

## **Menu Goals, Traps, Do's & Don'ts- A short list from several operators.**

Reprinted in part from R&I

Customer comments that find support in sales analyses are useful when considering which items to keep and which to drop. Another bottom-line-boosting key is having every item offered—drinks, specials, desserts—in print so that customers can more easily peruse the selections.

"Anything you put in print in front of customers is going to sell," "It's very important that we have our beverage selection in print for guests to select from, because they will."

Page Turners

Experts offer these starting points for menu design:

### **MENU GOALS**

Ease of use. Basic user-friendliness—in the menu's physical size, in the font's style and size, and in the organization of items—is key. "I like to be able to find the things I want to find," says Doug MacDonald of Boston's The Gourmet Pizza

A design that matches the restaurant's concept and purpose. The menu "is part of the whole experience to take you someplace else," says Free Range Productions President Gary Tarr. Adds MacDonald: "You want something that says something about where you are."

Standout artistic elements. "What people do with the physical menu—laminating it to a sheet of bamboo, or the way the menu is clipped or attached to a backing," can spark guest interest, says Scott Logan of Blue Mermaid Island Grill.

### **MENU TRAPS**

Clutter. "Jam-packed menus" are a pet peeve of Tarr's. "Seeing one thing on a menu in three different places" irks Logan.

Yawn-worthy presentation. Though readability is critical, a simple list of menu items and their prices in an everyday serif font is a bore, says Tarr.

Misspellings. For the sake of professionalism and continuity, proofread.

### **Add/Subtract**

Choice is good, but when Dallas-based Boston's The Gourmet Pizza overhauled its menu design in 2005, the chain's executives realized they had too much of a good thing. A surfeit of selections made for a menu that was hard to handle.

"We heard a couple of themes [from customers]," says Boston's President Doug MacDonald. "The first was that it was too big, too unwieldy—a party of six couldn't read them together. And the other was navigation; we heard that it was kind of crowded and busy." The old menu was a trifold with more than 100 items; the new menu features around 90 items on seven 11-inch by 9.5-inch pages in a binder.

Boston's also upgraded its food photography. The current menu features two full-page pizza photos and no more than four smaller photos per page. "If you put in a picture of an item, it will sell; if you put a box around it, it will sell a little better," MacDonald says. "If you're trying to do that with everything, it becomes clutter."