Food Cost Control for Success

a practical resource for Professional Chefs

by chefs resources.com

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Today's Professional Chef must do much more than simply create and/or manage great food. With budget meetings, fluctuating food cost percentages, menu mix analysis and theories on promoting items based upon margin versus based upon food cost there is a plethora of skills which a Chef must be competent at. This book provides an in depth, detailed analysis of how to manage your food cost and bring you and your business one step closer to being successful.

Written by a Chef for Chefs, **Food Cost Control for Success – a practical resource for Professional Chef** is a down & dirty, hands on practical guide for managing your food cost. While many books in the kitchen management genre deal primarily in theory, Chef Buchanan provides today's Professional Chef with both the theory and the practical instruction needed to evaluate the complex issue of food cost and move forward with actionable solutions.

In the section on **Sales Mix and Menu Analysis** find out when and why a high food cost may actually be a good thing. Learn how to find and fix errors in your inventory sheets before the accounting department have posted your final inventory numbers. And gain quality insights on how to prepare for and successfully deal with your P&L meetings.

Topics covered include: the **Forty Thieves of Foodcost**...diving deep into food cost management; **Period-end Inventory...**discover basic & advanced insights on managing your period-end inventory process. Find & fix the inventory errors which most chefs and accounting departments miss; and the section on **How to be a P&L Review Pro** covers how to prepare for and enter your P&L meetings with confidence.

Laced with interesting culinary photos and MEMEs and splashed with the occasional inappropriate language of the kitchen, this book is both informative and a pleasure to read.

Note: This book contains links to downloadable Excel Worksheets from Chefs-Resources website. You must have a licensed version of **Microsoft Excel** installed on your device in order to access and use these free worksheets. We do not provide

Microsoft Excel.

Warning: This book is randomly spiced with bawdy kitchen language and expletives. If you find this kind of "colorful" language offensive then you will be offended with approximately 2% of the content.

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The following section is more of an appendix containing a series of useful forms for the Professional Chef. All the forms are downloadable from the Chefs-Resources website. You must have a licensed version of **Microsoft Excel** installed on your device in order to access and use these free worksheets. We do not provide Microsoft Excel.

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Back Cover

The Kitchen Code: Ethos of the Professional Kitchen

image courtesy of the Tulalip Resort Casino

Before jumping straight into the very important, but also pretty "dry" reading of managing food cost I thought I'd open the book with some lighthearted truisms about the culture of the kitchen and the environment in which many of us live.

Most (but not all) cooks and chefs tend to be "potty-mouthed sailors" who lack the social willingness to be "nice" to people who are pricks (i.e. some customers), and would be much more likely to say, "Fuck off!" to an unreasonable guest than to say, "I apologize for that sir, how can I help?" That's why we are in the kitchen. It's hot, dangerous, stressful…an adrenaline rush…we love it here! A lot is expected of us… and we expect a lot from each other in return. You **MUST** pull your own weight to be respected by your peers and superiors in the Kitchen. There is no one "star" player, the whole crew is dependent upon each other to win…or everyone sinks together.

Following is the unspoken code of the professional kitchen. If you have been in the industry for a long time then you realize that this is true at most of the well-run places you have ever worked. And conversely, everyplace you worked which had crappy food or low moral probably had staff which did not follow "the code".

To those who have never been in a professional kitchen, these seem harsh, archaic even. But for everyone who has endured the long, hot, stressful shifts of a full-service kitchen these standards make total sense. You understand that with every dish sent from the Kitchen, we are being judged by a guest who is going to be

either happy or dissatisfied with the work we have just done. Judged not just once per shift, but judged a hundred or more times every shift, every day!

You understand that to reach the level of perfection which we must attain for every single meal served to be excellent, it requires an extreme demand upon personal responsibility, reliability, and execution. It takes pride to do what we do daily, and pride in our work does not come cheap…it demands personal integrity and commitment. The unspoken rules of the Kitchen Code make our lives easier, not harder. It brings order and discipline to the chaotic, difficult environment we work in.

Understand that these are the unwritten code, the ethos, of the Kitchen. You will not find them in a job description. They're not in the SOP's of any particular kitchen. The chef is not going to sit down and tell you every single one of these things. Many of these are simply learned as part of the culture of the kitchen. They are understood and expected by the cooks of a professional crew as well as by the chef.

If you can't step up then get the hell out…we have work to do and you're in the way.

THE KITCHEN CODE:

not in any particular order...

1. You show up early and are at your station early, ready to work.

2. You arrive in a presentable fashion: showered, shaved, brushed, combed, and in a clean uniform. Last night's entertainment is not discernible.

3. You have a genuine enthusiasm for good food, good technique, and culinary advancement, regardless of how much you already think you know.

4. You have a "sense of urgency".

5. You maintain a good attitude, finding satisfaction in doing good work.

6. You are coachable and don't get defensive when criticized.

7. You are not a know-it-all (i.e. the opposite of being coachable).

8. You don't take yourself too seriously and are able to laugh at yourself if you fucked up…but you also learn from it.

9. You do not dwell upon or allow the feelings associated with a fuck-up to distract you. Instead, you keep your mental focus in the game and move on. If you need to discuss it with Chef then do so after service has ended.

10. You season everything with the "correct" amount of seasoning as per the Chef's preference (not your own).

11. You taste everything in your station, making sure it is correctly made and of proper quality.

12. Dull knives are disrespectful to ingredients – you have a sharp knife at all times.

13. You **NEVER** use someone else's knives without their permission. As Anthony Bourdain says, "Don't touch my dick, don't touch my knife."

14. You do not complain – especially about those things which cannot be controlled, such as customer requests/returns, the restaurant hours of operation, having to work weekends/holidays, how busy or slow it is, etc. all.

15. You show respect for the food, for the Chef, and for how we want things done at THIS restaurant (not the way some other chef did it at some other restaurant you worked at…we don't care).

16. You show respect for fellow co-workers (team members); this includes cooks, dishwashers, bussers, prep cooks, food runners, expeditors, and servers (yes, the servers too!).

17. You do not expect or demand respect from others. You understand that respect is earned: a) by being equal or better than everyone else in the kitchen, and b) by treating everyone else like they are equal or better than you.

18. You understand the importance of a fully staffed crew and you do not call in sick so you can go to that concert, or party.

19. You consistently show up for work…if you are sick then be prepared to provide a drs note to prove it (too many have violated the other members of the Saturday night crew by calling in sick to go to a party).

20. If you have a mild cold, or a headache, or a hangover, you are not sick… show up for work.

21. You don't get sick often.

22. You have the ability to stay focused under pressure – expect to be in the weeds often… and work your way out of it alone.

23. You're not afraid to ask for help if your station gets slammed…but you understand that help may not be available.

24. If your station gets utterly hammered and you sink, you don't give up and walk off the Line…you break out a shovel and dig your way out.

25. You are aware of the kitchen flow and take initiative…if your fellow cook is buried, you help them out.

26. You always rotate product properly, practicing FIFO (First In, First Out)

27. You always have enough mise en place for your shift.

28. You never throw product out due to over-prepping.

29. You NEVER steal someone else's mise en place.

30. You always prep fresh products daily…do not make tomorrow's chiffonade today.

31. When running low on a product for your station's prep you always let the chef know before the last of it is gone.

32. Never 86 anything unless there is no more product to prep. When running low on a menu item you always give the chef at least a one hour warning before having to 86 it. This allows a count-down for the servers so no customer orders it when it is gone; and it allows time to try to prep more or find a replacement.

33. You are fast, but not sloppy…your station is clean and organized even in the middle of the push.

34. You always have an extra gear available when needed.

35. You organize your time efficiently, always planning ahead…you make fewer trips to the walk-in, always carrying something both ways.

36. You take your breaks when it's slow, and only with the chef's permission.

37. You restock your station before taking your breaks.

38. You manage your food well – if it needs to be in the window in 2 minutes you can make it happen. Or if you're told to slow a dish for 4 minutes you know how to do that as well.

39. You have an appetite to learn more, regardless of how much or little you already know.

40. You prepare and present the food exactly as the Chef has taught you…every time.

41. When you're having a **great day** you focus, prepare, & present the food properly throughout your entire shift.

42. When you're having a **shitty day** you focus, prepare, & present the food properly throughout your entire shift.

43. You do it right, without taking shortcuts, even if it's a tedious pain in the ass. This is called **Professional Discipline**.

44. You do not bring your personal drama to work with you. You take control of, and are responsible for, your "Emotional Wake".

45. You are not afraid to ask appropriate questions about proper procedure…do not hack up an entire tenderloin because you are too arrogant, or too scared, to ask for a demo.

46. You work neatly and clean as you go.

47. You properly label and date EVERYTHING.

48. You admit when you are wrong, but don't point it out when others are wrong – especially if it's the chef.

49. The kitchen is not a democracy…always do it the Chef's way, even if you think your way is better. If you must suggest something, do so in private… hopefully the Chef will give you kudos if he accepts the revision…but don't expect it.

50. "Yes Chef!" or "Oui Chef!" is the only proper response to any directive from the Chef. If the Chef says, "Please do it this way" understand that he/she is not offering you a choice; you are politely being instructed how to do it and your compliance is expected.

51. You always give call-backs when orders are called.

52. You always use appropriate kitchen warnings such as, "Behind", "Corner", "Hot", "Knife", "Oven Open", etc.

53. You work for the good of the team and the restaurant.

54. You always know exactly what is in your oven, or on your stove or grill, even if it's not yours.

55. You are aware and observant in the kitchen: you smell when food doesn't smell or feel right. You notice if the temp in a cooler is too high. You smell if something is burning.

56. You work efficiently as regards time and organization, meaning that items which take a long time to prepare are started before items which take less time. During service, if you have a dish which takes 10 minutes to prepare, one which takes 5 minutes, and one which takes 2 minutes, you are able to time and prepare all three within 10 minutes and hit the window at the same time; and it does not take you 17 minutes because you prepared them one at a time.

57. You always tell the chef when you leave the Line, including why you are leaving, "Off Line for shrimp".

58. When it's slow, you always find something useful to do, including cleaning your station or organizing the walk-in. "If you have time to lean you have time to clean."

59. Always treat equipment with respect, as if you paid for it yourself.

60. Always work in a manner which meets the health code, ensuring that you're not going to get someone sick.

61. You understand the proper use of food service gloves. They are a pain in the ass, but they protect our guests. No glove, no love.

62. Know the difference between a cut and a scratch; a cut requires stitches, a scratch does not. If it's a scratch put a Band-Aid on it and get back to work. If it requires only 2 or 3 stitches, consider returning to finish your shift after the doctor is done. The crew and the chef will both respect and appreciate you more for it.

63. If you do return to work with injuries, be wise enough to work within your restrictions and not cause yourself additional injury.

64. You daily rotate all your mise en place on the Line into clean containers at closing.

65. You stay until all the day's work is done properly w/o asking to leave early. You ask if there's anything else that needs to be done before leaving.

66. You mentor new co-workers as you would have liked to have been mentored/taught, not necessarily how you **were** taught.

67. You manage your "recreational activities" wisely…too many of us become addicted to alcohol or drugs.

68. To be recognized as a leader in the kitchen…you know the kitchen code, practice the code, and mentor the code. (I know…sappy and proselytizing! But how else could you possibly end "The Code…" of anything?!)

Food Cost Tools – an overview

Finding Food Cost problems can be as elusive as the mysterious Dragon Fish

There is a huge array of information associated with f**ood cost control**, so much so that managing your food cost can be as elusive and mysterious as the legendary Dragon Fish. To get a handle on the complexity of the challenge facing chefs you will need an arsenal of kitchen "book sense" and business sense at your fingertips. It is our hope to provide you with those tools. We'll briefly touch on a number of these tools before we jump into a more detailed explanation of each.

Your first step should be to read the **Forty Thieves of Foodcost** article for a primer on the various issues related to managing your operation's culinary bottom line. Be sure to check out the **Declining Balance Worksheet**, our explanation of **Inventory Turns** and why they are important, and the very useful month-end **Excel Food Cost Calculation File** (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/food-cost-calculation/) which is available for free download. To help in the fight of controlling your food budget **Chefs-Resources.com** provides a number of food cost tools including **free prep sheets** (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/prep-sheets/) and an assortment

of downloadable [Excel recipe templates](www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/recipe-template/recipe-templates-excel/).
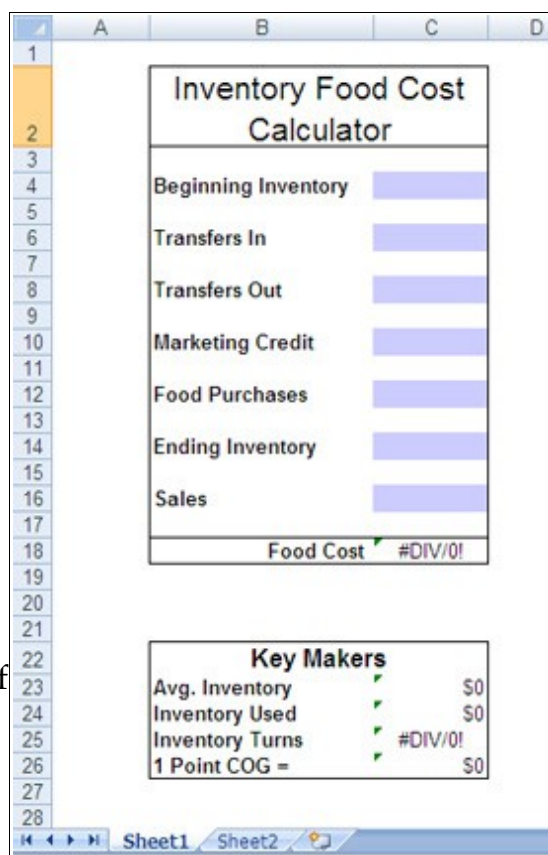
Month End Inventory and Food Cost

Managing your food cost also has a lot to do with managing your end of month (or end of period) inventory. Do you count items by the sheet-to-shelf or by the shelf-to-sheet method? Which one is better? We explain the difference in Taking Inventory.

Are all of your food credits and transfers entered correctly? Do you track them?

Do you verify the information on your month end inventory balance sheet? This is extremely important if you want to be on top of your game in controlling your month end inventory accuracy.

Do you leave your food cost fate in the hands of the accounting department? Or do you verify their numbers (never trust someone else with your fate, always know your numbers!). Use the Food Cost Calculation File (free download) to track all of your month end numbers and verify the numbers which accounting has.

Month End Food Cost Calculator

The end of period (usually either weekly or monthly) Food Cost Calculation Formula is as follows:

(Beginning Food Inventory + Purchases + Transfers In – Transfers Out – Credits – Ending Food Inventory) / Sales

The [inventory food cost calculation tool](www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/food-cost-tools/) is a free downloadable Excel sheet on Chefs-Resources.com which will calculate your period end inventory.

Explanation:

Beginning Food Inventory is the value of the food you had at the beginning of the period, which generally is also your ending inventory for the previous period.

Purchases is new food purchases for this period (do not include paper, chemicals, equipment, etc…only food purchases)

Transfers In is for establishments which transfer product from one venue to another, or perhaps from the bar to the kitchen

Transfers Out is product transferred to another venue, or perhaps to the bar

Credits can be a variety of things including vendor credits for bad/wrong product, marketing credits, rebates, etc

Ending Food Inventory is the value of your food inventory at the end of the period

Sales is your food sales

note: Sales may be either Food Sales only -or- Food & Beverage Sales depending upon your operation's accounting method.

New Forty Thieves of Food Cost

Food cost management is essential for the professional chef to be successful. Every chef is judged on a financial basis by his/her food cost. If your food cost looks good then you are in great shape, but if your food cost is bad you could be in a heap of trouble. If you have read the **40 Thieves of Food Cost** then you know that solving the problem can be very complicated as there are a host of things to evaluate in order to determine the source of the problem. The original version of this food cost problem solving tool was written in 1972 by Robert C. Petrie. Here is an updated version of the Forty Thieves of Food Cost:

Chef John Jamamec
image courtesy of Tulalip Resort Casino

Things to Look for if you Have a Food Cost Problem

Purchasing

- Purchasing for too high a cost – no bid system to get best price
- Buying from only 1 or 2 vendors – no competition for best price
- Purchasing more than needed
- No detailed Specifications – quality, weight, type
- No purchasing budget
- No audit of invoices and payments
- Too many vendors
- <u>Read more detail</u>

Receiving

- Theft by receiving personnel
- No system for issuing/tracking credits
- No system for checking in orders
- Billed for items not received

- Invoiced weights different than received weights
- Shipped & billed for items not ordered
- Lack of facilities and/or scales
- Perishable foods left out of proper storage
- [Read more](#)

Storage

- Foods improperly placed in storage
- Storage at wrong temperatures and humidity
- No daily inspection & rotation of stored goods
- Unorganized storage areas
- No physical inventory system
- Lack of single responsibility for food storage
- No control or record of foods issued from the storeroom
- Storage areas not secured
- Theft

Preparation

- Excessive trim on vegetables, seafood & meats
- No check on raw yields
- No secondary usage of trim items
- [Read more](#)

Production

- OVER production!!!
- Improper cooking method
- Cooking at the incorrect temperature – excess shrinkage
- Cooking or holding products for too long a period of time – poor batch firing

- Not using food production schedules or Prep Sheets
- Not using/following standard recipes
- No waste log used for items thrown out
- [Read more](#)

Service

- No standard portion size
- No standard size utensils for serving
- No records of food production
- Carelessness (spillage, waste, cold food, re-fires)
- Poor production planning during the transition from busy to slow periods
- Inadequate or poorly trained "wheelman" to control the ticket flow and give "all-days"

Sales

- Unrecorded sales: "no charge" or cash not turned in, unauthorized comps to friends/family/regulars
- "Open food" abuses (get rid of this key if possible! Or allow only with mgr approval)
- No tracking of "comps" and giveaways
- No tracking of re-fires, waitstaff/cook errors
- No sales records to detect trends
- Poor pricing of menu items
- Incorrect pricing keyed into your register system (Micros, etc.)
- Employee meal costs – over production or unauthorized meals
- Not running specials on items that were overproduced
- No credit for marketing events

Sales Mix

- Sales mix impacted food cost
- You don't know your theoretical food cost
- Poor menu item layout
- Read more

Inventory

- Counting Sheet-to-Shelf instead of the best method of Shelf-to-Sheet
- Failure to utilize discontinued menu products before they expire
- Miscalculations in your inventory program extensions
- for example: you enter 1 case of shrimp and it calculates it as 1 pound
- zero dollar value for items in inventory
- Items are not being counted
- especially true for new products and "out of sight" products
- counting inventory by sheet to shelf method instead of shelf to sheet
- Out of date pricing on your inventory calculation software
- Not verifying the accounting data before final posting!
- Read more detail

Accounting

- The Chef didn't verify the General Ledger
- Charging your paper/equipment products against food cost of goods
- Products from other venues are being charged against your account (for operations with multiple venues)
- Transfers and credits not processed correctly
- Read More

The original "**Food Costs and the 40 Thieves**" was from "**Cooking For Profit**" by Robert C. Petrie 1972

Food Cost Problem Analysis

So there are many variables to deal with when trying to analyze a poor food cost. If

you have done all the basic legwork, making sure your waste isn't too high, double-checking the accuracy of portioning by your crew, checking the pricing on key menu items to be sure that they are priced appropriately, then it is time to move on to working through the forty thieves step by step. One area chefs often neglect is checking out your accounting system.

There are multiple ways in which the accounting system could screw-up your food cost. First thing to do is to go through your **general ledger** and make sure that everything in it is actually a food item you are being billed for. Make sure that paper products, equipment and so on are not being billed against your cost of goods for food.

image courtesy Tulalip Resort Casino

Next, check the cost extensions on your inventory. For instance, if one case of shrimp cost $300 make sure that if you have 2 cases in your inventory that it calculates correctly to $600. I frequently find issues in our accounting system where I'll put in 2 cases and it will cost it as 2 pounds, or vice versa. So check all your extensions to see if they look correct.

Scan down the page through the cost extensions and look for very high numbers and very low numbers then verify that those numbers are correct. Especially check everything which has a $0 value. I frequently find items which have an inventory balance but which have no cost associated with it due to some glitch in the process or system. And check all items which have a 0 quantity to verify that indeed you did not have that item on hand during inventory. This is especially true if you do not do the inventory yourself as others tend to miss items, especially new items.

Next, check the pricing on key proteins to see that they are up to date on the inventory system. This includes meat, fish, and dairy as well as specialty products which are expensive. And check any new items which have been added to your inventory to see that they were counted.

Check Your Sales Mix

You could be doing everything correct and driving cash to the bottom line, making the business successful, and still have a bad food cost! To prove this point let's imagine that you have a budgeted food cost of 39%, you only have 2 menu items...spaghetti and lobster, and 2 months in a row you served exactly 1,000 covers.

Let's say that one month 90% of your restaurant sales were spaghetti at $10.00 a plate with a food cost of 37.1% and a margin (revenue after cost of food) of $7.00. And then the next month your sales were 90% lobster at $50 per plate with a 50% food cost and a margin of $25. Both months you sold exactly 1000 meals.

The first month you sold 900 spaghetti dinners and 100 lobsters, you have a food cost of 37.1% (you're a star!) and you have earned $8,800 in margin (see chart below). The second month you also sold 1,000 meals but 900 of your dinners were lobsters and only 100 were spaghetti dinners. You now have a 49.6% food cost (you suck!) but have earned $23,000 in margin which is revenue driven to the bottom line (oh wait...you're a superstar!)

Unfortunately very few owners, managers and chefs understand the dynamic interaction between food cost, margin and profitability

Sold mostly Lobster

	Cost	Sales $	Food Cost	Margin	# Sold	TT Cost	TT Sales	Food Cost	Margin
Lobster	$25.00	$50.00	50%	$25.00	900	$22,500	$45,000	49.6%	$23,000
Spaghetti	$3.00	$10.00	30%	$7.00	100	$300	$1,000		
					Total	$22,800	$46,000		

Sold mostly Spaghetti

	Cost	Sales $	Food Cost	Margin	# Sold	TT Cost	TT Sales	Food Cost	Margin
Lobster	$25.00	$50.00	50%	$25.00	100	$2,500	$5,000	37.1%	$8,800
Spaghetti	$3.00	$10.00	30%	$7.00	900	$2,700	$9,000		
					Total	$5,200	$14,000		

Sales Mix Impact on Food Cost -vs- Revenue

Reality check... $8,800 with a 37.1% food cost is garbage next to $23,000 and a 49.6% food cost! **Would you rather have $8,800 or $23,000?** You can't put a food cost percentage in the bank! The margin is where the money is at and is therefore the end goal. So a high food cost isn't always a bad thing. Knowing your sales mix will help determine if your food cost is off simply because people are buying more

expensive items but dropping more money to the bottom line.

Perhaps It's Time to Get The Hell Out!

If you have taken several months and have thoroughly gone through the forty thieves, attended to all the issues you find, implemented proper procedures, verified your sales mix and accounting system, heightened the training of your staff, and yet continue to not be able to meet your budgeted food cost then here's what to do… Move on! Some companies set unrealistic budgets based upon what they want to earn and not upon what is actually doable for the menu concept they want to use.

One place I worked at tightened the food budget a little every year, even though the past 3 chefs and 6 years had never seen the budget attained. In this instance, the "food cost problem" is with poor management at the highest level of the company not knowing how to set attainable budgets. And not understanding that unattainable goals coupled with budgetary beatings does more harm to their company than the ½ point they are trying to save. I moved on, and they recently filed bankruptcy. If you work for such a place… safe yourself! Get out! Put in your one year, give proper notice, don't burn bridges, and leave. Let them draw blood from someone else…the restaurant coroner will be at their door soon enough.

Food Purchasing and the Art of Food Cost Control

Forty Thieves part 1

Chef David Buchanan - image courtesy of the Tulalip Resort Casino

This is the first in a series on Food Cost Control, following the guidelines set forth in the New Forty Thieves of Food Cost article. This first section deals with controlling Purchasing. Here is the summary of what the Forty Thieves guidelines say:

Purchasing

- Purchasing more than needed
- Purchasing for too high a cost – no bid system to get best price
- No detailed Specifications – quality, weight, type
- No purchasing budget
- No audit of invoices and payments
- Too many vendors

How Controlling Purchasing Helps Control Your Food Cost

Of course controlling your purchases makes sense. If you run a blue collar sandwich shop you better not be purchasing foie gras or wagyu. But how do you actually implement an intelligent food purchasing program? Hopefully these guidelines will help in creating a useful tool for your establishment.

Purchasing more than needed

Although this is obvious, here are some of the nuances which go along with over purchasing:

- The most obvious, excess product can result in spoilage and waste
- You may decide to sell specials at a discounted rate in order to move product before it goes bad
- Extra product increases the chance that FIFO (first in, first out) will not be followed and you will lose product due to improper rotation
- Excess product increases the opportunity for theft and decreases the chances of its detection

Purchasing for too high a cost – no bid system to get best price

The natural tendency to want to be "nice" or "friends" with people will conflict with the need to operate a business and make purchases based upon business needs. Having no bid system in place will certainly make it harder to make your salesmen competitive in their pricing. Having a bid system in place forces your vendors to compete to get your business based best price for best product. Remember, it is NOT about getting the Best Price…it is about getting the Best Product at the best price (who cares if you got a killer deal if the product is dog shit!).

Here are some things to remember:

- If no one is bidding on your product purchases then you are paying the highest price
- You should have 2-4 vendors bidding on your business for items such as produce, beef and fish
- Even if you have a contractual broad line vendor agreement, keep them honest by accepting bids from competitors
- Do NOT simply buy based upon the lowest price

- Buy according to best quality at best price
- If you have to choose between quality and price… choose quality if it is measurable (don't serve dog shit!)
- Purchase according to your demographics and budget…you are not going to purchase Wagyu beef tenderloin to serve at Denny's

Bid Sheet and Order Sheet Template Download

Below is a free [download for a Bid Sheet](www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/food-cost-tools/forty-thieves-of-food-cost/food-purchasing-art-of-food-cost-control/) (courtesy concept by Chef Charles Kaye via Chefs-Resources). It is in Excel (2010 version) and has several additional tabs with alternate Order Sheet templates.

	Item	Company	Price	Quality	Service	Notes		Quality/Service Ratings:	Excellent
1			**Bid Comparison Sheet**						Good
2									Fair
3									Poor
4	Item	Company	Price	Quality	Service	Notes			
5		Vendor 1	$ 33.25	G	E	This is an example			
6	Romaine Hearts	Vendor 2	$ 34.01	P	G				
7	4/12 Ct	Vendor 3	$ 32.85	E	F				
8		Vendor 4	$ 32.52	E	E				
9									
10	Item 1								
11	Pack Size								
12									
13									
14	Item 2								
15	Pack Size								
16									
17									
18	Item 3								
19	Pack Size								
20									
21									
22									
23									
24									

No detailed Specifications – quality, weight, type
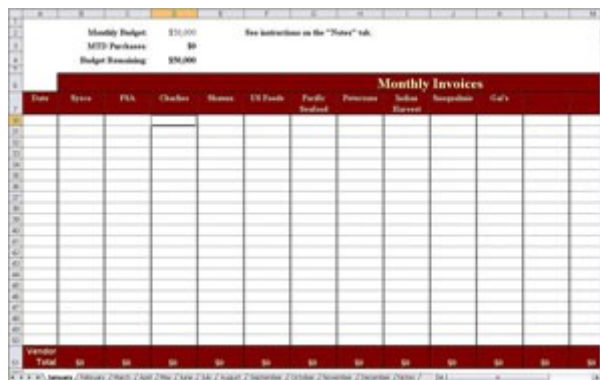
Detailed specs for product are clearly needed in order to maintain consistency in recipes. But detailed specs are also needed in order to maintain consistency in quality and price. Product specs can be as simple as naming the pack size that you require, or it may include pack size and a specific quality from a specific vendor. For instance, if you butcher your own Halibut then a 20/40 fish has a better yield than a 10/20 fish and the difference in yield will affect your food cost. How about your New York steaks? Are they an end to end cut or are they a center cut? Are they select, choice, or prime grade? If you are on vacation or sick, does your crew know which quality and spec to order? Is it clearly labeled on your ordering sheets?

