2455 The Menu as a Marketing Tool

Product Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/2455-the-menu-as-a-marketing-tool/

Ninety-three percent of people view menus online before dining. Your menu is being read — and judged — before your Guest ever walks in the door. Seventy-seven percent of Guests visited a restaurant's website before walking through the door. The latest reliable data tells us your menu is being evaluated before the Guest ever decides to come in. The decision to visit — or not — is often made on the strength of what they found online.

Most operators treat the menu as an internal document. A price list. Something to print when items change and laminate when things stabilize. That framing misses everything the menu actually is.

The menu is your most read marketing piece. It is read more than your website, more than your social posts, more than any email you will ever send. It is read by people who are actively in the decision phase — weighing whether to come in, deciding what to order, forming an expectation of what the experience will be. Every word on it is doing marketing work, whether you designed it that way or not.

This means your menu descriptions are not labels. They are invitations. The item named "Chicken Sandwich" and described as "grilled chicken, lettuce, tomato, bun" is asking the Guest to imagine nothing. The same item described with language that evokes origin, preparation, or occasion is asking them to imagine something worth ordering.

Your menu currency matters. A menu that has not changed in two years tells your regulars there is nothing new to discover. It removes the reason to come back and try something. Specials give the menu motion — a signal that something is happening here, that the kitchen is alive, that there is always a reason to see what's new.

The menu that earns its place as a marketing tool is current, specific, designed for appetite, optimized for how it will be read online and in-hand, and written with the Guest's experience — not the operator's inventory — at the center.

Build it that way. Read it that way. Update it that way. It is your cheapest and most frequently consumed piece of marketing. Use it like one.