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# 4

## Operational areas, equipment and staffing

### Aim

To outline key considerations in the planning, design, equipping and staffing of food service operations.

### Objectives

The chapter is intended to support you in:

- Developing a systematic approach to the planning, designing, equipping and staffing of food service operations
- Identifying the factors to be taken into account when making operational choices
- Ensuring compliance with health and safety requirements.

### 4.1 Key influences

Creating new operations, or renovating existing ones, means being involved in developing new concepts or rethinking old ones. This can include activities such as developing new menus, beverage lists and rethinking approaches to production and service, as well as concepts and design ideas which can be innovative and creative in approach, or follow a tried and proven delivery format. This in turn leads to reconsidering plant, and equipment such as crockery, glassware and cutlery, through to staff uniforms, and so on.

Other trends in restaurant design have included the opening up of the kitchen to be viewed by the customer, as part of the total dining experience, with some

fine dining restaurants offering the opportunity to sit at the chef's table as part of the meal experience, a reorientation of the role of the chef as they become part of the customer dining interaction. There are also the minimalistic New York loft style restaurants. Traditional plates have been replaced by food presentation on wooden boards, glass plates, marble squares and slate, which can offer novel service concepts, and for some, a unique and exciting customer experience, but for others an unnecessary move away from traditional approaches to presentation.

It is important to be abreast of new food service approaches. It is the innovator who is able to capture the new market share, but the earlier adopter can capitalise on it and bring it to market before the product life cycle wanes.

Because of recent successes, and the pressure of industry competitiveness, further developments are now far less likely to be hindered by tradition. The boundaries of food service delivery and service are constantly being pushed in the search for the next competitive edge in the meal experience offer. Yet within this changing world order of creative and innovative food offers, traditionalism in service standards remains. It is for the food and beverage manager to know the market they are aiming for and the food service organisation's place within it.

However, there can also be pitfalls. New operations can fail simply because the spend on the interior design is far in excess of what the business will ever recoup, or the business does not attract sufficient custom because the design concept is not harmonised with effective staffing and menu and beverage list design. It is clearly a conundrum which needs to be carefully considered and the economics planned, if success is to be achieved.

There is a tangible relationship between the nature of the market, the type of demand being met and the budget available. In a competitive market unless the operation is unique, it has to be more attractive: customers need a reason for coming to a particular operation rather than to another offering a similar product.

**Activity:**

- Identify four key recent innovations in food service operations.
- Consider what you think the long-term effect of these innovations might have on the food service industry in general.

## 4.2 A systematic approach

The systematic approach to designing, planning, equipping and staffing a food service operation includes giving consideration to a wide variety of factors. These can be grouped under six broad headings:

- The market needs
- Operational needs

- Connectivity
- Space allocation and requirements
- Finance availability
- Sustainability
- Hygiene, health, safety and security.

## ■ The market needs

As a customer driven service business, it is the identification of the market needs that shapes the concept design and hence the operational needs. The needs of the market, or rather the need of the establishment to provide products to meet the determined market needs, may be ascertained by working through the first three stages of the food service cycle (see Chapter 1, page 3). These are:

- 1 Consumer and the market** – which identifies the potential market for the business and the customer needs.
- 2 Policy and objectives** – which identifies the policies, principles and business objectives that the operation is intended to serve.
- 3 Customer service specification** – which identifies the type, range and scale of the food and beverage services to be provided.

Giving consideration to and making decisions within the first three stages of the food service cycle, (much of which has been discussed in Chapters 1 to 3), a framework will have been established. Within this framework, systematic consideration can be given to the planning and design of the facilities and determining the plant, equipment, and staffing required.

## ■ Operational needs

Included in the consideration of the planning and design of facilities and the staffing of the operation, is the determination of the various operational methods that will be used. These include:

- Receiving and storage methods
- Production systems and methods
- Service system and methods
- Dining arrangements
- Clearing methods
- Dishwashing methods
- Control methods
- Disposal of waste and waste products.

The movement of food and beverages through a food service operation should follow a logical linear sequence starting with receiving and storage functions and continuing through to the disposal of waste products and waste (see Figure 4.1).