

Going Round About Cycle Menus

Linsey LaPlant, MS, RDN

Health-e Pro Sales Manager





What is a cycle menu?

“A cycle menu is a set of menus that repeat. The goal should be to build a cycle that offers enough choice to maximize participation.”

-School Food and Nutrition Service Management

by Dorothy Pannell-Martin & Julie Boettger





How many weeks?

- Depends on how much variety you offer
- Depends on how many standard items you serve
- Depends on how you have to plan labor for meals (spread out the scratch days)





Benefits of Creating a Cycle

- Planning
- Labor
- Ordering
- Forecasting
- Compliance
- Participation
- Costs





Planning

Meals that take advance prep time are planned later in the week

Thawing

Precooking

Batch Cooking

Other commitments can be accommodated

Delivery Day

Meeting Days

Short Days

Equipment availability



When do I make Tacos?

- When is my delivery day?
- What is the thaw time for ground beef?
- Do I have refrigeration to give up for a week?
- How long will it take me to cook all the meat?
- What side dishes do I serve?
- Do I have enough time to prepare them the same day?
- Are kettles available for meat?
- How many batches must I do?





Labor

- Typically, labor is fixed and does not adjust
- Menu prep does fluctuate based upon items
- Prep time
 - Complexity
 - Side dishes
 - How is it served
- Service time
 - Popularity
 - Speed of Service
- Clean up time



Today: Corndogs/Fries

Tomorrow: Turkey & Gravy



- Which meals take more time?
- What prep can be done a day (or more) in advance?
- Can prep be done by another person in advance to balance labor, cupping fruit?
- Is there equipment available to use or do we have to wait for lunch to be done?
- How popular is the item?
- Can something be cooking during lunch service?



Ordering

- Items on order guide clearly identified
- Items are expected and compliant
- Orders can be checked to follow the cycle
- Consistency in orders
- Ordering matches usage
- Inventory is used up regularly
- Inventory is not lost in back of freezer or gone





Forecasting



- Historic usage of products
- Products used with the same sides so more consistency
- Trends in usage
- Documentation of abnormalities so not considered
- Better able to prepare in batch or based upon actual numbers
- Use of all production data numbers

Heritage Day Lasagna

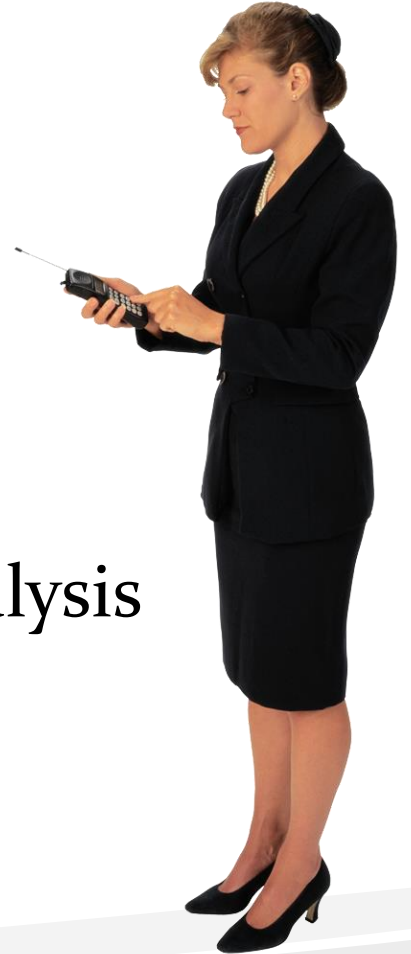


- Use of production record showed last three served amount: 350, 335, 325
- Trends in prepared showed decline, waste was increasing 5, 10, 15
- Today served with slushie trying to improve counts
- Comments for abnormalities
 - Grade 3 was celebrating Italian Heritage Day and inviting parents
 - Served once on a Monday then on a Thursday



Compliance

- Meal Components are familiar
 - Combinations are expected
 - Meal items are associated
- Portions are consistent
- Planning reflects actual production which is where analysis is done
- Decreased chance of missed requirements





Pancakes & Sausage then Waffles & Ham

- Three pancakes vs only two waffles
- 2 Sausage links vs 1 sausage patty vs 1.5 oz ham
- Strawberries served on waffles but not pancakes
- Do we serve syrup?



Participation

- Students know what the product is
- Students require multiple exposures to show interest or try something new
- Can students count on the product being the same when they see that name on the menu





Cheese Zombie Sticks



- Do students know what this product is?
- How was participation the first time it was offered vs the last time
- How much leftover was there ?
- Did you change the side dishes? Sometimes with dipping sauce and some times without?
- Was it served with a slushie that was really driving the counts?



Cost

- Bid 80% of what you use
- Inventory is not excessive and quickly rotated
- Decrease in true loss
- Better monitoring of ordering, usage, waste
- Cost menu on actual not theoretical cost
- Planning for labor and food (90% of budget)
- Decrease waste





Mix it up Lunch Menu

New! New! New! New! Everyone loves it!

“Southwestern” Food is so popular


- Taco Snack
- Lettuce, cheese, tomato cup
- Salsa cup
- Spicy Tater Tots
- Grilled Veggies
- Applesauce
- Choice of Milk





Taco Snack Trouble

- Served with tater tots, cupped salsa and grilled vegetables and ran out of sheet pans
- OT the next day for chicken wraps since staff thought they had to make the taco meat and wraps
- Wrong item actually received but served anyway
- New item does not show contribution so did not serve enough meat component
- Made the max of 400 because kids love Mexican items
- Put back 1 ½ full cases that were panned since (luckily) not cooked
- Kids and parents did not know “taco snack”
- Sub took the ½ case remaining but could not tell
- Never put back on the menu so extra case ordered got freezer-burned



But...But...But...But

- Cycle menus SHOULD be adjusted over time
- Substitutions can be made for like production, participation, cost
- Commodity products can easily take the place of a purchased item or similar item
- Specials can be introduced and emphasized so everyone can prepare or market it to get the desired outcome
- New products can be tried in a true test scenario to compare, not in a random method





Software Can Help You Write a Menu

- Using menu planning software can provide you the ease of maintaining a cycle menu for any length of time
- Production Records manage forecasting, prepared and leftovers over time
- Ordering to ensure accuracy
- Assurance of compliancy
- Costing of planned, prepared and leftover



And Help You Change It Easily

- Able to:
 - Change
 - Update
 - Substitute
 - Rearrange menu days





Questions?

- Linsey LaPlant, MS, RDN
- Health-e Pro Sales Manager
- Linsey@healthepro.com
- 800.838.4856 x105



© 2017 Health-e Pro. All rights reserved.

This presentation is proprietary and is for individual use only. Cannot be used for group training purposes without written permission.