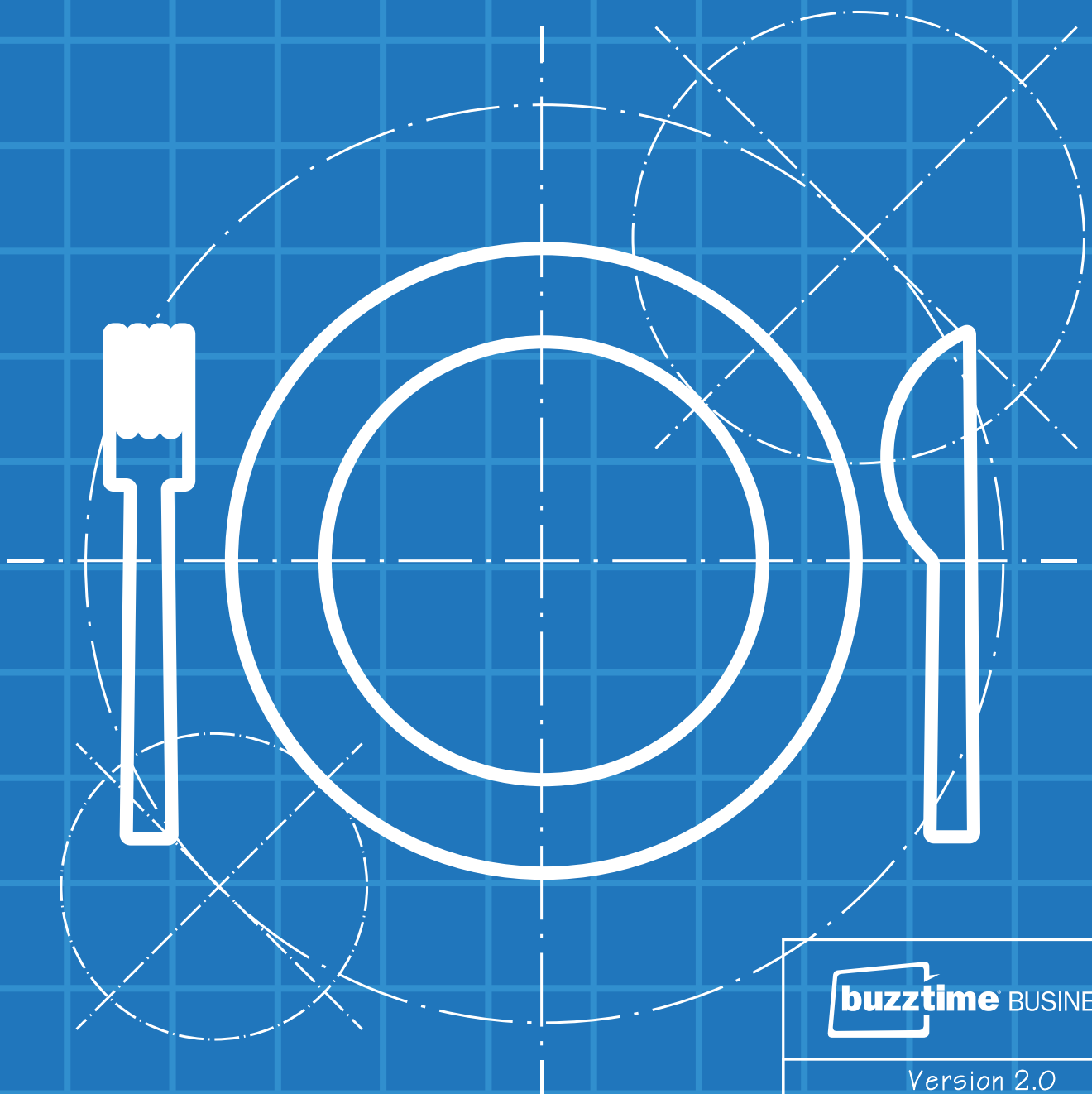


How to Create a MENU That Sells



buzztime BUSINESS

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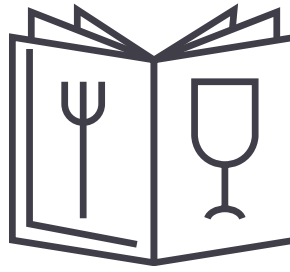


The Blueprint No Menu Engineer Wants You to See

Like a star server, your menu can upsell and increase guest satisfaction. To unleash the power of this “silent seller,” think like a menu engineer. Every variable has a bottom line impact: from fonts to layout, item descriptions to depicting prices.