Detailed product specs can:

- help minimize customer complaints and comps due to wrong product served
- make recipes more consistent
- make cost analysis and food cost more consistent
- make portion sizes more consistent
- make quality more consistent
- ensure consistent ordering when you are not there
- ensure consistent ordering when your purchaser or salesman is gone (and someone else places the order)
- make it harder for an unscrupulous salesman to con you

No purchasing budget

A purchasing budget establishes, in theory, how much food you can purchase in order to meet your budgeted food cost as measured against forecasted sales. The best tool for tracking this number is the [Declining Balance Sheet](www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/restaurant-inventory-control/declining-balance-sheet/) (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/restaurant-inventory-control/declining-balance-sheet/). It's important to remember that this number is based upon sales. So if you do half the amount of forecasted sales but spend all of your budgeted purchasing dollars than your food cost is in the tank. Likewise, if your sales are above forecast then you will need more dollars in order to purchase food for those additional customers. Use the same percentage in order to calculate your purchase budget.

If your actual sales are significantly (+5%) above the forecasted sales, and your manager or regional manager is giving you a hard time about purchasing above the purchasing budget amount, then run the numbers, make sure your percentage of purchases is in line with the budget. Present that info saying you are hitting the budget percent for purchases. If they still give you a hard time then they are either ignorant, or pricks. The percentage is the most important part of this tool. I consider this to be one of the "lesser tools" in the food cost control tool kit. It can be helpful if things are way out of line, or if you want to fine tune things. But if your food cost is generally in line, then don't bother with this one unless you have a problem.

- Purchasing budget equals forecasted sales times budgeted food cost percent for the month

- Example: forecasted food sales of $200,000 x cost budget of 35% = purchasing budget of $70,000

- Use the Declining Balance Sheet to help track your daily trend against the purchasing budget

- The most important part of this tool is hitting the %, not the number

No audit of invoices and payments

If you are in the habit of simply signing invoices at delivery and writing a check when the bill is due then a food cost problem could be hiding here. An audit (verification) of invoices and payments should always occur with all invoices and payments. It can save you money. An actual invoice audit in accounting terms is more detailed than this, but here are the basics you should check.

For Invoices:

- Check invoice items delivered against your PO or order sheet

- Did you get what you asked for?

- Is it the right spec?

- Did you get subbed or outed on an item?

- Did something get rejected when it arrived? Where is the credit for that item?

- Verify that items with a bid price are at the price you were bidded

- If non-food items are on the invoice be sure they are properly coded for your budget and general ledger (i.e. equipment coded to kitchen equipment, etc.)

- Verify that the totals are correct both in the extensions and in the grand total

- Verify payment against invoiced amount

  ◦ Are any/all credits and adjustments accounted for?

For Payments:

- Verify payment against invoiced amount

  ◦ Are any/all credits and adjustments accounted for?

Too Many Vendors

While too few vendors stifles competition, too many strangles it. You have X dollars in purchasing power for each type of vendor (broad line vendor, produce, beef, etc). If you cut that dollar amount into too many small pieces then the business the vendor receives may not be worth the discounted price you want. As a general rule, 2 to 4 vendors bidding for each segment of your business is best (based upon the volume you do).

That does not mean that you will only have 3 or 4 vendors. Some things you can only get through a specialty vendor and they may be the only viable source for that product. I like to receive 3 bids for fresh seafood and beef, 4 bids for fresh produce, and have a contract agreement for food staples through a national broad line vendor. And it is worth mentioning again, I purchase by defining my quality expectation first and then seeking best price for that quality. Best price should ALWAYS be secondary to best quality for the price range.

The Receiving Department and Food Cost Control

Forty Thieves part 2

This is the second part in a series on **Food Cost Control**, following the guidelines set forth in the New Forty Thieves of Food Cost article. This section deals with controlling the Receiving Department. Here is what the Forty Thieves guidelines say:

Receiving

- Theft by receiving personnel
- No system for issuing/tracking credits
- No system for checking in orders
- Billed for items not received
- Invoiced weights different than received weights
- Shipped & billed for items not ordered
- Lack of facilities and/or scales
- Perishable foods left out of proper storage

Theft by the Receiving Crew

This is fairly simple to pull off and can potentially go unnoticed. They receive and check the product in, then stash some for themselves and deliver the rest to your storage areas. If you have a receiving crew then they are frequently at work well before most other staff come in, which makes it even easier to stash something in their car before others will notice.

The way to "keep them honest" is to do a daily spot check of a few items which were delivered that day. Have one of the receiving crew verify with you a few items every day, actually looking at the invoice to see how much was delivered, and visually checking that it is actually in your storage area.

No System for Issuing/Tracking Credits

What happens if the receiving crew rejects a product when delivered, or you are billed for something which did not arrive, or the driver issues a credit of some kind? How are these items tracked? Are you aware of your weekly/monthly credits? Can you easily track down a specific credit if you need to? You should have a system in place which details the following key items:

- The invoice number which the credit correlates with
- The date of the invoice
- The amount of the credit
- The reason for the credit
- The vendor
- Who received it

With these things recorded it is easy to go back and know what happened, when it happened, and who owes you money. You also need a specific place to store only the credits as a group. Don't lump them together with invoices, keep them in a separate folder. It is also wise to include a copy of the original invoice along with the credit.

No System for Checking-in Orders

You should have a system of protocols in place which your receiving crew follow when receiving deliveries because there are a variety of ways which you can lose money at the receiving dock. Always check the invoice of what is being delivered against a PO or guide of what was ordered, especially if one person does the ordering but someone else does the receiving. It is time consuming, but it verifies

that you actually ordered the product which is being delivered. It prevents being delivered and charged for product which you did not order. It also prevents the driver from making a mistake and forgetting some of your order on the truck.

Here are specific things your receiving crew should do before they sign an invoice and let the driver go:

- Check delivered products against the invoice to verify that you have received everything for which you are being billed.

- Check delivery invoice items against an order guide or PO to verify that everything delivered is something which was ordered.

- some vendors will unscrupulously send you extra items, or more expensive items, if they know you don't pay attention to your deliveries.

- even good vendors will sometime automatically sub an item with something which you don't want.

- this also allows you to be notified by Receiving if something was ordered but did not get delivered, giving you a heads-up to acquire a needed product.

- Check invoiced weights against actual delivered weights

- this means putting products which are billed by the pound (such as fresh beef or fish) onto a scale and verifying that the invoice weight is correct.

- Check the temperature of cold and frozen product

Does your receiving crew use a thermometer to check-in deliveries? They should be. Frozen product isn't usually a problem, but cold product, especially fresh fish and meat, can be an issue. It should be received at a temperature of 41° or lower. If it is over this temperature then it should be returned to the vendor for improper handling.

Lack of Facilities or Scales

You must have a scale in your receiving area which can verify the weight of items delivered. Invest in one which can handle at least 200 pounds. Your receiving area should also be secure so that other employees or someone off the street can't simply walk off with product while your one guy is busy doing something. The area needs to be clean and organized, preventing pests from access to product.

Perishable Foods left out of Proper Storage

This seems like a no-brainer, but it is amazing how many times product which should be refrigerated sits at room temp too long while the receiving crew puts

away "the easy stuff", take lunch or other breaks, chat too long with truck drivers, etc. Cold storage products must always have highest priority and should be put away as quickly as possible. No one should be on their lunch break while the fish (cheese, lettuce, whatever) is left to rot on the dock. Schedules and breaks must be organized around the delivery schedule of perishable foods.

Managing Food Preparation Costs

Forty Thieves part 3

This is the third article in a series on Food Cost Control, following the guidelines discussed in the New Forty Thieves of Food Cost article. This section deals with controlling food **Preparation and Production**…the [Forty Thieves guidelines](#) lists the following items in blue as potential food cost drains. We will dive into a more in depth examination of these concepts in this section.

Preparation

- Excessive trim on vegetables, seafood & meats
- No check on raw yields
- No secondary usage of trim items

Production

- OVER production!!!
- Improper cooking method – poor technique
- Cooking at the incorrect temperature – excess shrinkage
- Cooking or holding products for too long a period of time – poor batch firing
- Not using food production schedules or Prep Sheets
- Not using/following standard recipes
- No waste log used for items thrown out

Lets take a deeper look at how the chef or kitchen manager can control these costs.

Preparation Notes

Excessive Trim on Vegetables, Seafood & Meats

Prep cooks and line cooks will often take shortcuts and not use proper knife & production skills when cutting vegetables, fish and meat. Train your people properly…and then follow-up regularly to be sure that they are not being lazy in

their technique. Also, look for training seminars and send some of your staff to them, perhaps making them compete for the opportunity to go to one.

The most common fruit & vegetable cheats (and product loss) include:

- Cutting & discarding the top & bottom of bell peppers
- Cutting & discarding the top & bottom of tomatoes
- "square-cutting" round fruits to remove the peel

For trim techniques check-out these videos:

- [Cut a Bell Pepper](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIEChqw7YwM)

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIEChqw7YwM

- [Cut an Onion](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKY0sJ9igj8)

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKY0sJ9igj8

- [Cut Watermelon](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwHIXpTQbIM) – read the comments under the video for some great tips on trim usage

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jwHIXpTQbIM

- [Fillet Halibut](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-3_2ijcK38)

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-3_2ijcK38

- [Fillet Salmon](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbGDVTnhQH4)

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbGDVTnhQH4

No Check on Raw Yields

Do you know what kind of yields your staff should be getting from the various products they work with? And do your recipes account for the trim loss of each product? Using a Yield Chart can be a great tool to both track the work of your crew, and to give them an incentive to get better as they see how good the people with the best knife skills are.

One training tool to gauge the skill level of new or inexperienced staff is to have them put all vegetable trim into a clear Lexan tub for one shift. This makes it is easy to see how well or how poorly they did on proper vegetable cutting, and gives you opportunity to train them correctly.

Here are some useful tools for yield tracking and control:

- [Produce Yields](www.chefs-resources.com/produce/produce-yields/)

   www.chefs-resources.com/produce/produce-yields/

- [Fruit Yields](www.chefs-resources.com/fruit-yields)

  www.chefs-resources.com/fruit-yields

- [Fish Yields](www.chefs-resources.com/seafood/fresh-fish-availability-chart/)

  www.chefs-resources.com/seafood/fresh-fish-availability-chart/

- [Fish Butchering Form](www.chefs-resources.com/Fish-Filleting-Log-and-Butchering-Chart) (Excel)

  www.chefs-resources.com/Fish-Filleting-Log-and-Butchering-Chart

- [Meat Butchering Form](www.chefs-resources.com/Beef-Butchering-Yield-Form) (Excel)

  www.chefs-resources.com/Beef-Butchering-Yield-Form

No Secondary Use of Trim Items

Do you have a specified use for trim items? Or does trim sit in your walk-in until it is time to toss? The most crucial part of trim utilization is to have a plan in place BEFORE you prep the item. If you need bell pepper julienne then what will you do with the top and bottom…toss it or dice it for some other use? If you cut your own beef tenderloins how do you utilize the chain? If it goes into the trash then it may be cheaper to purchase pre-cut steaks…and throwing it into the stock pot is only slightly better than throwing it away.

Production Notes

OVER Production!!!

Although it is obvious that over production of product can result in waste/loss and therefore hurt your food cost, it is still worth discussing. Over production is frequently the result of mismanagement, and is not always a matter of employee error. While it is true that the staff does the production, it is the role of management to do the forecast and tell the staff how much to produce. If next week is going to be slower for whatever reason, it is management's job to a) know this, and b) communicate it to the staff along with new prep numbers.

If you tell the staff, "Next week will be slower"…so what!! That's not leadership! It's telling them to guess how much to prepare so you don't have to make a decision or take responsibility for a wrong guess on the numbers so you can tell your boss, "Well, I told them it was going to be slower and prep accordingly." As the Chef or Kitchen Manager it is your job to forecast the numbers and delegate to your staff how much to prep for…and take the heat if you are wrong. You should be telling the crew something like, "Decrease the prep by 10%", or better yet, issue a revised prep sheet with new pars.

Here is a partial list of the reasons over production happens:

- No awareness by management of seasonal or special event/holiday trends
- Poor communication to staff of seasonal or special event/holiday trends
- Staff over producing to make their life easier (for instance, making a double batch so they won't have to make it again in 2 days)
- No daily pre-service to tell staff how busy or slow you expect the day to be
- No prep sheets with separate pars for slow and busy days (weekdays/week ends)
- Prep sheet pars which are not updated for seasonal business changes

Improper Cooking Method – Poor Technique

Properly training the staff in all aspects of a recipe is essential both for consistency and for saving on waste. One classic example of an improper cooking method is to add pasta to water which is not boiling. The result will be mushy, starchy pasta that is garbage.

Every product has a best technique and best cooking method to achieve the result you are looking for. Be sure that your crew: a) are properly trained how to do it correctly, b) are not taking shortcuts.

Cooking at the Incorrect Temperature – Excessive Shrinkage

The perfect example is cooking a prime rib at 350° on high fan until it is done! Massive shrinkage and massive loss of potential revenue is the result of this incorrect cooking temperature and method for prime rib. If you use a convection oven then cooking at about 285° on low fan will save you a lot of cash. And if you use an Alto Shaam, they say that their oven will save up to 20% compared to traditional cooking methods.

This applies to all roasts…cooking long and slow will give you a better yield and therefore a lower food cost. You may still want to sear the meat at a high temperature for a short period of time, but the majority of the cooking time should be at a low temp, and definitely with low (or no) fan.

Sous vide cooking is another process which maintains the original integrity of the product and cooks with a significantly lower loss due to shrinkage. There are additional considerations/challenges with sous vide cooking, but it may be worth looking into for some of your production.

Cooking or Holding Products for too Long a Period of Time – Poor Batch Firing

For the purpose of this conversation, batch firing means cooking enough product to get through a relatively short period of time (10 minutes – 60 minutes) and still serve quality product which looks as if it was cooked to order. Although batch cooking typically relates to buffet or cafeteria style cooking, many restaurants will also batch fire certain parts of the menu such as vegetables and starches.

There are two crucial timeframes for controlling your food costs as it relates to batch firing: 1) The transition from busy to slow times during service, 2) The end of the shift before closing when the staff is tired and tends to cook too much just to make life easier.

What is of particular importance to successful batch firing is the necessity to have someone in charge of evaluating the flow of business and modifying the amount of product to produce. For instance, if you batch-fire fresh asparagus for plated dinners off the Line then you should do this with the intent that it appears freshly cooked, is vibrant green, has a slight "bite" to it, and is in overall excellent condition. You can probably hold asparagus for 10-20 minutes in this state in an alto shaam. So, if it's slow then you may fire asparagus to order, if it's busy then you may fire 5-15 orders at a time. And when it slows down again you will fire less.

The standard should be fire "x amount to get through the next y number of minutes". For instance, fire enough to get through the next 10 minutes of service. This amount will always change as the level of business changes. And the most crucial part is having someone who is aware of the flow of business and communicates that it is time to fire more or fire less.

Not using Food Production Schedules or Prep Sheets

Prep sheets are an absolute must if you want to control your costs and either a) not run out of product in the middle of the rush, or b) have to throw away product because too much was prepared. Your prep lists should contain two columns for pars, one for slow days and one for busy days (typically the weekend). This way the staff knows how much to prep for each type of day (busy or slow). Remember to update the pars with the seasons if your business fluctuates with the time of year.

Not using/following Standard Recipes

Standard recipes ensure a number of things including flavor profile, consistency, quality of products used, the yield which is expected, and proper technique.

Without standard recipes the crew just "wings it" which can be terrible both for the consistency of product to the guest and for your food cost.

What typically happens is everyone starts out with a standard recipe, but then over the course of time small parts of the recipes get modified, short cuts are taken, unauthorized "tweaks" are added. Person "A" trains person "B" who trains person "C" who trains person "D" and things get diluted along the way.

Follow-up on your recipes on a regular basis to ensure the crew is still following the original one. Taste test your entire menu on a regular basis. Quiz your team.

No Waste Log used for Items Thrown Out

The waste log is a necessary tool…even though I hate it! A waste log indicates areas of rotation or ordering failure, or on a positive note, opportunities for improvement! In an ideal world there would be nothing on a waste log because nothing would get thrown out. This however is unrealistic, and a waste log will let you know areas of inefficiency in your operation which need your attention to fix.

If items are on the waste log then you need to determine the reason.

- Was too much ordered?
  - If so, did you update the ordering pars?
  - How can you catch the error and utilize the product if it happens again?
  - Was the product improperly rotated (ie someone took newer product before this product)?
    - If so, is this an organizational issue in your storage areas? Fix it. All similar products should be together in the same area all the time with a clear rotation method (FIFO).
    - Or is it a training issue, with staff not practicing FIFO? Educate them.
    - Was too much prepped?

What should be on a Waste Log?

Only include items which have spoiled which you should have been able to sell if it hadn't gone bad. These are the things you need to deal with. Do not include things like vegetable or meat trim.

Improper Standards During Service can Impact Food Cost

Forty Thieves part 4

Part 4 in the series on Food Cost Control following the guidelines set forth in the New Forty Thieves of Food Cost article. This section deals with managing Service meaning the timeframe that the restaurant is open and serving food. Here is the summary of what the Forty Thieves guidelines say:

> **Service:**
> - No standard portion size
> - No standard size utensils for serving
> - No records of food production
> - Carelessness (spillage, waste, cold food, re-fires)
> - Poor production planning during the transition from busy to slow periods
> - Inadequate or poorly trained "wheelman" to control the ticket flow and give "all-days"

No Standard Portion Size

This is pretty straight forward. If you don't have a standardized recipe and portion spec then you do not have control over how much is being served and your food cost will certainly fluctuate unless you are the only one serving the food. Different cooks will serve different amounts unless you set a specific measurable standard ("one handful" is not a specific measurable standard!)

No Standard Size Utensils for Serving

Similar to not having a standard portion size, not having standard serving and/or portioning utensils can also hurt your food cost. Standard serving utensils may include specific sizes of disher scoops (www.chefs-resources.com/culinary-conversions-calculators-and-capacities/scoop-disher-sizes/), ladles, serving spoons, portion cups, soufflé cups and so on.

Standardized serving utensils also helps to ensure a consistent product to the guest (resulting in fewer guest complaints about varying portion sizes on their plate) and they can help increase speed of service.

No Records of Food Production

There are several food production sheets which can help improve communication and give you more control over both production and its impact upon food cost.

They include the following forms:

- Standardized Prep Sheets for each station as well as bulk/batch prepped items
- Cooling Logs – used to track bulk prepped items from hot to cold as they go through the danger zone. These forms monitor the safe handling of your foods and result in less product being thrown out because it is bad, not to mention the more important priority of serving safe food and not losing business due to a foodborne illness outbreak.
- Cooler Temperature Logs – a simple form to be used twice during each shift to check the temperature of your coolers. If the cooler goes down and no one notices it the result is a LOT of wasted food.
- Shift Notes – daily shift notes via email or a Shift Log Book should provide pertinent info about the shift. Day and date, number of covers, is it a holiday, easy or rough shift, was there an event which impacted your covers, and so on. Shift Notes are extremely helpful for looking back to solve problems, and to be able to see how many covers you did last year on any given holiday which will then help you forecast how much food to prepare this year.

Carelessness (spillage, waste, cold food, re-fires)

Mistakes happen and everyone gets the occasional free pass. Carelessness on the other hand is just poor discipline. If one person on your crew has more "mistakes" than everyone one else on a regular basis then their performance needs to be evaluated and improvement is necessary.

Here are some of the culprits which provide the environment for "mistakes" to happen; things which increase the possibility for mistakes:

- A cluttered work space
  - Clutter distracts the mind, but a clean work area focuses the mind
- Disorganized station
  - Can lead to miss-fires or wrong product going into a dish during the rush
  - Slows the Line down, backing things up which may result in re-fires
- Horsing around
- Not giving call-backs to the wheelman or expeditor when tickets are called
- Not taking the time to plan for the forecasted covers
  - Results in being either under-prepped or over-prepped…both can hurt your bottom line
- Not taking regular temps of the hot and cold holding areas

Poor Production Planning During Transition from Busy to Slow Periods

"We're getting slammed! Fire everything!" An experience cook and Chef will know to watch the floor and the flow in the restaurant and try to gauge production based upon the next 15-30 minutes of forecasted service. Don't fall into the trap of just firing product based upon how busy it feels right this moment. You must be looking at least 20 minutes out, especially during that time of the shift when you know things tend to slow down. **Fire product based upon knowledge, not based upon feeling**.

Inadequate or Poorly Trained "Wheelman"

The wheelman or expeditor calls out orders as they come into the kitchen and controls the flow of tickets until the food is plated and served. They set the pace, keep the ship moving and act as the gatekeeper to ensure that all food which leaves the kitchen meets the required standard. Calling the wheel is the hardest job in the kitchen, the most stressful job in the kitchen. It requires an intelligent mind, a strong ability to focus on multiple things, and a steel hand at managing one's own frustration and anger.

A poor wheelman will become overwhelmed or lose focus during the rush. And if the wheelman goes down then the entire Line sinks with them.

Restaurant Sales Mistakes which Cost you Money

A professional, well-managed waitstaff will help improve your bottom line. Conversely, an undisciplined, unmoderated, or poorly managed waitstaff can cost you tons of money. Here is what the 40 thieves food cost have to say about possible food cost problems which relate to sales

Sales:
- Unrecorded sales: "no charge" or cash not turned in, unauthorized comps to friends/family/regulars
- "Open food" abuses (get rid of this key if possible! Or allow only with mgr approval)
- No tracking of "comps" and giveaways
- No tracking of re-fires, waitstaff/cook errors
- No sales records to detect trends
- Poor pricing of menu items
- Incorrect pricing keyed into your register system (Micros, etc.)
- Employee meal costs – over production or unauthorized meals
- Not running specials on items that were overproduced
- No credit for marketing events

Unrecorded Sales

There are a number of ways which a server may deliver food two customers, friends, family, etc. without you receiving the money. First, you must keep track of all sales a server makes per shift and reconcile their balance at the end of the shift. This should include a way to track all credit card sales, cash sales, food cops or credits, and so on. Make it impossible for them to ring in an order to the kitchenand then pocket the cash if the guest pays with cash only. The only way to do this is to reconcile all their sales for the shift.

Food Comps

Unless you implicitly trust your servers then do not allow them to issue food comps to their guests. It's better to run all comps through a supervisor or manager. Remember that servers are tempted to be extra nice to a guest in order to pump up their tips, so giving them a comp for the slightest reason, or no reason at all, is certainly an incentive to the server to increase their tips at your expense. All comps should be in controlled through management.

No Ticket No Food

Another way to control illegitimate food sales or unauthorized comps is to mandate that the kitchen will produce nothing without a ticket from the server. Once it is wrong in through the POS system you have documentation of the transaction and it makes it much easier to hold them accountable and to verify all transactions and food sales.

Your POS system should also be set up with special keys for comps, re-fires, and any discounts or giveaways what you allow.

You should not allow server or kitchen mistakes to be eaten by the staff. It's too easy for one of them to make a mistake simply because they want to good meal. Also, track misfires/re-fires by server to see if one of them needs additional training or has suspicious transactions.

Open Food Abuses

Seriously, if you can get rid of the open food button you will be better off! I understand that many establishments need the flexibility to ring in an unusual food item. However, it is extremely easy to abuse the open food button. Ring in a fillet mignon open food for $5 dollars! At the very least, verify all open food charges by the server, or I make it so that only a supervisor or manager can authorize an open food charge.

Comps and Giveaways

All comps and giveaways should be rung in using a comp key in your POS system so that you can keep track of them and be aware of their impact upon your food cost. All comps should be issued only by a manager.

Misfires/re-fires

Similarly, misfires and re-fires should use a specific POS key so you can keep track of them, their impact upon your financials, and tractability to specific servers. Associating kitchen errors to specific cooks is useful if you are able to track that as well.

Tracking Sales Trends

Do you know what your top sellers are? How about the worst sellers? Do you review this information on a regular basis… Monthly, quarterly etc. Do you use this information to modify item placements on your menu using the concepts of menu engineering and the way that I moves over your man? How do your trends change

with the seasons?

Poor Pricing of Menu Items

Know your menu item food cost percentages, margins, and popularity or percentage of sales. Knowing these 3 metrics will help you make intelligent decisions about raising or lowering menu prices on any given item.

Poor pricing of menu items can take a variety of forms. Sometimes it is about food cost percentage and making sure that you're not selling it for two cheap. But that's not always the case as a section on sales mix points out because a high margin can offset a high food cost and net more money to the bottom line.

Another thing to look at, is if your top selling one or two items are huge sellers then perhaps it's time to kick the price up a little bit. It's always worth testing a little price bump on a exceptional selling item to see if it impacts sales in a negative fashion or not. Just don't bump it up to high all at once.

If your menu items are completely based upon food cost percentage then you could also be missing out on sales. You really don't want to run your lobster and a 25% food cost because he just won't sell them. Even had a 50% food cost your margin will often be better than any other menu item and therefore it's worth selling at the worst food cost.

Incorrect POS Prices

Double check and confirm that the prices plugged into your POS system are the correct sales prices for each item. Also follow up with your service staff to be sure that the correct keys are being used by them for each menu item. Sometimes the key which you intend them to use is not the key they're actually using. This is especially true for new menu items.

Also check to see if some of the keys are confusing for either the waitstaff or the kitchen. The waitstaff may consistently use the wrong key because it is too similar to another dish. Or the way the ticket prints in the kitchen may cause confusion and a misfire may be reoccurring.

Employee Meals

Regardless of whether or not you have an employee meal program, your employees will avail themselves of your food. Be sure they understand exactly what it's OK for them to have and what is not OK. If you allow employee meals

then be sure you track it and are aware of its impact upon your food cost.

Also be sure that you take control of it and don't let them just have whatever they want. Always know the actual cost of the food which you are allowing them to have for employee meals. Some operations will track this as an HR benefit or some other employee benefit and not as an actual line item against your food cost.

No Credit for Marketing Events

If you do any marketing events such as food and wine dinners, food shows that are offsite, or any other unusual marketing event, be sure to keep track of the cost associated with it, especially if there is no sales associated with it. If you do not have A separate line item in your PNL statement for marketing events, you will at least want to know the direct impact in dollars to your food cost percentage. Track it separately in an Excel program if you need to so when you go to your P&L meeting you can explain what impact those events had on your P&L for that month.

Sales Mix, Menu Mix and Menu Engineering

Chef David Buchanan - image courtesy Tulalip Resort Casino

What is definition of **Sales Mix** and how is it different than **Menu Mix**? What about **Menu Engineering**, how does that concept work into this discussion?

I've heard all three terms used interchangeably to describe an evaluation of your margin as it relates to the menu. And I've also heard each phrase used in a different context to describe other aspects of menu analysis. There is no general consensus or set in stone rule.

But having said that, here are the definitions of these 3 phrases which make the most sense to me as a chef, because I do see them to be 3 distinctly different perspectives of menu management.

Sales Mix is an evaluation of your **Theoretical Food Cost** based upon total items sold for a given period and the margin generated from those items. We'll cover more on this topic below.

Menu Mix is often used interchangeably to refer to the same thing as **Sales Mix**.

However, I consider **Menu Mix** to refer to how the menu items are distributed in the kitchen during service. Menu Mix evaluates the flow of menu items. For instance, if you have menu items which come from the grill station, sauté station, and fry station then ideally one third of the most popular items will come from each station during service.

This even distribution of production in the kitchen facilitates speed of service. Conversely, if 70% of your menu items come off of the grill and only 30% come from the other two stations, then your grill station will constantly be slammed and speed of service will be slow.

