

Coffee: Brewing Up Satisfaction

by | Timothy L. Bauman, DHCEA, CDM, CFPP

Coffee has been a satisfying human experience since ancient times. Around the world, coffee has earned an almost religious respect and is an important part of many social and special events. A multitude of coffee experiences pour over into our daily lives in healthcare facility lunchrooms, work areas, espresso bars, where patients eat/snack, and anyplace cups and contemplation come together. Coffee itself is a part of our culture, giving us pleasing aromas, flavors, and rituals that combine to symbolize well being in daily life. Coffee can help us satisfy those we serve, and enhance the image of our food service and organization as a whole.

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Shaping the Experience

Food and culture are intertwined so much, that as managers evolve their operation and services, they transform the social nature of their organization. *Lifestyle* constitutes the habits, attitudes, tastes, and economic class of an individual or group. When referring to an organization and its personnel, it's called *workstyle*. Patients, families, physicians, social workers, and anyone else making a judgment on bringing someone into a facility consider the overall atmosphere, of which food service is a part. Once medical needs for admission are met, *lifestyle* for patients and *workstyle* of employees are considered.

What is old is new with coffee, and managers can leverage image, culture, and history to evoke responses, pleasure, and shape customer/patient behavior. The world of psychology has always supplied a good intellectual meal for managers. We have all seen that the smart redesign of menu and atmosphere spark increased satisfaction and participation. For example, the themed event—if done well—makes people feel immersed in the concept and triggers a positive response. For foodservice professionals creating the experience, it's important to note that *personality traits require trait-relevant situations for their expression* (Kendrick & Funder, 1988). Foodservice managers strive to control the concept phase of food service and menu development to achieve a posi-

tive customer response. Behavioral expression of a trait requires arousal of that trait by relevant situational cues (Tett and Guterman). This explains why we get different reactions to services by what we create and set in front of the customer.

With this in mind, take a sip of your java as we move to designing and building the facility coffee shop.

Designing the Coffee Shop Experience

Coffee has its place in food operations big, small, and across industry segments. Decide if you are presenting a coffee experience at an assisted living afternoon group, a catering event, your cafeteria service, or an espresso bar. Upscaling is a general trend and a way to generate income and satisfaction with affluent Baby Boomers as they replace the Greatest Generation folks in the heavy user segment of health care (ages 65 to 85). Commercial coffee shops carved out a niche with state-of-the-art practices and by seeing themselves as the third destination between home and work. Coffee gained for so long by moving upscale, and has of late resiliently gained with the downscaling trend. Challenging economic times gave tail wind to fast food outlets mastering very good coffee and espresso drinks, notably bringing in a new customer.

If you are considering opening a coffee shop in your facility, a business plan can help guide the project and explain what is happening to interested others. It outlines the strategy and tactics planned to achieve your goal, and the expected profits, usually over a set period of years. For the operation, decide your target audience. Administration can see what you plan and this sells the idea. A business plan should contain—but not be limited to—an executive summary, objectives, market considerations and research, competitor analysis, menu cost analysis, sales projections, and bottom line conclusions with a summary.

Spell out the markets the unit or service will address. Will it be the captive customer of patients, residents, and employees? Will you draw traffic from outside the facility, and what—if anything—will you do to actively seek that customer? Assisted living and related op-

erations can offer coffee and tea in a “high tea” drink and biscuit service. Administrators and social workers have a great opportunity to market, and as managers we can elicit the right resident reaction. For catering you can offer basic coffee or choose an occasion-appropriate upscale service with higher-end serving pieces, condiments, and flavor syrups. High-end coffee service gives the manager a tool to please important groups and if charging, revenue is expandable. Making the

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Special thanks to Robert Guion, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus at Bowling Green State University, for research assistance.

menu transition from basic coffee to upscale fresh ground brewed coffee and ultimately an espresso bar adds variety, creates interest, and brings many new products to please patrons.

Menu, Pricing, and Cost Analysis

The classic formula of dividing into thirds labor, food cost and overhead/operating expense/profit margin is subject to market conditions and administration goals for pricing. Will you give free coffee to people in the waiting rooms and employee lounges, and be asked to price coffee in your cash operation lower than that of outside competitors, making profit hard to attain? As a support service, we are not the core business of the facility and food is used to help achieve your administration's organization-wide goals. People bring to our institutions expectations they develop on the outside with the commercial coffee shop's product and pricing an established value in their mind. Go to these shops to document pricing, displays, and menus. These commercial operations have put a lot of work into menu development and know what sells. When creating your own establishment, this is a good place to start and as time passes, you will find what your patrons like. Profit projections consider coffee/espresso variables which include: ounces of coffee per serving, ounces of milk per serving, servings sold per day, and price per serving. Your basic elements are

coffee, milk, water, and flavoring. Work with your staff so they are well trained and consistent with everything so the business is predictable and manageable.

