**Methods of Controlling Food Costs**

1. **Portion Control**
   * Standardizing portion sizes ensures consistency in food quality and cost.
   * Using portioning tools like measuring cups, scales, and pre-portioned packaging helps prevent over-serving.
   * Training staff on proper portioning techniques minimizes waste and maintains profitability.
2. **Supplier Management**
   * Building strong relationships with reliable suppliers ensures consistent pricing and quality.
   * Negotiating bulk discounts and comparing supplier prices helps reduce expenses.
   * Regularly reviewing supplier contracts and exploring alternative options can improve cost efficiency.
3. **Waste Reduction**
   * Implementing inventory tracking systems helps monitor stock levels and prevent over-ordering.
   * Proper storage techniques and FIFO (First-In, First-Out) practices reduce spoilage.
   * Repurposing excess ingredients and tracking waste sources can minimize financial losses.

**PORTION CONTROL**

Defn: Means the controlling of size or quantity of food to be served to each customer. The amount allowed are dependent on different factors.

The difference in the portions will be brought about by the following:

1. **Type of establishment/customer**

For example in a restaurant which offers a 3 course Table dhote menu will naturally serve a smaller portion than a luxury restaurant providing an A’la carte menu.

Therefore strict portion control is one of the critical factors in successful cost control. For example if end of month costs are too high, there is a very good chance that portion control isn’t being enforced and if portions are too small or inconsistent customer dissatisfaction may result.

1. **Quality of the food**

Good quality food usually producers more portions than poor quality for example, low quality beef produces much trimmings that they reduce the number of portions e.g. a kilo of good meat produces 6-8 portions but in poor quality meat, it is difficult for one to get 6 portions out. In addition, the time and labour consumed contributes to the loss of money.

On the other hand, it is possible for a caterer to get more portions to a kilo of high quality meat with less time and labour required for preparation and more customer satisfaction.

1. **Buying price of food**

The cost price of food affect the food portioning. Food costs should correspond with the quality of food if the purchaser buys wisely. A good buyer has got to ensure that the price paid for any item of food is equivalent to the quality i.e.

Good price = Good quality ≡ Good yield

This therefore will help in establishment of a sound portion control. The portion size that is to be standard for the operation is a function of customer expectation and the need to make a profit by selling a product of reasonable cost for reasonable price. On the other hand a buyer the buyer has paid a high price for indif quality food then it will be difficult to get a fair number of portions, the selling price necessary to make the required profit may be too high and customer satisfaction will be affected. Therefore, portion control should be closely linked with the buying of food.

It is important for a buyer to have good knowledge of food without it, it will be difficult to state fairly how many portions should be obtained from it. Each establishment needs individual consideration for proper evolvement of the sound system of portion control. A Golden Rule should be a fair portion for a fair price.

Butter pat machines, soup plates, ladled for soups, glass dispensers, baking time are some of the equipment.

**What is:**

* The rationale of portion control?
* Purchasing specifications, importance, objectives, factors that determine portion control, principles of portion control?
* Discuss the customer expectations regarding the portion size.
* Operational concerns?

When a customer buys some sweets in a shop he specifies the quality he wants. The shop keeper will carefully count / weigh the sweets to see that he gives the correct quantity.

By doing this, both the customer and the shop keeper will be satisfied because of value for money.

The customer will continue to patronize the shop and the shopkeeper will know that provided his costings are right the customers return will be a right. He will know that the prices he has charged are correct for the quantities he has sold.

The same accuracy in measuring quantities sold is expected in many other transactions. Eg. A litre of fuel / petrol may be costing shs. 4,000, it is therefore expected to be a litre nor more nor less.

The price fixed for that quantity will sometimes vary due to slackness / corruption / dishonesty of the seller and when this difference is multiplied by millions of litres sold, the difference is expected to be enormous/ big similarly packets of biscuits are supposed to be of Uniform size when produced by the manufacturer. In each case the manufacturer / supplier takes trouble to ensure that the quantity he sells for a given price is consistently the same.

Attaining this, he will need the help of portion size control to ensure that his costings are up to date. This method of controlling the size of each unit of sales using suitable equipment is termed as portion control.

Many items may be sold in different containers which are enough only to contain the right quantity.

In catering, the reasons for portion control are very strong although the methods used will vary. Portion control equipment will include:-

* Scales
* Slicing machines
* Measuring jugs
* Laddles
* Scoops
* Spoons
* Standard size cups
* Glasses
* Bowls
* Baking tins
* Bar optics etc

It is noticeable that the largest and financially successful establishments employ highly developed portion control methods and have done so for quite long.

Scales should be available to check the weight of portion served, but it is normal practice that a caterer can estimate by eye alone a portion of a given size with a remarkable accuracy. Provided a check is made with the scales occasionally to avoid gradual drifting away from the correct size.

Vegetables will be served with a scoop of a size to give just the weight already decided upon. A chapatti will be made in a frying pan of a size that gives it the exact size and portion, a pizza will be made from the appropriate sized tin for its price etc. with all the proper equipment however, portion control may not be successful without the following:-

1. **Standard recipes**

The item produced must consist of the same ingredients every time. This particular applies to dishes.

1. **Portion charts**

If the staff is to serve the correct portions, they must know what those portions are their prices. Charts showing portions should be displayed at convenient points in the kitchen for reference.

A portion may be 2 eggs, 2 teaspoons, 1 soup bowl, 1 juice glass, 1 tot, 1 laddle.

1. **Regular checking**

Supervision must be automatic so that there is no thought of varying the system. In this way, correct habits are developed and there will be no need for special effort. It should be emphasized that the expression “portion control” means what is says i.e. the control of portion sizes. It doesn’t mean limiting the portion sizes so that they are small. The actual size of portions may be small or large depending on the policy decided upon by management.

Other factors may be –

The management commitment

Staff must be trained on how to portion

Staff must have the tools to motivate them

There should be active measurement using the equipment.

Limitation

* Perishability
* Elasticity of dd
* Fluctuation of market prices
* Unpredictability of the menu mix – culture, tastes and preferences
* Pricing