Menu Engineering most commonly refers to the layout of your menu, as in the printed layout. This involves the science of the way people read, which items attract them, and which parts of the physical menu capture the most attention. Items placed in the "best real estate" of the menu design will get better sales simply due to the science of how people read and perceive a menu.

But in my view, Menu Engineering has a much more broad meaning as it relates to the evaluation of your menu. It is the big picture. It involves all aspects of your menu, from printed design & layout, to the science of reading & marketing, its Sales Mix structure, and the impact of Sales Mix and Menu Mix. Menu Engineering evaluates the inter-relatedness of the kitchen, guest perception (of the menu), and the financial bottom line.

So, with that out of the way, let's jump into Sales Mix and how to use it to strengthen your financial picture.

What is the Sales Mix Definition?

As already stated, **Sales Mix** is an evaluation of your **Theoretical Food Cost** based upon total items sold for a given period. In other words, based upon what you sold this should be your food cost…assuming no waste, no comps, no mistakes, etc. Sales Mix calculations will also often then compare the theoretical food cost with the margin generated from the items sold. The goal is to measure and compare three vital pieces of information: your theoretical food cost % based upon items sold, the margin (net profit as compared against cost of goods), and your actual food cost after inventory is taken for the given period.

As chefs, we are often taught that food cost % is the end all, the most important evaluation of our business success. That is a misconception, a failed concept, because it is only half the truth, half the picture. **Sometimes a high food cost is good thing, perhaps even a better thing, than a low food cost.** Keep reading!

To illustrate that sometimes a high food cost is a good thing, if you sell lobster at a

50% food cost, and spaghetti at a 30% food cost, your actual food cost will vary depending upon the quantities of each sold. If you sell lots of lobster you will have a lousy food cost…but you will have lots of cash! And more importantly, you will have **a lot more cash (Margin)**.

Sold mostly Lobster

	Cost	Sales $	Food Cost	Margin	# Sold	TT Cost	TT Sales	Food Cost	Margin
Lobster	$25.00	$50.00	50%	$25.00	900	$22,500	$45,000		
Spaghetti	$3.00	$10.00	30%	$7.00	100	$300	$1,000	49.6%	$23,000
					Total	$22,800	$46,000		

Sold mostly Spaghetti

	Cost	Sales $	Food Cost	Margin	# Sold	TT Cost	TT Sales	Food Cost	Margin
Lobster	$25.00	$50.00	50%	$25.00	100	$2,500	$5,000		
Spaghetti	$3.00	$10.00	30%	$7.00	900	$2,700	$9,000	37.1%	$8,800
					Total	$5,200	$14,000		

In the examples above 1,000 orders are served in each case. In one example it is mostly lobster, and in the other it is mostly spaghetti. At the end of the day would you rather have a 49.6% food cost and $23,000 net cash; or a 37.1% food cost and only $8,800 net cash? Give me the cash! That's $14,200 more net cash for the same amount of covers, the same amount of labor…focusing on the "lousy" food cost is a mistake. The cash pays the bills, not the percentages.

The sales mix calculation tool below will help you get a better picture of the dynamics of your menu, which items are most popular, which ones drive the most revenue, which ones are stars, and which ones are dogs. It will give you a theoretical food cost, a sort of snapshot picture, of your food cost based upon the menu items sold.

It's important to note that your actual food cost will be higher than your Theoretical Sales Mix food cost, typically by about 3 to 5 percentage points. There are many reasons for this disparity, a few of which include incorrect recipe costing, theft, waste, re-fired food, food comps, wait staff errors, kitchen errors, and over portioning just to name a few. Read the 40 thieves of food cost article for the full list of food cost perpetrators.

Restaurant Name

SALES MIX - APPETIZERS

	Date Prepared:		6/23/2014			Period Covered:			Week Ending 6/22/2014			

Menu Item	Total Sold	Popularity %	Item Cost	Item Sales Price	Item Food Cost %	Item Margin	Total Cost	Total Revenue	Total Margin	Food Cost Rank	Profit Rank	Popularity Rank	Menu Category
Item # 1	125	15.3%	$4.00	$13.95	28.7%	$9.95	$500	$1,744	$1,244	Pass	High	High	Star
Item # 2	25	3.1%	$6.04	$15.50	39.0%	$9.46	$151	$388	$237	Pass	Low	Low	Dog
Item #3	20	2.4%	$5.25	$8.50	61.8%	$3.25	$105	$170	$65	Fail	Low	Low	Dog
Item #4	75	9.2%	$3.00	$12.50	24.0%	$9.50	$225	$938	$713	Pass	Low	High	Plow Horse
Item #5	75	9.2%	$1.80	$3.00	60.0%	$1.20	$135	$225	$90	Fail	Low	High	Question
Item #6	125	15.3%	$4.25	$16.00	26.6%	$11.75	$531	$2,000	$1,469	Pass	High	High	Star
Item #7	37	4.5%	$4.25	$15.00	28.3%	$10.75	$157	$555	$398	Pass	High	Low	Challenge
Item #8	65	8.0%	$6.05	$14.00	43.2%	$7.95	$393	$910	$517	Pass	Low	Low	Dog
Item #9	140	17.1%	$7.50	$19.00	39.5%	$11.50	$1,050	$2,660	$1,610	Pass	High	High	Star
Item #10	130	15.9%	$4.50	$18.00	25.0%	$13.50	$585	$2,340	$1,755	Pass	High	High	Star

Total Sales				Total Cost	Gross Revenue	Gross Margin
817	100.0%			$3,833	$11,929	$8,096

Popularity Rank	Sales Mix Food Cost %	Budget Food Cost %	Ave Gross Profit
8.0%	32.1%	30.0%	$9.91

Know your Sales Mix impact on your Food Cost

If you would like to analyze your Sales Mix and Theoretical Food Cost you can download this Excel sheet from Chefs-Resources.

www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/food-cost-tools/sales-mix-and-menu-mix-for-the-chef/

Restaurant Inventory Control

Managing your food cost is closely tied to controlling your food inventory. It starts with purchasing products which are within your budget (no foie gras at Denny's!) and then keeping control of every aspect of that financial asset (food is an asset as far as your budget is concerned) from storage to prep to tracking yield and waste to portion size and out the door.

And if you have product left then there is the whole inventory process. Just because you have it and put it on an inventory sheet doesn't mean that you are getting proper credit for that food item. Knowing how to take inventory properly and how to verify that you have actually received proper credit for your inventory requires a lot of skill and time…but it is effort which is well worth the time it takes to learn because at the end of the day it is your name on the bottom of the balance sheet next to "food cost %."

The following 4 sections dive into the deep end of the period-end inventory process. A couple of things to remember:

Inventory is Your Responsibility…it will be your Crown or your Heartache

- Take an active part in every aspect of the inventory process
    - Don't trust the persons counting inventory…they will make a mistake
    - Don't trust the persons entering it into your inventory software…they will make a mistake
    - Don't trust the accounting department…they will make a mistake
    - Trust no one (even yourself!)…verify everyone's work

One of the most important components of managing your food cost is managing your inventory process. Controlling your **month end food inventory** and **food cost** is essential both for your business as well as for your own professional reputation. Controlling your end of month food inventory revolves around four specific tasks: **Taking inventory**, verifying credits & transfers, verifying the pre-closing [food inventory balance sheet](#), and checking posted inventory. Managing each step of this process is vital to being on top of your numbers.

Taking Inventory

First of all when taking your inventory, be sure that everyone uses the **Shelf to Sheet method** of counting inventory. Never use the Sheet to Shelf method, where you use your printed Inventory Taking Sheets to hunt for the items to count as you read down the Inventory Taking Sheet page. If you go Sheet to Shelf, then you will inevitably miss items which are on your shelves but which are not on the taking sheets. Always use the Shelf to Sheet method.

Shelf to Sheet means that when taking inventory you look at what's on the shelf and then find it on your Inventory Taking Sheets. You move along counting every

single item on each shelf in a systematic method, whether it's top to bottom, left to right, whatever. If you take inventory shelf to sheet you will miss nothing and you will probably end up with write-ins on the worksheet. Write-ins are items which are not on your inventory taking sheets but are on your shelves. Write-ins are possibly items which have dropped off the inventory sheets for some reason, or more likely, they are new purchases for the month which have not been added to your inventory taking sheets yet.

Always count your expensive proteins by the pound, not by the each or by the case! If you are counting your prime ribs by the each or case and they are packed as 6 each 10 lb average per case but what you have on hand actually weigh 11 or 12 lbs each then you are losing money. Also, items such as shrimp may be packed as 6 each 4 lb bricks one month (24 lb) and 10 each 5 lb bricks next month (50 lb). Counting shrimp by the case can have a disastrous effect on your foodcost! Cheese, meat, fish, shellfish, and other expensive items should ALWAYS be counted by the pound. They should also be costed in your inventory system by the pound.

Separate your Inventory into Specific Storage Areas

Your Inventory Taking Sheets should be organized by specific areas. Ideally, you will have a meat cooler, a dairy cooler, a produce cooler, dry storage, prep area, liquor, and freezer (and possibly more). You should have separate Inventory Taking Sheets, and matching separate areas in your inventory software. This way you will be able to compare each storage area (and its representative products) from month to month. If your food cost is high and there is a corresponding unusual fluctuation in your meat cooler, then there is a good chance that your problem somehow relates to that cooler.

Inventory Taking Sheet Checklist

Once you have finished taking your physical inventory, you will want to double check the following items on your taking sheets. **First**, check all "zero" entries, any item which has a zero quantity entry. It's easy to accidentally skip something so you want to double check to be sure that you really did not have any of that product in-house.

Second, check the units of measure used during the inventory taking. Spot check a number of items to verify that the correct unit of measure was used so that things which are inventoried by the pound were indeed counted by the pound, items counted by the case were counted by the case, and so on.

Third, double check large numbers. Verify that any entries with a large number are correct. Again, sometimes a large number may reflect that somebody has

inventoried an item by the each instead of by the case (you have 16 eaches but it was counted as 16 cases). Fourth, verify that new purchases have been inventoried. These are items which are new purchases during month.

Once you have checked your inventory taking sheets, it is time to enter your quantities into whatever accounting software your company uses.

Chef John Jadamec - image courtesy of the Tulalip Resort Casino

As stated in the previous chapter, one major components of managing your food cost is managing your inventory and giving it your undivided attention at period closing. Controlling your end of period food inventory revolves around four specific tasks: Taking inventory, verify credits & transfers, verify the pre-closing food inventory balance sheet, and check posted inventory. This section deals with credits, transfers, and marketing events.

Verify Product Credits, Transfers, and Marketing Credits

Verify with accounting that all of your product credits are correctly recorded. Be sure that you have received all credits that you should have received. These include credits for product that was returned; miss-picks; being shorted on product which you were still billed for; and so on. Keep a separate file throughout the month to track credits that you should be receiving so it will be easy to track these down at the end of the month.

If you receive transfers from, or make transfers to, other departments within your operation, verify those numbers to make sure that they accurately reflect both the correct quantity and the correct price.

If you participate in food shows, charity events, or other marketing events, you should keep track of your food cost for those events. Even if your company does not have a budget line for marketing events, you should still track your cost for these events. This way, if your food cost comes in unusually high for that month you can say, "I had a half a point of cost due to this event that we did to promote our business."

If you don't see these product credits & transfers posted to your account then verify with accounting what the status on them is. Are they to be posted to your account next month? Or did they accidentally get posted to a different account? Always get your money, or at least know how much you have given away.

Transfers-in & Transfers-out

This refers to a property which has multiple venues which purchase their own products and have separate P&Ls, such as a hotel which has a restaurant, a deli, and a catering department. If the restaurant ran short on product and needed lettuce from the deli this would be a Transfer-in for the restaurant and a Transfer-out for the deli. The cost of the product would be transferred from one venue to the other and would be reflected in the **General Ledger** and the **Cost Of Goods (COGs)** for each venue as relates to budgets and food cost. It is a way to keep a more accurate analysis of the financials of each venue. If you have a stand alone property (one unit), then this is irrelevant because you make no transfers, with the possible exception of employee meals.

House Smoked Sockeye Salmon over Chèvre-Cucumber Purse

Controlling your month end food inventory and food cost is essential both for your business as well as for your own professional reputation. Controlling your end of month food inventory revolves around four specific tasks: Taking inventory, verifying credits & transfers, verifying the pre-closing inventory balance sheet, and checking posted inventory. Managing each step of this process is vital to being on top of your numbers.

If you want to really dig into analyzing and controlling your inventory, then this page will be very informative. But if you are simply cruising through, better grab a shot of bourbon (Knob Creek please!) because although the content is useful, it is also tedious. Like caviar, it requires a discerning palate.

Check The Food Inventory Sheet Figures

Once your food inventory is entered into the computer the Food Inventory Balance Sheet should be returned to you from accounting for review before it is posted as

the final month-end. You want to be sure that you have at least a day to check out the numbers before they are posted as a final month-end inventory number. You'll want to check the **product quantity column** and the **extension cost column**, analyzing a variety of potential problems for each column.

Dry Goods

Description	Qty	Unit	Cost	Amount	Notes
	dry8-2014 D		Commodi	*ALL	
	davidbu N		Qty	-1	
WINE COOKING MIRIN AJI 12/24 OZ (DEMAND	1.25	CASE	$59.50	$74.38	
CHERRY DRIED TART 1/5 LB (DROP SHIP)	9.75	LB	$9.67	$94.25	this is an Each price, not a Case price
COFFEE TULALIP GRND DECAF KILLER 32/7 OZ	0.38	CASE	$124.28	$46.61	
COFFEE TULALIP KILLER REG GRND 32/7 OZ	0.75	CASE	$3.42	$3.42	
FRUIT MEDLEY BAKER'S 1/5LB (1/5 LB)	0.20	CASE	$22.92	$4.58	
KETCHUP FCY 6/#10 (6/#10)	0.60	CASE	$25.86	$15.52	5 Cases!? No, I have 5 Eaches The program has a faulty calculation
MILK COCONUT UNSWEETENED 24/13.5 OZ	5.00	EACH	$2.80	$25.19	
CORN STARCH SYS CLS 24/1 LB (24/1#)	5.00	CASE	$25.83	$129.14	
NUT HAZELNUT WHL PLD 1/5 LB (1/5#)	1.50	CASE	$55.07	$82.61	
NUT MACADAMIA (DROP SHIP) 1/5 LB (1/ 5 LB)	1.25	CTNR	$89.09	$111.36	
NUT PINE SHELLED RAW 1/5 LB (1/ 5 LB)	1.25	CTNR	$89.63	$112.04	
POLENTA CORN MEAL YELLOW MED 4/5# (4/ 5	1.00	CASE	$29.61	$29.61	
RICE BASMATI WHITE 1/25# (1/25#)	8.50	BG	$9.54	$81.09	
RICE LONG GRAIN WILD BLND 6/36 OZ (6/36 OZ)	1.83	CASE	$55.67	$101.87	
CAPER NONPAREIL IMPORTED INTLIMP 6/32 OZ	0.30	CASE	$42.63	$12.79	
SAUCE FISH TIPAROS 12/25 OZ (12/ 24 OZ)	1.00	CASE	$19.14	$19.14	
SAUCE SOY KIKOMAN 4/1GAL (4/1 GAL)	2.00	GAL	$10.77	$21.53	$1.00 is a default when no price has been put into the system
SAUCE WORCESTERSHIRE SYS CLS 4/1 GAL	0.50	CASE	$30.15	$15.08	
OIL OLIVE BLEND 80/20 - 6/1 GAL (6/1 GAL)	5.00	GAL	$12.80	$63.99	
OIL OLIVE EXTRA VIRGIN ITALY SUPREMA	0.25	CASE	$1.00	$0.25	
OIL SESAME SEED JAPANESE 12/12 OZ	0.80	CASE	$50.95	$40.76	Cases instead of Eaches
MUSTARD DRY SPICE 1-2 KG (1- 2 KG)	0.75	CTNR	$32.78	$24.59	
PASTE RED CURRY 24/14 OZ (24/14 OZ)	8.00	CASE	$49.18	$393.46	
SALT GRANULATED PLAIN SYS CLS 1/25#	10.50	CASE	$1.00	$10.50	
SALT KOSHER SYS CLS 12/3# (12/3#)	1.08	CASE	$17.61	$19.01	
SPICE ANISE SEED 6/15 OZ (6/15 OZ)	0.60	EACH	$1.00	$0.60	
SPICE CHINESE FIVE SPICE (1 /16 OZ)	3.00	EACH	$10.95	$32.85	Purchased 1 Case then purchased 1 Each. The system calculated total cost for 1 Each as if it were a case of 6 eaches (8.22/6)
SPICE CURRY POWDER IMP/MCC 6/1# (6/1#)	0.30	CASE	$54.64	$16.39	
SPICE PEPPER CAYENNE GRND IMP/MCC 6/14	1.00	EACH	$6.51	$6.51	
SPICE BASIL LEAVES SWEET 6/5 OZ (6/5 OZ)	1.00	EACH	$1.37	$1.37	
SPICE THYME LEAVES WHL IMP/MCC 6/6 OZ	0.16	CASE	$39.11	$6.26	
VINEGAR BALSAMIC BULK ITALY 2/5 LTR (2/5	0.38	EACH	$26.35	$9.88	
VINEGAR RASPBERRY CHAMPAGNE 12/16.75 Z	0.16	CASE	$29.65	$4.74	
VINEGAR RED WINE 50 GRAIN SYS CLS 4/1 GAL	0.75	CASE	$19.58	$14.69	
VINEGAR RICE NATURAL 4/1 GAL (4 1 /GAL)	1.50	CASE	$35.57	$53.35	
VINEGAR SHERRY SPAIN 12/16.75 OZ (12/16.75	0.50	CASE	$29.02	$14.51	
COCONUT SNOWFLAKE 5/2 LB (5/2 LB)	0.20	CASE	$23.26	$4.65	Entered 25 lb, system counted as 25 Cases
ONION RED JMBO FRSH BOX SYS IMP 1/25#	6.10	CASE	$8.68	$52.95	
ONION WHL PLD RED FRESH 2/5 LB (23/5 LB)	25.00	CASE	$17.12	$427.95	
ONION YELLOW JMBO FRSH BOX SYS IMP 1/50#	1.00	CASE	$14.19	$14.19	
POTATO BAKING 50CT (50/CT)	0.68	CASE	$12.83	$8.72	
POTATO FINGERLING #1 -1/20 LB (1/20 LB)	0.58	CASE	$26.03	$14.97	
POTATO SWEET, MED 1/40 LB (1/40 LB)	7.00	LB	$1.21	$8.44	
POTATO YELLOW YUKON GOLD A 1/50 LB (1/	0.50	LB	$0.50	$0.25	
				$2,226.02	

Verify Inventory units of measure & price extensions

I don't actually analyze every single line of my inventory balance sheets because there may be several thousand items in food inventory. But I'll cruise through and

look for both **item quantity extremes** and **extension cost extremes** with either really low numbers, especially "0", or really high numbers.

Product Quantity Column

First, check for **item quantity extremes** to verify low and high amounts entered into the b column. Check all "0" quantity entries to verify that you actually had "0" of that item on hand. Then check all large quantities. A common mistake happens when entering values into the computer, a person accidentally hits two keys simultaneously. So, instead of entering "1" case of product, they accidentally hit the "4" and "1" keys simultaneously (or some other combination of keys which are right next to each other) and enter 41 cases of product instead of 1 case.

Extension Cost Column

You'll want to check for **extension cost extremes** and c**alculation errors**. Again, verify that every $0.00 extension is correct. If there is an item quantity entered on that line but the extension is $0.00 then there is a problem either in the calculation formula, or there is no price entered for that item.

Verify that every high extension cost is correct. If the quantity of product on hand is correct then the extension value should be correct. If the quantity on hand is correct but the extension is too high (or too low), check the **unit of measure**, the **pack size**, the **calculation formula**, and the **price**.

It is very common for items to be calculated incorrectly, even if you have entered the correct number. This is because someone has to tell the software how to calculate how many items or units are in a case. If they enter the wrong info (and someone always does) then the system will calculate that item incorrectly. Last month my 11 lb cases of vine ripe tomatoes got costed out as one pound per case because accounting entered into the system that 1 cs = 1 lb!

- *Unit of Measure* – Having the wrong unit of measure can adversely affect your extension. If you have 15 'each' on hand but the unit of measure is 'case' then your extension cost will reflect a cost for 15 cases. And vise versa. Also, meats, seafood and cheese which is purchased by the pound should be inventoried by the pound.

- *Pack Size* – Before you can check the calculation formula you will need to know the pack size which has been entered into the formula. Verify that it is the correct pack size for that item. For instance, black pepper is sold as 3 each 5 pound containers per case.

- *Calculation Formula* – Once you know the pack size used in the calculation

you can do the math to determine if the extension cost is correct. Common calculation errors occur with items which are sometimes purchased by the 'case' and sometimes purchased by the 'each'. Some programs will take the last purchased price and consider that to be the 'case' price even if it is an 'each' price. So, in our example with the black pepper, the formula in the system would be "3 each 5 pound containers per case". If you purchase just one 'each', the system may take that cost and apply it as the 'case' price. So if one each costs $50 (which equals $10/lb), the system may apply that purchase as a case price. The result from the system would be $50/cs = $16.67/ea = $3.33/lb. The actual price per pound is $10. You lose $6.67 per pound of inventory due to this error.

- *Price* – Lastly, when evaluating **extension cost extremes**, verify that the price is correct for the item being purchased. Make sure that the price corresponds to the unit of measure and that the final extension cost is correct. Especially check pricing on new items.

Freezer

Description	Qty Unit	Cost	Amount	
freezer/aug/15	D	Commodity:	*ALL	
WONTON SKIN FROZEN 12/1 LB (12/1#)	0.50 PKG	$1.18	$0.59	
LOBSTER TAILS 5-6 OZ 1/10# (1/ 10#)	30.00 LB	$19.19	$575.8	Check extreem numbers
CRAB KING RED 9/12 SCORED IQF 1/ LB (1/20	34.00 LB	$437.60	$14,878.40	
CRAB MEAT DUNGENESS 6/5 LB CAN (6/5 LB	2.00 LB	$25.97	$51.95	
CRAB MEAT RED 2/2.5 LBS (2/2.5 LBS)	1.00 LB	$12.37	$12.37	
LOBSTER BODIES 1/25LBS. (1/25LBS.)	25.00 LB	$1.74	$43.62	
LOBSTER SLIPPER 1-3 OZ 6/5 LB (6/5 LB)	15.00 LB	$27.14	$407.14	
LOBSTER TAILS 10/12 OZ - 1/10 LB (1/ 10 LB)	30.00 LB	$18.77	$563.02	Check extreem numbers
SHRIMP 13/15 GH BLK TGR 6/4 LB (6/4 LB)	55.00 LB	$0.00	$0.00	
HALIBUT FRS FLT 20/40 - 1/ LB (1/ LB)	45.00 LB	$16.99	$764.49	
BEEF STEAK NY STRIP PRIME GD 10/16OZ (LB)	1.00 CASE	$244.90	$244.90	
BEEF STEAK PORTERHOUSE (PETSCHLS) 20 OZ	0.40 CASE	$13.03	$5.21	
SALMON KING S/OFF PBO (1/LBS.)	120.00 OZ	$0.75	$89.40	NEVER count
SCALLOP SEA DRY U10 - 1/LB (1/LB)	162.40 OZ	$1.15	$186.42	expensive items
BEEF BONE MARROW SPLIT FRZN (10 LB AVG.)	0.80 CASE	$49.77	$39.82	by the CASE
LAMB LEG NETTED BONLESS LB (PETSCHLS)	25.00 LB	$11.89	$297.13	Always count
LAMB RACK SPLIT FR NZ 24/16-18OZ (24/ 16-	8.50 LB	$9.48	$80.60	them by the LB
HAM CAPICOLA BUTT HOT 2/4.5-5LBS. AVG	3.00 LB	$3.75	$11.25	
HAM PROSCIUTTO BNLS HALF 2/4LBS. AVE	9.00 LB	$9.38	$84.42	
SALAMI DRY ITAL WRAP 5/2 LBS. AVG (5/2 LB	3.00 LB	$5.74	$17.22	
CHICKEN CVP WHOLE WOG FRESH 16/3# (16/3#)	54.00 LB	$1.61	$86.93	
FOIE GRAS DUCK A WHL LOBE IQF 6/2 LB AVG	36.00 LB	$12.26	$441.50	
ONION PEARL GR A 1/30 LB (1/30#)	0.70 CASE	$35.53	$24.87	
FIGS FRESH (1/LBS.)	0.25 CASE	$16.71	$4.18	Is total inventory higher/lower than normal?
			$18,911.24	

Verify Inventory highs, lows, and unit count method

Also, verify that the **prices** used to calculate your inventory are current prices and not prices from several months ago. If you have time to go through and verify every actual price on every single item, more power to you. But generally speaking, you only go through and double check the pricing on key high-cost items such as your major proteins like meats & seafood, maybe your cheeses, and specialty produce. If you have new purchases for the month, be sure that accounting has accurate prices for those items (often they will show a cost of $1.00 or have no price at all).

Managing Food Inventory – Verify Final Numbers

(Part 4 of 4)

This is the forth part of this discussion on managing your food cost by managing your period end inventory. Controlling your month or period end food inventory and food cost is essential both for your business as well as for your own professional reputation. Controlling your end of month food inventory revolves around four specific tasks: Taking inventory, verifying credits & transfers, verifying the pre-closing inventory balance sheet, and checking posted inventory using an excel spreadsheet. Managing each step of this process is vital to being on top of your numbers.

Use Excel To Verify The Inventory Balance Sheet

You will want to use your own Excel spreadsheet to verify your food inventory. The free Food Cost Calculation File (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/food-cost-calculation/) is an excellent inventory tool to use if you do not have one already. Never leave your fate in someone else's hands. In other words, don't trust the accounting department to get your numbers right. Know your numbers. Know what your beginning inventory number is as well as your ending inventory number. Know your transfers and credits. Know your sales. Be aware of marketing events and comps which may have hurt your numbers. Enter all these numbers into your own spreadsheet to calculate your food cost.

Invoicing Methods

The numbers which the accounting department have will probably be different, but they should be close (+ or – half a point). If they are not close then you need to know the reason why. Do they have all your credits and transfers? Is the accounting department accruing invoices so that your budgetary monthly purchases reflect what is actually being brought into the restaurant for the current month? Or are they simply paying invoices as they come across their desk and considering those paid invoices as your purchases for the month?

Invoicing Gone Bad

An example of this gone bad would be New Year's Eve events. If the sales for New Year's Eve are posted in December, but the purchases for New Year's Eve get posted to January (when the invoices cross their desk), then your food cost for January could be exceptionally high, whereas December would look great.

Accounting should be accruing these invoices so that they are reflected in the appropriate month. If not, you at least need to be aware of the method that they are using so you can give an intelligent response to fluctuations in your food cost.

Food Cost and Inventory Calculation Spreadsheet

I use the Food Cost Calculation Tool to keep track of all these elements. It will also keep track of Comps, Marketing Event Credits, and Transfers. The nice thing about this tool is that it also will give you a comparative sense of most of these numbers against last month's numbers so that you can notice an increase or a severe decline in your ending inventory month-to-month, or the inventory of a specific storeroom month-to-month, or the difference in your sales month-to-month. This is a great tool for putting the answers to your questions right at your fingertips. It does most of the math for you. An additional feature of the food cost calculation tool is that it will show you your inventory turns and average inventory for the month. And best of all, this food cost spreadsheet is free to use, simply download it.

By using the Food Cost Calculation File (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/food-cost-calculation/) and the Declining Balance Worksheet (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/restaurant-inventory-control/declining-balance-sheet/), or your own version of them, you will be able to track your purchases and your theoretical Month End Food Cost.

If you implement these techniques, you will gain several things. First, you'll achieve better control of your month-end inventory. And second, you'll have authoritative answers as to what has impacted your food cost either for the good or for the bad, as well as insight into how to correct it.

