

Portland Rose Festival Waterfront Village Food Operation's Best Practices

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Providing successful food service at festivals, fairs and civic events presents various challenges. Having good or unique food products at a competitive (fair) price is not enough. Location, food quality and friendly employees are important but you still need more to stand out. Providing fresh, healthy and safe products that are not under or over cooked can be "anybody's guess," especially for new food vendors or at a new event. Knowing how much to buy and prep, as well as maintaining proper refrigeration and heated service temperatures in a temporary environment only compound the challenge.

To use Marketing as an example, there used to be the famous Five P's of Marketing: Product, Placement, Promotion, Position and Price. Then it expanded to include People. Then it went to seven and nine. Now there are at least fourteen P's listed by different professional Marketeers including: Product, Place (or placement, meaning distribution systems), Promotions (Advertising), Price, People (staff), Partners (key providers), Prospects (customers), Position (in the marketplace in comparison to your competition), Purpose, Performance, Planning, Preparedness, Perception, Persuasion, and on. These "P's" are also important parts of a successful food service operation.

Using corn dogs as an example, do you want to offer the cheapest, average, fastest, "original," fattest, longest, best (freshly hand dipped), most kosher, or unique (hot dog inside a hollowed out zucchini dipped in batter and deep fried).

Across the board food operations have become more complicated and difficult. Over the years, we have picked up ideas and suggestions from restaurants and other food vendors that may help your food operation be more successful. We won't attempt to address all of the challenges, because quite frankly, there isn't time or space but here are some of the keys to success.

- 1) **Consistency:** Your product, portion size, presentation, and service must be consistent if you expect to build a loyal return clientele. Providing an oversized portion to one customer may bring them back but then they'll feel cheated when they get a "standard" portion on their next visit.
- 2) **Simplicity:** KISS (Keep It Simple Smiley) is also essential. Offering too many menu items complicates the customer's decision-making, your ordering/storage/prep/service time (which lowers your potential volume), increases your waste, etc. Also plan your menu so that key items (expensive, spoilable, etc.) are on numerous items or not on any. Using a seafood food vendor as an example, if he adds a shrimp cocktail to his menu along with chowder, fish and chips, and a grilled salmon sandwich, he should also at least consider adding a shrimp melt sandwich, shrimp bisque soup, shrimp (or seafood) salad, etc. Otherwise a lot of his shrimp will likely not be fresh or, worse, go bad. Of course, seafood is an unusual and risky direction to go in the first place. It is a far cry from traditional event food and has a higher risk of spoilage (at least in many customer's minds.)
- 3) **Uniqueness & Quality:** In an event situation it is better to be known for a few unique &/or high quality items than a spectrum of okay items. It is extremely difficult to maintain consistency, quality and quick service when there are too many items on the menu. Using frozen by the case products will typically result in generic, average quality items.

Event food service can be akin to fast food industry or buffet food service. But it's extremely difficult to present a unique or quality product in these mass (short order) preparation conditions. And volume sales are typically essential, so once again KISS.

First, visitors must be attracted to your booth by its appearance, décor, and signage. While the quality and consistency of your food items are vitally important so is the food's presentation and employees' appearance, cleanliness and attitude. Here are a few other suggested BEST PRACTICES.

Booth Appearance – This is of Critical Importance

Your booth's appearance must be appealing to the customer's eye as they approach or walk by.

This includes signage, counter space, displays, layout, menus, and counter frontage.

A professional, well-organized appearance that is neat, clean & cohesive helps attract customers.

Having a theme and color scheme for your decor that reflects your menu adds tremendous appeal.

Décor attached to exterior &/or interior walls might include flags, pennants, pictures, posters, plants, etc.

At least once a day, view your booth with a critical eye from your customers' viewpoint.

Signage should be large, simple and straightforward with bold lettering.

It also helps if it is clean, uniform and has some artistic appeal (graphic, coloring, etc.).

We suggest that all of your signage have a uniform coloring, layout, font (style & size), etc.

A display case featuring sample menu items or pictures of your items is also appealing.

& pulls potential customers closer to your booth (which sometimes is half the battle).

Our best selling food booths often display their most popular menu items in a display case.

Service, cooking and storage areas should be clean & orderly.

Any unsightly messiness is a deterrent for customers as it suggests unhealthy conditions.

Menu Board

Your overhead booth signage readable from at least 50 feet away.

Menu item names should be large (visible from 25 feet away) while item descriptions can be in smaller lettering

Clear, simple and professionally made signage is usually best

Create an identifiable and appealing name for each item

Pedro's Famous Al Pastor is much more appealing than Cooked Pork

Ex. Poncho's Chili Verde Burrito – Tantalizing mild slow-simmered sweet pork seasoned with grilled onions, bell peppers, mild chilies and flavorful secret spicing. Served in a large rolled flour tortilla with black beans, Spanish rice, cheese, lettuce & tomato. Add cheese (\$0.50), guacamole (\$0.75), sour cream (\$0.25) or the works (\$1.00)

Selection of menu items is very important

Focus on a few great, popular items is better than offering a lot of mediocre items

Providing consistent quality products is essential to any successful food business

Offering full meal (with side item) options & combination plates helps provide customers with a variety of quality items from a small, simple & consistent menu.

Food

Healthy storage, handling & preparation of all food items is of paramount importance

Other critical food item details include: food presentation should be appealing to the eye.

Quality and consistency in your products is critical

Customer Service

Employee appearance is an indication of your professionalism, cleanliness & quality

Be open, friendly, and helpful by smiling, look them in the eye, greet them as they approach,

Be open and available to answer questions and take their order.

Reputation

For new food vendors, it can take several years to build an audience

People do remember from event to event and year to year

If satisfied, they will start to look for you here and at other events

(Photo Examples on Next 2 Pages)



A GREAT APPEARANCE

- Attracts Customer's Eyes
- Creates a Positive First Impression
- Makes your Booth STANDOUT
- Attracts Customers

ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS

- Appeal to their Sight and Smell
- Win their Heart and Mind
- Their Stomach & Feet will Follow
- Your Cash Register will Ring



These booths feature themed décor reflecting their menu, with a complimentary color scheme & simple bold signage with matching font and a graphic image. Their signage is pulled tight & the counter space is neat & organized.



MORE GREAT EXAMPLES:

Golden Grill's umbrellas & themed décor draws attention, as did their attractive, uniformed staff.

Orient Express appears simple & clean with a buffet-style food display window in front where visitors can view menu options. While their Coke balloon signs are colorful they could spice up their façade – especially their front of counter space.



Mediterranean Gyros had great tight & color-coordinated signage.

Thai Pepper is well themed with simple but colorful signage that has pictures of their menu items.

