

China . . .

Some Questions Answered

Club managers around the nation are wondering about the values of china. Questions arise on the maintenance, cost and care of the pieces and in this story GOLFDOM along with the American Restaurant China Council attempts to solve some of the inquiries.

CHINA MAINTENANCE

Q. Can you give us any tips on dishwashing?

A. Keep in mind that the objective of washing dishes is first, to get the china clean and second, to put the ware back into use. Therefore, you should:

1. Reduce the amount of handling as much as possible by good kitchen layout, modern equipment, and the orderly transportation and storage of china.

2. Make certain your dishwashing machine is adequate for peak volume (any food service operation which feeds more than 60 customers per meal can save money by using a mechanical dishwashing machine).

3. Make certain your soiled dish table is large enough for peak hour loads and arranged to speed unloading and sorting.

4. Train your dishwashing per-

sonnel. Remember that the job of a manager is to manage and one of the most important jobs of a manager is training his people to do the things he wants done by teaching and showing them how he wants it done.

5. Avoid cross traffic wherever possible.

6. Never stack china too high, and for most items this means no more than 18 pieces in a stack. Also stack by size and shape and avoid the nesting of cups.

7. Maintain a sensible inventory of china. Low stocks force the crew to rush pieces through the dishwasher to get them back into service.

Q. Isn't dishwashing going to become more and more expensive?

A. In an evaluation of dishwashing systems in food service establishments published by the United States Department of Agriculture, it is reported that the study "indicates that the average dishwashing system in restaurants and cafeterias evaluated is operating at less than two-thirds of peak efficiency." They go on to point out that if efficiency were at 100 percent, an annual savings of \$21,000 per operation could be realized. In other words, if a manager looks

at his dishwashing operation as a potential source for improving bottom line profits, dishwashing need not be a disproportionately high expense. Keep in mind, also, that what you are really doing is maintaining and recycling the merchandising package that helps you sell your menu items. Paying attention to proper maintenance of such an important item as your china will pay dividends to the astute manager in lower replacement costs and a better looking china service.

PURCHASING TABLEWARE

Q. How much china should I buy?

A. An answer should be based on some basic information. For example:

- a. How large is the operation?

- b. How many different items of china will you be using and for what purpose?

- c. Is the pattern you are buying stocked by a local distributor, or is it made to order?

- d. Is your dishwashing a continuous, or intermittent operation?

In other words, the amount of china you should purchase is go-

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ing to depend on your operational needs.

Q. But can't you give me some rule of thumb?

A. Yes, but remember, like any other all-inclusive statement, it must be modified depending on your own answers to the questions raised previously.

However, to be as specific as possible, your china inventory should allow for one complete setup in the dining room, one complete setup in process (in the dish room, in transit, etc.), and, finally, one complete setup in reserve.

In operating a clubhouse, you should figure on these ratios:

- Dinner Plates—2 ½ to 3 times the number of seats.
- Salad Plates (Underliners) — 3 to 4 times the number of seats.
- Bread & Butter Plates — 3 to 4 times the number of seats.
- Cups—3 to 4 times the number of seats.
- Saucers — 3 to 4 times the number of seats.
- Fruits — 2 ½ to 3 times the number of seats.
- Grapefruits — 2 to 2 ½ times the number of seats.
- Sugars — ½ to 1 times the number of seats.

Q. With all that beautiful china, won't the club have a lot of pilferage?

A. If employees are stealing your china, you probably have much more serious problems as cold hard cash, and New York strip steaks are much more tempting. The same careful controls that you adopt for cash control and food cost control should be applied to the control of your inventory of all tabletop appointments.

PRICING

Q. Why is there such a difference in price between companies?

A. First, you must recognize that when a distributor is quoting prices on any product, it includes the price of the product itself and the price of his services. If, for example, even on an iden-

tical product one distributor's price is lower than another, it may be because one of the distributors does not stock the product while the other one does and, therefore, can give you better service. Depending on the product and your own ability to wait, the higher price distributor may be offering you the least expensive method of purchasing the product.

Q. Let's say both distributors are offering the same service, why will some china cost more than others?

A. There are a number of factors. Generally, the thinner the china, the higher the price. Also, the number of colors in the decoration will usually increase the price as well, of course, as the use of precious metals such as gold and platinum.

Q. I have heard talk about firsts and seconds in relation to quality and price, what significance do they have today?

A. None. Today each manufacturer has only one level of quality and it is the best they can afford to put on the market for the price they charge.

Q. Can you elaborate?

A. As you know, prices are not set in a vacuum. Supply and demand play a part in pricing. The cost of manufacturing and distribution also play a part in pricing. In the specific case of china, each manufacturer has a number of inspectors, as well as quality control people, checking the china at various crucial steps in the production process. At these quality check points, flaws are picked out and either sent back for what we might call repair or else discarded totally. Each manufacturer has his own standards of quality to which they adhere very rigidly. However, because these standards differ from manufacturer to manufacturer, the end price of the product itself is also different from manufacturer to manufacturer.

Keep in mind that quality is a very subjective thing, and in the final analysis, *value* is what the buyer is really seeking. In other words, when the balance between what the customer con-

siders quality and what he considers a fair price for that quality has reached, the customer is getting value.

MIXED TABLEWARE

Q. If the table top is so important, why do I see mixed china patterns on the tables of some seemingly successful clubs?

A. You may also see worn tablecloths, dirty carpets, burned out light bulbs, finger prints on doors, and soiled menus. The operator is trying to save money rather than make money.

Q. Isn't the objective of a food operation to make money?

A. Yes, but in order to make money you must have an adequate customer count. After all, the first objective is the sale of food and service.

Q. If the members are not complaining about the table top, then they will return to the club. Correct?

A. No. Members spend their money for food and service. The eye appeal of your food goes a long way in making it either good or bad.

Now, I am not going to tell you that at first sign of a mixed table top your members are going to walk out en masse. But members are observant and, in effect, you have sent them a signal that you are cutting corners. You have planted the seed of doubt and some of the members will begin to wonder where else you have begun to cut corners, particularly in areas that are not as evident as the table top. They might think that you have begun to cut corners in the kitchen, too.

Perhaps the most important reason for maintaining your table top is the very reason that you selected with great care your table top appointments when you first went into business. You selected it because it was a package that enhanced your menu items. You also selected it to compliment your decor. Now if these were good reasons to begin with, and the club has been a success, isn't it rather foolish to destroy the winning combination? □