

INDUSTRIAL CATERING

Introduction:

Industrial catering, also called "Industrial Feeding" and "Employee Feeding" may be described as the provision of catering facilities at a place of work for use by the organization's employees. The catering facility may range from vending machines supplying a limited variety of beverages and snacks, to a waiter silver service restaurant with an extensive menu. In the majority of establishments the provision of a catering service is more important in terms of its functional purpose rather than its entertainment value, as the catering amenities represent a place of refreshment and rest for those employees who choose to use the facilities.

Catering facilities in industrial firms first began to appear in the 19th century when there was shown to be a correlation between the physical and mental health of employees and the catering and other welfare facilities provided for them. Today industrial catering facilities have emerged as an important fringe benefit to employees, particularly where highly subsidized or completely free meals are still provided.

Unlike other forms of catering outlets such as hotels, restaurants, high street take-aways, etc. where catering may be the main or only function of the establishment, the catering facilities in industrial situations such as factories, office blocks, hospitals etc. are an ancillary service to the main function of the organization. The two main methods by which catering may be organized in such industrial situations are direct management or contracted out. Direct management is where the parent company chooses to establish and operate the catering facilities itself. The second method involves the parent company employing a firm of contract caterers to operate and manage the catering department for them. In the first situation the parent company is completely responsible for the type and standard of catering service it provides; the catering department thus becoming another department in the organization that is under its direct control and management.

The different variety of catering facilities that may be available in an industrial situation include some or all of the following:

1. **Cafeteria.** Single, straight line or free-flow. Used by the majority of employees. Providing light and full meals, snacks, and beverages.
2. **Coffee or Snack bar.** Providing light meals only, that is, snacks and sandwiches and beverages. Mainly used for morning coffee and afternoon teas, and for those bringing their own meals to work.
3. **Plated service restaurant.** Open at main meal periods only. Offering more variety in the choice of foods and beverages, and higher standards of food and service. Used mainly by middle management.
4. **Silver service restaurant.** Open for main meal periods and often for morning coffee and afternoon teas. Highest standards of food and service. Used mainly by senior management.
5. **Vending machines.** May be a supplement to or in place of a catering facility. Frequently vending may be the only catering service available during nights and at week-ends. May vend main meals, for example chilled pre-plated dishes ready to be reheated or snack items such as pre-wrapped sandwiches, rolls, tea, coffee, etc. May be sited within the main dining area or in strategic positions around the office block or factory. Used by any grade of employee.
6. **Remote catering facilities.** Smaller catering service situated away from the main amenities. The food may be transported to these satellite facilities in heated trolleys, or small peripheral kitchens may serve these smaller dining areas. Trolley or cart service to employees at their place of work is also still used in office blocks and factory complexes.
7. **Conference / function facilities.** Plated or silver service may be used. Available for business meetings during the day and social functions in the evening and at weekends. Patronized by all levels of employees.

Basic policies - Financial, Marketing and Catering

The extent to which basic policy decisions are contained in a formalized document will depend largely on whether the organization's catering is operated by the parent company or whether it is contracted out to an independent catering firm. There are a number of reasons why a company may provide a catering service for its employees. The office block or factory may be situated where there are few alternative catering facilities and it must therefore provide some form of catering service, for example isolated industrial estates; it may be for prestigious reasons, acting as an added benefit to prospective employees, particularly in areas where there is keen competition for labor; the company may need to provide some form of catering service to staff at their place of work because it is of such a nature that it cannot be left for any long period, for example continuous process industries; or the organization may see the provision of a catering service as a social responsibility to its employees, particularly as the meal received at their place of work may be the employees' main meal of the day.

Financial Considerations:-

Once a company has decided to provide a catering service the financial policy will determine the amount of money to be invested in the catering facilities. Some companies consider the provision of a catering service as a valuable and important contribution to the welfare of their employees and are proud of the standards they achieve. Other companies have different views and feel that as little money as possible should be invested. However, once a company has opted to provide a catering service then the best possible facilities should be sought with the finance available.