Inventory And Recipe Management Software Best Practices

Most medium to large food service operations now use some sort of professional restaurant software which allows multiple users to accomplish a variety of tasks, all of which can help in controlling the financials of a restaurant. Popular programs include Red Rock, ChefTec, EGS (Enggist & Grandjean Software), and IT Chef (note: I am not necessarily recommending any of these, they are simply a few of the programs available). This type of software package typically includes recipe & menu costing analysis along with inventory control. Some also have the ability to give nutritional analysis, sync with your POS system, provide current pricing bids and synchronize all of your ordering with your vendors.

Although these foodservice software programs are powerful, the old adage "too many chefs in the kitchen" certainly impacts how efficiently (or chaotically) the software works. The more people with "hands in the system", the more problems you will have with the effective functionality (and frustration level) of the software.

Here is a typical scenario for a larger operation with multiple staff. The Chefs give their food orders to Purchasers who create PO numbers in the system for orders placed. Then they transmit those orders either via the software or through traditional methods. Invoice prices for all products are entered (sometimes by someone other than the person who created the PO) on a daily basis. Chefs enter recipes into the system which are automatically updated with current prices from the info the Invoicer has entered. At the end of the budget period Chefs (or their staff) take their period end inventory. Someone (often a person in Accounting) enters the physical counts into the system which calculates the food cost. With so many hands in the pot it is inevitable to create inconsistencies.

Here is an all too common consequence of improperly trained people entering new items into the system, creating names for items which are not logically designed. The inventory and order sheets generated by these programs will usually sort alphabetically, which is very helpful. But people put names into the system without intelligent thought. For instance, if I am inventorying my produce walk-in I would think that Tarragon would be found under "Tarragon" when sorted alphabetically. No…depending upon who created the item name it could be under "Fresh Tarragon", "Fresh Herb Tarragon", "Herb Tarragon", or perhaps "Herb Fresh Tarragon". And all the fresh herbs may use a different variation depending on who created it…WTF?!

Only a chef should decide how to name an item into the system. But in every establishment I've been at it is multiple people who enter new items, and they do so with no understanding, no food knowledge. They are often data entry people

who are very good at most of their job but were not properly trained on how to name new items into the system in a manner which makes culinary sense.

7 Ways to Better Manage Your Foodservice Recipe & Inventory Software

1. Properly train all personnel…especially in each of the following steps

Sounds obvious, but too often the data entry people are simply trained to enter the data…not how to enter it in a logical, consistent, "foodservice intelligent" manner. To make matters worse, they seldom have much culinary background in regards to costing recipes and taking inventory.

2. Data entry and naming of items MUST follow the Chef's direction

This is important because the Chef is the one searching for the info in the system to create recipes, do menu analysis, and take inventory. S/he knows best what units of measure will be used both in recipes and for inventory taking. And s/he will know best how to differentiate between similar products.

Accountants/Purchasers think differently than chefs do and do not understand the products as chefs do. They therefore enter info into the system incorrectly, creating product names with errors (or misspellings), creating unnecessary duplicate items, combining items which should be separate, and assigning units of measure which are wrong.

3. ALWAYS name items in the system by category from general name to specific name

For instance:

- Salmon King Fillet Fresh
- Salmon King Whole Fresh
- Salmon Sockeye Copper River Fillet Fresh
- Salmon Coho Fillet Frozen (if you only serve fresh salmon then there is no need to use the word "Fresh" because it is redundant. Same thing if you only use one species of salmon…"Salmon Fillet" is all you need
- Tarragon Fresh
- Lemons 115 CT
- Potato Yukon Gold #1
- Potato Russet 80 CT

4. Don't make things too specific

Name items according to how you will identify it in a recipe…but stop short of over-specificity.

If you regularly order King Salmon Fillets then you may receive a range of sizes. If you don't actually order by the different sizes (because all you care about is getting King Salmon and the size is irrelevant) then there is no need to have:

- King Salmon Fillets 7/11
- King Salmon Fillets 11/18
- King Salmon Fillets 18-Up

Adding the size to the item name only clutters and confuses the process, unless you specifically have a use for 2 or more sizes and regularly purchase those different sizes for different recipes. If you create a recipe, which size King Salmon will you use? If don't choose the most recent purchase then it will pull in the price from the last time you purchased that size Salmon…which could have been months ago! And if you do add the correct size now but in 4 months you are using a different size then your cost analysis for the recipe will be wrong in the future. King Salmon Fillets is therefore the best name.

5. NEVER name items simply using the invoice or vendor name!

First, all vendors will have variations on the name for the same product. Second, invoice names are often **HORRENDOUS** for inventory and recipe software because they frequently say something like "fresh tarragon". Great, I'm standing in my produce cooler doing inventory and half the items begin with the word "fresh"…utterly useless info to have at the start of the name because everything in the produce cooler is fresh!

Here are some examples of how **NEVER** to name an item:

- Fresh Tarragon (should be Tarragon Fresh)
- Fresh Herb Basil (should be Basil Fresh…or Herb Basil Fresh if all Herbs begin as such)
- 115 CT Lemons (should be Lemons 115 CT)
- Fish Ahi (why would someone use "Fish" in the item name? Yet I've seen it done!)
- Fillet Sockeye Salmon (should be Salmon Sockeye Fillet)
- Kumamoto Oysters (should be Oysters Kumamoto

- Fuji Apples (should be Apples Fuji)
- Chicken Base (should be Base Chicken, or Soup Base Chicken, or whatever makes sense to the Chef)
- Fresh Peeled Cloves of Garlic (should be Garlic Cloves Peeled)

6. Always use spell check!

It is very difficult to find an ingredient if someone created its name with an incorrect spelling (I've seen "Scollop" instead of "Scallop!"

7. Always consider the best Units of Measure for Recipes & for Inventory

- The best units of measure for recipes generally break down into weight (pounds/oz) and volume (cups/tbl),
- The best unit of measure for counting inventory generally break down into either weight, or cases and its pack units (cans, containers, etc).
- Proteins should always be inventoried by the pound, not by the case.

It sucks when you are inventorying sugar packets and your only unit of measure is by the each! Or, vice versa, you're creating a recipe and the only option is by the case.

How to Calculate Inventory Turns

Inventory Turns is the number of times your inventory turns (is used or replaced with new product) during a given period (month, year, whatever you choose). Typically, the higher the turns the better because it indicates that product is purchased and used on an "as needed" basis and is not just sitting on the shelves. Typical industry standards for Inventory Turns in restaurants is 4 – 8 turns a month. The higher the ratio of fresh product to frozen/dry product you use the higher the number should be.

Inventory Turn Formula

The formula to calculate inventory turns for any given period is:

inventory used ÷ average inventory

First, calculate average inventory for the period. If you take a monthly inventory, this is the formula to calculate average inventory for the month:

Average Inventory = beginning inventory + ending inventory ÷ 2

Next, calculate the amount of inventory used:

Inventory Used = beginning inventory + purchases – ending inventory

Lastly, calculate inventory turns:

Inventory Turns = inventory used ÷ average inventory

Calculate Inventory Turns Example		
Beginning Inventory	$3,490	
Purchases	$22,873	
Sub-Total	$26,363	BI+P
Ending Inventory	$6,129	
Inventory Used	$20,234	ST-EI
Average Inventory	$4,809	(BI + EI) ÷ 2
Inventory Turns	4.21	IU ÷ AI

Declining Balance Spreadsheet

I can hear what some of you are saying, "What exactly is a Declining Balance Sheet and why in the hell would I want to use it?" A declining balance worksheet helps you manage your food cost by keeping track of your month-to-date food purchases. If your food budget is $70K, you simply enter your daily food vendor invoice totals (not individual line item purchases, just the total food purchases per vendor per day), and the form calculates how much cash you have left for food purchases based upon your budget.

If your sales volume is on target for the month, then your food purchases should also be on track. This tool will let you know if purchases are in line with budget so that you can deal with it before over-purchasing becomes a problem. It is a forecasting tool. And, it is helpful for double-checking what the accounting department says you have spent on food when they produce your food cost report. The number they have for food purchases should be very close to what you have documented in the declining balance sheet has for a total. If not, then one of you have made a mistake.

Declining Balance Sheet helps manage Food Cost

Description

The **Declining Balance Worksheet** is an Excel spreadsheet which will keep track of

how much budget you have left for monthly purchases. Enter your monthly budget number in the cell where you see $50,000 and enter your daily invoice totals by vendor into the lower section. The Declining Balance Worksheet calculates the rest! It tells you how much total $ you have spent month to date, how much you have left to spend, and subtotals by vendor.

The chart comes with 16 columns for vendors and a separate tab/worksheet for each month. Simply enter your vendors names. Delete or add extra columns as needed. Download a free version of the Declining Balance Worksheet.

www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/restaurant-inventory-control/declining-balance-sheet/

How to Deal with Restaurant P&L Reviews

As a Chef you will be held accountable for your budget numbers and usually will be required to attend regular restaurant P&L reviews (Profit and Loss) in which you will be expected to explain your numbers. Here are some tips on how to handle these meetings and the questions which will inevitably arise.

Fictitious numbers showing an example of a good restaurant P&L review form. This form is proprietary to a specific company & is not available for download.

Study the Numbers!

First and foremost… **Know your shit!** For real, if you don't know your numbers and why they are good or bad then you're sunk. You need to know your numbers inside & out and have an explanation for everything. And it can't be a bullshit explanation… you need to have believable, plausible, legitimate responses to questions about the good and/or bad aspects of your numbers. If you can't explain your numbers then you have already lost because you will appear weak, unknowledgeable, and inept. So start by reading and knowing the concepts listed below.

There are no Problems, only Solutions

Never offer anything up as a problem. You do not have problems, you only have challenges. And before you present anything as a challenge, you need to have a possible solution as to how you're going to deal with that challenge. You need to show that you've taken ownership, have a plan, and are moving forward to solve that challenge.

During your restaurant P&L reviews, if a question from a superior about your P&L takes you off balance, do not bullshit or blow smoke! It's OK (occasionally) to say

that you're unsure or that you don't know. But immediately follow that up with how you will investigate it to find a solution. It builds trust and honesty if you are able to truthfully admit when you do not have an answer. So long as that doesn't happen too often, and so long as you always follow up so that in the near future you have an answer to that situation. If you arrogantly profess that you are "Mr. Know-it-all" then you will be discounted as an arrogant, insecure ass who is unteachable. Admit your shortcomings and seek to learn, and do not make the same mistake twice. Once you've been given knowledge you MUST act upon and implement that knowledge.

It's important to note that lots of knowledgeable answers with an occasional "I don't know" answer is a good thing. Lots of "I don't know answers" with an occasional articulate answer is a bad thing. And spewing bullshit in either situation will always taint your reputation. If your superior is halfway smart they will know you're bullshitting and then you will need to go through the arduous process of regaining their trust. That's not a wise situation to put yourself in.

If you find that no matter what you do the numbers don't work out then it's either one of two things. Either the company is setting bullshit numbers which are unattainable, or you need some serious improvement on your management skills.

Common Topics in Restaurant P&L Reviews to Understand

Today's Professional Chef needs to be much more rounded and business savvy than simply creating good food and managing your food cost. Here is a short-list of common P&L concepts which you need to understand. Each one has a brief description with a link for more in depth study.

How to Manage Food Cost Actuals

Managing your actual food cost is a multi-layered exercise in communication, discipline, and management standards practiced by you, your staff, and everyone who has any contact with the food and/or the billing/invoicing process. There are a host of reasons why your food cost may be good or bad. It could be incorrect recipes, bad portioning, theft, incorrect invoicing, incorrect inventory taking, a bad menu mix, or a plethora of other possibilities.

Further Reading: The Forty Thieves of Foodcost

Know the Best Way to Manage Period-end Inventory

If you are just taking inventory at the end of the period and turning it in without knowing all the other steps needed to assure it's accuracy then your food cost is

bound to be wrong. I ALWAYS find errors in the inventory process…every single time, no exception, ever. Read the following article about how to accurately take and verify your inventory.

Further Reading: [Restaurant Inventory Control](#) (a 4 part series)

Know your Sales Mix

Your Sales Mix is the analysis of your most popular and least popular menu items sold. It should be broken down by category such as appetizers, salads, entrees, sides/extras, desserts, etc. A good POS system should be able to generate this report for you.

But this Excel tool (Sales Mix pg link) for evaluating your Sales Mix goes further. It allows you to determine the best margin as well as the food cost of each item. And best of all, it will give you a Theoretical Food Cost based upon the actual items sold.

Further Reading: [Sales Mix](#)

Know your Theoretical Food Cost

A chef's attention must be divided between creativity and business sense. If you have the Sales Mix tool working then you can calculate your theoretical food cost and compare this against your actual food cost. The theoretical food cost is the food cost you should have based solely upon the items sold on your menu. If you sold only lobster then it stands to reason that your food cost would be higher than normal. If you sold only grilled cheese sandwiches then you could expect your food cost to be lower than normal.

This is the menu mix in action. It's important to note that theoretical and actual food cost will never be the same…actual will always be higher by roughly 2 – 4 points. This is because theoretical does not account for waste, over-portioning, theft, miss-fires, mistakes, re-fires, server errors, comps, marketing promotions, etc.
Further Reading: [Sales Mix](#)

Know your HOH Productivity Numbers

The most often used measurement for kitchen productivity is covers per hour = covers/total labor hours. This calculation tells you how many labor hours it takes to serve each cover. And of course this number varies widely based upon the type of operation you have, and also by the business levels your operation has.
Further Reading: [Manage Restaurant Productivity](#)

Restaurant P&L reviews vary by company and you may not need all of these

statistics, but knowing them will certainly make you king of your castle! And of course, some companies may have additional budget review info which they expect from the Chef.

How to Calculate Restaurant Productivity

Red Cow Kitchen - Ethan Stowell Restaurants - Seattle

Managing restaurant productivity is a challenging endeavor. If you focus only on the numbers, only on the bottom line, then you may win the battle but lose the war. Productivity in each restaurant has its own ecosystem and you need to see the whole picture in order to build a successful business model.

If you are over staffed then you are paying too much to run your business. But if you cut labor too much then customer service and/or speed of service will suffer and you will lose customers. You will also add undue stress to your team and turnover may increase, resulting in more inconsistency of service and additional hiring/training costs.

Before you begin the process of determining your productivity budget numbers and targets, you first need to answer these more important questions:

- How do you determine/measure the efficiency/inefficiency of your staff and procedures?

- What level of customer service do you want to provide?

- How important is the morale of your staff?

- If you make changes in your productivity expectations, what processes do you have in place to track its impact on productivity, customer service, and team morale?

It's important to keep in mind that the purpose of improving your productivity numbers is to improve productivity (work habits, scheduling, etc) by weeding out inefficiencies which do not result in a negative impact on customer service or team morale.

Common Practices for Tracking Restaurant Productivity

- At the minimum, track FOH, HOH, and Support Staff (dishwashers, cleaners, janitors) separately

  ◦ Smaller operations include dishwashers in HOH, larger operations keep them separate

- Better yet, track each position separately to give you detailed analysis of each position

  ◦ Cooks

  ◦ Prep cooks

  ◦ Servers

  ◦ Hosts

  ◦ Bartenders

  ◦ Bussers

  ◦ Dishwashers (Stewards)

- Also have a summary of all staff combined

- Track each shift separately

- Base scheduling around an accurate forecast of business

- Review productivity actuals on a regular basis

- Review scheduling changes to productivity to evaluate its impact on service and guest satisfaction

- Do not include salaried positions – you cannot control their pay or hours like hourly staff

  ◦ Some operations prefer to include salaried positions. But be careful, some of these companies expect salaried positions to work 60+ hours on a regular basis in order to keep their productivity numbers low. If your company consistently expects excessive hours from you (assuming that you're managing your time/crew right!) then it may be time to look for other opportunities.

Productivity Evaluation Benchmarks

There are a number of different calculations which can be used to evaluate and set benchmarks for your operation. Productivity is generally calculated by four different methods:

- Covers per Labor Hour (total covers/total labor hours)
- Labor Cost per Cover (total labor $/total covers)
- Labor Hours per Cover (total labor hours/total covers)
- Labor Cost per Labor Hour (total labor $/total labor hours)

It's important to understand how these calculations work and what uncontrollable factors can impact them for the better or worse.

Covers per Labor Hour

formula: total covers/total labor hours = covers per labor hour

This is one of the fundamental evaluations to use for managing restaurant productivity. It is the most neutral benchmark because it is unaffected by fluctuations such as big spenders, good/poor upselling, menu pricing changes, etc.

Covers per Labor Hour are calculated by dividing total covers by total labor hours. This includes all hours i.e. regular and OT hours (since no dollar value is evaluated in this calculation 1 OT hour is the same as 1 regular hour so if a team member works 50 hours it is just counted as 50 hours.)

Example: If you served 3,000 covers for the period:
- And HOH labor was 1,900 total hours
  - Then covers/hour for the HOH = 1.58 covers per labor hour
- And FOH labor was 1,400 total hours
  - Then covers/hour for FOH = 2.14 covers per labor hour
- Total covers/labor hour (1,900 + 1,400)/3,000 = .91 covers per labor hour

Covers can either be counted as all persons who purchase food, or just those who purchase entrees. The latter would mean that if someone only purchases appetizers but no entrees then they don't count as a cover. The advantage of counting only entrees is that it is easier to tie productivity to average check of those guests who have an entire meal. But I think that since the goal is to track productivity that you should track all covers sold (who buy food). It still takes labor to produce those appetizers even if they don't buy an entrée.

At the very least, if you decide to base productivity only on entrée count then you should also track what percentage of patrons only order appetizers each month because a 2 point swing can directly impact your percentages.

Also, realize that if you only track entrees then your productivity number by definition (necessity) should be a lower (in the sense of "worse") number. For instance, if your budgeted productivity is 1.35 for all covers then for entrée covers only your budgeted restaurant labor productivity may be only 1.05 covers per labor hour.

Increased covers or decreased labor hours help improve this productivity evaluation.

To my knowledge there are no industry standards for Covers per Labor Hour productivity numbers because every operation is unique. Even the same franchise will have different numbers in different locations due to the flow of business.

Having said that, here is what I could find on ranges of Covers per Labor Hour by industry sector/type:

Foodservice Productivity Benchmarks

Fast Food restaurant	8.5 - 10
Fine Dining restaurant	.9 - 1.4
Family restaurant	3.8 - 5.8
Cafeteria/Buffet	4.5 - 7
Acute Care Facility (hospital)	3 - 4
Extended Care Facility	4.5 - 5.5
School Foodservice	13 - 15

Note: every operation is different. These are not meant to be recommended standards, but rather are the ranges of some operations. Your numbers may need to be different to meet your service & budget goals.

www.Chefs-Resources.com

sources: Association of Nutrition & Foodservice Professionals

Labor Cost per Cover

formula: total labor dollars/total covers = labor cost per cover

Another important benchmark is knowing how much labor it costs to serve each cover. Total labor dollars includes regular and overtime hours. It may or may not include salaried staff (see note above). Since over-time labor is more expensive than regular-time labor it has a direct negative impact upon this calculation.

When reviewing your P&L numbers this benchmark can help identify these possible issues:

- Over-staffing/Under-staffing per cover

- Excessive over-time

- Increase/Decrease in forecasted covers

What is your "skeleton crew" size?

The skeleton crew is the minimum number of staff needed to serve the anticipated number of covers. If it takes 3 cooks, 3 servers, 1 busser and a host to successfully run a shift on a slow day then this is your skeleton crew. Perhaps they consistently handle 90 to 120 covers successfully, but if you only do 80 then cutting staff to improve your productivity may have a negative impact on your customer service and therefore on your business. Most operations will have several skeleton crew scenarios, such as minimum staff needed for a slow shift, and minimum needed for a busy shift.

In a nutshell, all productivity numbers directly relate to either total covers or total sales. Increasing covers or sales will immediately improve your productivity numbers (assuming that you used the same amount of labor). Adding additional covers is difficult. But increasing the total sales is manageable simply by good menu engineering and having the servers upsell. And if they upsell on the menu items with the best margin then you beat the productivity game while simultaneously adding increased revenue to the bottom line.

How To Organize Recipes

Organizing your recipes on your computer can be a little daunting but ultimately is well worth the time to do. Once you have set-up your recipe organizational system it becomes very easy to both save and to find recipes. I used to labor over "under what category should I save this recipe so I can find it later? Should I save it under the entrée name or the sauce name?" Now I do both. That way when I go to my Halibut recipes I can see what sauces I have specifically paired with Halibut in the past. Or I can go to my Beurre Blanc sauce file and see all my Beurre Blancs to pick one for the Halibut which I used for a different application but may not have used for Halibut yet.

Most of my recipes are in an Excel format, but some are in Word and a few are even html web pages I have saved to a folder. I prefer Excel because it is easy to scale a recipe to feed 20 people or 2000. And Excel also allows me to put costing right into the recipe format to calculate my food cost % and appropriate sales price.
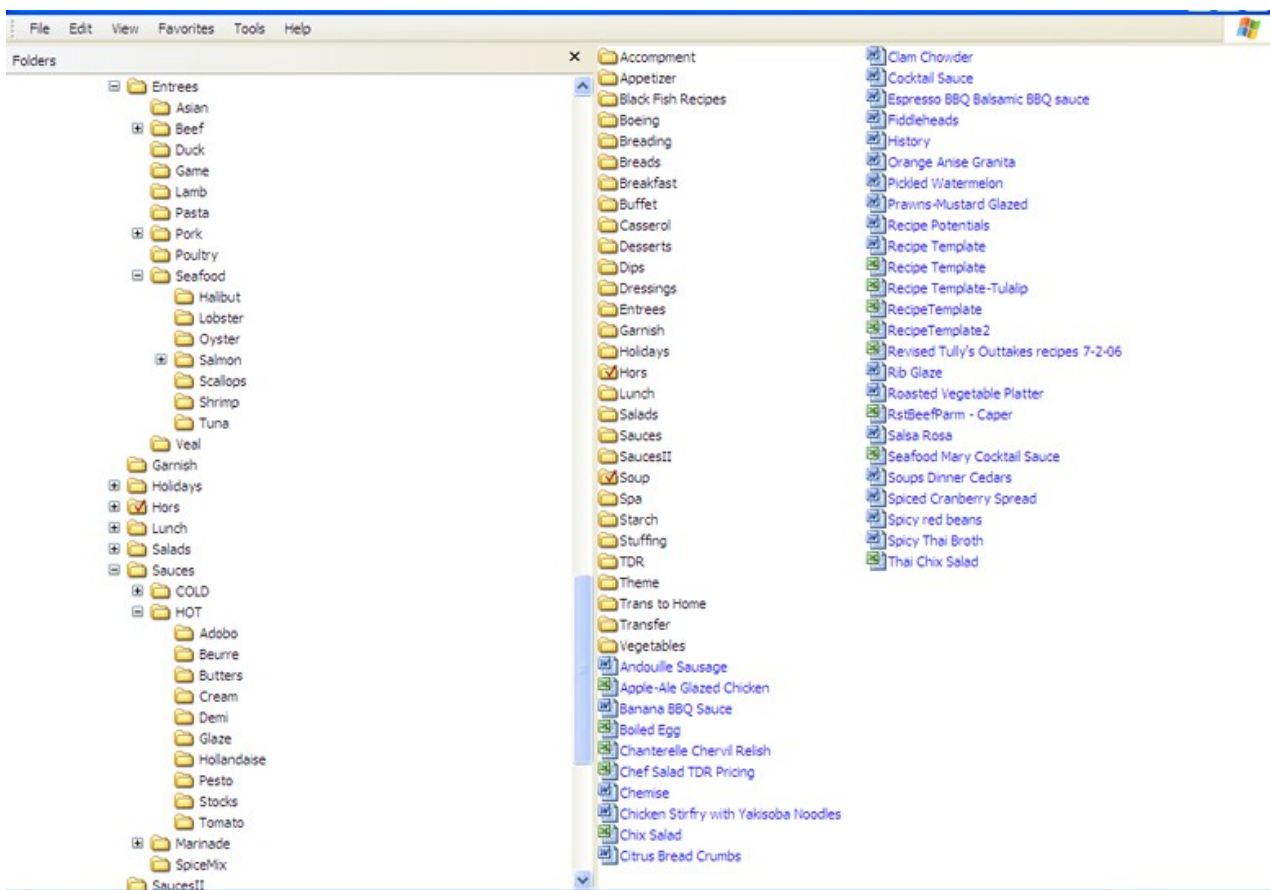
Above is a picture of part of my computer Recipe File. The small yellow folders are category names which have other folders or recipes contained in them. On the right

side, the names with blue are actual recipes which I have not yet assigned to a category and so are as yet still unorganized.

The right half of the page shows the major categories I have chosen, a few of which refer to establishments I have worked at, but most of them are organized by food categories. The left half of the page shows some of the sub-categories. You can see my sub-categories for "Entrées" and also for "Sauces". On the left-hand side of the page, any file with a "+" in it has sub-categories. So, "Sauces" have the primary sub-categories of "Cold", "Hot", "Marinades", and "SpiceMix". And the sub-category of "Hot" has its own sub-categories of "Adobo", "Beurre", "Butters", "Cream", etc. Each of these sub-categories contain the actual recipes.

