

To Remedy Dining Room Deficit, Analyse Menu's Adaptability

By HELEN EWING BENJAMIN

PROBABLY nothing is more disheartening than to set down on a budget "Deficit," and to follow this word with a substantial figure, such as \$3,000 for instance. This refers to food.

Yet this is exactly what is going on in country clubs all over these United States, and, curiously enough, it is as regular an experience with clubs as is the coming of spring! It was faced as regularly during our most prosperous years as it has been since 1929.

But certain enterprising clubs have determined to overcome it. Probably every club would like to be rid of it, and to this end and with the assistance of financial statements sent us by the clubs themselves, we have determined to show it can be done.

The Present Situation

In looking through the figures of these clubs we find food costs as high as 85 per cent! And service costs still higher, relatively. This is an extraordinary state of affairs.

Ordinarily, in successful clubs, showing no loss, food costs in prosperous times run about 42 per cent of the gross business done, and service (in the food department) never above 30 per cent of the gross sales.

At present in any restaurant that is serving really fine food, costs for food are not quite 40 per cent, while service costs run around 24, 25 or 26 per cent.

In clubs where cafeterias or buffets are the chief feature of the cuisine, the food costs are 34 to 38 per cent while the service charge runs from 16 to 22 per cent.

Where there is a cafeteria and a dining room with proper club service, the cafeteria makes money while the dining room shows a loss.

Some of the Reasons Why

A club is like a church in some respects. Both have expensive plants that are used only part of the time. A church is used Sunday all day and, perhaps, Wednesday evening. The rest of the time taxes and

costs click on like the meter in a waiting taxicab.

So the service in the club cuisine is maintained all day Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, with essentially nothing to do. Then on Saturday hundreds pour in and demand meticulous service; and still more come on Sunday; everyone who comes is critical of the service. He compares it with service rendered by the fashionable city club or the very excellent hotel at which he lives (and where by the way they probably lose money in their food department). He wants quick service and he wants excellent food, and for this he wants to pay what he would pay in the restaurant where he takes his hurried luncheon.

And that, of course, is hardly fair to the governing committee!

Yet this fact remains: cafeterias in even the most exacting of country clubs make money! They help to make up the deficits of the dining rooms.

Members Demand Service

Club members want "service." This means that six or eight men waiters are rushed to death over Saturday and Sunday and twirl their thumbs for the other five days of the week.

And a man waiter is a man waiter—he isn't an assistant to the greenkeeper, nor the carpenter, nor to anyone else. He's a man waiter and makes that plain!

This service problem can be overcome and still have the dining room service unusually smart. But that will come in another article. For the present we shall explain why club food costs run far above those of the finest restaurants.

Analyze Your Menu

Look at your own club dining room menu. Examine it. It is just what your club members demand—fine food: steaks, chops, roasts, fowl; delightful entrees, excellent salads, wonderful desserts.

In 1929 clubs got \$1.50 for such a dinner as compared with the average restaurant

figure of \$1.00. Still, there was the deficit at the close of the year!

Last year your club probably reduced its prices. Partly as a result of that, and partly as the result of smaller attendance, it did possibly a third less business. Sales almost everywhere in clubs dropped a quarter to a third.

But that menu, plus the service and rainy Saturdays and Sundays were the causes of the deficit.

Menu Interference Likely

Business men own the club. They run it by committees. They get a manager who probably understands food and then they too often tie his hands so that he can't use the talents for which they employed him!

They tell him what to put on the menu! They think they should have this and they think they should have that. And at the end of the month they shake their heads over the manager's statement.

He might stop this head shaking by some such report as this:

"Venison roast, \$8.00. This is chargeable to Mr. Doe who insisted that other clubs had game and that we should have it. The individual cost of serving this was \$1.25, but Mr. Smith said that was a ridiculous price—that we should 'sell it at 50 cents and charge it off.'"

This is, of course, an exaggeration, but if you will examine your committee and look carefully into these matters you will find things moving somewhat along these lines.

Here's an Ideal Menu

"Very well," you say to the manager, "what kind of food would you suggest?" Ah! When your committee reaches that point of view there is progress and your manager will probably set up some such menu as given on this page.

That's as good a dinner as the Prince of Wales could ask! Yet it is capable of a saving that is not apparent to any but a first rate steward or an experienced *cusinier*.

Where does the saving come in? It looks extravagant enough.

Right here is a good place to ask (without intending the slightest impertinence, mind you): Do you see the economy of this menu? No! Does your house committee see it? No!

