



Tapas bars fill a unique food service niche. Photo by Cathy Hsu

category increases their popularity by about 20% (namely the gain from 45% of the time when an item appeared in the middle of its category to 55% of the time when it appeared at one of the ends of its category)” (p. 339).¹²

The second step involves the design and presentation of the menu itself. Seemingly simple things such as deciding what type of menu board should be placed above an ordering station or selecting the paper stock, graphics, color, font, and layout of a menu take on new importance. These decisions communicate an image to guests even before the food is presented.¹³ A theme-park guest wanting a restful break will have different expectations than a businessperson on an expense account entertaining clients. The design and presentation of the menu sets the stage for the next important decisions.

The third step involves a variety of decisions that range from selecting service ware to designing place settings. These decisions may be driven by the functional demands of serving as many guests as inexpensively as possible or a desire to create an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere. Plastic or paper with self-service areas for condiments may be the best selection for guests in a hurry, but the same choice would not be suitable in a fine-dining situation.

Designing the actual plate presentation is the fourth and possibly most artistic step in the process. Attention to detail in the previous steps comes to life when guests receive their selections. Once the order is delivered, whether hot dogs and fries or chateaubriand, the eyes always take the first taste. Even with simple dishes, the presentation should be designed to fill our senses through a thoughtful combination of

- color,
- texture,
- shape,
- aroma, and
- arrangement.

Think for a moment about how many different ways a chicken breast can be prepared and presented. Does your choice encourage the guest to sample and savor or simply eat because it is there and he or she is hungry? In one research study, among six