In the image below I have opened the "Beurre" sub-category file under "Sauces/Hot". In it you can see the actual recipes saved there. You can see that I have both Excel and Word recipe formats saved here. Using a file structure like this keeps your recipes very organized and searchable.
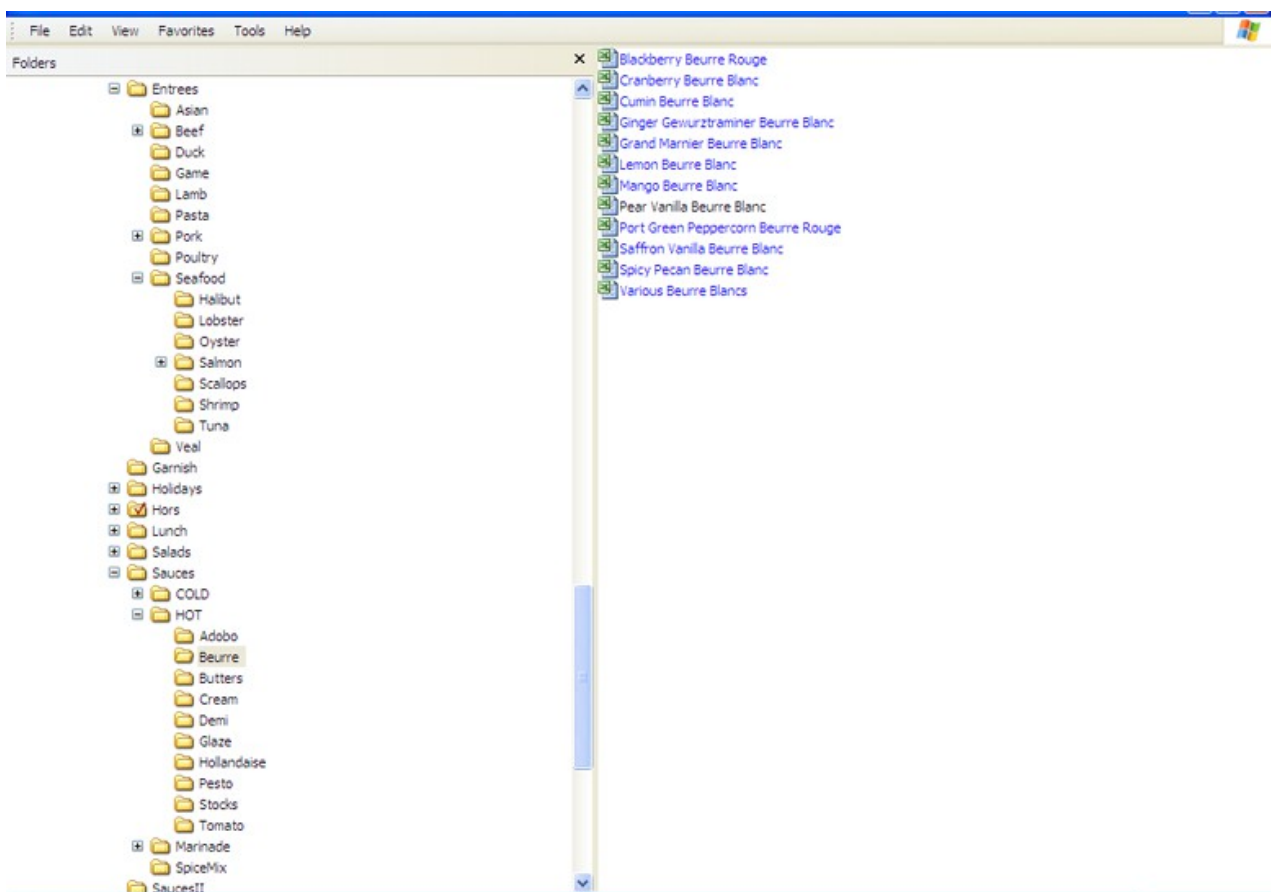
This final image (below) shows the full primary organization of my recipe file (on the left side of the page) with only the primary files showing. Note that the top

most file is called "Recipe" and all other recipe files are contained in it and under it. This way I can back-up my entire recipe database simply by saving my "Recipe" folder because all other recipes are contained in it.
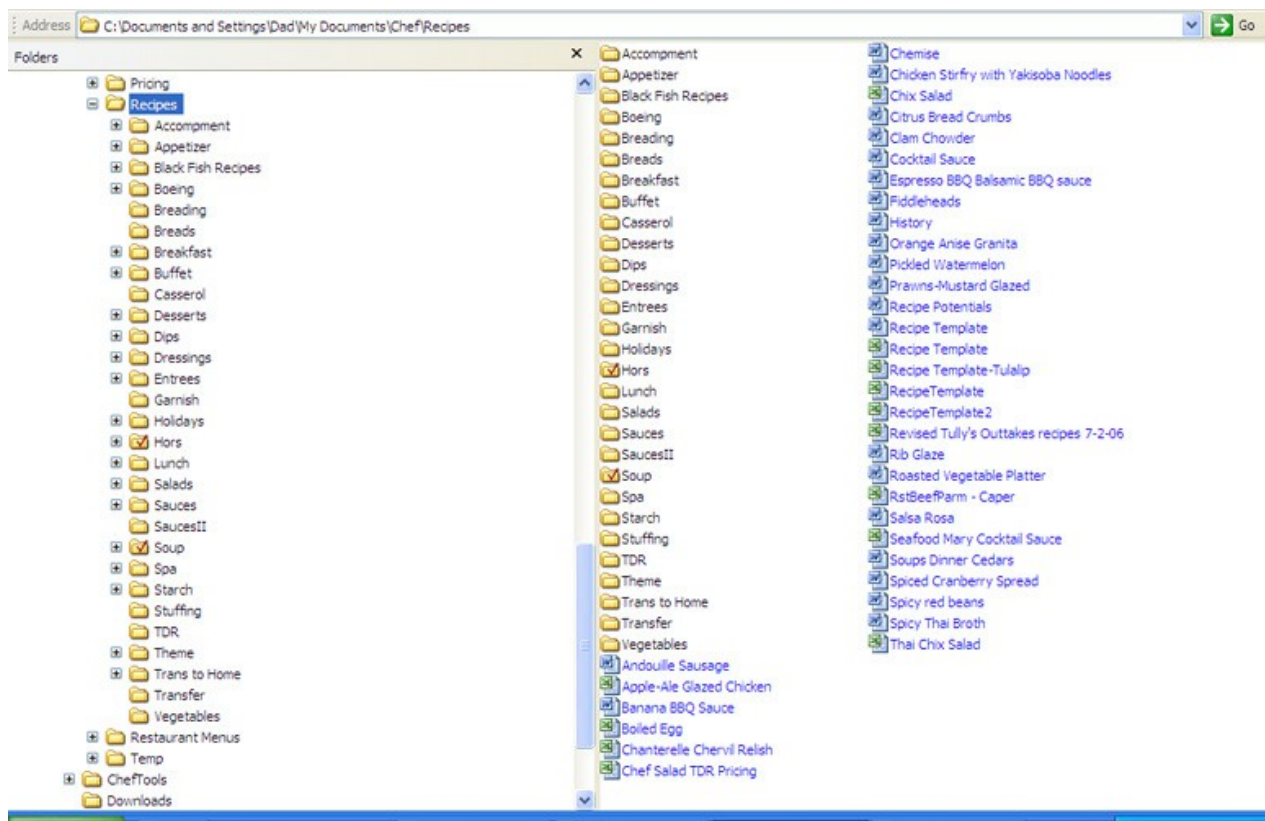
Using Excel for Kitchen Planning

Catering Spreadsheet

Every time you create a new recipe, plan a catered event, or implement a new menu there are a number of steps which need to be taken in order for its roll-out to be smooth and successful. There is the creative phase where you design the dish, the "naming" phase where you decide how to phrase in on the menu and/or for social media, if its a catering then there are all of the function details & how many servings you need to prepare, then there's the prep phase which may take multiple days, the ordering phase, and so on.

image courtesy Tulalip Resort Casino

Although Excel is known for its computing abilities, it is also an extremely powerful and versatile tool when it comes to planning complex tasks. I've learned that **using Excel culinary spreadsheets** can save you time and money. This is where a **catering Excel spreadsheet** can be extremely helpful to the chef. By creating an Excel workbook for the task/event you can have a separate tab (page) for every aspect of the project and have it all organized in one spot. Using Excel for event planning and project management makes it easy to look both at the big picture and at all the minutia of details it takes to make any project successful. Following is an example of how to use Excel for an off-site catered event, including a video demo/tutorial. I named the Excel workbook after the event, and then added the following tabs, each with its pertinent info: Ideas, Menu, Prep, Ordering, Loading (for equipment & transport), Recipe. Now everything for this event is organized in one place, easy to edit, easy to print, and uploadable to my phone or tablet.

In the video tutorial at the bottom of the page I go through the whole process using this form as an example. However, **the tutorial is not about the form, rather it's about the techniques and concepts I used to create the form**. If you pay attention to the technique then you'll be able to create your own forms and use Excel to organize anything from implementing a new recipe, to rolling out an entire menu, to opening a new restaurant. Excel is your "**mental mise en place**" tool for organizing any project in the kitchen.

Idea Board – Brainstorming

Here is an example of the "Idea" tab, which is a virtual "Idea Board". It is the first step in planning a foodshow or new recipe, a place to "play" with ideas. What I particularly like in Excel is the ability to quickly create an index of tasks with multiple sub-categories, so when I'm working on a new recipe I can brainstorm by throwing "whatever" on a page like this.

I'll list the main idea for a dish concept, then indent its sub-components, and if I'm still working on an aspect of the dish like the sauce or garnish I'll add another indent and list off a bunch of ideas for this part of the dish. (see the 3rd item in the example: Smoked Sockeye Salmon & Dungeness…)

I'll put recipe ideas, and their sub-components, on the left, and images for inspiration on the right. I may not use any of these, but putting them here helps me experiment with a dish before I actually make it. You'll notice that there is a photo of a white fish even though I'm planning on working with salmon. I like the presentation of this dish so it is one of the plate designs I was considering for my finished concept.

Prep Organization – The "Big Picture"

This is my "Prep Planning" tab. This is where using Excel for "**mental mise en place**" can significantly organize any event and save you a lot of stress. This is the "big picture". It is everything which needs to be done, what day it needs to be completed on, how much needs to be done, and who is assigned to do it.

The best way to structure this is by starting at the end (ie the day of the event) and working backwards. In this example the foodshow is on Thursday and I need the

Lox cut by Tuesday. By working through the various prep phases for the lox I now know that I need to pull the salmon from the freezer on the previous Friday in order to complete slicing it on schedule.

After the prep schedule is completed and the major workload items are added, it is easy to see which days are the heaviest prep days and where to backfill the easier days with prep which can be done ahead of time. You also have a picture of how to write your staffing schedule to accommodate the workload.

Another big advantage of having this form in your hands is that every day you can verify that everything is on track. And if you are busy with other responsibilities then it is easy for your sous chef or lead cook to keep the ball rolling.

Download the Event Planning Template from Chefs-Resources.
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/chefs-using-excel-for-event-planning/)

The Recipes

Of course, any event for a Chef will have recipes, and usually lots of them. You can add as many recipes to one Excel workbook as you want to, allowing you to keep all recipes for a project (a foodshow, a food & wine dinner, a new menu concept, whatever) in one place. And you can scale them! So if the recipe needs to serve 25 people one week and 450 the next week Excel makes it easy to transform a recipe into a scalable recipe…simply change the batch size and the entire recipe recalculates. Awesome.

Redwood Resort Casino

Recipe: Citrus-Fennel Relish

Yield: 2 Cups — Date: June-08
Portion Size: — Chef: David Buchanan
Scale:

AMT	UNIT	INGREDIENTS
1	Cup	finely chopped fennel bulb
3/4	Cup	chopped orange sections
1/2	Cup	finely chopped cucumber
1/3	Cup	finely chopped red onion
1	Tsp	grated lemon rind
1/4	Cup	chopped lemon sections (about 2 lemons)
1	Tbl	cider vinegar
1	Tbl	extravirgin olive oil
1.5	Tsp	sugar
1	Tsp	chopped fresh tarragon
1/4	Tsp	sea salt
1/8	Tsp	freshly ground black pepper

PROCEDURES
Combine all items. Fold to incorporate. Place in a plastic container. Date and Label

Excel makes "signature" dishes easy to organize as well. For my Fillet Mignon w/ Roasted Garlic-Pecan Crust recipe I have separate tabs for each of its sub-recipes: **Plate-up** (which has the specs for the plate when it hits the window, including a photo), Thyme Demi, Roast Garlic-Pecan Crust, and Scallop Potato Pie. The file is saved under its entree name, but all the recipes associated with it are part of that workbook and therefore are always together…easy to find. If a sub-recipe is one I

use for another dish then I'll save a copy of that recipe as well, for instance, I make a copy of the Thyme Demi and save it to my file for "Sauces".

There are a number of different **recipe templates** (www.chefs-resources.com/recipe-templates-excel/) on Chefs-Resources for you to check-out, however, this one is my favorite version so far because it uses a chef's "shorthand" style for the recipe and has costing built into the right side of the sheet. And of course, it is set-up to be scalable. Just add the formula and you're done.

Video Tutorial: How Chefs Can Use Excel to Plan Events and Projects

The first 7 minutes of the demo (follow the link below) shows experienced Excel users how to create their own "mental mise en place" worksheets in Excel. The remainder of the video goes through the process step by step so beginner Excel users can learn the process.

Follow this link for my Video Tutorial **Using Excel for Event Planning**
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/chefs-using-excel-for-event-planning#EventPlanningVideo)

After watching the video, if you need additional help learning Excel, then I recommend Lynda.com as they have a plethora of Excel tutorials. It will cost you $25/mo, but you can watch as many tutorials as you want and it is easy to cancel anytime. So pick out what you want to learn, then sign-up and dive in. I've used them a number of times and highly recommend them.

The Kitchen Expeditor aka the Wheelman

Miles Hopkins – a Wheelman rock!

A Night on the Line

It's 7:30 on a Saturday night at [Blackfish Wild Salmon Grill](www.tulalipresortcasino.com/Dining/MenuBlackfish) (www.tulalipresortcasino.com/Dining/MenuBlackfish) and you are in the middle of your second push. You're expecting to serve 350 covers tonight for dinner service…and of course each plate must be perfect, every guest must be happy with their dining experience, and the Chef must be satisfied with the way service was executed. Another ticket comes in and you realize that the ticket machine is an oblivious task master…even though the board is full of orders it continues to spit out more tickets.

The Tickets just keep coming!There are seven cooks on the Line, all experiencing the adrenaline, the challenge, the various degrees of duress which goes with a busy service period. Each cook is multitasking…working on multiple orders at once and planning which dishes they can fire next. Saute' pans hiss and sizzle as ingredients are added, the grill sporadically erupts with tendrils of flame as steaks and fish are rotated, plates jostle as cooks add the finishing touches. They are caught-up in "The Dance" of service…skillfully riding the wave of a busy shift and trying not

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to be crushed by it. But regardless of how slammed any cook or station is, the focus of everyone is on one thing … the voice of the person who is "**calling the wheel**".

"Ordering: 3 New York's…2 medium rare, 1 medium; 2 bounty bowls; 1 Halibut." He's just given instruction that this food needs to be ready in 20 minutes, and he follows that instruction with this one: "Plating: 2 fillets: 1 rare, 1 blue-rare; 1 crab Mac, 1 heritage salmon." This instruction means that these dishes are to be plated and in the pass within the next 2 minutes.

Each station echoes back both sets of instructions. If someone doesn't echo back then the Wheelman calls out the item or the cook's name until they do call back…"1 heritage salmon (pause)… 1 heritage salmon (pause)…Richard 1 heritage salmon!" This is to ensure proper communication… i.e. everyone has heard what is expected from their station. One missed call in the middle of a busy shift can result in a train wreck, so proper communication is of eminent importance.

Another ticket! "Ordering: 3 Bounty Bowls, 2 Lobster Macs, 1 Grilled Halibut." You hear the sauté cooks swear as this ticket is called. Five of those dishes come from sauté and they are already buried. A quick look tells you that:

- they have 15 sauté items on the board (they only have 8 burners)

- they are slamming out quality food w/o taking shortcuts as quickly as possible

- and most importantly, they still have their wits about them and are not utterly and completely cluster-fucked in their mental focus/production. They are pressured but they're holding their own. That's good…because you know that if they go down, then the whole Line goes down while they gasp for breath and try to dig themselves out of the hole.

Right then a server runs up and says "I need to hold table 23. They went out for a smoke." Your mind screams "Dammit!!", but you respond by making the call, "Sauté, drag table 23 x 10 minutes." You hear a chain of expletives followed by the call back "dragging 23!"

Another ticket spits out of the infernal machine…and it's all for sauté! You decide to hold this ticket for a few minutes before calling it. The sauté cooks are already at their production/stress limit. It's better to drag the table and let them put a few plates out rather than to utterly bury them.

Expeditor – Wheelman Qualifications

If you run an à la carte restaurant then you have someone who fulfills this role. The position is referred to as "**calling the wheel**" or "**calling the board**" and typically

the Chef, sous chef, or lead line cook will take this position. Although duties vary by operation, typical responsibilities include: calling the tickets, organizing the flow of food to the window, plating dishes, final inspection of food, and final garnishes.

If the Chef is not filling this role then the position goes by a variety of names including the following: the **wheelman**, **ticket man**, **expo**, and/or **expediter**. Some operations are busy enough that they will have a Wheelman to call tickets and organize plates in the kitchen, and they will have a separate Expeditor who does finishing garnishes and organizes plates for the waitstaff. In this type of operation the servers communicate only with the Expo, and the Expo is the only one who talks with the Wheelman.

The strength or weakness of the Wheelman or Expediter's ability directly impacts both the efficiency/quality of service and your food cost.

S/he keeps the kitchen moving at a steady pace, regardless of the calmness or storminess of the shift. S/he controls the flow of plates to the pass, evaluating the quality of each plate to ensure that it meets the Chef's expectations before it hits the window. They communicate timing to the different stations on the Line so that the five-minute dish from Sauté comes up at the same time as the 20 minute steak from the Grill station.

The wheelman acts as the mediator between front of the house special requests/food problems and the corresponding need for the back of the house to get something fired on the rail (get it done as quickly as possible).

If the wheelman becomes flustered then the entire Line is in jeopardy. If s/he gets "lost" and loses mental focus then the Line comes to a standstill while the expeditor gathers their wits. Seconds are precious during service, so if the expeditor crashes then the Line is instantaneously buried. Life was already hard…now they have to take out shovels to dig themselves out of the hole they're in. Tempers flare, ticket times escalate, table turns slow to a crawl, and servers pull double duty in order to keep customers from getting upset over the extra wait.

This is the point at which things can go from a bad day to a fucking living hell. A poor wheelman is now going to slam food out of the kitchen as fast as they can regardless of its quality. "Just fire everything!" s/he will scream. Tickets get missed, extra food is prepared by accident while other tables are missing part of their order. And food starts coming back because it's overcooked, low quality, not properly cooked, or otherwise unsatisfactory to the guest. As a guest, it's bad enough if you have to wait a long time for your food… but its unforgivable if the food which finally arrives after too long a wait is substandard. If the kitchen is buried it is better to let the guest wait longer to get quality food rather than to just slam

something in the window which will disappoint them. It is the Wheelman's job to keep the ship afloat until things get caught up again.

And while we are on the subject of the kitchen getting buried, it is my experience that this is usually a front of the house problem, not a kitchen problem! Too many managers will allow the restaurant to be mass-seated and then blame the kitchen for falling behind. The fault is with the manager's inability, or unwillingness, to control the seating. So don't blame the kitchen for a problem which you created!

The **expeditor/wheelman** has the hardest job in the kitchen. A good wheelman MUST have the following qualities:

- must be able to remain calm under extreme pressure
- must be able to think clearly under pressure
- must be able to make excellent snap decisions while under pressure
- must be mentally organized
- must be able to multitask
- must be flexible and able to change organization and priorities on the fly
- must be emotionally stable…able to handle the demands/frustrations of the cooks and the servers
- must demonstrate calmness in the midst of chaos
- must be able to maintain the highest quality of food and require items to be re-made if they do not meet the Chef's standard (resisting the urge to simply sling shit out as fast as possible)

How to Call the Wheel

Calling the wheel varies by establishment but here are some general procedures which most operations follow:

- call every ticket as it comes in, trying to group same items on each ticket. For instance, rather than calling "ordering: halibut, salmon, fillet MR, salmon, halibut, salmon" you should call "ordering: 1 fillet MR, 2 halibut, 3 salmon".
- always require a call back or echo from each station for items ordered.
  - if you do not get a call back then repeat the item, or call the cook's name, until you get a call back
- there are typically at least two kinds of calls:
  - "Ordering" which indicates a new order to put into the flow

- ◦ "Pick~up" or "Plating" which indicates the dishes or table which is now being plated
- ◦ "Fire" – this is a 3rd common call for establishments where servers ring in their entire order of multiple courses and then tell the kitchen which course to "fire" as the table moves through their meal. For instance, "Fire table 21 entrees: 2 salmon, 2 NYs MR."
- maintain the timeline, meaning that if your goal is a 15 minute ticket time for entrees then you maintain that timeline
- give occasional "all day" calls. For example, "all day you have 9 New Yorks: 2 Rare, 4 MR, 2 Medium, 1 MW."
- if a dish comes back from a guest and needs to be re-fired then it takes highest priority over other tables
- when things go horribly wrong (because they will!) look for solutions…do not look for who to blame
- maintain quality control of food and presentations
- clean plate edges

The "Board" or "Wheel"

The "Window", "Pass", or "Pass Through"
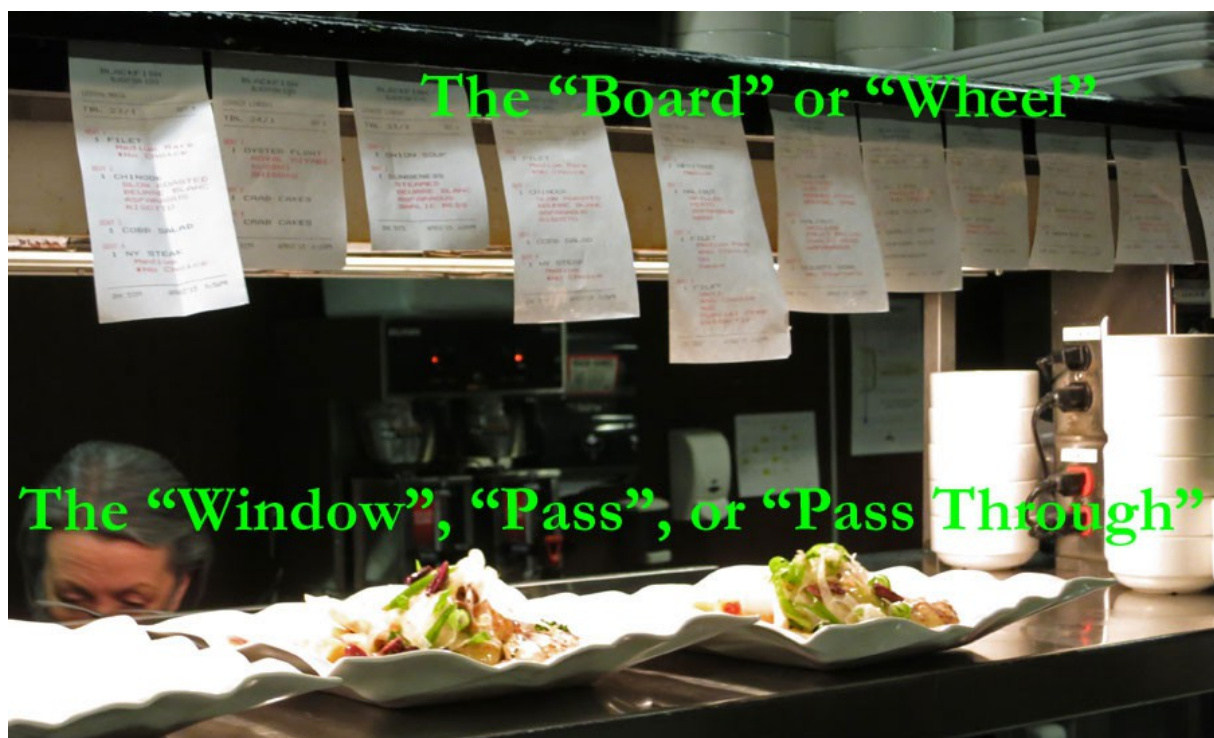
Wheelman Terminology

Fire – start cooking. "Fire 3 halibut, 1 bounty bowl."

The Board – a straight bar which holds tickets while they are being prepared. The Board & the Wheel are 2 versions of the same device…a place to hold tickets during preparation.

The Wheel – an old fashioned round ticket holder which looks somewhat like a wagon wheel from the old west.

Call back; Echo – when the wheelman calls an order it is expected that each cook/station "call back" or repeat the order to ensure that it was heard.

Kill it – cook it well done! "Ordering a New York…kill it."

Sell table __ – means that specific table is ready for the server to pick-up and deliver to the guest. "Sell table 31" or "Table 31 is sold".

Table __ is up – has same meaning as 'Sell table __'.

All day – a summary total of one or more items from all tickets. So, if you have 10 tickets with lots of steaks (each ticket is one table) you might give an "all day" for the total number of NY steaks ordered, "all day you have 9 New Yorks: 2 Rare, 4 MR, 2 Medium, 1 MW".

In the Weeds; Weeded; Buried – falling behind on producing orders. "Saute is in the weeds." There are many other phrases used for this predicament!

Re-fire – the need to cook something over (for any number of reasons). Always means that it is needed ASAP. "Re-fire 1 fillet MR."

Rail it; On the fly; On the rail – cook it as quickly as possible…highest priority of all items being prepared right now. "Rail a crab mac." "On the rail: 1 crab mac." "I need a crab mac on the fly."

Window; In the window; Pass; In the pass – the area where plates are put when they are completed and ready for servers to pick-up. "In the window (pass) I need…" Pass is short for "pass-through" which describes the area where food is "passed through" the "window" from the kitchen to the servers.

The Line – the kitchen line where the cooking takes place during service. When leaving the Line its common practice to notify everyone, "**Off Line for romaine**". This lets everyone know that your station is temporarily unmanned and it gives them an idea of how long you will be gone in case someone else has to cover for you.

Improve Cook & Server Communication
– Dynamics Of The Kitchen

Improve cook and server communication

Improve Communication, Team Morale, and Speed of Service between the FOH & BOH

Improve cook and server communication Communication between the FOH and BOH (front of house and back of house) in a professional kitchen is a constant ebb & flow of playful camaraderie, pointed comments, and terse words spoken under duress. A solid establishment with a professional crew will treat each other with respect (even in the midst of the coarse teasing which is common in our industry) and will always focus on getting quality food to the guest in as timely a fashion as possible…even if during the rush it is taking longer than normal. Here are some thoughts on how to improve cook – server communication and interaction.

Every kitchen operation has experienced this scenario. **Server**, "How long for my food on table 21? It's taking you way too long." **Typical Cook reply**, "It's working. It'll be ready when it's in the window." The server feels ignored, and has not been given the info they need to manage their guests. And the cook feels insulted ("… you're taking too long.") And, as much as I hate to admit it, many cooks in the industry believe that it is their god given right to harass and impede the waitstaff. Many believe that it is "funny" or "playful" to give the servers a hard time by not

answering such a simple question, "How long on…?"

I'm here to tell you (cooks & chefs) that it is not funny. It is not appropriate, it is not professional. And most importantly, it does not serve the best interests of your guests, your business, or your team morale. And the same comment applies to servers who think that the best way to motivate the kitchen is to push, insult, belittle, or harass them until you get what you want.

Showing mutual respect and trying to understand the needs/pain/duress that your "other half" (server or cook) is experiencing will help to find common ground. We all want the same thing…a successful service providing food we're all proud of with as little pain as possible. Improving BOH and FOH communication will simply make everyone's life less stressful while making the restaurant more successful.

The Server's Perspective

Servers have the impossible job of trying to make everyone happy, regardless of the situation. They are tasked with the responsibility of not only meeting every guest's normal expectations, but of also being able to move the incorrigible asshole from being an indignant prick/bitch to becoming a raving fan.

Servers have learned the art of being professional soothsayers even when their minds are screaming "There's the door…get the f__k out!" Servers have the skill to handle guest's inappropriate abuse/stupidity in a professional manner. Most cooks on the other hand would quickly introduce an asshole guest to their fist, or to a torrent of foul language, resulting in their subsequent termination!

What Servers Need to Understand

Make it short and sweet
Servers need to understand that in the middle of the push it is not time to point fingers or have a long conversation with the cooks about how something went wrong, or how it should have been done. The cooks don't have time for a long explanation about why you need something on the fly or whose fault it is. All the extra talk only annoys a cook… they're buried, they're trying to focus, and

you are interrupting their work process. Be short and to the point, but as polite as possible.

Don't take it personal

If you ask the cooks a question and they bark an answer back which appropriately answers your question but isn't in a nice tone…let it go! They're busy. They don't have time for "please", "thank-you very much", "can I hold the door for you", etc. Their short, curt answers are the result of being in the weeds and needing to focus. They're (usually) not really mad at you, you haven't done anything wrong, they're really not even yelling at you. Their tone of voice sounds intense because they are intensely focused, trying to slam out the plethora of plates they have working while keeping track of all the ones they still have to get started. They say that the average person can remember 6 – 7 items at a time. It's not uncommon for a cook in any station to be working 12 – 20 dishes at any given time, all in various stages of production (just starting new dishes, remembering the 5 in the oven which are all on different cook times, and plating the ones which are going to the window now.) Forgetting any one of those items for even just 1 minute can result in a f__ked up dish which needs to be started over, which derails the whole table for 15 – 20 minutes.

In the middle of a push the cooks want to interact with outside distractions for as short a time as possible so they can get back to digging out of the hole. Short, succinct communication is best. It is distractions that will really piss them off. Tell them what they need to know in as short a sentence as possible and let them get back to work. If you have an expeditor and/or wheelman then always work through that person.

Cooks: don't spoil this by asking a hundred questions about what happened! Just get the order done the way the guest needs it and move on.

Best Practices for Servers

- Don't say, or insinuate, that the kitchen is doing something wrong.
- This doesn't help the situation, it will not make the cooks work faster, nor will it magically cause the food to cook faster. It will only piss them off.
- If you have a genuine issue with how long things are taking (or some other problem w/ the kitchen) then take it to a supervisor, manager, or the chef at an appropriate time.
- Only ask once…and then leave. Don't come back after 1 minute if you were told it would take 3 minutes.

