



How to Write a Best-Selling Menu

*A few simple tricks and following some rules
can bring more profitability to your bar or club*

Every bar and nightclub has a menu but many operators don't give it enough attention. Think about it: This menu passes through the hands of almost every person who patronizes your venue. Isn't it time to treat it with a little respect?

Arlene Spiegel is a hospitality consultant in New York City and is a big believer in using your menu wisely. "A menu is real estate and every dish has to earn its rent on it. So the menus have to be positioned from a design standpoint, where you bring the most attention to the items that bring you the highest profit."

The big mistake bar and nightclub operators make is using food/beverage cost percentages instead of gross profit margin to figure out menu items they should highlight the most, she says.

"You may have a 30% food cost on a burger and a 50% cost on a steak dinner, but the person eating that steak will contribute a much higher net profit margin for the time the guest is spending in that seat."

Don't just focus on the high profit items, but also your signature items, Spiegel says. "Highlight exclusive items so you create a cravability and a stickiness in the customer's mind and you become known for it. I would highlight or box those in some way — or even just raise the font up from 12 to 14."

Spiegel's a fan of rounding out your numbers — to \$12 for example, rather than \$11.50 or \$11.95. "People know if it says 12 that's what it costs. Don't use dollar signs so it doesn't seem like money so why clutter the page?"

"When possible, provide the halo effect," says Spiegel, so highlight what's good about your food or beverage. If beef is grass-fed, note it; if you grow the herbs for your cocktails, include details. "All of a sudden a mojito has a halo effect if you use your own mint."

Don't write too much. Write more about the more expensive drinks and dishes, but there's no need to explain a burger, Spiegel says. Long menus slow service and lead to fewer table turns. ●