

Controlling Costs for the Kitchen Manager

Menu Planning and Purchasing

1. Know your food budget and your food costs. Compute your food costs per portion.
2. Plan menus 3-4 weeks in advance to assure that menus meet program requirements and foods can be ordered using cost saving purchasing procedures.
3. Use foods in season when plentiful (e.g. watermelon in August, apples in October, etc.).
4. Work towards high meal participation by featuring popular items on the menus more frequently, offering students choices and taking foods off of the menu that most students do not like.
5. Include only foods on the menus that provide the food components or the needed nutrients. Do not have foods on the menus that do not contribute to the component requirements or provide empty calories.
6. Use competitive purchasing practices for all purchases.
7. Review invoices and payments for accuracy. Assure that the invoice price matches the quote or bid price. Do not accept products which do not meet specification or are not the quality ordered.
8. Compare prices for individual portions versus bulk (e.g. salad dressings, crackers, catsup, etc.) and make decisions to keep costs lowest without undermining quality.
9. Purchase cooperatively with other school districts or schools.

Storage

1. Store items properly to prevent spoilage or loss.
2. Complete a physical inventory of foods monthly or maintain a perpetual inventory of all foods and supplies.
3. Control storage areas by locking doors at night and limiting access. The door nearest the storerooms should be locked at all times.
4. Use First-In, First-Out procedures. Mark boxes and cans so that FIFO can be used.

Preparation and Production

1. Minimize food waste. All cooking and serving staff should be committed to reducing waste.
2. Require cooks to follow standardized recipes that have been adjusted for the day's anticipated participation.
3. Keep accurate production records that reflect the amounts prepared and leftover.
4. Track prior preparation and leftovers for each menu item and use that information to forecast production. Meet with cooks to discuss the forecasted amounts and adjust recipes to fit those forecasts.
5. Avoid over-production by batch cooking just before food is taken to the serving area. For example, most vegetables and fruits should be prepared in several small batches to assure optimal quality and that the quantity prepared matches the amount needed.
6. Keep leftovers to a minimum.
7. Compare costs of pre-prepared foods versus the cost of labor needed to prepare from scratch. Unless you are cutting significant labor to allow for the pre-prepared foods, school made will nearly always be less expensive.
8. Establish a plan to assure that you are informed in advance when groups of students will not be in school.
9. Don't lose income when students take field trips. Prepare reimbursable sack meals for students and teachers.
10. Preheat oven for not more than 20-30 minutes.
11. Turn off ovens when not in use.

Service

1. Use portion control. Do not allow students to self-serve unlimited amounts of foods that they typically over-serve (e.g. French fries, tater tots, cookies).
2. Conduct 5-10 minute menu service meetings daily so that all servers know serving sizes, have the correct serving tools and know what foods are being prepared just before they are taken to the serving area.
3. Price a la carte items so that the price includes the costs of food, labor, and non-food supplies.
4. Survey students about their likes and dislikes.
5. Assure students and servers understand "offer" by posting signs that explain the amounts of food they are required to take.

6. Watch the garbage line to see what students are throwing away. Consider if the menu should be changed, the menu item can be prepared differently or if students or servers fully understand “offer”.
7. If “seconds” are available, offer only lower cost items (e.g. breads, vegetables).
8. Promote your program to students and adults.
9. Merchandise your meals with clean, neat, attractive serving lines; happy and neatly clad servers; a positive dining atmosphere; menu boards; and menu choices that students love.

Dishwashing/Clean up

1. Fill dishwasher racks full, but don't overload.
2. Turn dishwashers off when not in use.
3. Train staff to use proper amounts of sanitizers.
4. Use portion control pumps for soaps, cleansers and sanitizers.
5. Run pots and pans through the dishwasher when possible.
6. Pre-soak pots and flatware to cut down on washing time.
7. Use only the utensils needed. Students may not need a fork and a spoon for every meal.
8. Devise ways to reduce flatware losses.

Refrigerators and Freezers

1. Check temperatures daily and record to reduce the chance of inventory loss.
2. Open and close refrigerators and freezer doors quickly. Install air curtains on freezer and refrigerator doors.
3. Return foods to their established places to save time and energy in finding the items.
4. Keep condensers clean.
5. Don't overload freezers. Allow for adequate air space around food.
6. Turn off lights in the walk-in when not in use.
7. Date and label items so foods are used before they lose quality.

Labor

1. To eliminate paying overtime, use part-time or substitute employees.
2. Increase productivity through training and cross-training.
3. Place each person in the job that best fits them. The best employee for the job may not be the one with the most longevity.
4. Write work schedules based on specific labor needs; consider staggering work times to best fit the work needed.
5. Place equipment with the goal of helping employees work as efficiently as possible.
6. Use self-service to reduce labor needed for serving food.
7. Work with administrators to plan serving periods that make the best use of labor.
8. Use labor-saving equipment such as a tomato slicer, orange sectioner, dough divider, tilting braiser, convection oven, utility carts, etc. Purchase adequate numbers of labor-saving small utensils.
9. Schedule breaks. Take a timer or watch the clock to assure that breaks do not exceed the planned time.
10. If employees have finished their work before the end of the work day, have them do pre-preparation for the next day or clean. Post a list of tasks so they know what to do when they have time.
11. Work to increase participation while maintaining current labor. This will lower the labor cost per meal.
12. Implement an accident prevention program. Injured workers increase program costs.