

Module 4, Session 1

Slide 1 - Customer service and Communication

Introduction to Customer service and Communication session 1

Slide 2 - Session 1

In this session we will talk about the importance of thorough staff training on menu, menu changes and special offers and we want to educate staff on allergens and diets regarding to menu components.

Slide 3 - Introduction of the session

We know that food waste is a significant and pressing global issue that has far-reaching implications for the environment, economy and society. In the context of the hospitality industry, where food preparation and consumption are central to business operations, addressing food waste becomes paramount. By adopting good practices, businesses can not only reduce their environmental footprint but also enhance their reputation, cut costs, and contribute to a more sustainable future. The statistics surrounding food waste are staggering. In the hospitality sector, restaurants are among the main contributors to this waste. From kitchen inefficiencies to over-portioning and customer plate waste, there are multiple points along the food supply chain where waste can occur. To combat this issue, businesses need to rethink their practices and adopt a holistic approach to food waste reduction. This of course includes efficient waste collection and management processes.

Slide 4 - Education and staff training

That is employee awareness and engagement are pivotal in the fight against food waste. Restaurants should provide comprehensive training to kitchen staff, servers and management about the importance of waste reduction, portion control and efficient food handling. Regular workshops and seminars can keep employees informed about best practices and inspire them to actively participate in waste reduction initiatives.

Slide 5 - Knowing the menu

Staff training is a vital component of ensuring quality service in your restaurant, and this should include an education around the dishes on your menu. In this training, we outline five key benefits to making sure your front-of-house team knows your menu inside and out, and outline how you can introduce this type of training.

Slide 6 - Five reasons for menu training

1. **Upselling:** Staff training is crucial in order for upselling to become a regular and successful part of operation. When you feel knowledgeable and empowered enough to make helpful and smart suggestions to customers, this expertise can be easily translated into bigger bills at the end of the night.
2. **Authenticity:** The more educated servers are when it comes to dishes, the more confidence they'll have when responding to customer questions. Recommendations without the knowledge to back them up often fall flat; in situations where a server is asked which starter they would choose, or to recommend a wine pairing for the main course, a confident, in-the-know answer is often discernible from one that is pulled out of the air — and carries more weight.

3. Better service, improved loyalty: The level of service provided by your front-of-house team is elevated by expertise. When servers are knowledgeable and confident, this generates trust, increasing customer loyalty and making return visits more likely.
4. Better time efficiency: Running back and forth to the kitchen to ask questions wastes everyone's time. In addition, when a server leaves the table to "check with the chef," customers can lose faith in the overall quality of the establishment.
5. Smart allergen management: When customers have questions about potential allergens in your dishes, it's essential that your staff is well-informed. Staff who can answer questions with both authority and accuracy will make guests with allergies feel welcome and safe. Not only can extensive training in this area prevent serious incidents from occurring, but these guests are more likely to return or recommend the venue to friends and family.

Slide 7 - Ways to involve and educate your staff

When you're developing a new or updated menu, we recommend involving employees from the early stages. Front-of-house staff interact with your customers on a daily basis; as such, they often have valuable insights that you can use to inform your menu items, phrasing and descriptors.

Communicate to managers and supervisors that they will need to support you in getting staff up to speed with the menu. Co-create a training plan with them so that they can take ownership of the process and help bring their teammates on board.

Sit down for a full-menu tasting session with front-of-house staff. As they sample each dish, give them relevant and useful information around its ingredients (including allergens, if any), preparation, presentation, price and biggest selling points.

Explain how this training will benefit staff members; for example, discuss how the information provided will make upselling easier, boosting the average bill size and having a positive effect on tips as a result. Emphasize that this knowledge will make their jobs easier by giving them increased confidence in their interactions with customers.

This is an ongoing process, and should continue as your menu is tweaked and updated. If you've got a daily special, ask your kitchen staff to cook one portion at the beginning of the shift. Let servers sample the dish while the chef explains its ingredients, selling points and price, and encourage them to ask any questions they may have.

Slide 8 - How to learn the Menu?!

In this video is a strategy, not only to study the menu, but show you why it is important as knowing the menu will help you connect with your customers.

Slide 9 - Menu training

It is important that you can:

- describe all of the dishes on the menu in a simple and clear way, including what makes them special,
- accurately pronounce the names of all dishes and ingredients,
- identify allergens and suggest alternatives where possible,
- answer questions about ingredients and cooking methods,
- explain what sides or sauces will accompany each dish,
- highlight the provenance of your ingredients,
- identify your restaurant's signature dishes, and
- give appropriate advice around the portion size of each dish.

Slide 10 - Understanding dietary restrictions and preferences

Today, the importance of serve or catering to consumers with special diets is imperative to the prospects of any food business.

The first step is clear communication with your customer base about their specific dietary needs and restrictions.

These include allergies, lifestyle choices like vegetarianism or veganism, or dietary and cultural requirements including intolerances, health preferences and religious dietary restrictions.