Now, you have access to the menu engineer’s blueprints and toolkit. Apply these menu-selling strategies and watch guests order up...way up.

- 14 DOs and DON'Ts for Menus That Sell
- 5 Ways Tablet Menus Increase Sales
- When to Update Your Menu
- Put Local on the Menu: 3 Reasons Why + 10 Sources



DESCRIBING AND NAMING MENU ITEMS

1) *DON'T Short Shell Your Side Dishes*

Both frozen and fresh vegetables are low cost, but you can sell them for a higher price by preparing – and naming – them creatively. Stanford University found that vegetable dishes with “indulgent descriptors” **were selected 25% more** than standard names. Examples from the study included:

Carrots > Twisted Citrus-Glazed Carrots

Sweet Potatoes > Zesty Ginger-Tumeric Sweet Potatoes

Zucchini > Slow-Roasted Caramelized Zucchini Bites

[Source: Stanford University Medical Center](#)

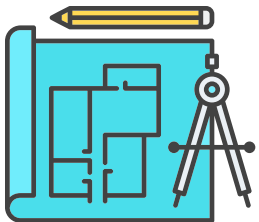
2) *DO Go into Graphic Detail*

Another study highlights the importance of descriptive names for menu items – both food and drinks. In a study by Cornell University Food Brand Lab, researchers discovered that **menu items with descriptive titles were ordered 27% more** than those with simple titles. Plus, **consumers would pay up to 10% more** for the vividly descriptive dish.

Burger with Blue Cheese > Black n’ Blue Burger with Black Angus Beef and Creamy Blue Cheese

Gin Gimlet > Gin Gimlet with Key Lime Juice, Local Cucumber, and Fresh Basil

[Source: Cornell University Food Brand Lab](#)



109 SECONDS

A Gallup poll found that people spend less than 2 minutes browsing your menu. Use boxes or bold fonts to make sure your highest margin menu items catch their eyes!

3) *DON'T Be Brief*

Stanford University professor Daniel Jurafsky analyzed over 6,500 restaurant menus at high-end eateries, diners, and everywhere in between. He found that menu items with **longer-than-average words** in the descriptions were priced higher. Some of the words Jurafsky noted were:

- Decaffeinated (instead of “decaf”), traditionally, overflowing, inspiration, exquisitely, preparation, and complements or complimented by (instead of “sides” or “comes with”) Decaffeinated (instead of “decaf”), traditionally, overflowing, inspiration, exquisitely, preparation, and complements or complimented by (instead of “sides” or “comes with”)

[Source: The Language of Food: A Linguist Reads the Menu](#)

4) *DO Keep It in the Family*

Researchers found that menu titles that mention family, tradition, and patriotism resulted increased sales. Of all three variables, **menu item names associated with family had the highest sales increase.**

Pan Pizza > Grandma's Favorite Pizza

Pumpkin Pie > Mayflower Pumpkin Pie

Clam Chowder > Traditional Clam Chowder

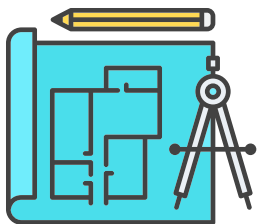
[Source: Université de Bretagne-Sud, France](#)

5) *DON'T Overwhelm Guests with Too Many Options*

A study showed that fine dining restaurants with **7-10 menu items per category** benefited from higher sales. Quick service or fast casual concepts should strive for just **6 items per category.**

- If you overload your menu, guests begin suffering from “choice overwhelm.” Guests then put down the menu, and order a “simple” item like a basic burger instead of your high-margin skirt steak dinner.

