

Resource 11: Tips for a popular, manageable, and profitable menu

Food Quality	
Make foods fun	Use fun shapes and patterns and give foods fun names. Offer meal deals such as the 'Boost Pack', 'Energizer' or 'Fruitylicious Pack' or name meal deals after prominent sports people.
Offer tasty foods	Free taste tests are a good idea for testing out new menu ideas. This can help to gauge their popularity before being added to the menu.
Visual appeal	Ensure foods are packaged and displayed well so they look appetising by using plenty of colourful foods (wrapping in plastic and using clear containers help).
Suitability of items for all age groups	Offer a variety of serve sizes such as half sandwiches and/or wraps.
Sufficient variety	Ensure that different needs and tastes are accommodated. For example, provide a selection of sandwich fillings, vegetarian/meat based meals, savoury/sweet selections and a variety of base sauces for dishes.
Seasonal foods	Fruit and vegetables in season generally tend to be cheaper. Talk to local suppliers about which items offer the best quality, freshness, taste and value.
Efficiency and Economy	
Balance variety and choice	<p>Large numbers of menu items can also be harder to manage. Add new items for variety, but don't forget to remove old ones. Specials are a good way to offer variety week-to-week without greatly increasing the number of items on the menu.</p> <p>Determine a manageable number of menu items that is appropriate for the circumstances such as preparation time and available space.</p>
Affordability	<p>Many canteens adopt a policy to mark-up less healthy RED or AMBER items in order to promote healthier GREEN foods and drinks.</p> <p>Choose if this is suitable for your club.</p> <p>Don't sell items below cost price unless part of a promotion or otherwise will be discarded.</p>

Time effective	Design a menu that is not time consuming to deliver. Avoid menus that offer a large choice of meals, use a lot of ingredients or are complicated to prepare. Create a menu that requires very little last minute preparation of items during peak service times.
Minimise preparation	Minimise preparation and maximise output by organising and streamlining tasks. Consider when foods need to be ready, preparation time, cooking time, equipment requirements and staffing requirements. For example, fillings for sandwiches, wraps, burgers and salads can be prepared at the same time. Provide a task timeline to volunteers.
Use the same ingredients in a variety of ways	This can save on costs. For example, choose two meats and use these to prepare four meals or snacks. Tuna and chicken could be chosen and used to make sandwiches, pasta, burgers and pita bread pizza.
Appropriate equipment	Choose appropriate equipment for preparation and storage. Source donations for small scale equipment such as chopping boards, utensils and containers. Large scale equipment such as fridge/freezers and machinery may require donations from industry or funding through available grants.
Efficient and convenient meal order system	Consider options that enable customers to order food ahead of time. Consider prepaid meal deal cards that allow customers to pay in advance, but collect different items at different times.
Limit waste	Ensure there is sufficient storage space for freezing leftovers. Provide instructions for volunteers that specifically outline the type and quantity of ingredients for menu items. Use leftovers and items close to their use-by-date for specials or in standard dishes.
Promotion	
Specials	Specials stimulate interest. They are a great way to assess the popularity of items and a guide as to whether or not they should become regular menu items.
Meal deals	Good value meal deals can encourage people to choose healthier options. Combinations could include a toasted sandwich, fresh milk or juice and a piece of fruit; or low-fat burger with salad, bottle of water and low-fat fruit muffin.

Adapted with permission from NAQ Nutrition.