

Impacting Food Cost

Introduction:

Controlling Food Cost is every Manager's responsibility. As a FOH Manager, your responsibilities are not limited to just the front-of-house activities and staff. While you have direct impact and responsibility for how the Front-of-the-House runs, your role as a Golden Corral Manager goes way beyond that. At times, you will be the only Manager on Duty and as such, you will have the direct responsibility of ensuring the restaurant meets all standards, not just service and cleanliness, but also Labor, Food Cost, and Profitability. As a FOH Manager, you need to be aware of recipe changes, food-quality focus items, and Back-of-the-House activities.

Front Line Focus:

Controlling Food Cost starts on the front line. Properly ringing up orders is the first step. Monitor your cashiers. Are they ringing up every ticket in the same manner—drinks first, then buffet orders? Are Servers checking tickets at the table to ensure all orders have been rung up correctly? Are your kid's meals, big cups, discounts, voids, and GC On The Go meals consistent across all shifts, or are there times when the percentage of these items is much higher? This is a sign that there may need to be some retraining or monitoring to ensure orders are rung up correctly. Use the C-5 and other financial reports to help monitor what is going on at the cash register. Getting all sales entered correctly is the first step in controlling Food Cost and increasing your ticket average.

Ticket Average:

There is a saying in the restaurant business that "sales cure all ills." There are two ways to increase sales. The first is to increase the number of Guests you are serving. The second is to increase the amount of money each Guest spends on average, in other words, increase the ticket average.

As a buffet concept, we are limited in the ways that we can increase ticket average beyond ensuring all orders are entered correctly. The main opportunity to increase ticket average lies in increasing beverage sales. It doesn't take many Guests switching from water to iced tea or a soft drink, or even a Big Cup, to see an increase in beverage percentage. Use the information on Increasing Beverage Sales found in your workbook to identify ways your restaurant can grow its current ticket average.

Server Focus:

There are many different elements that go into managing and controlling Food Cost. Monitoring the amount of food product wasted on a shift-by-shift basis is one way a FOH Manager and your Servers may positively influence Food Cost. Your Servers can play a critical

Impacting Food Cost

role in monitoring waste. Servers are aware of what the Guest is or is not consuming. By building relationships with Guests, Servers can ask the Guests why a certain food item is not being finished. Train your Servers to promptly notify a Manager whenever they notice a problem with a product.

Conducting bar checks is another way to help ensure your restaurant is consistently providing quality food and presenting a well-stocked and clean buffet. Food that does not meet our quality standards actually costs the restaurant more than preparing and maintaining high quality food. If a Guest takes a product and doesn't eat it because it doesn't meet our recipe standards, what happens? It is thrown away and the Guest will go back for something else. Wasted food has a 100% Food Cost, not to mention that you have just doubled the labor cost. You paid to have a Co-worker(s) prepare the original product and now you are paying them again to prepare the replacement. Twice the labor and twice the Food Cost over what it would have cost if it had been prepared correctly the first time. It isn't just about the food or labor cost. If the Guest has a poor experience, will that Guest come back? It is hard to grow your business if you don't have repeat Guests.

Conducting bar checks isn't just about wiping down the bar or sweeping the floor. Train your staff to look at the food, the pans, and the utensils, all from the Guests' view. A Server may not know how to prepare the meatloaf, but that Server can tell when it is overcooked, burned, or has been sitting out so long that the topping is crusted in the pan. Train your staff to bring any food issues to the attention of the Manager-on-Duty. If it isn't something they would be happy serving to their family, then why would we try and serve it to our Guests?

Communication:

At times, it can be hard for the Kitchen Staff to know how many Guests are in line or when a large group is expected. This can lead to overproduction of food, which impacts quality and Food Cost, or underproduction, which leads to unhappy Guests. Rushing to produce more product quickly can encourage short cuts in how an item is prepared to ensure there is food on the bar.

As the FOH Manager, you can take the lead role in communicating Guest flow to the kitchen. Did an unexpected team bus just pull into the parking lot? Do you have a large party scheduled for a specific time? Are sales trends for the meal period up or down? By communicating Guest flow to the kitchen, it allows the Back-of-the-House to manage food production more easily.

Impacting Food Cost

Conclusion:

Every Manager, on every shift, needs to focus on cleanliness, Guest service, food safety, food quality, and profitability. Maintaining a low Food Cost is an ongoing process. Effective management of Food Cost is the establishment of systems, both in the Front- and the Back-of-House. Systems only work effectively if there is continual follow-up and commitment on the part of the Management Team. Active Management means Managers are managing. The Manager on Duty has to be giving direction throughout the day; letting Co-workers know what to do and how to do it. By working together as a team, great things can and will happen.