

Inside foodservice

compiled by
Herman Zaccarelli,
foodservice editor



large, integrated foodservice organization, except in one notable way: the scale of operations in foodservice is vastly greater, embracing a volume of fresh and processed food items and food-related products that is beyond the imagination of the average home food preparer.

This magnifies the importance of competent planning and management. If club foodservice people aren't looking ahead and anticipating change, sooner or later they will pay the price. How soundly they understand the intricacies of the national food dollar — both its complex components and its likely trend — goes far toward determining their success and their customers' ultimate satisfaction.

And if there is more to the food dollar than meets the casual eye — more, that is, than the mere cost of the wheat in the bread or the milk in the dairyman's pail — there is likewise more to the foodservice dollar than just the food. A similar assortment of cost components levies a substantial toll. Taxes, interest, energy, transportation, and labor expenses all add up enormously.

For example, considerably more than half of total operating costs and expenses are allocated to items other than food. If we bear in mind the information revealed in the USDA's cost-components report, this fact about our own food dollar will come as no surprise. The plain truth is that often nowadays the ancillary costs of doing business are the major costs of business, and for an obvious reason: inflation does not pick and choose its spots. It strikes hard at every facet of operations, bar none. Little wonder, then, that it has food business people gnashing their teeth.

How to not handle problems

- Look embarrassed when a difficult problem is brought up. Hint that it is in bad taste, or too elementary for mature consideration.
- Say that the problem cannot be separated from other problems. Therefore, no problem can be solved until all problems are solved.
- Rationalize the status quo; there is much to be said for it.
- Point out that those who see the problem do so because they are unhappy — rather than vice versa.
- Carry the problem into other areas; show that it exists everywhere. Hence, everyone will have to live with it.

Club foodservice costs

Hidden between the lines of any food cost report are two facts about food economics well worth remembering. First, the cost breakdown on any single foodstuff is not a year-to-year constant. A weather refersal might sharply alter the farmer's share of the food dollar from one production season to the next. Or a hefty wage boost in some stage of a food item's journey from farm to consumer might hike the item's end-cost at the very time that its basic raw material experiences a price decline. As a case in point, we have the recent price history of bread; the labor component of bread's cost has been nearly double the farm-commodity component.

Just as the price complexion of a single food item can change swiftly, due to abrupt variations among its several cost components, so too can the overall price makeup of the entire marketbasket of food. One year sugar prices soar, the next year they plunge. First pork is a luxury and beef a bargain; then the tables turn. In hundreds of ways the patterns of gyration and change are repeated constantly.

Same story for club foodservice

Complex and unpredictable. In a nutshell, that's how the food economy looks to the individual food consumer. It's no different for a

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