Then why not let the manager who *does* see it do the managing? That would seem

	Canapes	
Anchovy	Red Herring	Caviar
	Tromantana	
	Soups	
	Chesapeake Oyster Soup	
	American Cream of Pea	
	Meats	
Broiled Halibut,	Lemon Butter	
Prime Ribs of Beef		
	Planters' Stewed Chicken	
	Broiled Tenderloin Steak	
	English Mutton Chops	
	Vegetables	
	Baked Florida Tomatoes	
	California String Beans	
	French Fried Potatoes	
	Baked Idaho Potatoes	
	Mashed Potatoes	
	Salads	
	Hearts of Lettuce	Stuffed Tomatoes
French Dressing		Mayonnaise Dressing
	Desserts	
Icebox Mousse,	Cafe Parfait,	Chocolate
Sundae Pie,	Apple Tartlets,	Apricot
	Tartlets,	Lemon Tartlets,
	Mince	
	Pie Meringue,	Minted
	Pineapple Supreme	
Tea	Coffee	Milk

to be rather a bright thing to do in the circumstances.

Why should the only man who does understand such things be constantly divested by those who understand lots of other things but can't see that this is a menu designed expressly to save money?

Why Is It "Cheap"?

Canapes: These are set up on Saturday but made, that is combined, only as called for. The Tromantana is a mixed canape, but the mixture keeps perfectly. There is no loss whether a hundred come or more come. There is no waste whether the weather be bad or gorgeous.

Soups: Only six orders, or so, of these are made up in advance—there can be no waste!

Meats: Roast beef is so cooked that it is red all the way through with a rich crust of golden fat on the rim—all the juices and flavors have been carefully locked up in the meat by the method of cooking it and the shrinkage has been almost nothing. Tomorrow it will be as good as it is today, served in another form.

Stewed Chicken: This will go into individual chicken pies even better liked

than is stewed chicken. It will show even more profit in its pie form!

Fish, Tenderloin Steak, English Mutton Chops are, even now, in the cold-room and they won't come out unless they are called for, when they will be ready within fifteen minutes or before the patrons will have finished the soup course. There they are, safe on ice, as good as gold, and ready any time you want them. Not an ounce of loss if a hundred come or if no one comes!

Tomatoes: There will be a dozen or so of these already baked. More than these, if called for, will be done in eight minutes. No waste!

Baked Potatoes and those that are mashed will be transformed into potato *crustadoes* tomorrow in which form of creamed meat or possibly a vegetable will be served with all the swank of a boulevard restaurant on the Champs Elysee, and they'll taste like Thanksgiving food!

String beans will go into a salad. Deserts are icebox desserts—except the chocolate pie. Tartlets are cooked pastries waiting for a call before being filled. And so on and on—like those cigarettes—not a loss in a carload!

On the Other Hand

However, suppose it should turn out to be a bright beckoning day—a day with the call of spring luring the entire membership into the open to come starving and demanding into the dining room. Ah! Then there is money in the menu! Even at \$1.00 it will show a net profit (if the service doesn't eat it up) of 10 per cent at least; in a cafeteria it will show twice that!

Don't Take Deficit for Granted

The attitude of mind towards deficits has become quite complacent in many clubs. They say: "We don't even try to make a profit; we are content if we make costs." But most clubs don't make their costs!

A good many members differ with that point of view. They hold an equity in the club and would like to see clubhouse profits, and thereby obtain dues reductions.

In times like these slouchy mental habits aren't so good even in clubs. The time has come to wake up—to be rid of all deficits; and the club that is honest enough to face the facts set out here is the club that is going to hold its membership best.

We have spoken in detail of food costs and losses. We have shown a type of menu that can be varied in a thousand ways; and

a good manager allowed the freedom he requires in order to save you a loss can do this if he is not hampered by the authority of inexperienced men—men who generally know nothing about the costs that enter into the serving of food.

Busy Sessions Promised at Managers' Convention

ACCORDING to H. A. Lewis, national secretary of the Club Managers Assn. of America, everything is all set for their 1932 convention, scheduled for the Hotel Warwick, Philadelphia, Feb. 18-20. Final program arrangements are essentially as announced in last month's GOLFDOM, with registration Thursday morning, Feb. 18, and a 2-group get-together in the afternoon, the city club managers assembling in one room, the country club bosses in another, to discuss problems of management peculiar to their respective groups.

Friday and Saturday, the managers will hear addresses by a number of outstanding authorities, including Joseph B. Uhler, president of the association, Theodore DeWitt, C. K. Swafford, advertising manager of Hotel New Yorker, and Dr. William McClellan, former dean of Wharton school. Numerous round-table discussions and convention details will occupy accustomed shares of these sessions.

Entertainment features have not been forgotten. On Thursday night, an informal dance, supper and Monte Carlo games will be held at the Penn Athletic club; on Friday, a theater party has been arranged, to be followed by a sea-food supper and dance; on Saturday evening, there will be a formal dinner dance, for which the speaker of honor has not yet been announced.

For the ladies, shopping tours, sight-seeing trips, bridge parties, etc., follow closely enough one after the other to guarantee no idle moments for the fair sex.

Customary arrangements have been made with all railroads to extend convention rates to delegates and their wives. Secure proper credentials from station agent when purchasing ticket, and half-rate fares will apply for the return trip.

LONGVIEW (Ore.) G. C. is aiding unemployment relief by hiring 6 men to clean up rough and clear brush and trees during the winter.