Specialty coffee shops are everywhere and they have laid the foundation for the advancement of coffee culture. Center stage is the *barista*, who serves as the bartender of the coffee shop. Showmanship, customized quality drinks, and social skills are proven to build business and effective when adapted to all operations. The next important player you select is the *roaster*, who is the interpreter, creator, and blender of the flavors served. Coffee is such a perishable product that at its pinnacle, freshness must be addressed. Like bread, dairy, and oftentimes produce, we need local or micro roasters to supply fresh product and needed customer support which is especially valuable if you go it alone. They can train your baristas and staff in making a great cup, service the equipment, offer variety, and be a valued confidante. You can contract with the large national coffee chains if you have an operation capable of generating the needed traffic. They supply franchise-like details, taking much of the guesswork out of starting the business. Your decision is whether you want the strength of their brand, products, and service, or you do it on your own, retaining the menu and business control.

Coffee is an industry of trends, so it's no surprise to find creative people constantly exploring, experimenting, and tinkering with taste. Coffee shops and food service in general are perhaps the most dream-driven businesses out there. Back up the dream with a burning passion and a clear vision of exactly what you want. If there is no passion



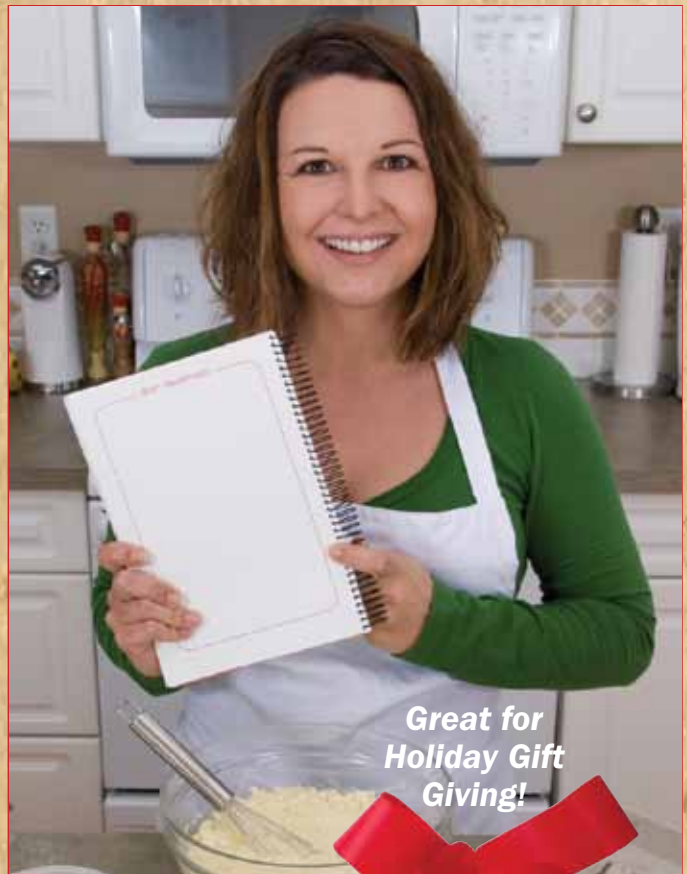
A Checklist of Things to Think About for Coffee and Espresso Service

- ✓ Price beverages based on market conditions and administration's goals.
- ✓ Find a good pastry vendor and heavily consider items that are wrapped, thaw and serve.
- ✓ Queue the line past the pastry case so your visual merchandising can spark sales.
- ✓ Position your brewing station and/or espresso machine next to a dump sink. Have close garbage access, and space for cups, syrups, and prep tools.
- ✓ Have a separate area for a condiment and/or "hand off" station including trash. This works to minimize customers' clogging the cash register/serving area.
- ✓ Stock various sweeteners: sugar, sprinkles, cubed sugar, and artificial sweeteners.
- ✓ Provide condiment shakers with cocoa, cinnamon, nutmeg, etc.
- ✓ Consider whipped cream: Do you plan to make or buy ready-made product and will you portion it by dollops or pressurized dispensing containers? Practice your latte art!
- ✓ Consider your milk vendor: Besides milk, do they offer soy or organic? Do they have a minimum order size on non-milk products that works for your operation so you don't have to buy so much and have waste?
- ✓ Provide a toaster and/or microwave for the pastries and bagels.
- ✓ Stock sanitizer buckets, gloves, hair control items, 3-sink test strips, and all you need to meet the health code.
- ✓ Determine whether the customer will pump their own drip coffee or you will serve it. As you reach the higher-end of coffee service, the magic is in the increase of barista-like services.
- ✓ Have refrigeration below or close to the coffee brewer or espresso machine for your milk, whipped cream, etc.
- ✓ Have good decorations in place or decor that can be taken along if catering.

for the best-brewed coffee, perfectly extracted espresso, or the world's most delicious chocolate brownie, there is no spark to drive the vision. Look for people who place a premium on all areas of product preparation and presentation. The food and drinks are the basis of the business. **DM**

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Source: Excerpted from "Situation Trait Relevance, Trait Expression, and Cross-Situational Consistency: Testing a Principle of Trait Activation," Robert P. Tett and Hal A. Guterman, jrpe.2000.2292



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