

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
- 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.

The term *menu du jour* (French) or *menu del dia* (Spanish) is sometimes used instead of the term *table d'hôte menu*. Another menu term used is *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. A *prix fixe* (fixed price) menu is similar. A 'tasting menu' (*menu degustation*) is a set meal with a range of courses (often between six and ten). These tasting menus are offered in restaurants where the chef provides a sample of the range of dishes available on the main menu. These tasting menus can also be offered with a flight (selection) of wines – a different wine for each course., with the chef coming to the customer's table to explain the production of the dish. For all menus the price of the meal might also include wine or other drinks.

In addition to menus for main meals, such as luncheon or dinner, there are also requirements for other types of menu such as all day menus, floor/room service menus, lounge service menus, hospital tray service menus, airline tray service menus and rail service menus and event menus.

■ Classic menu sequence

At the end of the 19th century, France, and later other countries, had adopted the style of service known as *service à la russe*. In this system, the courses in a meal are served one after the other. Previously there had been a style of service known as *service à la française* where meals consisted of two courses, each made up of a variety of dishes, anything from 10 to 40 in number. The first set of dishes were placed on the table before the diners entered – hence the word *entrée* – and, when consumed, these dishes were removed or relieved by another set of dishes – hence the words *relevé* or 'removes' (see the classic menu sequence below).

Over the last 100 or so years the sequence of the European menu had taken on a classical format of dishes. This format is used to lay out menus as well as to indicate the order of the various courses. Although the number of courses on a menu, and dishes within each course, will depend on the size and class of the establishment, most follow the classic sequence. This is given in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Classic menu sequence

1 Hors-d'oeuvres	Traditionally consisted of a variety of compound salads but now includes such items as pâtés, mousses, fruit, charcuterie and smoked fish.
2 Soups (potages)	Includes all soups, both hot and cold.
3 Egg dishes (oeufs)	There are a great number of egg dishes beyond the usual omelettes, but these have not retained their popularity on modern menus.
4 Pasta and rice (farineux)	Includes all pasta and rice dishes. Can be referred to as farinaceous dishes.
5 Fish (poisson)	Consists of fish dishes, both hot and cold. Fish dishes such as smoked salmon or seafood cocktails are mainly considered to be hors-d'oeuvres dishes and therefore would be served earlier in a meal.
6 Entrée	Entrées are generally small, well garnished dishes which come from the kitchen ready for service. They are usually accompanied by a rich sauce or gravy. Potatoes and vegetables are not usually served with this course if it is to be followed by a main course. If this is the main meat course then it is usual for potatoes and vegetables to also be offered. Examples of this type of dish are tournedos, noisettes, sweetbreads, garnished cutlets or filled vol-au-vent cases. Today these are usually on the menu as a main course
7 Sorbet	Traditionally sorbets (sometimes now called <i>granites</i>) were served to give a pause within a meal, allowing the palate to be refreshed. They are lightly frozen water ices, often based on un-sweetened fruit juice, and may be served with a spirit, liqueur or even Champagne poured over.
8 Relevé	Refers to the main roasts or other larger joints of meat, which would be served together with potatoes and vegetables. These are usually now on the menu as a main course and in some restaurants may be presented on a trolley and carved at the table.
9 Roast (rôti)	Traditionally refers to roasted game or poultry dishes. Again today are usually on the menu as a main course and in some restaurants may be on a trolley carved at the table
10 Vegetables (légumes)	Apart from vegetables served with the Relevé or Roast courses, certain vegetables (e.g. asparagus and artichokes) may be served as a separate course, although these types of dishes are now more commonly served as starters.
11 Salad (salade)	Often refers to a small plate of salad that is taken after a main course (or courses) and is quite often simply a green salad and dressing.
12 Cold buffet (buffet froid)	Includes a variety of cold meats and fish, cheese and egg items together with a range of salads and dressings.
13 Cheese (fromage)	Includes the range of cheeses and various accompaniments, including biscuits, breads, celery, grapes and apples. This course can also refer to cheese-based dishes such as soufflés.
14 Sweets (entremets)	Refers to both hot and cold desserts.
15 Savoury (savoureux)	Sometimes simple savouries, such as Welsh rarebit or other items on toast, or in pastry, or savoury soufflés, may be served at this stage.
16 Fruit (dessert)	Fresh fruit, nuts and sometimes includes candied fruits.
17 Beverages	Includes a wide range of beverages, including: tea, coffee (in both standard and de-cafeinated versions) and a range of other beverages such as tisanes, chocolate, milk drinks (hot or cold), and proprietary drinks such as Bovril or Horlicks.