- If you were told 3 minutes and your food isn't up in 3 minutes then it is time to ask (politely!) again…but not before.
- Don't complain or argue about the answer you get. If the kitchen is buried then your complaints will only distract the cooks and add more stress to them…neither of which will get your food out faster, in fact, distraction & additional stress will likely slow the kitchen down. Leave them alone and let them dig out of the hole.
- Remember that if the kitchen is buried it is very possible that the front of the house sat too many people all at once. This is a common problem caused by the FOH by not controlling the seating properly…but it often is blamed on the kitchen.
- If the kitchen is frequently buried, and you consider the caliber of the cooks to be pretty good, then the problem is improper management of the flow and seating.
- Be nice! Ask questions politely.

The Kitchen Perspective

Cooks are under immense pressure to produce tons of quality food, to slam it out as fast as possible, and to make sure that it is genuinely quality food which hits the window…not dog food slung out of Billy Bob's Choke & Puke just to sling shit out of the kitchen. The pressure to work fast and maintain perfection is severe. When it gets busy, the temptation to simply sling shit to clear the board is perpetual. But a kitchen with pride will always make the guest wait in order to serve the best possible meal, rather than simply slam food into the window in an effort to get to get it out as fast as possible.

What Cooks Need to Understand

As important as quality food is to the kitchen, quality service is equally important to a great server. If a server is asking "how long on such & such table" it indicates that they are a good server. They care about the guest, the food, and the service. The cook's job is to make the food. The server's job is to keep the guest happy… regardless of everything else!

If their table isn't ready when they arrive even though they made reservations 6 months ago for their special anniversary… it's the server's responsibility to make the guest happy. If they didn't get the special table or the exact time that they wanted…it is the server's responsibility to keep them happy. If the kitchen is buried and the food is taking too long because the FOH sat too many f__king people all at once… it is the server's job to keep them happy. If their significant

other just cheated on them, they lost $10K in the casino, their favorite cat/dog just died, and they just got fired…you guessed it, the server gets the pleasure of dealing with that guest and trying to keep/make them happy.

It's also very important to note that it is in a server's job description to be polite in the face of adversity and stupidity. They are required to restrain themselves, be professional and polite regardless of the rude and impolite treatment they receive from guests. Since they have learned this skill is it so hard to figure out that they would expect a similar level of tolerance and professionalism from the kitchen? If they can respond professionally to an arrogant asshole guest, shouldn't they be able to expect some small measure of professional response from the cooks when they have a legitimate request relating to their food or customer service? The FOH & BOH are opposite sides of the same coin. We need each other to make us whole (corny, I know!) So let's all play nice together in the sandbox.

If a server questions the quality or appearance of a dish…swallow your pride and take an honest look! Seriously, they see the same dish plated by all the other cooks who work that station…it is possible that you made a mistake, or could have done better. Don't put your pride, or your need to clear the board, in front of serving quality food.

Cooks, remember these tidbits

- When a server asks "How long…" it is because:
  - They need an accurate answer so they will be better equipped to deal with the next few minutes of service. It may seem like they are saying, "Hey asshole! Where the hell is my food?!" (and perhaps they are!) But really, they are asking for the damage report so they can make informed decisions about how to handle their part of service for the next few minutes.
  - Just like you have food in various stages of preparation, they have a sequence of service which they need to manage with multiple tables and multiple guests. If you mess up their timing it will come back to haunt the

kitchen later…irregardless of whether they wish to piss you off or not. Give them the info they need to make them successful…and which will ultimately make your life easier.

- Depending on how much/how little time they have before their food is ready, they can plan their next few minutes to:
    - Be prepared to console a guest who is waiting longer than usual
    - Pre-bus a table
    - Take a new table's order
    - Take a dessert order
    - Deliver desserts
    - Deliver drinks
    - Greet a new table
    - Water or bread a table
    - Deliver the check to a table
    - Decide how to deal with an angry guest
    - Use the restroom
    - Or any of many other things they need to keep rolling
- You have food which you need to keep rolling…they have a sequence of service which they need to keep rolling. Both are required for a successful service.

Best Practices for Cooks

The following may seem a little harsh, like I'm yelling at the cooks (but was "nice" to the servers. Here's the reason: I expect more from the kitchen than I do from the FOH. The kitchen is a Chef's domain, his/her reputation. We always hold the HOH to a higher standard. Here's what cooks need to do to improve communication when a server asks a question.

- Always try to answer with **alacrity** (a cheerful willingness to help or assist).
- **ALWAYS (seriously…f__king ALWAYS!)** give an accurate answer such as "2 minutes."
    - But do not say "2 minutes" every time, regardless of the actual time!
- **NEVER** give one of these typical responses:
    - It's coming
    - It will be ready when its ready
    - It's working
    - When it's in the window, it's ready
    - Go away
- Do you want them there to pick-up when the food is ready? Or do you want it to sit there and die in the window? If you want it served as soon as it hits

the window…then give them an accurate answer so they can plan their timing!

- If you don't give them an accurate answer for how long their food will take then you have NO VALID REASON to hold it against them if their food sits there dying because they are tied up doing some other aspect of their job.
- If a steak or anything else needs to be re-fired:
  - **Fire it NOW!**
  - Don't waste time trying to figure out whose fault it is!
    - It doesn't matter right now. Let the manager & chef figure it out later if it's necessary
    - Finger pointing fixes nothing
    - Good grief! Swallow your ego (if that's the problem) and move on brother/sister!
    - The server/guest made a mistake and now you're incredibly buried? Have a 5 second melt-down then get your ass back to work! **FOCUS!!**

If we improve the level of communication between cooks and servers then the whole operation will improve, and so will the quality of life in the BOH & FOH. Better communication directly equates to more efficiency, less stress, faster service, and an overall better place to work. Cooks & servers are opposite sides of the same "successful service" coin. There are times when we hate each other…but we also need each other. Learning to play nicely in the sandbox together only makes our lives, our jobs, easier and less stressful.

The Willows Inn, WA
Chef Blaine Wetzel (not shown)

Mutual respect and giving each other "space" in the heat of the rush are the traits of a highly successful, highly professional team. And if you say something which you should not have said (we all do that at some point), have the courage and maturity to follow-up with the insulted/offended person later…make amends. And by all means, DO NOT just push someone's buttons for fun unless they are having fun too. If you push someone's buttons with the intent of making them angry, embarrassed, frustrated or demoralized then you are a pathetic f__king person. Grow the fuck up and learn to be kind. It's more difficult to do…but so much more rewarding.

mise en place – a Way of Life in the Kitchen

What is mise en place?

mise en place...Ethos of the Kitchen
The easy answer is, "everything in its place." It's a French phrase meaning that everything is organized and ready…But it is sooo much more!

Years ago when I was in culinary school I was working at a four diamond hotel in Stowe, Vermont. Chef Louis Chabot handed me a BEO for a small banquet and told me to set it up for service.

I gathered and arranged all the food on the plating table and waited for the Chef. He arrived with a few other cooks to start the plate up. He looks around and asked, "Where are the plates?" I scrambled and grabbed plates for the event. Then he asked, "Why aren't these plates hot!?" I scrambled and flashed them in the oven quick and brought them back to the plating table. Chef's next comment was,"Buchanan, where are the fucking serving utensils?!"

After the event was plated Chef Louis took me aside and had a frank conversation with me about the meaning of **mise en place** and having your station ready. Part of the conversation went something like, "If you consider yourself a professional cook then the Chef shouldn't have to think for you." I had nothing to say…he was absolutely correct and it opened my eyes to a new way of thinking.

To this day it is one of my most memorable and succinct learning experiences.

In the professional kitchen mise en place is more of a philosophy or a way of life rather than just a simple phrase. **Mise en place is everything needed to make the shift as smooth as possible**. It is not just your food and prep. It is also actively maintaining a well organized station, having all of your tools, utensils, and plates. If you have questions regarding a recipe or a plate design then proper mise en place demands that you have resolved it before service. It includes a "professional cook" mindset (regardless of how you feel!), a "get it done" attitude, your mental awareness, a sense of urgency… Everything!

We learn it, we teach it, we get it tattooed on our bodies! As Chef Randy Burns has said, ["Mise en place is a state of Mind."](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mise-en-place-state-mind-randy-burns) It becomes an integral part of how we think. Whether we are working to implement a new recipe, planning an off-site catered event, or going camping with the family, the philosophy of mise en place infuses our souls with the need to hope for the best and plan for the worst. Everything in its place. A plan for everything.

Your mise en place makes or breaks you during a busy shift. The quality, freshness, and organization of mise en place in a station reveals the quality and professionalism of the cook. A poorly mise'd station reveals a disorganized or lazy cook.

Proper mise en place means that you are the master of your domain. You know how many covers you should do tonight, you know if it's a holiday, or if there's some other special event going on which may impact your covers. If a prep cook does some of your mise then you have verified the quantities and seen where the backups are stored. Trust no one, you verify it yourself.

If you've been having issues with one of your ovens then you have a "plan B" for how to make the night work. If one of the cooks was sick yesterday then you already have an idea of how the chef may deal with that today and how it will impact you… And you've made a mental adjustment to your attitude to be able to cope with it.

Mise en Place is defined as:

- mise en place - Pride, Passion, Dedication
- The Ethos of the kitchen
- So much more than minced shallots

- Hope for the best, plan for the worst
- Seconds save minutes
- The foundation of success
- The foundation of a successful shift
- It makes or breaks you
- A way of life
- Learn it, know it, live it
- Prep, Attitude, Focus, Drive
- Slapping Murphy's Law into place
- Telling that bitch Murphy's Law to sit the fuck down
- Organization of product, tools, and mind
- Seeing and preventing a problem before it arrives

For further reading on this topic check-out this great article by Chef Randy Burns entitled [“Mise en Place”, a State of Mind](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mise-en-place-state-mind-randy-burns)
(https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mise-en-place-state-mind-randy-burns)

The Purpose of a Recipe

The Joy and the Pain of Recipes

Every Chef has hundreds of recipes and yet we are always looking to create another one, to try something new, always bringing in ingredients for the pure pleasure of playing with food. Chefs take a lot of pride in their dishes (obviously) and will spend many hours developing and implementing a new recipe.

Getting the recipe correct when we create it ourselves may be simple enough. We know what we want, a little of this, a little of that, etc. But getting our staff to recreate it the same way is another story. First we have to document (ughhh!) the recipe as we have created it. This is where the fun of the creative process becomes the drudgery of recording how we did it ("Did I use 2 pinches or 3? Damn, I don't remember! I just added until it tasted right."). It is the discipline of implementation, which includes the training of the staff.

Recipes are Simply a Guide – they are Never Perfect

I've found that even a perfectly written recipe will have different results depending upon the season, the product, and who is cooking. The purpose of a recipe is to be a guide to an end. What I try to teach my staff is to use the recipe as a guide to reach the end result I have prepared for them. After they have followed the recipe and prepared the dish they should ask… Does it look the same? Does it taste the same? Is it seasoned correctly? Is the acid balance correct? Is the plate layout correct? Are the flavors harmonious? Will the Chef be happy?

A recipe is a tool, a guideline, to move you in the right direction. It's purpose is to teach you how to taste, how to balance, how to create a sublime dish. If you are opening cans of processed product then sure, the recipe should be followed verbatim. But if you are working from scratch then you need to know the palate of the Chef. You need to understand the flavor profile of the dish, what is meant to be prominent, how to balance the flavors, and the correct use of acid to "brighten" the dish. You need to understand taste, texture, acid, balance, and the proper use of salt.

For example,as seasons change so does the intensity of flavor in your ingredients. This in turn will change the flavor profile of a recipe. I remember a Potato Cake with Walla Walla Onions I had developed. We worked out the recipe until it passed our tasting tests and implemented it on the menu. Six months later I received an

observation from a fellow chef that the Potato Cake was "off". Sure enough, now the exact same potato cake recipe tasted more like an onion cake with a hint of potato! The seasons had changed and the onions were now much more potent than when we had originally tested the recipe. Moral of the story… recipes are only a guideline. Everything needs to be tasted and adjusted at the time of preparation.

Writing Cookbook Recipes

Writing recipes for other professional cooks/chefs to use isn't too laborious. But if the recipe is for a cookbook or publication for the general public then the process becomes much more tedious because we cannot use professionally understood terminology. For example, "sear the chicken breast" in a Chef's recipe becomes a long description of the process when written for the general public; "in a medium sized sauté pan over high heat add a small amount of olive oil. When the pan is hot carefully add the chicken breast and cook until it is browned on one side. Turn the chicken over and cook the other side until browned." A lot more wordy than "sear the chicken".

Certainly there are plenty of skilled home cooks, especially food bloggers, who would understand culinary terminology. But there are an equal number of people who would not understand what "blanch the broccoli" or "sear the meat" means.

Dealing with Murphy's Law

Beating Murphy's Law in the Professional Kitchen

If you've been in the restaurant/catering business for any length of time then you know from painful experience that that bastard Murphy's Law is going to show up. Although he never makes a reservation he will show up, sooner or later. Here are some strategies you can put in place for dealing with him when he arrives.

Plan for his arrival!

You know he is going to show up at some point, so make plans for when he does. Always have a plan B. Know what you're going to do if somebody calls in sick, if the oven goes down, if your product doesn't arrive, if the party is moved ahead or back, whatever. A seasoned Chef can "see" possible tragedies and avert them before they arrive.

Always plan for the unexpected, for the worst case scenario.
Hope for the best, but plan for the worst.

Mentally prepare your crew ahead of time

For instance, if you have an ungodly amount of reservations all at one time then there's a good chance Murphy will show up and turn pain into agony. Let your staff know about the pain and possible chaos ahead of time so they can be mentally prepared for being buried. Give them clear instruction such as "focus on quality not on speed" or whatever. If you have a steward or prep person who can help pantry, make sure they're on the line during the crunch. Talk with the front of the house to see if they can slow things down a bit during that time frame.

I've been know to tell my crew, "At 7:00 tonight we are going to get bent over and raped with a stick so prepare your stations as best as possible. When you sink, just keep breathing, foucus on what you can do, focus on quality, do your best, and fuck the rest." It's not politically correct, not something HR woud approve of, but in our high-stress, chaotic, adrenalin-charged working environment this testosterone lace comment puts smiles on faces and challenges my staff NOT to

sink. "What do you mean Chef...we can handle anything! Let it come!" When the crew is aware of the challenge ahead of time, and are both ready mentally as well as with mise en place, then *when Murphy shows up he is usually slammed against the wall and told to sit the fuck down!* **Mental preparedness is EVERYTHING.**

Late arrivals and food quality

How often have you been told to have food ready at a specific time for a group, a tasting, or an event… and then they are late and your food quality suffers? It's a catch 22, either you're late in serving the food, OR they are late and the quality of the food is substandard. Either way they blame you. I've learned that it's better to be late and serve quality product, than to be on time and serve sub-standard food. I plan on having as much ready as possible and then do the final finishing touches and plating after they have actually arrived (this is somewhat easy to do in restaurants, not so much in banquets). Murphy likes to say something is urgent and then arrive late. Put quality first.

Off property events

Always arrive early! If you figure you need 2 hours to set up then give yourself 3. It's sooooo much better to "walk into" an event opening than to "run like a madman". Murphy loves offsite events… there are tons of things which could go wrong. Get there early so you have time to address any/all challenges. And bring something to do in case everything is absolutely perfect.

Don't trust anyone!

Always double-check EVERYTHING. Anything that you have delegated out needs to be double-checked… it's still your responsibility and don't trust that they have completed it until you see it with your own eyes. It's your ass on the line, not theirs. It is not so much a matter of distrust as it is a professional habit of verifying everything. For that matter, double-check yourself as well.

Beating Murphy's Law is about due diligence. Planning is everything. If you're looking only at what's right in front of you then he's going to catch you. You need to be looking one or 2 miles down the road, seeking to solve problems before they ever even get to you.

Proper Seating and Flow of Restaurant Customers

Managing the rush

How Many Customers Are Too Many In One Seating?

If you work in a restaurant then you are familiar with this question. There are two clear perspectives of thought regarding this subject: the Front of the House (FOH) perspective and the Back of the House (BOH) perspective. Speaking from the Back of the House, it seems that the Front of the House perspective often is to simply seat as many people as possible, regardless of the outcome. Got 100,000 seats open? …seat them all!! The kitchen's perspective is to seat as many people as the kitchen (and Waitstaff for that matter) can execute in a timely, professional manner with a focus on quality food and successful service resulting in happy customers.

What often seems to happen, however, is that many guests will show up all at once, the restaurant will be seated all at once, the waitstaff scurry around and take all of their orders from all of their new tables, and then turn in all of their new orders and tables at the same time. This results in slamming the kitchen and giving them more plates than they can possibly produce in a timely fashion (we have 10 burners but suddenly are slammed with 25 sauté items!). The result is that customers will wait for their food, while the kitchen tries to dig itself out of the hole and waitstaff stand around asking, "What's taking my food so long?" And when waitstaff go back to

their tables and respond to customer comments about why it's taking so long, the most frequent answer to the customer is that "the kitchen is behind". Wrong! The Front of the House failed to manage the seating!

What often happens next is that the kitchen will hit high gear, food slams into the "window", and now the waitstaff cannot pick-up food fast enough. The cooks yell, "take this food out! Get it out of the window!" Then the kitchen comes to a halt while they wait for the servers to deliver food. This is often followed by food coming back to the kitchen because it is overcooked or dry from sitting in the window too long.

Not a Kitchen Problem

From my perspective, none of this is a kitchen problem. The fact that the kitchen was buried is because the Front of the House failed to manage the guest seating. It is the responsibility of the FOH to manage the flow of guests, to speed up one table and slow down another, to drag a few "walk in" guests rather than seat everyone at once. If the kitchen where to put up 40 plates all at once for one waiter and then complain about taking so long to get the food out, that would be unjust. The same goes for the Front of the House when they slam the kitchen. It's about planning and controlling the flow, not just putting butts in the seats.

The guest is going to have to wait, one way or the other. They will either have to wait to get a table, or they'll have to wait to get their food. It is better to tell the customer (customers with no reservation) that it's going to be 30 – 60 minutes before you can be seated rather than to seat them quickly and then have them wait a long time to get their food. It is a better guest perception to have to wait to get a table (unless they have a reservation of course) and then once they have arrived at their table to have a quality experience. Rather than to be quickly seated, and then sit and wait and wait and wait and wonder what is going on before they can get their meal. At the end of the day the proper seating of restaurant customers is defined by how many happy customers you had and how few "guest relations" issues you had to resolve due to timing.

Will you lose some covers that night because the guest isn't going to wait 30 minutes for a table? Yes, some customers will leave and go dine somewhere else. But they will remember that and the next time they will plan ahead and make a reservation. On the other hand, if you seat that guest when the restaurant is already at capacity and they then have to sit and wait, wait, wait for their food…what will they remember? That the service was terrible, and they won't be back. So, you got

their money for one day…but lost that guest for the future. I'd say that's a pretty poor business model.

Proper service is more important than simply cramming "butts in the seats"

Here is a great example of "seat everyone" -vs- "controlled seating". Let's say you are open from 5:00 – 11:00 pm. On one Saturday you serve 384 guests with the vast majority of them being served between 6:30 – 9:00, slamming the restaurant. On the next Saturday you again serve 384 guests, but this time with a controlled seating of about 16 people every 15 minutes. You've done the same number of covers but the night went much smoother with better service from the FOH & BOH and the guests are happier. Yes, I know it may be hard to get either that first or last turn, but the point is to control the seating and force guests into slower time slots. If you routinely go on an hour wait at prime time then drastically limit the available reservations during prime time so you have more room for walk-ins. Force reservations into the earlier or later slots. That way you'll have more room for walk-ins during "the rush".

Venison Tartar on Pumpernickel - The Willow Inn

I would like to propose two questions to two different groups of people. First question is for people who are in the industry FOH and BOH. What are your

thoughts on this topic? Is it better to have the customer wait to be seated, or is it better to get them seated and make them wait for service and food? In which situation do customers leave happier? In which situation do you spend more time and money trying to recover the table?

Second question. When you go out to eat, would you rather sit at the bar or in the waiting area for 15 minutes before being seated? Or would you prefer to be quickly seated and then have to wait a prolonged period of time for your meal, wondering what is taking so long?

I understand that the perspective of the House is to capture as many customers as possible. Even if that means making them wait for their meal. At least they will end up paying a check and contributing funds to the House. I contend that a quality customer experience will cause that customer to return again and again. While a negative customer experience may cause the customer to never return…and of course tell all their friends. Therefore, slamming as many people into the restaurant as possible may not necessarily generate you more funds in the long run. If the House believes that filling the restaurant with as many customers as possible is the best way to capture revenue and promote their business, I suggest giving the matter more thought.

Every restaurant has disputes between the FOH and the BOH. These disputes revolve around the difference in perspective between them, as well as their different priorities, tensions and challenges. To properly assess and navigate through this minefield there are two guiding principles. **Number 1:** what is best for the business. **Number 2:** what is best for the customer. Pretty much any issue between the front of the house and back of the house can be resolved by applying these two principles. The highest priority is what is good for the business. But that is very closely followed by what is good for the guest. For instance, it is good for the guest to receive an extra pound of king crab for free. The guests would love that and the waitstaff's tip would probably go up because of it. But that is bad for business, and therefore it is an improper decision. On the other side of the coin, is it good for the business to advertise a pound of king crab, but only present the customer with half a pound? That saves the business money, but it creates a very negative perspective in the eyes of the guests and will negatively impact the future revenue of the restaurant.

So let's get down to the nitty-gritty application of these two principles. You have a customer who is dissatisfied with their meal. Is it better to buy their meal, or simply

apologize and hope that they'll return again. In this situation it is better to lose money in the short term, i.e. offer them another entree option, a free dessert, buy them a drink, or pay for their entire meal, whatever seems appropriate to recover the guest. You may lose money on this one meal, but you will probably recover that guest so that they will come back again and hopefully with more people. It makes better business sense to lose money in the short run and gain future revenue. Are they sincere in their complaint, or are they someone who simply complains in order to get something for free? If you recognize a trend with certain customers who always come in and complain in order to get something for free, in that situation you are better to cut them off and lose their business because they're costing you money every time they come in. They are freeloaders and not worth your time or the money you spend on them.

Habitual complainers. Every restaurant will have habitual complainers. You should keep a list of these people. Keep track of their phone numbers, the names they use (some use various names), credit card numbers, etc. These people are parasites upon your business. You need to evaluate whether or not they are worth compensating every time they come in to dine. If they contribute in some way to your business, then it may be worth keeping them. But if they contribute nothing, but only come in to get some type of free discount every time, then you need to cut them off and ask them to take their business elsewhere. You can do this in a polite fashion by saying something like. "I'm sorry, it appears that we can not meet your needs. We would appreciate it if you would take your business elsewhere."

Is It Time to 86 Tipping?

Is the unequal system of tipping hurting the ability of restaurants to hire qualified cooks in mid to high-end establishments?

written January 2014

Warning! This article is written from a chef's perspective…if you are a server then be prepared to get pissed off. But also, please keep an open mind and try to read the article objectively as if you were not in the business.

Are good cooks choosing to become servers, or choosing a different industry entirely, because the wages for cooks are too low? Is it time to **scrap the tip system and move to a service charge system** so cooks can be equally compensated with the servers?

Today's graduate from the Culinary Institute of America will have a tab of about $112,785 or more to pay off. Yet the national average wage for a line cook (www.starchefs.com/acquia/trends/chef-salary-report-2012) in 2012 was $13.64. Meanwhile, servers will usually earn 2 or 3 times the annual wages of a cook. According to Bill Guilfoyle, an associate professor at the Culinary Institute of America, "At the most exclusive New York restaurants, servers and others out front can make $75,000 or more a year, while the kitchen staff might have to settle for $30,000.[1]"

In the May 2011 Occupational Employment Statistics Report, the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that restaurant cooks earned an average wage of $11.25 per hour, or $23,410 per year assuming a 40-hour work week. The lowest-earning 10% of

restaurant cooks earned wages of $8.06 per hour or less. Their median income was $10.61 per hour, and only the highest-earning 10% earned wages of $15.46 or better.

Of course a number of variables affect these numbers, including type of workplace and geography. Full-service restaurants were the largest employer of line cooks, paying an average wage of $11.12 per hour. Hotel cooks received an average of $13.36 per hour, while limited-service restaurant cooks only earned $9.98 on average. Cruise ship cooks earned among the best wages, averaging $17.72 per hour.

The 2010 StarChefs.com Salary Survey Report showed experienced line cooks earned an average of $28,662, or $13.78 per hour. In 2011 the average increased slightly to $13.89, and then in 2012 the wage dropped to a five year low of $13.64. www.starchefs.com/acquia/trends/chef-salary-report-2012

Some will say that restaurants should pay cooks more, but restaurants cannot afford to pay line cooks the significant difference between server's and cook's wages without passing that cost on to their customers. The average net profit of a typical restaurant is only about 5%, plus or minus 3%, so there's really no playroom for them to eat the cost of paying higher wages to cooks. And passing that significant cost onto customers is not a good business solution.

I'm going to wade into this age old battle between the front of the house and the back of the house. Cooks will probably love me, waitstaff are going to hate me, and managers are going to be irritated because I'm bringing to the surface an issue which "stirs the nest". An issue which needs to be dealt with but for which there is no easy solution.

So, what's the problem?

In essence, the kitchen staff is under compensated for the work which they do while the waitstaff are overcompensated. Wow, I can hear the front of the house screaming! But are they upset because it's a false statement? Do you think servers are better, work harder, or in some way deserve more than the cooks? If so, would a server have a job if there were no cooks?

Here is my goal…
At the end of the day when all things are counted including tips, number of hours worked, overtime, benefits, and so on, the line cooks should earn at least the same hourly wage as the servers. And it is not that hard to fix. Although policies vary by

establishment, the servers in most restaurants are already required to tip out other staff, such as the bussers, the host, the maître d', and/or the bartenders. Sometimes they are required to tip the cooks, other times it is done voluntarily, but at most places it is not done at all. A big part of the reason for this discrepancy is that the IRS has termed cooks as a "non-tipped" job description (more on this below).

I respect the work which waitstaff do and I consider servers to be very important to a successful restaurant…but while they are important they are not essential. (I hear more screaming!) Cooks on the other hand are essential to a successful restaurant, and as the "essential" element of the operation they deserve equal wages as those who are simply "important". Some will say, "I have customers who come in just to see me." Or, "You don't know how many times I have had to save a customer because of poor food." That is true, and that's one of the things which make servers important to a successful restaurant. But that does not make you essential. Answer me these two questions. 1) Can you have a restaurant without servers? Answer: yes. 2) Can you have a restaurant without cooks? Answer: no. Would you go to a building just to visit and talk to a server that you like and pay some kind of a bill but never get any food? Of course not! No cooks, no food, no servers. This is why cooks are essential while waitstaff are simply very important to a successful operation.

Now that the front of the house is pissed off like an angry hornets nest poked with a stick, and the back of the house is giving high-fives, let me clarify my perspective.

I do believe the waitstaff are **extremely** important to a successful restaurant. They have skills which most kitchen staff do not have, such as the ability to deal with people who deserve to be given the finger rather than treated politely. The servers are able to up-sell items and bring in more revenue, push specials, make unhappy guests leave happy, fix errors made by the kitchen, smooth out an over-sat restaurant and the resulting wait both for a table as well as for food, are familiar with food & wine pairings, and many other special skills. I recognize and value these skills which servers have, and I would not want to do the job that you do. It is not my intent or purpose to demean, devalue, or suggest that waitstaff are not valuable. My point is, they are not more valuable than the cooks, and as such, do not deserve significantly higher wages than the cooks, especially since **waitstaff would earn nothing without the cooks**.

Some of you will say, "Well if you don't like it in the kitchen then become a server." That's not the point of the conversation. We do like it in the kitchen. The question

is, "Why aren't cooks compensated accordingly?"