Working within the limits set by the financial policy, the size and variety of catering facilities will be determined by the number of employees expected to use the catering services. Few industrial situations are the same and therefore the percentage usage of catering facilities varies from one establishment to another; it may be as low as 10% in some organizations and over 70% in others with the norm being between 25 and 35%; generally the higher usage of the catering facilities occurring when the percentage of catering subsidy per meal is highest.

There are a number of factors which can affect the total number of employees likely to use the restaurants, cafeterias etc. and any one of these may be more important in one situation than in another. The level of subsidy is probably the most influential factor, with a higher percentage of employees using the amenities when they are free or highly subsidized, than if they are not. Alternative catering facilities are also important particularly if the establishment is situated in a busy high street where there are other restaurants, snack bars, take-aways etc. which are readily available. Other factors are the location and accessibility of employees' homes to their place of work - the closer they are the more likely women employees in particular are to go home at lunchtime; the accessibility of the facilities in relation to all the organization's departments and offices, as there are the distance and convenience factors to be considered. The siting of the catering facilities should therefore be an important consideration at the initial planning stage. Unfortunately in some buildings the catering service is afforded whatever space is available or an area that no other department can utilize. The result is cafeterias and restaurants that are badly designed ergonomically, they are not conveniently sited for patrons to use, and because of these factors they suffer from poor uptake and subsequent financial problems.

MARKETING CONSIDERATIONS:-

The trend towards industrial catering facilities becoming more customer oriented is reflected in the marketing attitudes of these establishments. Gradually a more determined approach is being taken particularly by contract caterers, and industrial catering facilities are now being 'sold' to the employees. In addition to advertising the amenities using posters, leaflets, etc. some companies now give new employees several days' free meal tokens to encourage them from the time they join the company to use the facilities; other companies give away a certain number of free meal tokens each month. In this way it keeps the employees in contact with the catering department, generates goodwill and also acts as a reminder to the employees of the existence of the catering facilities.

Customer loyalty schemes, popular with airlines and hotel groups, are also being used by contract caterers. In the case of contract caterers, business may be obtained either through word-of-mouth advertising or direct advertising. Word-of-mouth advertising can be an important source of trade for contract

caterers, particularly once a good reputation has been established by a company. Direct advertising by contract caterers would include advertising in trade journals, selective mail shots and generally identifying those business magazines and circulars which may be taken by the type of companies contract caterers are interested in; for example, a large contracting firm may only be interested in catering for companies with over 1000 employees, and so would aim its advertising campaign at this size of market.

Market research in industrial catering can be particularly effective because the potential market for the catering facilities is often captive or semi-captive and is therefore relatively accessible. Research can take a number of forms; it may either be a large in-depth project and an outside agency may be engaged, or the company may do its own market research which is usually quicker, cheaper and more interesting. If the organization decides to undertake its own research, questionnaires can be distributed to all its staff to be completed. On analysis the results can prove to be valuable sources of information as they often obtain the views of the silent majority and are a source of objective information. This is particularly important where organizations may be under pressure from certain groups to provide catering facilities which in reality would be over-sized for the number of employees to be catered for. In cases such as these the objective information obtained from questionnaires may be taken along to meetings and help in discussing more realistic demands.

The type of questions used to form these questionnaires may include some of the following:

- ① How often do you use the restaurant?
- ② If you do not use the restaurant, what is your main reason? - it may be because of the atmosphere, poor choice, service etc. and a training need may be identified.
- ③ How long does it take you to get to the restaurant? - in an establishment of several thousand it may take a considerable period of time.
- ④ What type of food do you prefer?
- ⑤ On what basis do you make your choice?
- ⑥ How much do you spend?
- ⑦ How long do you usually spend in the restaurant? - it may be a social gathering place or just somewhere to eat and leave quickly.
- ⑧ Would you like to be able to buy wrapped or take-away foods? - a lost main meal sale may be partially compensated by a sale of a snack item.
- ⑨ If you do not use the restaurant what do you use? - employees may be buying snacks outside the organization and again those could be provided by the establishment.
- ⑩ Do you have a main meal in the evening?
- ⑪ Are there any changes/introductions you would like to see made? and so on.

By the careful compiling of this type of questionnaire a great deal of data can be collected about the use of the catering facilities.