[Source: Bournemouth University](#)



CATER TO DIETARY PREFERENCES: GLUTEN FREE AND VEGETARIAN

Customers are looking for menus that meet their dietary needs. Work with your chefs to create new dishes – or variations of current dishes – that are vegetarian or gluten-free. Highlight these items on your menu with “V” and “G” symbols.

- *Vegetarians do not eat meat (vegans avoid all animal products including dairy and eggs). According to [Harris Research](#), 37% of all restaurant guests occasionally seek out meat-free meals.*
- *Gluten-free patrons will not consume any wheat-containing food or drink. [A Gallup Poll](#) found that 1 in 5 Americans seek out gluten-free food.*

6) DO Use Good, Better, Best

If you can, **offer 3 variations** of your most popular menu item. Many studies show that guests often go for the middle option or splurge on the best to treat themselves. Here's an example for nachos:

- **Aztec King Nachos** **14-**
The ultimate nacho plate with pickled jalapenos, shredded sirloin and creamy queso
- **House Nachos** **9-**
Topped with sharp cheddar and ground Angus beef, served w/ pico de gallo salsa
- **Nachos con Salsa Trio** **11-**
Our House Nachos with a trio of house-made salsas

7) DON'T Invite Price Comparisons

Never list your menu items from cheapest to most expensive. Guests will often choose the least expensive. Instead, **mix it up** so guests focus on the actual items – not the prices.

Source: Shared by a Menu Engineer



HOW TO DISPLAY PRICES

8) *DON'T Show Dollar Signs or Zeroes*

How should an \$8 martini appear on your menu? **Never add double zeros.** It subconsciously suggests expense (an \$800 martini? No thank you). You should also lose the dollar sign. Your best bet? One of these 3 options:

Martini 8-

Martini 8.

Martini 8

[Source: Cornell University Center for Hospitality Research](#)

9) *DO Use the Magic Number 9*

Customers love the number 9, so you should make that martini 9 bucks! In a study of clothing by MIT and University of Chicago researchers, customers bought more of an item when it was priced at \$39 – **even compared to \$34.**

[Source: University of Chicago and MIT](#)

10) *DO Use Common Cents*

Do you cater to a value-seeking crowd? Include cents next to your prices as it shows that you're giving a great value. Studies show that .95 and .99 are ideal amounts to convey value. **If you serve guests who aspire to luxury, do not display cents.**

Martini 8.99

Martini 8.95

[Source: Cornell University Center for Hospitality](#)



PUT YOUR BEST FONT FORWARD

11) *DON'T Be Straight Up*

If you want to be perceived as a restaurant or bar that delivers top-rate service, simply use the italic version of any font.

Totally Loaded Nachos

~~Totally Loaded Nachos~~

[Source: International Journal of Hospitality Management](#)

12) *DO Round Up for Bigger Dessert Sales...*

Use a rounder typeface, and guests will perceive menu items as tasting sweeter, according to Oxford research. For guests with a sweet tooth, seeing a round font could mean the difference between ordering dessert – and skipping it.

New York Style Cheesecake (Century Gothic Font)

~~New York Style Cheesecake (Agency FB Font)~~

[Source: Oxford University](#)

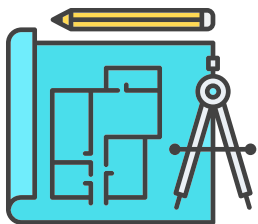
13) *DO Square Up to Increase Craft Beer Sales*

Participants in the same study said that angular, square fonts made them think of “bitter” and “sour” tastes. That’s exactly how a craft beer lover wants those trendy IPA and sour beers! Use angular fonts on your beer menu.

Sam Adams Double IPA

~~Sam Adams Double IPA~~

[Source: Oxford University](#)



PUT IT ON MY TABLET

Take digital tablet menus a step further: look for those with guest-facing order and payment. For example, Buzztime tablets come equipped with menu software that interfaces with most POS systems.

- In one click, guests can send orders straight to the kitchen – without waiting for a server.
- Guests can close their bill and pay when they're ready, directly and securely on the tablet.
- Tablets come equipped with integrated EMV (“chip”) card readers for PCI-compliant transactional security.

