

# *Common Restaurant Mistakes: Menu Design Errors*

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The fourth of *RMGT's* series on restaurant mistakes looks at common menu design errors. We talk to restaurant consultant Aaron Allen who reveals the mistakes restaurants often make and what they can do to correct them:

## **1. Overuse of dollar signs; or the menu item on the left with the price on the far right**

Too many dollar signs on a menu communicates that the meal is just about money. It communicates commerce and not hospitality.

It's much better to add a couple of spaces after a menu item than the price (no dollar sign). Restaurants that write the menu item on the left and the price on the far right, connecting them with dots reveal a lack of sophistication. This type of layout also encourages guests to look down the right hand side of the menu and select their food based on price.

## **2. No visible merchandizing**

Merchandise one—and no more than two—items on a panel or page. The menu shouldn't shout at guests like a kindergarten class all trying to get the attention of a teacher. It should function at a tour guide revealing what you're most proud of and your differentiation from your competitors. **It should also highlight the dishes with the highest gross margin.**

## **3. Too many or too few items**

Having too many dishes items overwhelms customers. Today people want some decisions made for them. Also too many means you have a huge inventory coming in. Just because you can make a dish with the ingredients you have, doesn't mean you have to.

Too few items on a menu doesn't lead to more guest frequency—there may only be one dish on the menu that appeals to a guest so it doesn't entice them to come back.

#### **4. Failing to conduct a competitive and profitability analysis at least twice a year**

The price of food fluctuates and this year we're expecting some of the biggest spikes and fluctuations in decades. But if menu prices don't increase in tandem, restaurants lose their margins. At least twice a year menu prices should be evaluated.

#### **5. Failing to update the menu at least twice a year**

Every item on your menu should be popular. If a dish is not, it should be evicted and replaced. At the same time, line extensions should be considered for the most popular dishes—so if grilled grouper is a top seller, add a grouper sandwich, for example.

#### **6. Selling “like-items” that are comparable to your competitors**

If everyone has a chicken quesadilla customers can compare your price. But if you create something brand new, there's no comparison. And that can help bring margins up.

#### **7. Not running LTOs, which should be run every four to 12 weeks**

Limited Time Offers create an opportunity to drive frequency and to show you're doing something new. It also makes life more fun for your chef. Menu development is an incredible discipline. It's also a chance to carry your brand forward and stops the brand from being stagnant.

#### **8. Failing to have a specialty drink menu (even if you don't serve alcohol there are opportunities)**

You can drive prices and tie into trends (such as superfruits) and consumer habits. Specialty drink menus can boost check averages, make you more relevant and increase guest frequency at your restaurant.

#### **9. Printing too many menus thereby confusing/overwhelming customers**

Too many menus are simply too much to deal with. Just because you can provide them, doesn't mean you need to.

**10. Menu descriptions are written by the chef rather than by professional copywriter with assistance of the chef**

The menu is the most important piece of marketing collateral that you have because every single person who comes in to your restaurant uses it. It's a restaurant's most important sales tool so make sure it's professionally written.

The way menu items are worded can have a completely different appeal and send a different message.

The cost of hiring a copywriter is a minimal amount of money compared to the boost you will see to your profits from a well written menu.

Give Us A Call To Talk about Your Menu or Restaurant!



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