Information may also be obtained on the profiles of customer's using the services, that is, sex, age, marital status, their position in the company etc., and also on those customers who may be termed 'floaters', that is, those employees who sometimes use the restaurant and sometimes do not. In many establishments it is this sector of the market that may be most influenced by an advertising campaign promoting the facilities and helped to increase the number of employees using the catering services. Market research may therefore be used to discover people's attitude towards the existing catering services and also if new facilities or changes are being considered a similar type of survey may be used.

Finally feedback can be obtained from an organization's employees not only through formalized surveys or questionnaires but also via channels within the organization such as staff councils and committees. In deed it is probably in the industrial catering sector that people are the quickest to air their opinions regarding the catering facilities and may be generally more critical. It is important therefore that there should be some feedback through this committees in answer to any questions that may be put to the catering department, just as when surveys have been conducted the results should be communicated to the employees and some form of action be seen to be taken.

CATERING CONSIDERATION

The catering policy will determine the standards of food and beverages to be provided for the different levels of catering facilities, such as a higher percentage of fresh foods to be used in the silver service restaurant than in the cafeteria. When setting the hours of service for the catering amenities particular reference should be made to the type of catering service to be provided for the evening shift; for example, the self service cafeteria may be closed and vending facilities provided instead.

In addition to itemizing the type, size, variety etc., of the catering facilities to be provided, the basic policy decisions should also include the procedure to be followed should any aspect of the catering service need to be changed or altered in any way. Such alterations may include the expansion or reduction of the amenities, due to an increase or decrease in the number of the organizations employees.

Type of Customer:-

In industrial catering situations the customers using the facilities are mainly the organizations employees with few establishments allowing their services to be used by the general public. In this respect the markets for industrial catering facilities may be described as more selective than the markets to which other sectors of the industry usually cater. This situation is sometimes referred to in terms of free, semi-captive and captive markets, each denoting the degree of freedom customers have in choosing where to take their custom. To take two examples. A customer working in a large city center may have a variety of catering facilities from which to choose, while an employee working on an industrial estate or a construction site many miles from the nearest town would only have the catering facilities at the workplace to use. Between these two extremes of free and captive markets, the semi-captive market exists where the customer has a degree of choice as to which catering facilities to use.

Due to the large numbers usually involved in industrial catering, it is a sector where a small percentage change in the number of customers using the catering facilities can result in a large increase/decrease in actual numbers for any one meal period. For example, in an office block of 1000 people, 450 on average may use the cafeteria daily for their main meal; a sudden change in the weather may deter many employees from leaving the building at lunch time and thus increase the percentage usage by 10 or 15% which is an additional 100 or 150 customers to be catered for.

The ASP of customers in industrial catering will depend on the type of catering facility and to what extent the service is subsidized. Some companies supply meals completely free, others make a nominal charge and others pass the full cost on to the customers. Where the catering service is provided completely free, this usually includes foods and non alcoholic beverages that may be available, these must be paid for by the employees themselves. The daily income received from the catering service is sometimes supplemented by special function events; at these function catering may be completely subsidized by the parent company or at least the total direct costs borne by the employers. On these occasions the market being catered for will often be mixed in terms of socio-economic grouping, age, sex, job level in the company, etc.; it will also usually include guests from outside the organization such as friends, families, etc. of the employees.

Type of Product/Menu:-

Due to the wide variety of catering facilities found in industrial catering situations, a corresponding variety of products are usually also offered. In industrial cafeterias the menus available are generally more limited in terms of choice than are the menus offered in comparable commercial operations. In an industrial situation for example, the cafeteria menu may consist of two or three starters, including fruit juices and soup; two or three main dishes, for example fish, meat and a vegetarian dish; in addition a wide range of salads and snacks are nearly always available, and two or three desserts usually including ice cream and cheese. The table d'hote menu offered in a waiter service restaurant and the a la carte menu in a silver service restaurant would also be comparatively limited. By streamlining and often simplifying the menus available the catering management is able to achieve an acceptable speed of

food production and service and more easily control the food costs.

