



Anthony

# Give your menu muscle



Story by Scott Anthony  
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When I walk into a restaurant, I look for it. When I check out the competition I grab it.

What is it, you ask? It's your menu!

Unfortunately, many times I am left disappointed and uninformed. This small but essential element of a restaurant has become a glorified price list with a logo. What more can a menu be? How about a powerful marketing muscle that lifts you to the next level? When I discovered this, my store sales rose 14 percent!

Menus help establish a restaurant's brand, reinforce its unique standing in the community and present customers with the food they prepare and serve. More than that, menus sell product. Let's talk about a few tricks of the trade.

First, use a professional menu developer. The menu is often the first impression you make on a customer, so make it count. DIY and it looks like everyone else in town. Take the time to check out menu designers at International Pizza Expo or ones listed in this magazine to see who can help you maximize the impact of your menu. Ask for samples and request referrals, look for results

— you only have one chance to make a good first impression.

When designing your menu, think marketing. Do you have any signature or high profit items? Do you have a product that is a customer favorite? Are you the official pizza of some organization? Have your recipes been passed down for generations? Has your business received awards? All of these questions need to be and can be addressed in a well-designed menu. Knowing these answers will exercise your menu muscle and build your menu into a powerful selling machine.

People are more likely to buy a product if it is placed first or last in a list of items. Let's look at your gourmet pizzas. Place the gourmet pizza with the highest profit first on the list. Add an image of this item and we can potentially increase sales of that item by 15 percent. Vision is a primary human sense. It not only brings things to our attention, but also moves us to action. Professional images of the food you actually serve incorporated into a menu design will persuade customers to buy. Additionally, a well-conceived heading like "House Favorite" or "A Louisville Tradition" grabs attention and guarantees consumers a positive experience, thus persuading them to buy. Bold lettering or boxing of items also draws people to the items you want to sell. Beware not to overdo it or this will lose its effect. Try one item in each menu category.

Descriptions of menu items should make a guest drool. Don't be afraid to explain what is in a dish and use ethnic names, if they fit, to add a bit of panache. "Nana's homemade white sauce" will intrigue a hungry customer.

Hungarian novelist Arthur Koestler once wrote, "The more original a discovery, the more obvious it seems afterwards." This certainly is true of the menu, a marketing muscle to be reckoned with. ❖

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