



Factors affecting menu planning

You need to be aware of the following factors when planning menus:

- **cost** (ingredients as well as business costs)
- **portion control** (value for money without waste)
- **balanced diets/current national advice**
- **time of day** (breakfast, lunch, and dinner menus as well as small plates and snacks)
- **clients/customers** (a menu with prices that will suit the people who visit your establishment).

Equipment available

You need to know and understand the type of equipment needed to produce a menu. The choice of dishes will be influenced by the equipment available to the chef.

This includes kitchen equipment such as:

- hobs, ovens, and microwaves
- fridge, freezer and/or blast chiller
- specialist equipment, for example a *sous vide* or pizza oven
- hand-held equipment, for example electric whisks or hand-blenders
- other electric equipment, for example food processors.

Skills of the chef

The skills of the chef must be suited to the type of provision and the menu offered.

A Michelin starred restaurant will require a chef who has complex skills in preparation, cooking and presentation of dishes.

A café will require a chef who has a range of medium and complex skills to produce a suitable menu.

A large restaurant will normally have a full kitchen brigade while a smaller establishment may only have a single chef with one or two assistants.

Time available

The type of provision will influence the amount of time a customer may be willing to wait for their dish to be prepared. Can the chef prepare, cook, and present more than one dish at the same time? Can some items be made in advance?

Time of year

The time of year can affect menu choices. Light and cold dishes such as salads are better suited to the summer months. Hearty dishes such as stews are more suited to the winter. Special dishes linked to holidays such as Christmas and Valentine's Day may also be included. The availability of **seasonal** produce can also affect menu choices as certain commodities, for example strawberries, are less expensive when in season.

Environmental issues

The chef will need to think about environmental issues when planning a menu. Can the chef **reduce** the amount of ingredients bought as well as reducing food waste? Can the chef **reuse** ingredients to create new dishes for example stale bread made into bread-and-butter pudding? Can the kitchen **recycle** waste wherever possible? Running the kitchen sustainably will save money.

Organoleptic properties

Organoleptic properties are the sensory features of a dish (**appearance, aroma, flavour, and texture**).

The chef will need to think about how the dish will look and taste. Is there a range of colours? Do the flavours go well together? Are there a variety of textures?