According to a study by [The National Restaurant Association](#), 39% of smartphone users want to use their phone to pay for a meal. Buzztime tablets include NFC readers that can process mobile SamsungPay and ApplePay transactions.

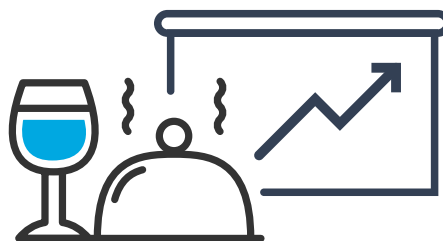
14) DON'T Be Too Easy to Read

Another study found that when guests see intricate, hard-to-read fonts for menu items, they believe your staff took extra care to prepare them. Customers are **more willing to pay extra** for all that hard work! The study used the “Mistral” font as an example:

Caramel Apple Martini

Caramel Apple Martini

Source: University of Michigan



5 WAYS TABLET MENUS INCREASE SALES

It's Time to Put Tech on the Menu

From fine dining to sports bars, many establishments are going digital with their menus. Instead of printed paper menus, guests receive digital touchscreen tablets. It's a way of giving today's patrons what they crave: more technology. At the same time, tech – like tablet menus – can improve your bottom line.

Good for Guests

73% of today's guests agree that technology improves their restaurant or bar experience.

[Source: Toast POS Restaurant Success Industry Report](#)

Good for Business

4 in 5 restaurateurs agree that technology increases sales and provides a competitive advantage.

[Source: National Restaurant Association Technology Report](#)

1) Customization Options Increase Sales and Loyalty

Tablet menus let guests click to see all customization options for each menu item. Customization is very important for patrons ages 21-34. A 2017 [Accenture Loyalty Study](#) found that 54% of millennials are more loyal to businesses that let them “create something unique to me.”

2) Upsell on Autopilot

The best tablet menus “suggest” add-ons for dishes. If a guest is ordering a salad, most tablets show a prompt: *want to add chicken for \$5?* Even a great server can't recite every possible “extra” for each dish.

3) Let Pictures Do the Selling

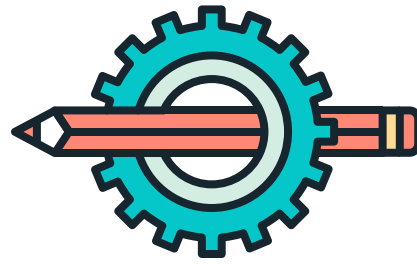
Have a high-margin menu item you want to push? Feature a picture of it to increase orders up to 90%, according to an Iowa State University study on digital images.

4) Impulse Buys

Since guests don't have to wait on a server, they'll be more likely to order that next round before changing their minds. Most bars and restaurants leave tablet menus at the table – so guests can give into their urges at any time.

5) Sell More Specials

Customers may have been planning to order a specific dish when they sat down. But, by placing a picture of today's special on your tablet menu, they may be tempted to add that item to their order.



WHEN TO UPDATE YOUR MENU

Keeping your menu fresh and exciting is a critical step to increasing sales. Use these tips for updating your menu for maximum profit.

Update Your Menu with the Seasons

A good rule of thumb is to update your menu with every season. At the very least, update your menu 3 times per year.

Use the 70-20-10 Rule

This rule is often used to plan marketing budgets, but it works for menu engineering too. Apply this rule when you update your menu each quarter or season:

70% Menu Mainstays

Keep your high performing menu items...on the menu! There's nothing worse to guests than looking for a favorite dish, only to find it's been removed.

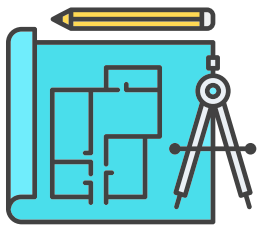
10% New Dishes

Devote 10% of your menu to trying out new dishes.

20% New Dishes That Were a Success

20% of your menu should include any of the new dishes that were a hit with customers in the previous quarter or season.

Repeat the process. That way, at least 30% of your menu is always changing – while the “classics” stay put as menu mainstays. Of course, monitor how menu mainstays are performing. If a classic isn't selling well, move an item from the 20% category into the 70% category.



