



The Perfect Match

Think about the last time you went into a department store to add to your wardrobe. The sales associate probably recommended accessories to go with your main purchase — a tie for that business shirt, a belt to hold up those slacks, a purse to complement a new evening dress.

If the person helping you was really on the ball, he or she didn't have to dig around for the perfect match. Specific eye-pleasing combinations had already been committed to memory, which enhanced the associate's ability to sell you the additional items.


Servers working in a restaurant can learn a thing or two from their department-store counterparts. Determining and memorizing food-enhancing combinations is a productive way to upsell extras and add-ons. Here's how you can get started:

Make a plan. At an upcoming staff meeting, use a flip chart to identify the most popular items in each section of your menu — appetizers, soups and salads, entrées and desserts. List the items vertically, leaving enough space next to each one to write in the natural combination.

A side of guacamole might complement your nachos appetizer. Grilled chicken strips would go great with the Caesar salad. How about some sautéed onions for the New York steak? Some fresh strawberries would do wonders for the cheesecake.


Write it down. Transfer what's on the flip chart to a piece of paper and make copies for all your servers, bartenders and host staff. Ask them to memorize the combinations; then conduct a quiz at a scheduled date and time. Throw verbal pop quizzes occasionally to make sure the information remains top of mind.

Work on delivery. Knowing the menu combinations is not enough. Use role-playing techniques to work on sales-building dialogue. Consider the personality of your restaurant, then decide how aggressive you want your staff to be.

The soft-sell will often get the job done: "Would you care for a scoop of vanilla ice cream on your Chocolate Decadence Cake?" But servers can also dial it up a notch: "Our Chocolate Decadence Cake is the best in town, but it's just not the same without a scoop of our homemade vanilla ice cream." 

Marketing Tip: Publicity Pointers


There's an old business adage that reads, "Advertising may pay off, but publicity is priceless." Here's how you can promote your restaurant:

- Call newspapers and magazines you want to be in and request an editorial calendar. Search for sections your operation may be a good fit for and query the editor months in advance.
- Contact the food editor or columnist from your local newspaper and invite him or her to your restaurant. Ask how you can assist in articles and offer to be a source for information.
- Whenever you're published, make copies of the article and send them to your database. Include a relevant coupon that ties in with the review. For example, if your company was positively noted for your stuffed mushrooms, offer one free with the purchase of an entrée.
- Call local radio stations and offer to trade food or gift certificates for advertising. Explore other opportunities — provide food for remotes, prizes and special events. 

Put It To Work

Looking for a way to speed up those ticket times? Well, unless you're leaning toward whips and cattle prods, or a big bald guy pounding a drum in front of a galley ship, you might consider this simple but effective incentive — Ticket Times.

Before you try the Ticket Times incentive, meet with your cooks to work on ways to improve ticket times. Once they master the requisite skills, they'll be ready to make the most of the incentive.

On the day of the incentive, hang 20 (or more) \$1 bills at the pass-out counter and establish desired ticket times for the shift. For every ticket that fails to meet the goal, you pluck a buck. At the end of the incentive, the money left hanging is divided equally among the cooks working that shift. 

*Excerpted from **Playing Games at Work: 52 Best Contests, Incentives and Rewards**, Red Book Solutions. Call 800-207-8140 to order.*

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