

Chapter 5

Food production

Aim

To highlight the importance of sound menu planning and emphasise its role in the planning, implementation and management of food production systems.

Objectives

This chapter is intended to support you in:

- Identifying types of menus and the classic menu sequence
- Planning menus
- Identifying key influences on menus
- Menu costing and pricing
- Managing food production as an operating system
- Managing volume within food production systems
- Developing and managing the purchasing function
- Developing and applying operational control procedures.

5.1 Types of menus

Menus may be divided into two main classes, traditionally called *à la carte* (from the card) and *table d'hôte* (table of the host). The key difference between these two is that the *à la carte* menu has dishes separately priced, whereas the *table d'hôte* menu has an inclusive price either for the whole meal or for a specified number of courses, for example, any two or any four courses. There are, however, usually choices within each course.

All menus, no matter how simple or complex, are based on the two basic menu classes of *table d'hôte* or *à la carte*. Some menus also offer combinations of these two classes,

with a number of menu items being offered together at a set price and other menu items being priced separately.

Other menu terms include:

- *menu du jour* (French) or *menu del dia* (Spanish) is sometimes used instead of the term *table d'hôte menu*
- *carte du jour* (literally card of the day), or 'menu of the day', which can also be a fixed meal with one or more courses for a set price.
- *prix fixe* (fixed price) similar to the *carte de jour*
- *tasting menu* (*menu degustation*) is a set meal with a range of courses (often between six and ten). These tasting menus can also be offered with a flight (selection) of wines – a different wine for each course, and a recent trend with ales and cider or with non-alcoholic drinks, with the chef coming to the customers table to explain the production of the dish and front of house host the drink pairing.
- *Tapas* is an example of à la carte where all items are ordered separately and priced individually. Tapas are Spanish savoury dishes usually served in a bar. The menu consists of an extensive selection of hot and cold, snack size, individual dishes that, when ordered together, can make a substantial meal. The dishes are shared with the table rather than an individual plate being served to each customer. Tapas are often served when ready and so may not all be served at the same time.
- *Meze*, has Turkish, Greek and Middle Eastern origins, and are similar in size to tapas, served hot or cold with alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages.

Classic menu sequence

Over the last 100 or so years, the European based menu has taken on a classic sequence or order of dishes. This sequence is used to lay out menus as well as to indicate the order of service for the various courses to be served. Although the actual number of courses on a menu, and the dishes within each course, will depend on the size and class of the establishment, many follow the classic sequence. A modern summary of the menu sequence is shown in Table 5.1.

The sequence shown in Table 5.1 recognises changes in the way courses and food dishes are classified. The modern meaning of the term *entrée* is usually the course that precedes the main course in a three-course menu. This can also be referred to as a 'starter' or, in the USA and some other areas, an 'appetizer'. In the USA, a main course is referred to as an 'entrée'. In many other places, it is often called a main course or *plat principal*.

Beverages (hot or cold) are not counted as a course and should not be included when stating the number of courses for a meal. For example, if a meal is described as having four courses, this means there are four food courses and beverages are an addition to these.

Table 5.1: Menu sequence (based on Cousins and Weekes, 2020)

Canapés and amuse bouche	<i>Canapés</i> are light, tasty, one bite, snacks. They are often served pre-meal to stimulate the appetite. In fine dining establishments an <i>amuse bouche</i> is a small appetiser served before the main meal. Normally these items are not counted as a course on a menu.
Starters / Appetisers	These courses can be shown separately or can be grouped together. Sometimes they are also presented under the headings ‘cold starters’ and ‘hot starters’.
Soups (<i>potages</i>)	
Egg dishes (<i>oeufs</i>)	
Pasta and rice (<i>farineux</i>)	May be as a starter, middle course, or as main course. Also known as farinaceous dishes
Fish (<i>poisson</i>)	Consists of fish dishes, both hot and cold. May be served as a starter, middle course, or as a main course.
Sorbet	Sometimes a sorbet (flavoured water ice) is served between courses to refresh the palate.
Meat (<i>viande</i>), poultry (<i>volailles</i>), game (<i>gibier</i>), and vegetarian (<i>végétarien</i>) and plant-based foods (<i>aliments à base de plantes</i>)	Can be listed separately by type of food or listed together under the heading ‘main courses’ and sometimes called ‘entrées’. Sometimes meats, such as steaks, are listed separately under the heading ‘grills’. Vegetarian, vegan, and plant-based dishes can also be listed separately. This section can also include a variety of cold meats and fish, cheese, and egg items, together with a range of salads and dressings.
Potatoes, (<i>pommes de terre</i>), vegetables (<i>legumes</i>), and salads (<i>saladés</i>)	If not included with a main course, these dishes are now often listed separately and sometimes called ‘sides’ (meaning side order) for which there is an additional charge. Sometimes a salad is served as a separate course after a main course.
Cheese (<i>fromage</i>)	
Sweets / desserts (<i>entremets</i>) (most often now called dessert)	Cheese is shown here after the main course and before the sweet course. However, the sweet course is still sometimes offered before the cheese course.
Savoury (<i>savoureux</i>)	Simple savoury dishes can be served at the end of the meal, such as Welsh rarebit, or other items on toast, in pastry, or savoury soufflés.
Fruit (dessert)	Fresh fruit, nuts and sometimes candied fruits.

The menu sequence outlined in Table 5.1 is based on a logical process of taste sensations and provides a guide for the compilation of a menu. However, several courses are often grouped together on a menu, for example:

- starters/appetisers
- main courses
- to follow/afters.