



Warming Up to Hot Beverages

Photo courtesy of Starbucks

Recommending and suggestively selling add-ons such as appetizers, sides, desserts and wine has become second nature for waiters and staff. But beyond the occasional cup of coffee, most high-margin hot beverages go overlooked. America's growing demand for gourmet and specialty coffees, teas, hot chocolate, ciders and more should be reflected on your menu—and you should be driving sales by educating the staff about your expanded hot drink offerings and encouraging innovative promotions and suggestive selling techniques.

Tea Time

It's not just "regular or decaf" any longer. Hot beverages—even the ever-popular latte—don't start and end with coffee. Capitalize on the resurgence of Asian-influenced teas by offering a deliciously aromatic, sweet and spicy chai tea latte, or a genuine matcha green tea latte blended with milk and gently sweetened with hints of honeydew, ripe tropical fruits and organic cane sugar. You can even put your own spin on hot cider, wassail and hot chocolate this winter—everyone loves a seasonal treat!

Holiday Packaging

Your guests will appreciate the opportunity to try new things, and your chefs will warmly welcome the chance to create delicious hot beverage pairings. Like a cup of hot peppermint tea and a slice of cheesecake after a leisurely meal, or cappuccino and biscotti after pasta. You might even serve a tabletop carafe of gourmet coffee with an oversized slice of chocolate cake and enough forks for everyone at the table.

Keep the Festivities Going

If your operation boasts a full bar, hot libations can add a special touch to winter festivities. Add a scoop of mint or vanilla ice cream to a liqueur-laced espresso drink for a sensational coffee dessert. Hot chocolate with a top-shelf orange citrus liqueur makes a fantastic dessert. Jazz up your Irish coffee by using a single-malt Irish whiskey instead of the usual blended spirit. Or put your guests in the holiday spirit by adding peppermint schnapps to your hot chocolate and serving it with a candy cane.



Home for the Holidays

With your hot beverage selection expanding, these profitable drinks should be a driving force on your menu, not an afterthought. Bring them up from the bottom of the menu, and use vivid descriptions of the ingredients, global origin and flavor signature of each drink to help guide guests through their hot-beverage selection. Suggest flavored syrups, lemon, honey, different creams and milks, and even flavored sugars to help capture the full essence of the beverage. And customize your gourmet brews by adding a flavor such as peppermint, pumpkin spice, cinnamon and ginger, or dark chocolate.

The More the Merrier

Leverage the popularity of drink-tasting menus if you want to see your hot beverage sales soar even more. You might create an early "happy hour" when customers can discover the subtle—and not-so-subtle—differences between their usual cup of coffee or tea and your specialty brews. Showcase flavors of coffees from different parts of the world, or even invite customers to taste gourmet teas with multiple takes on a classic like Earl Grey. Before you know it, your customers will have a reason to drop by *between* meals!

A Bittle Goes a Long Way

New, inventive hot drink options can make your operation stand out beyond the holiday season. Once you revamp your beverage menu, a little encouragement from your staff is all your customers will need to turn up the heat on their drink orders.



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