Once you have a clear understanding of your customers' needs, you can take the order, plan a menu that meets their requirements while still offering a variety of options. Clear labelling of dishes and staff training are important for ensuring customer safety. Implementing the practices below will help you cater to all types of special diets and requirements.

Slide 11 – 1. Know the Common Dietary Restrictions

Allergies and Intolerances: These can range from mild to life-threatening. Common allergens include nuts, gluten, dairy, shellfish, and eggs. It's essential to know the ingredients in each dish and to communicate any allergy concerns to the kitchen.

Religious Dietary Laws: Many guests follow dietary laws based on their religious beliefs. For example, Muslims may require Halaal food, while Jews might seek kosher options. Understanding these needs and having options available can greatly enhance their dining experience.

Vegetarianism and Veganism: Vegetarians do not eat meat, and vegans avoid all animal products, including dairy and eggs. Knowing the difference and being able to suggest suitable menu items is key.

Health and Lifestyle Choices: Some guests may follow specific diets for health reasons or personal beliefs, such as the keto diet, paleo, or low-carb diets. Familiarity with these terms and the ability to offer appropriate options or modifications is beneficial.

Slide 12 - 2. Communication and education

Communication is key: Always ask guests if they have any dietary restrictions or preferences at the beginning of the meal. This proactive approach demonstrates attentiveness and care for their dining experience. Be honest about what the kitchen can accommodate and don't be afraid to ask for clarity on restrictions you're unfamiliar with.

Be informed and educate yourself: Take the initiative to learn about different dietary needs and how they can be met within your restaurant's menu. If your establishment offers training sessions, participate eagerly. Use resources like books, websites, and even apps that provide information on dietary restrictions and recipes.

Slide 13 – 3. Special Requests and Offer Alternatives

- When a guest makes a special request due to a dietary restriction, communicate this clearly and promptly to the kitchen. Ensure that there is a system in place to prevent cross-contamination for allergies, such as using separate utensils and cooking areas.
- Be familiar enough with your menu to suggest modifications or alternatives. For example, offer to replace a dairy ingredient with a plant-based alternative for a vegan guest or suggest a gluten-free dish. Your ability to provide options makes the dining experience more inclusive and enjoyable for everyone.

Slide 14 - 4. Always Double-Check

- Before serving, double-check that the meal meets the guest's dietary needs. This final step can prevent mistakes and shows the guest that their safety and satisfaction are your top priorities.

IMPORTANT:

- As a waiter or restaurateur, understanding and accommodating dietary restrictions and preferences is a significant part of the service you provide. By following these guidelines, you can ensure that all guests feel welcomed, respected, and cared for during their dining experience. Remember, the key to success in this area is knowledge, communication, and attention to detail.

Slide 15 - What is the Difference Between Allergy and Intolerance?

- The terms "allergy" and "intolerance" are often used interchangeably when it comes to reactions to certain foods, but they refer to very different physiological responses within the body.
- Understanding the difference between food allergy and intolerance is essential for correctly diagnosing and managing these conditions, as well as for providing the right advice and accommodations for individuals affected by them.

Here's a breakdown of the key differences:

Slide 16 – Food allergies vs. food intolerance

- In food allergies is Immune System Response: A food allergy involves the immune system. When someone with a food allergy consumes the allergen, their body mistakenly identifies it as a harmful substance. The immune system then produces antibodies called Immunoglobulin E (IgE) to combat the allergen, leading to an allergic reaction.
- Symptoms: Allergic reactions can affect the skin, gastrointestinal tract, respiratory system, and, in severe cases, the cardiovascular system. Symptoms can include hives, itching, swelling, difficulty breathing, vomiting, diarrhea, and anaphylaxis—a potentially life-threatening reaction that requires immediate medical attention.
- Onset: Allergic reactions typically occur soon after consuming the allergen, often within minutes to a couple of hours.
- Amount of Trigger Food: Even a tiny amount of the allergen can trigger an allergic reaction in sensitive individuals.
- In food intolerance the Digestive System Response is: Food intolerance primarily involves the digestive system and is not mediated by the immune system. It occurs when a person's digestive system is unable to properly digest a particular food or ingredient. This can be due to enzyme deficiencies, sensitivity to food additives, or reactions to naturally occurring chemicals in foods.
- Symptoms: Symptoms of food intolerance are generally less severe than allergic reactions and are primarily gastrointestinal. They can include gas, bloating, diarrhea, constipation, cramping, and nausea.
- Onset: Symptoms of food intolerance can appear hours to days after consuming the offending food, making it sometimes harder to identify the cause.
- Amount of Trigger Food: People with food intolerance may be able to consume small amounts of the offending food without experiencing significant symptoms, depending on their sensitivity and the food involved.

Slide 17 - What are the most common food allergies?