Food Production Style:-

Whereas a variety of food service styles may be employed in any one industrial catering situation, the conventional cook-serve method of food production is still the most widely used for serving all the different types of outlets, for example cafeterias, restaurants, vending machines etc.

As in the kitchens of the other sectors of the industry, this involves the division of the kitchen tasks into parties, each being responsible for the production of a certain group of food items. Unlike other catering outlets, however, such as in hotels, restaurants or those involved in functions, industrial catering may involve a considerably longer holding time between production and service, particularly where the kitchen is supplying a cafeteria outlet. In this food service arrangement the food may often be kept hot in large quantities in the service line for most of the service period. Where the conventional kitchen is supplying a plated or silver service restaurant, however, then the food is either pre-portioned directly on to the customer's plate in the kitchen or on to serving salvers or platters. In large office blocks catering for several thousand employees the executive or senior management dining room may be situated away from the other catering facilities. In such situations as these where the distance separating the different facilities is considerable, the executive dining room will usually have some form of separate kitchen.

Although the conventional method of food production is still the most widely used, the cook-chill method and to a lesser extent cook freeze, are being used in the industrial sector. Cook-chill has a particular application in industrial sites such as factories which have a main administration / office blocks and in addition a number of satellite workshops, factories etc. With the cook-chill method the food is prepared in a central production area and may then be transported to finishing kitchens where it is reheated and served. A similar arrangement can also be used for the cook-freeze method which has an additional advantage in that the food can be transported greater distance because of the temperature at which it is held, thus serving a wider area.

As with function catering, the clearing away of soiled dishes at the end of each meal period is critical, particularly where large numbers are involved. In this sector of the industry conveyor belts and carousels may be used to remove the trays of dirty utensils from the food service area, such as a cafeteria, to the dishwashing area.

SNOW WHITE	
STAFF RESTAURANT LUNCH MENU	
Chef - Sally-Ane Knief	
SOUP	* Cream of Tomato & Basil Soup
HOT MAIN COURSE	* Grilled Salmon with Cucumber and Apple Salsa
SALAD MAIN COURSE	* Seafood Salad with Lime & Coriander Dressing
	** Carrot and Courgette Roulade with Cream Cheese & Chives
	** Bruschetta with Roasted Mediterranean Vegetables
	* Smoked Trout with Lemon & Dill
PASTA DISH	Lasagnette with Lardons, Mushrooms, Cream and Crispy Fried Sage
SNACK DISH	** Homemade Leek & Red Leicester Pastie
POTATOES	** Roasted New Potatoes with Garlic
VEGETABLES	*** Broccoli Florets
	* Honey Roasted Carrots
SALADS	Spinach with Feta Cheese & Olives Tomato
	Red Onion and Red pepper Salad
	Five Bean Salad with Celery and French Parsley
	Cracked Wheat, Cucumber & Tomato Salad with Mint & Coriander
	Mange Tout, Beansprout & Carrot Salad Soy & Ginger Dressing
HOT SWEET	Cherry & Walnut Sponge with vanilla Sauce
COLD SWEET	Summer Fruit topped Cheesecake
* Low Fat	
** High Fibre	
*** Low Fat & High Fibre	

Food Service Style:-

The most widely used method of food service in industrial catering today is the self-service cafeteria. Traditionally the straight line arrangement was most commonly used but the free-flow system is now more common as it allows a considerable number of customers to enter the cafeteria and begin to make their choice of food and beverage items at the appropriate service points. In some establishments this system may have to cater for several hundred employees all arriving at the same time, for example from large factories. Numbered among the different food service points there may be several specialist bars serving selected food items; for example a salad or sandwich bar where a light meal or snack may be obtained quiet quickly, or a call order bar offering mainly hot meals and snacks. A call order or grill bar will serve those items of food that can be cooked or reheated rapidly, particularly if a microwave is among the equipment used; the foods offered would include omelettes, jacket potatoes, mixed grills, pizzas, etc.

Second to the self-service arrangement is the plated method of food service in which the customer's food is plated in the kitchen and brought to their table by a waiter. Because this is a slower method of food service and more costly to provide, it is mainly confined to a fairly limited number of employees, usually those of a certain status within the organization such as the middle management upwards.

