

TOP 10 TIPS FOR PURCHASING FOOD

1. KNOW YOUR MENU

It is important to balance high and low food cost items. Be aware of products that are “special order” items so you stay within your budget.

2. USE YOUR MENU TO HELP CONTROL FOOD COSTS

When planning your menu, utilize each ingredient to maximize the value each one brings to your menu. Cook seasonally and use standardized recipes for consistency and to control your costs.

3. ORDER FOOD WITH QUANTITY IN MIND

Develop and update production sheets often and order in bulk for certain items you use in large quantities. It is important to understand your product types, (cuts of meat, styles of pasta, grades of food, etc.) Additionally, you should know your yields and Edible Portion (EP) and check package sizes and quantities. To prevent food waste, do not order food too far in advance, and place orders after all stock is organized on your shelves.

4. MAKE SURE YOUR FOOD ORDERS ARE CORRECT

Do not be afraid to send a product back if it is not up to your expectation or if it is incorrect! Be sure to check all items when you receive them, for accuracy.

5. UTILIZE PORTION CONTROL WHEN SERVING

Serve correct portion sizes, using appropriate serving utensils and measurements, weighing as needed. This will ensure consistent portions for your customers and as a result, you will not exceed the amount of product you plan to use.

6. DECREASE WASTE

If you have extra product or leftovers, get creative! Treat each product or leftover with value and use it where possible. To further decrease waste, establish a waste log to help you track your waste and take steps to decrease it.

7. KEEP TRACK OF YOUR FOOD INVENTORY

It is imperative that you maintain a proper and detailed inventory. Do not conduct an inventory from your desk. You need to physically know what is actually on your shelves. Establish a sheet-to-self method. This will help save time as you walk around your kitchen. Depending on your facility, you can check inventory weekly or monthly. If you order items electronically, set up a tracking system on your computer or tablet so you can easily input order details.

8. ATTEND FOOD SHOWS AND SAMPLE ITEMS

Food shows are a great resource for you to learn about new products and rediscover forgotten items you may now need. It is the perfect opportunity for you to try a product first-hand before implementing it in your facility.

9. CREATE AND MAINTAIN AN ORDER GUIDE

Keep an order guide up to date on items you want. This will save you time and prevent you from ordering incorrect items or pack sizes. The guide should only have items you want to order in it, to keep you organized. If you can customize “lists” in your order guide, go for it! This will ensure that you order the correct sizes, and you will save time and effort by keeping a record of the product numbers. Ultimately, this will improve your time management efforts!

10. ESTABLISH A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR VENDOR

Vendors want to help you. In addition to vendors being a great resource, they are aware of product recalls and food trends.

This list was compiled by CarieAnn Williams, CDM, CFPP, Chair, Certifying Board for Dietary Managers