It is not the server's fault that this situation has come about. It is the fault of the US government getting in there and regulating things, trying to tax tips and saying that cooks have a non-tipped job description. Years ago it was common for servers to tip-out the kitchen after each shift, but the government now says cooks do not belong in a tip category and should not receive tips! Who the hell are they to make that determination?! Bureaucratic imbeciles!! And changing that bureaucracy is so full of red tape that it would take years if not decades to change. So I think the solution is to **eliminate the tip system and go to a service charge system** instead. This would allow the house to evenly distribute tips among all food service professionals, both front and back of the house.

What is the Service Charge System?

Instead of guests leaving a tip, a service charge is automatically added to every guest check, usually somewhere between 15% – 20%. The house collects the service charge and then redistributes it to all staff (including the kitchen) as it sees fit.

What is particularly interesting about the tipping system is that, while customers say they like being able to control how much money goes to the staff, surveys show that most people tip the same percentage almost regardless of service, except in the case of REALLY bad service. Really great service statistically increased the tip by only 1.5%.

Also, the tip system is inherently skewed. Attractive women serving men make better tips, and attractive men serving women make better tips. Other tipping discrepancies based upon race, "smiley faces", and the weather can be seen here.

What are the benefits of moving to a service charge system?

Server's wages will become more consistent.
A service charge system essentially pools tips for redistribution among all staff. The server's wages will be more consistent and not as dependent upon such things as good customers, bad customers, good sections, bad sections and so on.

Teamwork will increase.
Since servers will not be dependent upon tips, their service teamwork will increase because it will be focused upon the entire health of the restaurant and not just upon their tables. Making them more willing to help each other out and serve the interests of the restaurant itself rather than their own pocket.

Thomas Keller has stated that when he instituted the service charge system at The French Laundry the waiters were worried, but "ultimately, the system proved instrumental in fostering an undeniably unified restaurant staff."

It will become easier to get and to keep quality cooks in the kitchen.
Better wages will attract more qualified cooks to the kitchen, making it easier for them to make a living wage in this industry. In turn, this can increase the number of qualified applicants for kitchen positions which will increase competition and result in better cooks in the kitchen and therefore better, more consistent food served to the guests.

There will be less animosity between the kitchen and the servers simply because there will be greater equality in wages.
I forbid the servers to discuss their tips in the kitchen. Nothing will piss the cooks off faster than to have a waiter say, "I just got a $300 tip because that guy loved his steak!" It is unethical, unprofessional behavior.

In some ways, customer service will actually increase.
- Servers will be less likely to pressure management to let them go home simply because it's slow…and then as soon as they leave you get slammed and are short staffed.
- Servers won't fight to be the only one to take a big table hoping to get a big tip. Instead, they'll help each other on big tables because they know they're all sharing the tip.
- Servers will not fight to get the most customers (padding their tips) which usually results in poorer customer service.
- Servers will work for the good of the restaurant rather than for getting the most cash.

Your kitchen staff will be more happy!
With better wages cooks will be more loyal, and more likely to stay long-term, which will result in less turnover and less expense in training new staff. And let's face it; training new cooks takes more time and money then training new servers. If you have a grill station, sauté station, pantry station, and so on then new cooks need to learn each of these stations. It can take many weeks to learn the various stations, all the recipes and prep associated with them. Training servers through the different sections on the floor does not change their job duties like it does in the kitchen. It is therefore generally less time-consuming and less expensive to train qualified servers than to train qualified cooks.

What are the arguments against switching to a service charge system?

The servers will have less incentive to provide great customer service.
My response: that's bogus! Quality service is a matter of good training, proper discipline, a good work ethic, professionalism, and pride in your work. Does a cook need an incentive to prepare a medium rare steak correctly? No. Treat them just like the kitchen staff…train them properly, and fire them if they refuse to do a good job. Servers are professional staff…don't treat them like prima donnas.

The guest check average will go down because the servers will sell less.
My response: not necessarily. There is still incentive to push high-end items and to upsell because at the end of the day it still drives more cash into the server's pockets if they up-sell. This is also another training issue. Give the worst sellers better training…if they fail to perform then give them the worst shifts, or replace them with better staff.

The establishment will lose some servers if we change to a service charge system.
My response: probably a true statement, especially if there is a large disparity between the front of the house and back of the house wages once tips are considered. But, you may also gain a more professional waitstaff with less drama and more of a teamwork oriented staff between front and back of the house. Customer service may increase, and therefore customer traffic may increase.

Additionally, as the disparity between the front and back of the house wages continues to increase, restaurants are increasingly faced with the possibility of losing quality kitchen staff. So either way you may be faced with the issue of losing staff over this issue. Or in the case the kitchen, it will become harder and harder to find qualified, quality staff. Great service with crappy food is not a recipe for success.

Your other alternative to alleviating the wage disparity is to increase the wages to the kitchen staff and then increase the prices on your menu. Yeah, we know that's not going to happen! That would increase the cost to the customer, while the service charge system simply puts the cost (by including the average tip) up front, at no extra cost to the typical guest.

You will lose customers by going to a service charge system.
Each operation needs to carefully evaluate their own situation. However, if you determine that your average tip is 20% and you decide to set up a service charge at say 18 or 19% you can then sell it to your customers as a way to offset the wage

disparity between the people serving their food and the people actually cooking their food, and that if they are a normal tipper that this system will actually save the average patron money. But you also must be clear in describing what the service charge goes towards, because customers will want to know, and the waitstaff needs a cohesive response to the question.

Without the tip incentive servers will become lazy and do less work.
This is the challenge of every manager at every job in every company which does not have tipped or commissioned employees. It is a challenge which the kitchen already faces and successfully deals with. Ultimately it is the job of the management to properly train their staff and weed out those who do not meet the standard. The waitstaff already know how to do the job properly. If anything, management will have to work harder for a while to maintain and enforce the standards upon the staff. Professionalism, self-discipline, and pride in your work. If they refuse to do the job properly then replace them.

Restaurants who have Decided its Time to 86 Tipping

World renown Chef Thomas Keller at [The French Laundry](#) , CA and Per Se, – NYC
  (www.frenchlaundry.com/)

Chef Alice Waters at [Chez Panisse](#) – CA
  (www.chezpanisse.com/reservations/)

Chef Daniel Patterson at [Coi](#) – San Francisco
  (coirestaurant.com/menu/)

[Briarhurst Manor Estate](#), Manitou Springs – CO
  (www.briarhurstdining.com/)

[Rattlesnake](#) – Detroit, MI
  (web.archive.org/web/20150409054245/ rattlesnakedetroit.com:80/?)

[Atera](#) – NYC
  (www.ateranyc.com/)

[Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare](#) – NY
  (www.brooklynfare.com/pages/chefs-table)

Chef Grant Achatz's two Chicago restaurants [Next](#) and [Alinea](#)
  (https://nextrestaurant.com/)
  (https://website.alinearestaurant.com/)

[The Turquoise](#) – San Diego
  (http://theturquoise.com/)

[Sushi Yasuda](), The Modern, Union Square Café, Gramercy Tavern – NYC
(www.sushiyasuda.com/information.html)

[Tom Douglas'] The Carlile Room, Palace Kitchen, and Dahlia Lounge – Seattle
(www.seattletimes.com/life/food-drink/tom-douglas-going-straight-to-15hour-adding-20-service-charge-at-3-restaurants/)

[Ivars Restaurants]() – Seattle
(www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/business/economy/as-minimum-wage-rises-restaurants-say-no-to-tips-yes-to-higher-prices.html)

[Walrus & the Carpenter, The Whale Wins, Barnacle]() – Seattle
(https://seattle.eater.com/2015/4/21/8463303/three-renee-erickson-restaurants-will-eliminate-tips)

[The Ram Restaurants]() – Seattle
(www.attn.com/stories/5087/seattle-restaurant-bans-tipping)

[El Gaucho, Aqua]() – Seattle
(https://seattle.eater.com/2016/3/1/11140242/el-gaucho-aqua-seattle-no-tipping)

[21 Trendy Restaurants]() article includes:
(https://time.com/money/4046887/restaurants-no-tipping-ban/)
- Black Star Co-op – Austin
- Abrusci's – Denver
- Packhouse – Newport, Kentucky
- Craft, Dirty Candy, Riki – NYC
- Girard – Philadelphia
- Bar Marco – Pittsburgh
- Bar Agricole, Comal, Ippuku, Manos Nouveau, Sous Beurre Kitchen – CA
- The Public Option – Washington DC

How is a Service Charge System Different than a Tip System as far as the IRS is concerned?

Starting January 1st 2014 a service charge is considered by the IRS to be part of a wage and as such the employer must withhold appropriate taxes. In theory, this makes no difference to the server because by year's end they will have the same amount of pocket cash…assuming that they didn't cheat on their income taxes by declaring less in tips than they actually received (they wouldn't do that would they?!)

[Are These The Final Days Of Automatic 18% Tips At Restaurants?]()
(http://consumerist.com/2013/09/05/are-these-the-final-days-of-automatic-18-tips-at-restaurants/)

[How the IRS Automatic Gratuity Ruling Impacts Restaurants and Employees]()
(www.paychex.com/articles/payroll-taxes/how-irs-automatic-gratuity-ruling-impacts-restaurants-and-

employees)

Things to consider before changing to a service charge system

What percent service charge will you use?
It is suggested that you evaluate your average customer tip percentage and use that as a guideline for your new service charge.

How will you determine which staff get what percentage of the service charge?
The goal is to bring more equity between FOH and BOH wages.

What are the tax ramifications of this change?
Definitely consult with your tax advisers regarding this. There are definitely different rules about who's responsible for reporting the appropriate taxes.

Will you allow additional tips above and beyond the service charge?
If so how will you deal with that tip? Many places taking a service charge approach will not even allow tipping. Others may take the tip and put it into a general pool which is distributed via lottery or some other method.

How do you communicate this change your customers?
It needs to clearly be on your menu that tipping is not required, or allowed, depending on your perspective, and that a service charge is in place instead. You also need a cohesive, detailed explanation to give to customers. All the servers need to give the same message, and not something like oh they're taking money out of our pockets. Posting the policy and the details of the distributions on your restaurant website can be very helpful. Below are a few examples of that.

Examples of Service Charge Policy Statements and/or Alternatives

Chez Panisse response to a news article request regarding their service charge
(http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2013/02/23/chez-panisse-service-charge-not-what-many-customers-believe-it-to-be/#comments)

Casa Nueva (www.casanueva.com/faq/no-tipping)

Add a Tip Line for the kitchen – Alimento restaurant in L.A. has implemented this approach
(www.eater.com/2014/12/5/7341743/why-la-chef-zach-pollack-implemented-a-kitchen-tipping-policy)

Further Reading

- Chef Thomas Keller eliminates tipping at Per Se

(www.nytimes.com/2005/08/15/nyregion/15tips.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

- [A Pittsburgh Restaurant Just Banned Tipping and Replaced it with Something Better](https://mic.com/articles/107818/after-a-pittsburgh-restaurant-banned-tipping-here-s-what-s-happening-to-servers-wages)
  (https://mic.com/articles/107818/after-a-pittsburgh-restaurant-banned-tipping-here-s-what-s-happening-to-servers-wages)

- [A Progressive Argument for Putting an End to Tipping](https://mic.com/articles/61789/a-progressive-argument-for-putting-an-end-to-tipping)
  (https://mic.com/articles/61789/a-progressive-argument-for-putting-an-end-to-tipping)

- [I got rid of gratuities at my restaurant, and our service only got better](www.slate.com/articles/life/culturebox/2013/08/tipless_restaurants_the_linkery_s_owner_explains_why_abolishing_tipping.html)
  (www.slate.com/articles/life/culturebox/2013/08/tipless_restaurants_the_linkery_s_owner_explains_why_abolishing_tipping.html)

- [Tipping is an Abomination](www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2013/07/abolish_tipping_it_s_bad_for_servers_customers_and_restaurants.html) – what affects a guest's reasons to tip
  (www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2013/07/abolish_tipping_it_s_bad_for_servers_customers_and_restaurants.html)

- [Leaving a Tip: A Custom in Need of Changing?](www.nytimes.com/2013/09/04/dining/leaving-a-tip-a-custom-in-need-of-changing.html)
  (www.nytimes.com/2013/09/04/dining/leaving-a-tip-a-custom-in-need-of-changing.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=all)

- [Tipping and Its Alternatives:](www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/chr/pubs/reports/abstract-13842.html) a Comparison of Tipping, Service Charges, and Service-Inclusive Pricing
  (www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/research/chr/pubs/reports/abstract-13842.html)

- [After I banned tipping at my restaurant, the service got better and we made more money](https://qz.com/113597/after-i-banned-tipping-at-my-restaurant-the-service-got-better-and-we-made-more-money/)
  (https://qz.com/113597/after-i-banned-tipping-at-my-restaurant-the-service-got-better-and-we-made-more-money/)

- [Check Please](www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/09/05/050905ta_talk_surowiecki) – the history and illogical side of tipping
  (www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/09/05/050905ta_talk_surowiecki)

- [Service Included: 11 Restaurants Where Tipping Isn't Customary](www.grubstreet.com/2013/06/restaurants-dont-accept-tips.html)
  (www.grubstreet.com/2013/06/restaurants-dont-accept-tips.html)

- [Tip Levels & Service](www.tippingresearch.com/uploads/managing_tips.pdf) – PDF on the weak relation between quality of service and tipped amount. Includes 14 behaviors servers can do which statistically increase their tips, regardless of service.
  (www.tippingresearch.com/uploads/managing_tips.pdf)

- [Who Gets the Tip](www.bridgeandtunnelclub.com/cookery/them/askawaiter/20061010_tip/index.htm#part6), or "If our server just made $60 cash from each of five tables in one hour, why did I go to law school?" – **a must read**
  (www.bridgeandtunnelclub.com/cookery/them/askawaiter/20061010_tip/index.htm#part6)

- [A Brief History of Tipping](www.foodwoolf.com/2010/08/history-of-tipping.html)
  (www.foodwoolf.com/2010/08/history-of-tipping.html)

- [The Futile War on Tipping](http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2013-09-09/the-futile-war-on-tipping)
  (www.bloombergview.com/articles/2013-09-09/the-futile-war-on-tipping)

- [Danny Meyer Eliminates Tipping at all of his restaurants](https://www.finedininglovers.com/blog/news-trends/no-tipping-danny-meyer/) – 10/2015
  (https://www.finedininglovers.com/blog/news-trends/no-tipping-danny-meyer/)

- [As Minimum Wages Rise, Restaurants Say No to Tips, Yes to Higher Prices](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/business/economy/as-minimum-wage-rises-restaurants-say-no-to-tips-yes-to-higher-prices.html) – NY Times 8/2015
  (www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/business/economy/as-minimum-wage-rises-restaurants-say-no-to-tips-yes-to-higher-prices.html)

- [Why Seattle May Be the First to Ban Tipping](http://www.esquire.com/food-drink/a29290/seattle-tipping/) – Esquire 6/2014
  (www.esquire.com/food-drink/a29290/seattle-tipping/)

What are your thoughts!

Should we change to a service charge system? Do the servers deserve more cash than the cooks? Would a service charge system increase teamwork: on the floor as well as between front and back of the house?
Is there a different/better solution to equalize wages between FOH and BOH?
Leave a comment here!
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/kitchen-management-alley/is-it-time-to-86-tipping#JumpToComment)

The Art of Plate Presentation

Components of an artistic plate design

Today's most successful chefs are multi-talented. And I'm not just talking about TV or world famous chefs. Our industry has changed massively over the past few decades. Today's best chefs are successful businessmen with the financial savvy to manage their food costs, control operational expenses, train staff how to repeat what they themselves do, interact with socially adept guests, and produce quality cuisine. But it is cooking great food and practicing the **art of plate presentation** (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/fond-tidbits-for-chefs/the-art-of-plate-presentation/) which most of us enjoy the most.

Of all the work that we do, the art of plate presentation is one of the most intriguing. Creating a visually stunning "picture on the plate" and hearing "Wow! That's beautiful!" brings a great sense of creative satisfaction…so long as the next comment is "It tastes even better than it looks!" Visual beauty without fantastic flavor is garbage.

Today's chefs are so talented, so artistic, so visually creative that presentations run the full gamut of super simple to very complex. And each restaurant will have it's own creative style which is often defined by it's cuisine. For instance, many of the presentations below are geared toward the high-end establishment and are too complex for the average restaurant, but perhaps would still work for the chef's special, the one place where a chef can truly highlight his/her talents and train staff the etiquette of plate design.

So, what makes for a great presentation? How do you go about designing a plate? What are the do's and don'ts? Here are things which I've found helpful. The first step is to try to visualize the plate in your mind. What do you want it to look like? Is there a design idea you want to use as a template. Have you seen a presentation you'd like to mimic using your food instead? For me, it usually starts with the concept of lines, arcs, circles and/or triangles.

The Art of Plate Presentation – Lines, Arcs, Circles and Triangles
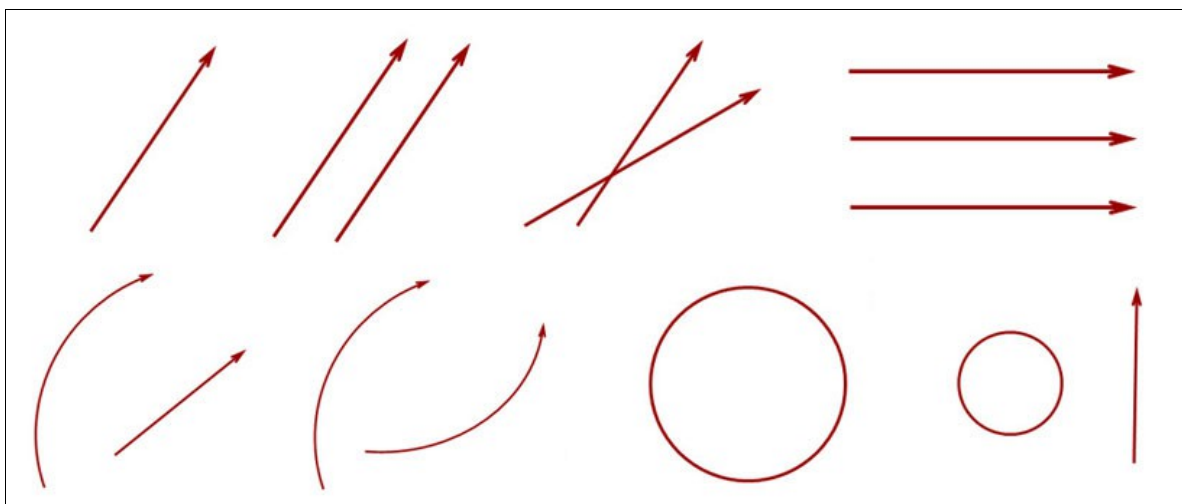
All plate presentations begin as simple geometric shapes

Simple geometric shapes are the "skeleton" of plate design, the base upon which the flesh is added. Consider all the images which follow and how all plate presentations can be defined by simple geometric shapes: lines, arcs, circles, etc. Being able to "see" the underlying patterns (skeleton) of a layout make it easier to visualize the end result, and to play with variations of design before you ever put food to plate.

I always start my plates by thinking of the lines, arcs and patterns that may work, often using my hands to draw an imaginary design on an empty plate to help me

visualize it before I even start adding food.

Read the entire article!
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/fond-tidbits-for-chefs/the-art-of-plate-presentation/)

The full article has many plate design examples with photos of various Chef's work but due to copyright limitations they could not be posted in this publication

Kitchen Forms Appendix

The following section is an appendix containing a series of useful forms for the Professional Chef. All the forms are downloadable from the Chefs-Resources website. You must own a copy of Microsoft Excel to open these forms.

Beef Butchering Yield From

Tracking Your Meat Yield Percentages

If you break-down beef, lamb, pork, and other primal cuts or sub-primals into steaks and other products for your restaurant then knowing your actual yields, and the accuracy of your meat cutters, is essential to managing your yields and your costs. If your crew simply takes a whole tenderloin, or any other cut, and goes at it without any type of record keeping, then there's a good chance that you are losing money, especially if you have multiple butchers.

	BEEF BUTCHERING YIELD FORM														
	Enter Item and Preparation Info					Enter The Numbers									
Date	Item, Grade (select, choice, etc) B/In or Bnls, Meat Buyer's Guide #	Priamry Use Yield A	Priamry Use Yield B	Secondary Use Yield C	Cryovac Weight	Raw Weight	Primary Usage Weight	Secondary Usage Weight	Waste Weight	Yield Qty A	Yield Qty B	Yield Qty C	Primary Usage Yield %	Secondary Usage Yield %	Initials
6/15/2014	Beef Tenderloin 189 Choice	CC 8 oz Steaks	End cut 8 oz Steaks	Sirloin Burger	6.75	6.61	3.50	1.32	1.78	5	2	1.32 Lb	52%	20%	

Beef Butchering Yield From

Industry standard yields for primal and subprimal cuts are hard to find, and of course vary based upon animal and size range. But if you purchase the same size (say a beef tenderloin 189 6-7 lb avg) then using the Butchering Yield Form below can help set standards in your establishment based upon the exact cuts you expect and the skill of your best butcher. Once you have standardized yields you can then compare everyone's work against that standard and help train your staff on how to increase their skill so as to meet the standard.

Here are basic descriptions of the form's usage:

Primary Use Yield A

Use this area to indicate the primary use and spec for the product. In the example it is for 8 oz Center Cut tenderloin steaks.

Primary Use Yield B

If you have a second primary use item, such as 8 oz end cut steaks (or smaller

steaks) after you have cut your Primary Usage product, then use this area to indicate the item and its specs. In the example it is for 8 oz End Cut tenderloin steaks.

Secondary Use Yield C

Use this area to indicate what you will use the scrap meat for.

Cryovac Weight

Cryovac is the weight before the item is removed from cryovac which will include your blood loss.

Raw Weight

Raw Weight is the weight of the meat after removing it from cryovac and discarding the blood. You will usually have some blood/liquid loss so the weight is typically less than the Cryovac Weight.

Primary Usage Weight

This is the total yield weight of meat for your Primary Usage Items. In this example the primary usage is for steaks and the yield wt of all steaks (Center Cut & End Cut steaks) is 3.5 lbs.

Trim Weight

Is the weight for all the usable scrap meat which will be used for your Secondary Use item, which in this example is sirloin burger.

Waste Weight

Pretty obvious…this is the weight of all your waste…fat, sinew, etc

Yield Quantity A

Is the yield quantity of your Primary Use Yield A items. In the example it is 5 Center Cut steaks.

Yield Quantity B

If you have two Primary Use items then this is the yield quantity of your Primary Use Yield B items. In the example it is 2 End Cut steaks.

Yield Quantity C

This is your Secondary Use item. Here it is for Sirloin Burger and is a weight which is identical to the Secondary Usage Weight column. However, if you were cutting

NY steaks then you might only have one Primary Use Yield A item (Center cut NY steaks), no Primary Use B items, and a Secondary Use of Vein Steaks or Breakfast Steaks which would then have a quantity rather than a weight.

[Download the Beef Butchering Yield Form](http://www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/beef-butchering-yield-form#Download)
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/beef-butchering-yield-form#Download)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Cook Evaluation Form

image courtesy of the Tulalip Resort Casino

An employee evaluation is your chance to get both you and your team members "on the same page" so there is no ambiguity as to your expectations and the employee's work performance. It is your opportunity to praise excellent staff members, and to educate those team members who are "work ethic impaired". It's purpose is to move staff "up or out." Meaning that you are giving them positive criticism of their work performance including specific areas of both strength and weakness.

And of course the expectation is that areas of weakness need to be improved upon, especially a rating of "1" or "2". Failure to show improvement indicate either an unwillingness or an inability to meet the basic standard of "3".

Employee Evaluation Process

In order to have a successful staff evaluation process, here are some common suggested practices:

- Be sure that the employee has been properly trained and has a copy of their job description and expectations.

- Make an appointment with the team member, allowing up to 60 minutes.
- Be sure that you have a quiet, private area for the evaluation.
- Give a blank copy of the evaluation to the employee prior to the meeting and let them rate themselves. This may give you some insight into their perspective.
- Always have another supervisor in the room with you during the evaluation, with one of you being the same gender as the employee.
- Specify the goals and purpose of the evaluation process: to accurately communicate your expectations, acknowledge good performance, improve poor or weak performance, establish new performance expectations, receive feedback regarding the expectations, create a plan for expected improvements.
- Try not to do all of the talking. Ask questions during the evaluation. Give them the opportunity to express how they think & feel about particular questions and what they need in order to be successful.

RATING GUIDELINES	PERFORMANCE LEVEL
SUPERIOR - Performance is exceptional and rarely achieved by others. Consistently achieves results well in excess of prescribed standards.	5
COMMENDABLE - Performance exceeds the normal requirements on a consistent basis. Frequently excels in one or more job aspects.	4
MEETS STANDARDS - Regularly meets standards prescribed for the position. A solid overall performance.	3
MARGINAL - Performance does not meet basic standards prescribed for the position. Improvement is required.	0 - 2

A "3" is considered a normal, average, good worker who meets standards. Whatever your standards are, 70%-90% of your staff should be a "3".

THE WAY YOU INTERACT WITH FELLOW EMPLOYEES

STAFF RELATIONS
Consistently demonstrates Attentive, Courteous and Efficient service to other staff. Anticipates fellow worker's needs and responds with alacrity to requests for help. Creates a friendly environment.

TEAM PLAYER
Cooperates and works well with others. Helps other staff every day to get ready for service. Is enthusiastic, portrays a positive demeanor and works toward Company goals. Understands that it is everyone's job to do whatever it takes to get the day's work done.

FOLLOW-THROUGH
Sees tasks through to completion. Finishes work so that next shift is prepared.

THE WAY YOU INTERACT WITH CUSTOMERS

CUSTOMER RELATIONS
Consistently demonstrates Attentive, Courteous and Efficient service to customers. Treat Customers with Consideration & Respect.

THE WAY YOU PRESENT YOURSELF

GROOMING STANDARDS
Practices and displays proper grooming, hygiene and personal care per Employee Manual. Maintains hair and facial hair per standards.

UNIFORMS
Always wears the proper uniform. Uniform is always clean.

THE WAY YOU DO YOUR JOB

DEPENDABILITY
Can be counted upon to do what is expected and required. Follows instructions and completes work on time with minimum supervision.

QUALITY OF WORK
Work performed according to Chef's standards and work requirements. All job description specifications are met. Consistency in work. Recipes are followed.

QUANTITY OF WORK
Completes the expected amount of work in relation to standards.

- Always have an area on the evaluation where the employee can give "their side of the story" regarding the evaluation, especially if they have disagreements.
- Be sure that your evaluation is balanced and includes areas in which the team member does well. Do not focus only on the faults. Most employees respond better to the pat on the back than to the switch on the ass. Appropriate praise is a key part of staff morale.

Free Employee Performance Evaluation Form for Cooks

The image is a sample of part of the free download. It is easy to modify the evaluation criteria to meet your own needs whether you have a fine dining establish, a coffee house, or a cafeteria. This form is created with a rating system of 1 – 5 where "3" is the standard expectation of all staff. A "3" is the average, good employee who meets the basic standards of their position, thus, most of your team would receive a "3" by this rating system.

A "5" is very hard to get and only an exceptional employee can achieve a "5" in any given category. If a team member gets an average score of "5" throughout the entire evaluation then it is time to consider promoting that employee to a higher position.

A rating of 0 – 2 on any category indicates a need for improvement on that specific part of their job performance. An overall average score of anything less than "3" is a clear indication that either this employee has not received proper training or they need to receive the boot.

Cook Job Performance Summary

The Performance Summary area at the end of the form provides a space for "Skills to be developed", and this is useful for all types of employees whether star players or on the short bus out of town. For star players you can plan additional opportunities for growth and instruction. For those who need to be worked "up or out" it provides an area for detailed expectations to be met on a specified timeline for future evaluation.

Each individual criteria is graded 1 – 5, then all are added together and the guide at the bottom determines the average of the total score.