- The most common food allergies, often referred to as the "Big 9,, include substances that are responsible for the majority of allergic reactions related to food.
 - Understanding these common allergens is crucial for food service professionals, educators, and the general public to ensure the safety and well-being of those with food allergies.
1. Milk: An allergy to cow's milk is the most common food allergy in infants and young children, and it can cause a range of symptoms from mild to severe, including anaphylaxis.
 2. Eggs: Both the whites and yolks of eggs can trigger allergic reactions, which vary in severity from person to person.
 3. Peanuts: Peanut allergies are one of the most common causes of severe allergy attacks and can be life-threatening. It's important to note that peanuts are legumes, not nuts.
 4. Tree Nuts: This category includes nuts such as almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, and Brazil nuts. Like peanut allergies, tree nut allergies can also cause severe reactions.
 5. Fish: Allergic reactions to fish can be severe and are often lifelong allergies. People with a fish allergy are usually advised to avoid all fish species.
 6. Shellfish: This includes crustaceans and mollusks such as shrimp, crab, lobster, squid, and scallops. Shellfish allergies are also known for causing severe allergic reactions.
 7. Soy: Soy allergy is more common among children than adults and is often outgrown. Soybeans are a member of the legume family, which also includes peanuts.
 8. Wheat: Wheat allergies are different from celiac disease, which is an autoimmune disorder triggered by gluten. Wheat allergy symptoms can range from mild to life-threatening.
 9. Sesame: Sesame seeds and their derivatives can cause allergic reactions similar to those caused by other food allergens.

Slide 18 - General Practices for Allergen Management

General Practices for Allergen Management are:

- Cross-contamination prevention: Using separate utensils, cookware, and preparation areas for allergen-free cooking.
- Ingredient transparency: Providing detailed ingredient lists and being open to customer inquiries about food preparation.
- Staff training: Educating staff on food allergies, cross-contamination, and how to communicate effectively with guests about their dietary needs.
- These alternatives not only help ensure the safety of guests with allergies but also enhance their dining experience by providing them with a variety of safe and delicious options. It's important for restaurants to stay informed about food allergies and continuously adapt their offerings to meet the needs of their customers.

Slide 19 - Example: How to Cater for Vegan Customers

- Catering to vegan customers involves more than just removing meat from dishes; it requires an understanding of veganism as a lifestyle choice that excludes all animal products. For restaurants, this means offering meals that are free from meat, dairy, eggs, and any other animal-derived ingredients. Here's how restaurants can effectively cater to vegan customers:

1. Menu Development:

- **Offer Genuine Vegan Options:** Develop a range of appetizing vegan dishes rather than just one or two token items. Consider creating vegan versions of popular dishes to appeal to a broader audience.
- **Clearly Label Vegan Items:** Use clear labeling on your menu to indicate which dishes are vegan, making it easy for customers to identify their options.

2. Ingredient Awareness:

- **Understand Vegan Requirements:** Educate yourself and your staff on what constitutes a vegan ingredient. Remember that some less obvious ingredients, like gelatine, honey, and certain food colourings, are animal-derived and not suitable for vegans.
- **Source Quality Vegan Ingredients:** Invest in high-quality vegan substitutes such as plant-based meats, dairy-free cheeses, and egg replacements. This can greatly enhance the appeal of your vegan dishes.

Slide 20 - Example: How to Cater for Vegan Customers

3. Kitchen Practices:

- **Avoid Cross-Contamination:** Use separate utensils, cookware, and preparation areas for vegan and non-vegan dishes when possible. If not feasible, ensure thorough cleaning between uses.
- **Innovative Cooking:** Embrace techniques and ingredients that bring out the best in plant-based foods, such as smoking vegetables or using nuts and seeds to add texture and flavour.

4. Staff Training:

- **Educate Your Staff:** Ensure that all staff, from the kitchen to the service team, understand what veganism entails and can confidently answer questions about the vegan options available.
- **Special Requests:** Train staff to handle special dietary requests courteously and knowledgeably, ensuring that vegan customers feel welcomed and valued.

5. Marketing and Communication:

- **Promote Your Vegan Options:** Highlight your vegan dishes in marketing materials, on your website, and through social media to attract vegan customers.
- **Engage with the Vegan Community:** Participate in vegan events, or consider offering special promotions to vegan groups and communities.

Slide 21 - Example: How to Cater for Vegan Customers

6. Feedback and Adaptation:

- **Solicit Feedback:** Regularly ask for feedback from your vegan customers to understand their needs better and improve your offerings.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up with trends in vegan cuisine and continually refresh your menu with new, creative vegan dishes to keep customers coming back.

7. Special Considerations:



- **Nutritional Balance:** Offer dishes that provide a good balance of protein, fats, and carbohydrates. Incorporate a variety of vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds to make meals nutritionally complete.
- **Seasonal and Local:** Emphasize seasonal and locally sourced produce to create fresh and environmentally friendly vegan dishes.

By implementing these strategies, restaurants can not only cater to vegan customers more effectively but also appeal to a broader audience interested in plant-based dining options. Offering well-crafted vegan dishes can enhance your restaurant's reputation, attract a loyal customer base, and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse menu.

Slide 22 - The end

This is the end of session one. Thank you for your time.

