Reviewing the range of the foods and beverages on offer to help to increase the efficiency of the production and service processes.
- Increasing the use of technology, including moving booking systems, menus, beverage lists and details of current service procedures online, and using mobile apps for customer check-in, ordering and payments.
- Ensuring more regular hazard analysis, risk assessment and monitoring, and maintaining up to date records.
- Managing hygiene and maintaining increased cleaning protocols, and having the processes visible to customers though, for example, displaying an up-to-date cleaning rota, and cleaners visibly working.
- Increasing staff training, especially on following the necessary processes and procedures to reduce risks.

Keeping ahead of best practice guidance and changes in scientific understanding is essential. It is also important to only follow advice from authoritative sources. These include the World Health Organisation (www.who.int) which provides information on world health, including detailed information on Covid 19. Also refer to the Food Standards Agency (www.food.gov.uk).

During the Covid 19 pandemic, when hospitality was forced to close, many food service operations created new markets:

- Using the dine at home concept, click and collect or delivery.
- Producing You Tube videos of how to finish the dishes at home.
- Subscription cooking lessons live from the professional kitchen on Zoom and Microsoft Teams.
- Tutored tastings of beverages to accompany the food from pre-ordered weekly/monthly subscription classes.

These trends have continued and have become embedded as normal practice. The acceptance of new ways of working has propelled caters to adopt new technologies, automation, and for some robotics.

Other trends in food service design have included:

- The opening up of the kitchen to be viewed by the customer as part of the total dining experience.

- Fine dining restaurants offering the opportunity to sit at the chef's table as part of the meal experience.
- Minimalistic New York loft style restaurants.
- Outdoor cooking kitchens with charcoal burners, smokers, and plates formed from the ash.
- The application of SMART technology and the addition of kitchen and food service robotics is currently being trialled and utilised successfully. Examples of this are development of the 'PEPPER' service robot – Robot Lab (www.robot-lab.com/pepper-robot) and drones delivering food to tables (austincar2go.com/drones-delivering-drinks-and-food-in-a-crowded-restaurant).

Because of recent successes, and the pressure of industry competitiveness, developments are now far less likely to be hindered by tradition. The traditional boundaries of food service delivery and service are constantly being pushed, in the search for the next competitive edge in the meal experience offer.

Yet within this changing world order of creative and innovative food offers, traditionalism in service standards still remains. It is for the food and beverage manager to know the market they are aiming for and the food service organisation's place within it.

Activity:

- Identify what you consider to be four key recent innovations in food service operations.
- Consider the long-term effect these innovations might have on the food service industry in general.
- From the Covid pandemic and the lock downs, identify three ways the restaurant offer has changed .

4.2 Developing a systematic approach

The systematic approach to designing, planning, equipping and staffing a food service operation includes giving consideration to a wide variety of factors. These can be grouped under six broad headings:

- The market needs
- Operational needs
- Connectivity
- Space allocation and requirements
- Finance availability
- Sustainability
- Hygiene, health, safety and security.