Download the Cook Evaluation Form
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/cook-evaluation-form#Download)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Commercial Kitchen Cleaning Schedule

A cluttered kitchen creates distraction, an irritation, a visual & philosophical drain on mise en place and the natural order of things in a proper kitchen. It can also pose a health or safety issue. A clean kitchen on the other hand promotes clear thoughts, focus, pride, and a greater realization of mise en place. Everything is clean, everything is "in its place", everything is as it should be.

Example Deep Cleaning Schedule
Cooks

Cleaning Task:	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Assigned
Saute						
Cleaning Task:	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Assigned
Clean Inside Saute Reach-in (Doors)				X		
Clean Shelves						
Clean Inside Top, Sides & Bottom						
Clean Gaskets						
Clean Fans						
Clean Inside Saute Reach-in (Drawers)					X	
Remove Drawers - Clean Tracks, Sides, Top						
Clean Inside Top, Sides & Bottom						
Clean Gaskets						
Clean Fans						
Clean Underside of Pass-through	X					
Clean, Sanitize & Polish						
Clean Turbo Chef	X					
Clean Inside						
Clean Outside						
Clean Saute Slim Fridge			X			
Clean Shelves						
Clean Inside Walls & Bottom						
Clean Gaskets						
Clean Outside - Top, Front, Sides						
Clean Casters (Wheels)						
Clean Fans						
Clean Stove-top Burners			X			
Brush Burner Pipes						

Commercial Kitchen Cleaning Schedule

[Download the Cleaning Schedule](http://www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/commercial-kitchen-cleaning-schedule/)
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/commercial-kitchen-cleaning-schedule/)
(requires Microsoft Excel...not included)

But how do you get to that "Nirvana" of kitchen cleanliness? If you tell your staff to "clean the kitchen" will your expectation be met? If you think that's true then you will be constantly disappointed and disillusioned with your crew! What's clean to them usually involves a 30 second wipe down with a rag. The only way to attain a clean kitchen which meets your expectations is to create, post, and verify (i.e. make sure they are doing it!) a clearly defined cleaning list. For a restaurant or catering operation, you need a very specific **commercial kitchen cleaning schedule** which details everything you expect to be cleaned, and when it is to be cleaned (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)

For instance, telling the crew to "clean the stove" is opening the door for them to take the path of least resistance! Your laziest cook will simply wipe the top and say it is cleaned. If you want it done correctly then you need something more like this:

On Mondays clean the stove:
- clean the firewall, rail, oven doors and sides
- clean the stove grates
- remove & clean the burner units
- clean the burner ports or jets
- remove & clean the grease tray

This kind of detail makes it very clear what your expectations are and when the cleaning is to be done. It also makes it easy for you to hold your crew accountable... did they accomplish the task or not?

The Excel sheet below is a kitchen cleaning schedule which I created to help in my kitchen. It's purpose is to do the "**deep cleaning**" of items which need to be detailed, not the daily cleaning which is expected at closing (that's a separate list!). For instance, the stove is cleaned every night, but it is detailed once a week.

The deep cleaning list is broken down by station (saute, grill, saucier, pantry, day prep, night prep). Each station is assigned items which need to be deep cleaned as either a weekly or monthly routine. This results in every piece of kitchen equipment being detailed right down to the casters either once a week or once a month depending upon necessity or preference. I've chosen the slower days of the week for daily deep cleaning. And items which are detailed once a month I've assigned to week 1, week 2, etc, meaning that they have all week to complete that task so they can learn to plan an organize which day to do it.

Fish Filleting Butchering Log

The Fishmonger's Art

Years ago every chef of a decent caliber was a Fishmonger and they knew how to break down their own whole fish into fillets. Chefs were intimately familiar with the different skeletal patterns of the various species which they served, and they knew how to get the most yield out of each type of fish.

Today, the Fishmonger's art in the kitchen is fading away. Most professional Fishmongers only exist at the seafood processing level, where almost all of our fish is filleted, skinned, and even portioned for us by the big seafood houses, then shipped to our restaurants. Although this is convenient, and can save on labor costs and perhaps even on actual yield costs (because of their expertise), it is sad that we, as chefs, are losing this skill.

Fish Fillet Yield Chart for Fishmongers

	Fish Butchering Yields												
Common Fillet Yields	Whole Fish						Fish Loins						
Item	Whole Fish Round	H/On Gutted	Head/Off Gutted	Skin/On Wt	Skin/Off Wt	Percent Yield	Loin Skin/On	Loin Skin/Off	Loin Bloodline Out Wt	Usable Trim	Center Cut Portions	Percent Yield	Name
Sockeye Salmon H&G			8 lb	5.8 lb	5 lb	63%							
Yellowfin Tuna (Ahi) Loin							10 lb			1 lb	8 lb 8 oz	85%	
Sockeye Salmon Fillet Skin/On				3 lb	2.7 lb	90%							

Fish Fillet Yields Form example

If you're among the few chefs who still order either whole fish, or loins of large fish, then I applaud you! To be successful at running your own Fishmonger program at your restaurant you need the technical skill to fillet various fish correctly, and you need the business knowledge to know the yield percentage you will get so that you can correctly price your menu.

This fish filleting log and yield percentage form will help track the skill level of your filleters, and also give you an indication of how different sized fish have different yields and how that impacts your food cost. For instance, I've found that H&G 10/20 Halibut have a poor yield compared to H&G 20/40 Halibut and therefore I always ask for the 20/40 size.

For comparison to standard yields check-out the Fish Fillet Yields page which lists a large variety of industry standard yields for various fish.

Download the Fish Fillet Yield Form
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/fish-filleting-log-and-butchering-chart#Download)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Food Service Safety Forms

Whether you work in a cafeteria, the B&I sector, or in a fine dining restaurant, all chefs share one basic tenant. We need to serve safe food to our guests, which of course means knowing and implementing the health code standards for our region. Using food service safety forms geared for your particular kitchen can help your crew maintain the standards.

Although the federal government mandates the basics of the health code, these standards can fluctuate depending on many variables including whether you're in a standalone restaurant or a healthcare facility. Healthcare facilities for it instance are under a much more stringent regiment of health inspection and standards. Standards may also fluctuate based upon the state or county you live in, and sometimes even what city you live in.

The B&I industry also tends to have a higher standard when it comes to health inspections as regards the plethora of health department forms needed (i.e. corporate bureaucracy) to monitor food safety discipline in the kitchen. Interestingly though, in the one B&I sector establishment I worked at the health department was more flexible than they were in many restaurants I've worked in.

For instance, we were given the opportunity to correct issues on the spot and not be docked points. This resulted in us being able to get 100% health inspection scores which was our corporate company's standard. The health inspector basically allowed us to fix issues immediately, or returned the next day to re-inspect those issues and then wouldn't dock us points for things we fixed. But at restaurants we are rarely awarded this luxury.

Through the years I've learned that the high or low score of a health inspection is relative to the health inspectors' personal interpretation of the health code. I'm not talking about the critical points which are non-negotiable, but rather about the little things. One inspector will tell me that my HACCP plan for sous vide is good while another will tell me to shut down that menu item until my HACCP plan is better (without saying specifically what needs improvement!) I have received one or two points simply because there were a few leaves of dried spices on the spice shelf. Some health inspectors will work with you, while others can be downright anal.

Ultimately the best way to deal with all inspectors is to spend their entire visit walking with them, giving them your undivided attention. Delegate a supervisor to

be available to immediately address and fix any/all issues which the inspection points out. Often, if you show immediate attention to their concerns then the points they may have issued will be reduced or eliminated.

8 Excel Food Service Safety Forms

Above are examples of **8 food service safety forms** done in one Excel spreadsheet (free download below) with multiple tabs which include a number of sheets for maintaining safe food standards in your establishment. They include a hot holding temperature log, banquet catering event hot holding log, sink temperature log, thermometer calibration log, Quat sanitizer log, bleach sanitizer log, and a food cool down temperature log. Of course you'll need to verify the standards set on each one of these. Some states have cold holding set at 40° while others use 41° and hot holding may be at 135° or 140° depending upon the region you live in.

[Download the Food Safety Forms](#)
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-management-tools/food-safety/food-service-safety-forms#Download)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Kitchen Opening & Closing Duties

This Excel checklist will work both for Kitchen Opening Duties as well as for Kitchen Closing Duties. It includes lines for 25 expectations for your employees to complete, organized by work station. It covers one week and has a place for a supervisor to make comments/evaluate the quality of work done so your staff will understand exactly what you expect. The workbook has eleven separate tabs with this worksheet on it so you can create one for up to eleven different stations for opening/closing duties. For instance, separate duties for Sauté, Pantry, Grill, Saucier, etc.

Kitchen Opening and Closing Duties Form

[Download the Opening and Closing Duties Form](www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/kitchen-opening-closing-duties/)
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/kitchen-opening-closing-duties/)
(requires Microsoft Excel...not included)

Kitchen Station Task List

Culinary creativity is the burning ember in every chef's chest which gives meaning and enjoyment to their work. But it is the organization of the kitchen, or lack thereof, which can make life either easier or a living hell. Having a well organized kitchen, with clearly defined duties and expectations of each team member, is essential to a successful kitchen. It also helps diminish the already high levels of stress which are part of our daily culinary experience.

Organization: the Kitchen Station Task List

The Excel workbook below is easy to modify for your establishment and will work equally as well in a cafeteria or a fine dining restaurant. Essentially, you detail the specific duties expected from each station in your kitchen. You can use this form as a **Kitchen Station List** (note: the **Kitchen Opening & Closing Form** is very similar). Simply change the content to meet your needs. What is particularly helpful is that if you find something which is not being done consistently by your crew, add it to the task list, print, implement and now it is a printed (and documentable) part of their daily routine.

The kitchen station task list form is separate from your prep list. It details your expectations for whoever is working a specific station in your kitchen. Click on the image to open a larger, easier to read copy to get a feel for how I have used it, then modify it for your own priorities. It is set up to be put on a clipboard and used at each kitchen station everyday of the week as a checklist for the crew to meet your expectations of set-up, break-down, whatever.

The kitchen task list below has tabs at the bottom of the sheet detailing responsibilities for: Supervisors, Day Prep, Night Prep, Saute, Pantry, Saucier, Grill, and a blank to copy and paste if you need to create more. To change the names of the tabs, right click, select "rename", enter your new name and hit "enter".

[Download the Kitchen Station Task List](http://www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/kitchen-station-task-list/)
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/kitchen-station-task-list/)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Period End Food Cost Calculation Tool

The **Period End Food Cost Calculation File** is an excellent inventory management tool which helps analyze your month to month inventory. It is an Excel file and has a separate monthly tab (Jan. – Dec.) to track your food cost for the whole year. Each month has the info and format listed below. It has room for up to 23 storerooms/storage areas. As you enter your ending inventory for each storeroom it automatically adds them together to calculate your ending inventory.

Inventory					
Blue Mountain Inn					
Saturday, February 28, 2009					

Inventory and Food Cost

Storerooms		Comparison to Last Month		Food Cost Estimate	
Dry Storage	$2,563	$112	$9,395	Beginning Inv.	$9,395
Produce Cooler	$1,854	$154	$684	Transfers In	$1,109
Meat & Fish Cooler	$2,984	$726	$288	Transfers Out	$663
Freezer	$1,877	$309	$1,127	Marketing Credit	$1,127
Prep Area	$621	$200	$1,881	Purchases	$44,891
Line	$543	$332	$1,126	Ending Inv.	$10,521
Liquor	$79	$43	$5,793	Sales	$127,862
		$0		Food Cost	33.70%
		$0			
		$0			
		$0		**Key Makers**	
		$0		Avg. Inventory	$9,958
				Inventory Used	$43,084
				Inventory Turns	4.3
				1 Point COG =	$1,279
Total Food	**$10,521**			Mo. Inventory Change	12%
				Mo. Purchases Change	-4%
				Mo. Sales Change	-4%
				Food Cost Points + -	5.7%

Period End Food Cost Calculation

The 'Comparison To Last Month' box compares the changes in value for each storeroom so you can quickly see major changes (potential problems) in each area.

It also compares the difference from last month for your **Beginning Inventory, Ending Inventory, Transfers, Purchases, Sales**, and the difference in points on your **Food Cost**. Decreases in any of these values appears in red.

The only areas you need to fill in are the areas in blue. All the other areas are calculated for you. In the '**Key Markers**' area you will find automatic calculations for your **Average Inventory**, the amount of **Inventory Used**, your **Inventory Turns**, the percentage of change from last month in Ending Inventory, Purchases and

Redwood Resort Casino

Recipe: Potobello Mushroom Soup

Yield:				Date: June-08
Portion Size:				Chef: David Buchanan
Scale:				

AMT	UNIT	INGREDIENTS	PROCEDURES
4	Cups	Onions, diced	1. Caramelize
3	Oz	Clarified Butter	
2	Tbl	Garlic, minced	2. Add, saute
4	Lb	Portobello Mushrooms, chopped as for duxelle	3. Add, cook as for duxelle mushrooms until dry.
2	Tsp	Fresh Thyme	
1	Cup	Brandy	4. Deglaze, reduce by half
1	Gal	Chicken Stock	5. Add, heat to simmer. Simmer 15 minutes.
2	Each	Bay Leaves	
2	Cups	Heavy Cream	6. Add, simmer 5 minutes.
		Brown Roux	7. Add, thicken to consistency
2	Tbl	Red Wine Vinegar	8. Add. Remove the Bay Leaves. Puree the soup. Press through chinois.
1/4	Cup	Brandy	9. Flambe the brandy, add to soup.
TT		Kosher Salt	Adjust seasonings

Sales. And there is a separate area to track your **Transfers In, Transfers Out, Marketing Credit/Expense, Comps, and Unrecorded Sales**.

[Download Period End Food Cost Calculation File](http://www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/food-cost-calculation/)
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/food-cost-calculation/)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Prep Sheets for Professional Kitchens

Prep Sheets Are The Backbone Of A Successful Kitchen

Prep is an essential part of everyday life in the kitchen. A properly prepped station is the foundation upon which a successful service period is built. Too little prep done and you go down in flames right at the peak of the rush. Forget to prep one item and suddenly that is the most popular dish of the shift!

Having detailed **prep lists** can make your kitchen much more organized and help your staff be more consistently prepped and ready for service. Having pars on the **prep sheets** ensures that they are not prepping either too little (and running out in the middle of service), or prepping too much which results in wasted product and a hit to your food cost.

I've seen many cooks write their prep lists on the back of ticket printer tape… WTF?! Having and using a standardized prep sheet for each station will accomplish the following:

- standardize par levels for slow & busy shifts
- provide cooks with an "at a glance" list of mise en place needed for their station
- if organized properly a prep list can also work as a shorthand recipe, telling cooks the ingredients which go into each dish
- makes it easy for someone else to step in and help prep a station
- makes it easy for someone else to take over a station if the assigned cook has to leave (sick, emergency, etc)
- it is quicker to fill out than hand writing a prep list
- it ensures that nothing will be forgotten (if you don't see it you often don't think to prep it)
- it makes it easier for the Chef or Lead Line Cook to hold staff accountable for the prep in their station
- it establishes pars for slower and busier days thereby ensuring that enough is prepped for the shift
- established pars also help reduce waste due to over-prepping

Two Column Kitchen Prep Sheets

This **Kitchen Prep Sheet** features two columns for prep items with an indent for the sub-ingredients of a recipe. This layout style therefore gives a "cheat sheet" for

the recipes, reminding cooks of the ingredients needed to complete the dish ala minute. It has columns for 3 days worth of prep, and separate par levels for slower -vs- busier days.

Black Mountain Prep - Prep Cooks

Item	Slow Par	Busy Par	Prep	Prep	Prep	Item	Slow Par	Busy Par	Prep	Prep	Prep
Onion Rings	3 Pans	6 Pans				Joannes Tartar	1 gal				
Cilantro-Lime Ranch		1 gal				Cajun Tarter	1 gal				
Prep BBQ Chix	8 ea	16 ea				Seafood Mary Sauce	1 gal				
BBQ Marinade		1 gal				Oriental Mignonette	1 gal				
Blackberry Gastrique		1/2 gal				Champagne Mignonette	1 gal				
Heavenly BBQ Sauce		1/2 gal				Apple Miso Dressing					
Potato Croquettes	16 ea	32 ea				Lemon Aioli	1 qt	2 qt			
Smoked Salmon:		1 ea				Bacon-Red Wine Vinegrette	1 gal				
Smoked Salmon Brine		2 gal				Caesar Dressing	1 gal				
Smoked Coho Salmon		1 ea									
Smoked Sockeye Salmon		1 ea									
Smoked King Salmon		1 ea									
Crab Cakes (2/order)	18	35									
Clam Fritters		3 1/6 pan				Garnishes:					
						Garlic Crouton Rings	60	25			
Wild Rice Strudel	10	20				Dried Lemon Wheels	50	25			
Scallop Potato Pies	25	60				Edamame	16 ea	10 ea			
Scallop Potato Pans	4	7									
Scallop Potato Hash	2 Pan	4 Pan									
Minced Garlic		1/6 pan				Chantrelle Relish	6" F-pan	4" F-pan			
Minced Shallots		1/6 pan				Cherry Pilaf	4" F-pan	2" f-pan			
Ched Horseradish Butter		10 #				Strudel Rice	4" F-pan	4" H-pan			
Onion-Bleu Butter		10 #				Red Potatoes	6" H-pan	4" H-pan			
Sweet Butter		10 #									
Lobster Stock		10 gal									
Beef Demi		2 gal									
Chicken Stock		10 gal									
Fumet		3 gal									
Lobster Bisque		3 gal									

▸ ▸I \ Preps /

Prep Sheet - 2 column version

[Download the 2 Column Prep Sheet](http://www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/prep-sheets/)

(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/prep-sheets/)

Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

One Column Kitchen Prep Sheets

This Kitchen Prep Sheet features one column for prep items with an indent for the sub-ingredients of a recipe. It has columns for 7 days worth of prep, and separate par levels for slower -vs- busier days.

Black Mountain Prep – Grill Station

Item	Slow Par	Busy Par	Mon Prep	Tue Prep	Wed Prep	Thu Prep	Fri Prep	Sat Prep	Sun Prep
Salmon									
8 oz Sockeye, S/on	25 ea	50 ea							
Cedar Boards		20 ea							
House Salm Seasoning		1/6th pan							
Halibut	15 orders	25 orders							
7 oz Halibut, bias cut		20 ea							
Ribeye Steaks 14 oz	15 orders	30 orders							
Cippolini Onions									
Broccolini									
Lobster Bisque	12 orders	20 orders							
2 oz Salmon		20 ea							
7 oz King Salmon, S/off	8 ea	15 ea							
7 oz Sockeye Salmon, S/off	8 ea	15 ea							
7 oz Coho Salmon, S/off	8 ea	15 ea							
Grilled Vegetables		50 orders							
Long Carrots		4" full pan							
Long Zucchini		4" full pan							
Red Bell Pepper		2" full pan							
Pork Chop Veg									
Zucchini		1/3rd pan							
Red Bell Pepper		1/3rd pan							
Kobacha Squash		1/3rd pan							
Asparagus		4" full pan							
Garnishes									
Cedar Fronds									
Lemon Tulips									

Station Responsibilities:
You are responsible for this Station all day and all its prep.
Taste EVERYTHING!!
Have the Chef taste every recipe before you consider the recipe complete.

Download the 1 Column Prep Sheet
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/prep-sheets/)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

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Plate Cost – How to Calculate Recipe Cost

Did You Forget Something In Your Recipe Costing?

Calculating your plate cost for any given recipe is essential to the profitability and survival of your restaurant. When calculating your **recipe cost**, you want to be sure to include every food item which goes into the recipe (you're saying "duh"!) But what about the "free" bread and butter you serve, or maybe the intermezzo, or some other item which every table receives but is not charged for? Where do you put those costs? I usually include it in the cost of the entree, figuring that most people will purchase an entree. Also, what about the cost of the frying oil? It is part of your food cost at the end of the month, but is it worked into the cost of your plates? What I would recommend for the fryer oil is to determine the cost of your average monthly usage of fryer oil and divide that by your average monthly entrees sold. Add that cost to the cost of every entree. Another thing chefs tend to forget is to add the cost of the oil needed for their saute items, or the butter used to toss the veggies in.

Recipe Costing Template

Recipe:	Salsa							
Restaurant:	Hickory Lodge							
Author:	Chef Thomas				Date:	16-Feb-2012		
Number of Portions:	10	Cost			Menu Price:	$3.00		
Serving Size:	3	Cost per Portion:	$0.56		Food Cost % Budget:	34.0%		
Unit of Measure Per Person:	Oz	Cost per Recipe:	$5.60		Food Cost % Actual:	18.7%		
		Margin per Portion:	$2.44		Ideal Selling Price:	$1.65		

EP = Edible Portion after Trim   AP$ = As Purchased cost (out of the box)   EP$ = Edible Portion Cost

For common Yields use these tools: Produce Yields   Fruit Yields   Fish Yields   Spice Yields

Ingredients	Recipe Quantity (EP)			Yield Costing				Recipe Cost
	Quantity	Weight	Volume	AP$ / Unit	Unit	Yield %	EP$ / Unit	
Tomatoes, diced	4		Cups	$0.98	Cups	91%	$1.08	$4.31
Peeled Shallots, minced	3		Tbl	$0.07	Tbl	97%	$0.07	$0.22
Lime Juice	4		Tbl	$0.04	Tbl	98%	$0.04	$0.16
Green Onion	0.25		Cup	$1.78	Cup	70%	$2.54	$0.64
Garlic, minced	2		Tbl	$0.13	Tbl	95%	$0.14	$0.27

The Importance of Calculating EP Cost

Another very important calculation is to use the **EP Cost** (Edible Portion Cost), not the **AP Cost** (As Purchased Cost). If you put 4 oz of of asparagus on the plate, does your recipe costing include the cost of the root end which you cut off? It should.

The easiest way to do this is to use a yield percentage for each item (see Produce Yields (www.chefs-resources.com/produce/produce-yields/) for an example). Obviously, this is even more important with your proteins. For see our list for common seafood yields (www.chefs-resources.com/seafood/seafood-yields/) or our chart specifically for salmon yields (www.chefs-resources.com/seafood/salmon-yields/).

Recipe Costing Template

The recipe template below is a free download which is a fantastic tool for calculating your plate costs. The download version includes both a blank recipe form as well as a sample one. Thanks to Chef Bill Williams and Cam Zahradnik for their work on this template.

Download the Plate Costing Template
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/recipe-template/plate-cost-how-to-calculate-recipe-cost/)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Excel Recipe Templates for Chefs

Professional Chef Excel Recipe Templates

Chefs know the importance of a standardized recipe. It documents an established flavor profile and method of preparation so that your crew can duplicate your creations in a consistent manner. An **Excel recipe template** offers not only the opportunity to write a recipe for your staff, but also adds the number crunching power which Excel is known for, making it easy to calculate your costs at the same time as writing the recipe.

Below you'll find a variety of recipe templates available for free download which are created in Excel. The images show examples of the templates in use. The download will be a clean recipe template with only the formatting and not all the content shown in the example. Grid lines have been turned off so the sheets look clean.

Recipe Template Set-up

The best way to use a recipe template is to set it up with all the basic info you want to appear on all your recipes, such as restaurant name, chef's name, etc. Save it as "**Recipe Template**". When you want to create a new recipe, open the "Recipe Template" file and immediately "**save as**" the name of your new recipe. Then add all of the content for your new recipe. This will keep your template blank and clear so it will be easy to use repeatedly. Do not open your template, add all the content for your new recipe, and simply click "save". This will overwrite your blank template with all the content from your new recipe.

Each Excel recipe template below has a "scale" feature in the header. If a 1 times batch yields 20 servings and you need a 5 times batch for a total of 100 servings, all you need to do is put "5" in the "scale" box and your entire recipe is recalculated to make a 5 times batch. If you know how to do some Excel formulas then this is a big help for scaling your recipes. This video link (www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/recipe-template/recipe-templates-excel#Scalable-Recipe-Video) gives a tutorial on how to add formulas to make your Excel recipes scalable.

Below are several versions of Excel recipe templates which are available for free download from Chefs-Resources.com

Classic II Chef's Recipe Template

This template style has the "Procedures" in the right hand column and has a food cost calculation table on the far right. You enter the cost per unit of measure and then the table calculates your totals based upon the quantities entered. These automatic formula calculations are easy to add to any of the other recipe templates as well.

Black Mountain Lodge

Recipe: Smoked Peppered Salmon w/ Apple Glaze and Spring Roll
Venue: Graywolf   Yield: 24 Oz
Scale: 1   Portion Size:

| INGREDIENTS | AMOUNTS | | PROCEDURE | Cost | Extension |
	QUANTITY	UNIT			
For Smoked Salmon:			**For Smoked Salmon:**		
Dry Rub:					
Anise Seed	1	Part	Combine spices, mix well.		
5 Peppercorn Blend, chopped	2	Part			
Orange Peel	2	Part			
Pink Peppercorns	1	Part			
Salmon, square cut	3	Oz	Season liberally w/ spice mix.		
			Put into a cold smoker for 1 hour. Chill & reserve.		
For Apple Glaze:			**For Apple Glaze:**		
Shallots, sliced	1/4	Cup	Caramelize.	$0.73	$0.18
Carrot, chopped	1/4	Cup		$0.27	$0.07
Granny Smith Apples IQF, chopped	1/4	Cup		$0.89	$0.22
White Wine	2	Cups	Deglaze, reduce au sec.	$1.55	$3.10
Bay Leaves	3	Each		$0.01	$0.03
Fennel Seeds	2	Tsp		$0.05	$0.10
Coarse Black Pepper	1	Tbl		$0.14	$0.14
Apple Juice	46	Oz	Add, reduce by half. Thicken w/ cornstarch slurry, strain.	$0.05	$2.40
			At Service:		
			Season Salmon with kosher salt and grill to medium.		
			Add Apple Glaze.	**Total Cost:**	$6.24
			Serve over Spring Roll.	**Sale Price:**	$18.00
		Revision Date:		**Food Cost:**	34.68%

Chefs Resources has 7 different recipe templates to choose from for free download. Checkout your options by following this link:
 www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/recipe-template/

Chef's Shorthand Recipe Template

This style is for shorthand recipes and has the "Procedures" in the right hand column. The ingredients are listed in groups based upon which step in the "Procedures" column they match to. There is also room at the bottom of the sheet for additional comments or to put "Procedures" if you wish them at the bottom instead.

Download the Recipe Templates
(www.chefs-resources.com/kitchen-forms/recipe-template/recipe-templates-excel/)
Requires Microsoft Excel (not included)

Back Cover

Today's Professional Chef must do much more than simply create and/or manage great food. With budget meetings, fluctuating food cost percentages, menu mix analysis and theories on promoting items based upon margin versus based upon food cost there is a plethora of skills which a Chef must be competent at.

Written by a Chef for Chefs, **Food Cost Control for Success – a practical resource for Professional Chefs** is a down & dirty, hands on practical guide for managing your food cost. While many books in the kitchen management genre deal primarily in theory, Chef Buchanan provides today's Professional Chef with both the theory and the practical instruction needed to evaluate the complex issue of food cost and move forward with actionable solutions.

In the section on Sales Mix find out when and why a high food cost may actually be a good thing. Learn how to find and fix errors in your inventory sheets before the accounting department have posted your final inventory numbers. And gain quality insights on how to prepare for and successfully deal with your P&L meetings.

Chef David Buchanan is a 30+ year veteran of the hospitality industry who has worked across a broad spectrum of the food service industry.

Starting out as a dishwasher and busser, he quickly moved into cooking at the Denny's and Sea Galley franchises. His resume includes 24+ years as an Executive Chef/Chef de Cuisine including five years at an exclusive golf and country club, 14 years experience at four diamond resort hotels, 5 years at a privately owned fine dining restaurant, and 19 years in high-end or fine dining restaurants.

He also spent 3 years as an Executive Chef in the Business and Industry sector working with Compass Group at Boeing in Everett, WA serving up to 30,000 people a day.

His extensive and broad-based experience gives him clear insights into managing food cost and foodservice venues of all sorts from the family owned operations to the corporate conglomerates.