

PARDON ME, BUT YOUR MENU IS SHOWING

*"With mere good intentions,
hell is proverbially paved."*

By Jerry Marlatt

Manager, The Northmoor CC
Highland Park, Illinois

The busy manager often realizes that he should create a change in his menu, but often something prevents him from doing so at the time he is made most aware of the problem. During a lull in your operations, take a long, hard, analytical look at your menu. After doing this, why not do something about it. (We are only talking now about the printed—breakfast, luncheon, sandwich list, a la carte or wine selection menu—not the daily menu, insert or flyer, which will be discussed later.)

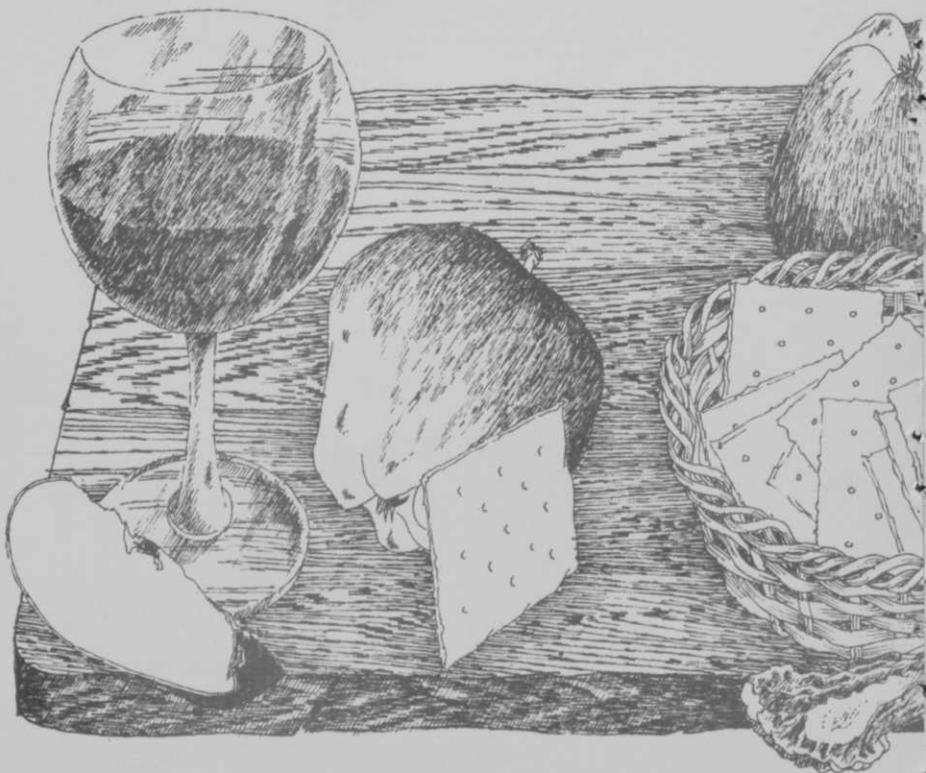
First, look at your club's statement of dining room policy, which is better known as the menu. Your menu might be regarded as your as well as the club's calling card. How often does a guest request a souvenir menu to take back to his club or manager? What is the first thing a visiting manager asks for when he makes a visit to your club? How often do you think menus from your club are discussed at board meetings at other clubs?

Like a calling card, a menu should be neat, clean and easy to read. It must in some way reflect the personality of the club and its food service. Even if you want to get an extra month's use from the menu cover, even if the breakfast waitress forgot to wipe it off, even if that new girl in the office cannot spell, you should

still prevent this problem because the menu could fall into the hands of the persons we have previously mentioned. I do not think it is necessary to dwell on this point to any greater degree, but do check this area as you analyze the other factors.

Next, note how old the menu is. It could have been printed that morning and still be 10 years

old. Have you just been reprinting it year after year with only a change in the color of the stock or ink? Try to determine when the menu was created. With the rapid rise in food costs, you might find it economical to throw out these 5,000 menus you have in the storage cabinet and print up new ones, if only to change the price structure to better reflect



today's restaurant prices.

If you can pinpoint when your menu was created, you will then know the length of time your members have had to look at the same items, wording and prices. Just as you may grow tired of seeing the same billboard on the expressway, the unchanging commercials on television or that old housecoat your wife has been wearing since you came back from your honeymoon, your members may have grown tired of your menu. If those billboards, commercials or that housecoat irk you, then think of how a member feels each time he gets your menu thrust in front of him.