DON'T PUT THE WORD "NEW" ON THE MENU

Only 30% of guests order menu items labeled as "new," fearing that those items haven't been "tested" by enough guests to earn a permanent position on the menu.

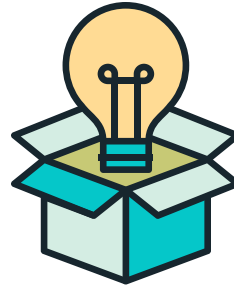
[Source: NPD Group Study](#)

Insider Tip! Check Commodities Pricing

On a quarterly basis, perform a cost analysis on every item on your menu. Why? **Because ingredient prices fluctuate. Updating your menu is a chance to increase your profit margin.** Keep an eye on the commodities markets using the USDA website.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price-outlook/summary-findings.aspx>

For example, in March 2017 beef wholesale prices were down 5% from March 2016. You could have adjusted your menu and marketing to focus on beef: hamburgers, steaks, etc.



PUT LOCAL ON THE MENU: 3 REASONS WHY + 10 BEST SOURCES

1) Gain a Competitive Advantage

According to a [study by Mintel](#), 62% of consumers try to “buy local” whenever they can. The same study found that when guests decide where to dine, 41% of them look for restaurants with local ingredients on the menu.

2) Reduce Food Costs, Improve Quality

Sourcing local ingredients revolves around seasonality. When tomatoes are in season, not only do they taste best – they’re cheaper. When food is shipped in from across the country, your distributor has to bury delivery costs somewhere...and it’s usually in your food cost.

3) Get Recommended by 72% of Your Customers

Want to get people talking about your restaurant? Source local ingredients – and support farmers and producers in your community. Customers will notice: [72% of consumers](#) recommend businesses that support a good cause over those that don’t.

10 Best Sources for Local Ingredients

1) Visit a Farmers Market

Use the [USDA Farmers Market Directory](#) to find your nearest market.

The farmers market is a great place to source – and be inspired by – local ingredients. Go to the market with business cards, as many farmers may not be able to sell bulk quantities on the spot.

2) Ask Your Local Extension Office

Use the [USDA NIFA Finder](#) to locate your county's extension office.

Some farmers only sell wholesale. To get a list of ALL farms near you, contact your county's extension office. It's a valuable (free) resource.

3) Find it at a Food Hub

To find the nearest food hub, use the [USDA Food Hub Directory](#).

If the thought of sourcing local ingredients from a dozen farmers makes your head spin, start with a food hub instead.

A food hub is an organization that manages the distribution for multiple local farms.

4) Talk to Your Distributor

Many broadline food distributors are getting in on the “buy local” trend. While most food products are sourced nationally or regionally, it's still worth asking your distributor if they carry any local products.

5) Grow it Yourself: Hyper Local Ingredients

“Hyper” local ingredients refer to fruits and vegetables grown at your location. Start small with a few herbs or lettuces in containers.

6) Tap Into a Local Brewery

Find your nearest local brewery using this [brewery finder](#).

With over 6,300 craft breweries across North America, chances are there's one near you. Inquire about putting their brews on tap.

7) Use Grower Associations for Local Ingredients

Use this list of [grower associations](#) to get started.

Similar to an extension office, a grower association can help you source local ingredients directly from producers.

8) Connect with Your Customers

Who knows, maybe one of your regulars is a beekeeper? Or, another customer might know a local beef farmer. Post on Facebook, send out an email, or put up signage asking your own customers for tips on where to source local ingredients.

9) Coffee Roasters

Like craft beer, locally roasted coffee is trending right now. See if you can buy from a local coffee roaster.

10) Local Schools and Colleges

Many schools and colleges have created on-site gardens where students can nurture their green thumb. Contact local schools in your area to see if you could source local ingredients from their garden.



Catch the Buzztime Effect.

Looking for a fresh, fun way to bring more guests to your tables – and keep them coming back? Join the Buzztime nation of 3,000 venues like yours serving up fun, games, and good times on our touchscreen tablets. Buzztime's social gaming solution brings everyone together at your place for trivia, live events, predictive sports, card tournaments, and arcade games.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? LET'S CHAT.

TALK WITH SOMEONE TODAY