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Chef Moran Interview - Purchasing

Here are some questions for the Restaurant Management. Take your time.

What is the purpose of a standardized recipe?

Answer: A standardized recipe to me is a tool (one of many to gauge success) the purpose is to achieve consistency of menu items used during prep and carries into service with portion size, presentation and flavor balance consistent regardless of quantity.

Have you had success using them? Failure?

Answer: I have had success and great results with standardized recipes, this requires a disciplined routine daily of checking, tasting and recording results. To achieve consistently high results the culture in the both needs to be consistent and communication positive and creativity matched with financial performance. The kitchen is a factory so every dish is a product....at the end how did the factory perform? A recipe is a measure of cost as well.....it should be accurate or discarded.....the basis of determining prices and quantities is the formula or recipe, 92 percent of operators do not have this tight or well-orchestrated....as a result financial disaster.

Let's discuss vendors. How do you choose a vendor?

Answer: I choose a vendor by their ability to meet my needs which are in order of priority: service, quality, price, educating me as the customer, I consider a vendor a partner in my business, we work together....if I succeed so do they...I want a long term relationship but it has to be one of integrity, dishonesty is a deal breaker.

Is there a benefit to using one exclusive vendor (one-stop) for all products?

Answer: The only way this can work is if it is a contract deal cost plus with a big chain, even then who has it all? The food supply is not cookie cutter, competitive advantage comes from sourcing the best which takes great effort and time.....many operators are making the big vendors money and losing themselves....this is a nickel and dime business if you want to make money you have to negotiate with the people who have the best products, period.

Multiple vendors?

Answer: 3 for each category, meat, fish, produce, specialty, foragers from the farming community, dairy,

Asian, Italian, Spanish.....who you are concept wise determines the list

In the respective establishments where you have worked, who has set the purchasing guidelines? Answer: The Chef is the leader with oversight from management and food and beverage.....3 sets of eyes, always

Product specifications?

Answer: Chef and culinary team unless a corporate structure sets quality standards. No one uses specs anymore it's about brands and inspection of what comes in, spec whatever you want but what is delivered is either up to snuff or not.

Will one system of purchasing and ordering work for all food establishments?

Answer: There is a basic framework but no one size fits all, this is customized for each concept and is market specific how it is done to be effective. I like buying coops, you may not...we are a fragmented industry with many different segments and measures. Daily inventory and ordering is a crucial component of tracking usage and ordering.

Why/why not?

Before choosing a vendor, what questions do you ask them?

Answer: Are you willing to deliver on my terms at times I dictate? Can I review your tax returns for the last 5 years? Can I visit your facility anytime I want? Can you provide 5 current references?

As a restaurant chef, what system worked best for you when ordering?

Answer: Inventory control daily with each station tracking their own performance and orders

Do you have a strategy for dealing with suppliers when it comes to fluctuating prices?

Answer: Yes, post prices Monday you will honor all week, regardless of market swings or I will find someone who will.

What do you do if a purveyor comes into your establishment and claims they can save you X% on your bottom line?

Answer: If it sounds too good to be true it is, low ball for two months then the gloves come off....this is not a game, it's about the relationship long term!

Can you think of an incident in your career when improper receiving made a large impact on the business?

Answer: Received a 15 pound rock in a 50 pound bag of potatoes....short weights on meat, wrong fish at the right price, it's all about the receiving process....had a banquet once for 1000 guests, ordered fish great price, day of event....not available but frozen was.....that's a bait and switch, fired company and paid more to get what I wanted....relationship over....any questions?

Briefly discuss inventory valuation. Did you have / experience a system that worked best for you?

Answer: Price paid is the value period. Computer program backup up by physical count. Zero credit for inventory is nice keeps quantities down but can be risky on Sunday.

Does purchasing, inventory, ordering, and requisitioning get more complicated as the operation gets larger? Adds more units?

Answer: Sure does that's when categories need to be tracked individually and by unit, the Bellagio in Vegas has 2500 rooms. Great buying power and with it a phalanx of employees and a complex bar code tracking system. Disney is a great example with automated warehousing and requisitioning system. Bigger means more precision and more checkpoints, the cruise ships have it down. Once the boat sails they have to have it on board or they are stuck.



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