



the barista's choice

## Planning your menu

Keeping ahead of competitors is key to running a successful coffee business. There are many ways of doing this, but ensuring your menu offers a wide range of drinks that are updated regularly is paramount. There are 5 key points that should be considered along the way to create a successful menu....

### 1. Assessing your market

Who is going to be buying your drinks? Before starting to think about the virtues of La Spaziale versus La Marzocco it is crucial to think about your location. If you're surrounded by student accommodation you will need to have a menu tailored to a younger customer base; so lots of smoothies, juices and frappes in summer, signature coffee drinks, and the ability to make drinks quickly for people on the go. This would also apply in a commercial district with office workers on shorter lunch breaks looking for a quick drink and a sandwich to go. If your business attracts an older audience, a more traditional menu may be more successful, offering a larger selection of food to be enjoyed in a longer seating, in a less rushed environment. Other variants to be considered include how many vegetarian / organic products should you offer and if you are in a family orientated area where you should be focusing on children's drinks and highchairs?

### 2. Pre-planning prep

Before planning your menu, make sure your staff are able to serve the drinks as they should be. It is important that your baristas are fully trained (your coffee company should be able to help) and regularly checked to ensure standards don't drop. The general public are now coffee savvy and will happily take their trade elsewhere if your milk isn't steamed correctly or your temperatures not right. Equally as important to the preparation of the drinks is the servicing and cleaning of your equipment. A dirty machine or grinder can seriously affect the taste of your drinks regardless of how fresh your coffee is; so ensure you have a well planned and managed cleaning schedule.

### 3. A taste for espresso

The staple for any coffee shop menu should comprise of espresso based drinks. Start off with espresso, cappuccino and latte. From these it is easy to make simple changes that create whole new drinks. Add a scoop of Zuma chocolate to a latte and you've got your mocha. Adding a shot of Sweetbird Gingerbread syrup to create the perfect spiced latte for the festive period. With a stock of key syrup flavours (we suggest Caramel, Hazelnut, Chocolate, Gingerbread and Vanilla as an introduction range) you can offer not only an 'extra shot', a profitable alternative to sugar, but also create other special signature drinks, seasonal or otherwise. For hundreds of recipe ideas to get you started visit [www.hellosweetbird.com](http://www.hellosweetbird.com)

#### 4. Going beyond the bean

Obviously no coffee shop would ever sell just coffee – by doing this the target audience is limited to an unfeasible level. With so many hot and cold alternatives to coffee available on the market the decision of what to stock can be baffling, but offering customer drinks to suit any mood or season is an important one. For hot drinks the first easy alternative is tea. The tea market in the UK has grown rapidly in the past few years as people become more health conscious. By offering green and fruit teas together with traditional teas such as English Breakfast, Darjeeling or Earl Grey proprietors can offer a large selection of drinks which are relatively cheap and convenient in terms of storage and preparation.

Of course no self respecting shop should be without hot chocolate. Whether you choose to use a traditional or more European darker chocolate these too can be made into a featured special by, as with coffee, adding a shot of syrup. For example, add Sweetbird Mint syrup to create an after dinner mint drink, or by adding coconut, create a popular chocolate bar in a drink! The quality of your chocolate is important, as is the preparation; we particularly enjoy Zuma Hot Chocolate. The cocoa rich powders are available in Original (milk), or Dark 2kg tins and 795g bags and contain up to 32% cocoa - a Fairtrade version is on it's way too. There are many ways of doing preparing and serving hot chocolate. Invest in a sauce pump from which pre-mixed chocolate powder can be served ensuring the correct dose is dispensed each time. Paddle machine are also very popular. They not only look appealing to customers but as the smell is wafted around a shop, senses are stimulated, as are sales. From a paddle machine you can add the chocolate to perfectly steamed milk to make delicious hot chocolate, topped with cream, sprinkles or marshmallows. A shot of the concentrated chocolate (before the milk is added) in an espresso glass is great for dunking strawberries, biscuits and even fingers, really useful for an easy promotion.

Other new hot drinks are entering the market, a recent example being Chai, which is fast becoming a favourite in many shops. Originating in India where it is hugely popular Chai is a milky drink made with real spices including ginger, cinnamon and cloves. This smooth and soothing drink can also be served cold so is great all year round.

#### 5. Feeling the chill?

So, with a menu full of tempting hot drinks it's time to think about a suitable selection of cold drinks for when things start to hot up in the summer.

Again, think about your audience. If customers consist of families consider what drinks are popular with kids. Granitas, milkshakes and sodas can all be inexpensively made using Sweetbird syrups. As they are free from GMO's, artificial colours and flavourings they are great for kids and with 12 fruit flavours in the range they cater to all taste. Recipes can be found at [www.sweetbirdsyrops.com](http://www.sweetbirdsyrops.com)

Also from Sweetbird is a range of six all natural fruit concentrate smoothies. The smoothies are mixed in the blender with ice and water, so are quick, convenient and cost effective. They contain green tea and ginseng making them a healthy and refreshing addition to any menu. Also within the blended drinks category are frappes which can be prepared with a frappe powder mix, milk and ice for a really smooth creamy blend or simply a shot of espresso, milk and ice, blended until smooth – a cool alternative to hot coffee in the summer. Add a range of freshly squeezed fruit juices to your menu and you've covered most tastes!

### **The rest is down to you...**

With a solid base menu in place there are no end of possibilities for development. Encourage your staff to create their own signature drinks and offer incentives such as promoting the best recipes as the monthly special. Take it even further by encourage staff to really hone their skills and enter a barista competition!

Help you business further by promoting new drinks both in and outside the store. People can't order drinks if they don't know they are on offer. Alternatively, offer free samples for customers to try, run a loyalty card scheme and make use of any available point of sale.

The last point when planning your menu is pricing. Again, location, location, location. Is your business surrounded by fancy offices, student digs or next to the village shop? What are your competitors charging? Whilst needing to be competitive, remember in these coffee wise times consumers will pay a little more for a good latte!