I once visited a manager, noted the excellent variety of luncheon items he presented on his menu and complimented him. His reply was to the effect, "Hell, my members order in the parking lot!" He explained that regard-

less of how much variety he presented, how often he changed and the efforts he placed into the menu, his members still ordered the same items day after day. In fact, he went on to explain, in spite of his excellent menu, most of his lunch diners ordered, "A hamburger, medium."

If this presents a problem at your club, first place yourself in the position of the member and try to understand why this happens.

1. *Confidence.* The member must first have confidence in the items you put on the menu, before he will try new or varied dishes. If he has been burned once, don't expect him to want to be burned again. If you do not make a dish well, with excellent ingredients, and present it in an attractive way, then don't put it on the menu.

2. *Tried and true.* If your kitchen staff can prepare well: fried

chicken, baked ham, roast beef and broiled steaks, you would be better off to list only those than to attempt emulating the Four Seasons, Imperial House or Ondines in your menu presentation. Some menus show only that you possess adequate funds in your printing budget, a French dictionary and the ability to run an adding machine.

3. *Food warranty.* Your members desire more than a menu. At today's prices your members are making an investment in the selection of menu items you present to them. Your menu becomes an implied warranty, stating in effect: "Careful thought has gone into the selection of these items. We use only the best ingredients that pricing will allow and we utilize the best skills and talents of our kitchen staff. And a most careful inspection has been made

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ILLUSTRATED BY BILL GOLDSMITH

Your menu is showing

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before these items were delivered to you. If after receiving this merchandise our products are not all that we have expressed them to be, you are invited to return them and we will either make the necessary repairs or refund the purchase price." You would expect a warranty from an appliance, but think in terms of a \$6.95 sirloin steak! Many good food operators don't give a written warranty to their customers, but every reputable food establishment lives up to this unwritten guarantee.

4. *Truthful advertising.* Most food manufacturers maintain rigid labeling standards of their products. Ingredients must be listed, and more agencies than the Food and Drug Administration have an interest in the sale and promotion of food products. Rigid rules and regulations govern not only the labels, the ingredients, the method

of presentation, but even how and what can be said in the advertising of these products. What would happen if truth in advertising became a law in menu making?

No longer could Bleu cheese, for which some persons charge extra, be passed off as Roquefort dressing. The 16-ounce U.S. prime steaks would have to have grading stamps visible to the diner, and that stuff, which is labeled whipped cream, just might have to be called "chilled, vegetable topping." Therefore, when making up your menu, be truthful with your members.

For example, if you serve a special dressing, associated only with your club, label it: Our Chef's Dressing or the XYZ Club Dressing. Should you secure a special cut of meat from your local butcher, which your members enjoy, label it: the ABC Club Steak. But unless it is, never indicate it as New York cut, strip sirloin steak. I must also

caution some of you that just because you have a copy of Larousse's "Gastronomique" or an Escoffier cookbook, do not attempt to place these dishes on your menu unless you have the culinary staff to back them up. Try them, test them, and if you can produce them, then use them on flyers rather than on your printed menu. While today's chef or baker may be able to prepare such items, who knows what can happen tomorrow.

Time Magazine recently carried an excellent article on menus and how some establishments have gone to great lengths to add descriptive phrasing to menu construction. Some clubs, attempting to imitate competitors, have tried this approach.

When I hear phrases such as Finger Lickin' chicken; Tenderloin; beef, a la Emile Swinford or Red Eye gravy, I just do not know what the menu maker might be saying. Although Rock Salt Encrusted standing ribs or native Colorado beef, Fin Herbers



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and Au Jus sound beautiful, I always wonder if there is any roast beef on the menu.

In a club menu, these kinds of adjectives should be kept to a minimum. However, you can still present a fine menu if a uniform system such as the following is used.

1. *Preparation method*: roasted, baked, sauteed, deep fried, broiled, stewed; in short, "How did you cook it?"

2. *Major ingredients*: prime ribs of beef, breast of chicken, Rocky Mountain trout, Chincoteague oysters, tenderloin of beef, pot roast; or to be brief, "What was it made from?"

3. *Additions*: bernaise sauce, poached egg, rasher of bacon, melted butter or julienne of vegetables. Again, "What is added to it after you have cooked it?"

4. *Garnishes*: au jus, orange glac'e, almondine, tartar sauce, mushroom cap or broiled tomato should be added, if they are important. I think here you are actually saying: "How is it going to look?"

5. *Other*: You should give more information to the member, if important. Dis-jointed, en casserole, sliced, creamed or marinated will inform your diners of something that is necessary.

Even though I stress simplicity in descriptions, if a menu carries an item such as: breast of chicken, en casserole Embassy Club, a short explanation below it is in order. This will give your member some idea of the dish, how it was prepared, what ingredients and what cooking methods were used.

Keep the language and verbiage to a minimum; it will eliminate confusion, misunderstanding and disappointments.

MENU CONSTRUCTION

We are not going to go into great detail about constructing a menu, what kind of items should be included or the rules of menu making. I would like to stimulate your imagination about your menu by asking a question or two.

1. *Breakfast menu*. Does your menu have a complete breakfast at a set price? Having a complete breakfast will result in higher

check averages and eliminate the "Gimme a sweet roll and cup of coffee" member. You have to stimulate his interest or you will attract the ordering-in-the-parking-lot member.

Do you have a hot cereal breakfast during the colder months? Is coffee (all they can drink) contained in your menu price? Nothing is more irritating to a member than finding an extra charge for a second or third cup of coffee. Include it in your price, and if they drink less, aren't you ahead?

Do you have a men's grill-type potato on your breakfast menu? Do you have hash brown or cottage fried or some other type of hearty potato for the early morning golfer who wants to skip lunch?

2. *Luncheon menu*. Does it contain eggs in some manner? Breakfast is not being served, yet your guest may have risen late. What about those dishes a man may never get at home: braised ox tails, corned beef and cabbage, roladen of beef, home-made chili, liver and onions and fricasse of chicken? We mention some hearty men's grill-type food, but do you have something for the dieter? My club has a "Fat Boy Special," consisting of eight ounces of prime, lean chopped steak; four ounces of large curd cottage cheese; half a can of peaches, plus three pieces of Rye Krisp. A daily special of one diet item has proven successful with my members. Why not try it?

Desserts at luncheon can be successful if they are aimed at the calorie conscious member. Try fresh berries, grapefruit baked Alaska, prune whip and low calorie ice creams and sauces.

3. *Dinner menu*. What about the man or woman who has been to a large luncheon and now accompanies his respective mate to the club for dinner? Do you have something interesting for the light eater? Try this one: Hamburger Henry VIII, consisting of eight ounces of prime, chopped beef to which one ounce of red wine has been added. Broil, and when almost done, put crumbled Roquefort or Bleu cheese on top. Garnish with juli-

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Menu ideas

Here are simple menu ideas which I have seen in various clubs during my travels.

COSMOS CLUB

Washington, D.C.

On the menu was listed a cheese board. Four or five types of cheeses were presented on a large wooden cutting board. It was accompanied by apple wedges and an assortment of Bents water, Euphrates and various type crackers. Who could resist such an item?

EVANSTON GOLF CLUB

Skokie, Ill.

A sandwich Smorgasbord was presented on a large silver tray at luncheon. Ready-to-serve, one selected from six types of sandwiches. If two persons wanted the same kind of sandwich, it took only a minute to bring another one from the kitchen.

SOANGETAHA CC

Decatur, Ill.

Frank Kern, the manager, presented a delightful substitute for potatoes, which also combated the high cost of wild rice. He uses brown rice, to which he adds pecan halves which have been sauteed in butter and a little salt. Delicious!

NORTHMOOR CC

Highland Park, Ill.

I mentioned grapefruit baked Alaska previously. Segment a juicy grapefruit half; chill, add a small scoop of lime sherbet in the center and top with meringue. Brown in a hot broiler and serve immediately.

If you have any ideas similar to the ones in this article, send them to GOLFDOM Magazine, 235 East 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017, and we will reprint them. Write them on your club stationery or send us a copy of your menu.

Your menu is showing

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enne style onion rings which have been french fried.

Again, at dinner try those dishes that the wife doesn't make any more as specials. But also try to have a club special on the same night of the week, each week. If a member wants Hungarian beef

goulash, the way you make it at the club, he knows he can get it any Thursday night. If you like New England boiled dinners, however, a member has to be there on Tuesday night to get it.

Desserts can include the ice creams, sherberts, sundaes and those items you carry every day. Flyers can contain such items as cinnamon baked apple, old-fashioned rice or bread pudding and

apple pie with Parmesan cheese in the crust. More dessert sales will occur, however, and more will power can be fought by using a dessert table. Put the desserts where members can see them as they enter the dining room. Let guests cut their own portions and then sit back and see how many desserts you can sell.

We have dwelt on some segments of the menu in this article which are intended only as a stimulant to you if you are thinking of changing your menu. Excellent books on menu making are available through your trade associations, university publishers and local book stores. □



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There's an evolution in the kitchen



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