The methods of payment used in industrial catering situations include the following:

1. Cash payment after the meal has been collected but before it is consumed, for example cafeteria arrangements.
2. Cash payment after the meal has been collected or served to the table and consumed, for example waiter service restaurants.
3. By purchasing tokens up to a certain value before the meal, to be exchanged in one of the establishment's catering outlets. These tokens are usually priced for two or three set courses, for example a starter and a main course, or a main course and a dessert, or all three courses. Where no charge is made for the meals provided a similar token system may be used, one for every day of the month, and these are given to every employee at no charge; each day employees use the restaurant, a token is removed from their card, or it is marked accordingly, so that it is no longer valid.

SNOW WHITE

AT THE INSTITUE

Chef - Sally-Ane Knief

First Courses

Mile Feuille of Mediterranean Prawn with Soy Dressing
Goats' Cheese & New Potato Salad with Saffron Dressing
Gravadlax & Cucumber with Dill Dressing
Avocado with Pancetta
Chicken Liver Pate with Toasted Brioche

Main Courses

Pan-fried Duck Breast with Jalapeno Creme Fraiche & Courgettes
Char-grilled Chicken & Spinach Ricotta Cakes with Warm Tomato & Basil Dressing
Roasted Salmon with Sauteed Potatoes, Mange Tout, & Chive Butter
Braised Lamb Stew
Turkey Breast & Caramelised Onion with Sage

Puddings

Chocolate Profiterole Cake with Orange Sauce
Clotted Cream Rice Pudding with Raspberry Compote
Steamed Treacle Pudding with Custard
Traditional English Fruit Trifle
Vanilla Parfait with Blackberries
British Cheese

Coffee

(Speciality coffees are available for an additional rate)

Two Courses Rs. 500/- including VAT
Three Courses Rs. 800/- including VAT
A 10% service charge will be added to the bill

4. By using an 'electronic money' system, such as Girovend, in order to eliminate the handling of cash. All employees or members of an organization are issued with a card which is pre-encoded by the company's in-house control unit. The information held by the card includes the holders' user group number, the tariff number that they will be charged under and any allowances for free or subsidized purchases. The card holders are then able to load their cards with as much value as they wish at validation units. Either coins or bank notes may be used. However, an increasing number of companies link the validation units or loaders to the payroll computer to centrally deduct the amounts from salaries. Once the card has a monetary value the card holder is able to make purchases from any of the system's operated tills or vending machines. Digital displays on the units show the current card balance and the amount being spent; on completion of the purchase the new card balance will be shown.

Organization & Staffing:-

The staffing of the catering department in industrial establishments is usually organized in one of two ways. First, it may be organized along the lines of other departments in the establishment using the same basic staff hierarchy structure, or, second, it may be an autonomous department within the organization with its own staffing and management hierarchy. In the first situation the catering department is seen as one of the departments in the establishment using to a large extent not only a similar personnel structure but also similar costing and budgeting techniques, marketing activities, etc. However, where the catering department is viewed as being separate from the main establishment in terms of organization, it will then also have its own policies relating specifically to that department. Whatever the catering department's internal structure, however, it is

still usual for it to be responsible to the personnel department and through this to a more senior management level. The catering department is often ultimately the responsibility of personnel as it is an aspect of the organization that is concerned with the welfare of the company's employees. The management personnel in industrial catering may either be selected by the parent company through the personnel department or if it is operated by contract caterers a management team would be engaged by them.

Finally, it is important that the catering department is represented on the company's staff committees and councils. This enables a two-way flow of information to take place, with any department in the company able to express their views regarding the catering facilities and allowing the catering department to answer any suggestions, problems or grievances that may be put forward to them.

Control & Performance Measurement:-

In order to measure the performance of a catering department, standards must be laid down against which actual results may be measured. It must not be assumed that the level of sophistication is necessarily a function of the size of the organization (although generally the larger companies do have more documented control and performance policies), rather it is a function of the parent company's attitude towards the catering department and the management personnel who are responsible for it. Standards should be documented in the form of policies which contain the objectives of the organization in providing the catering facilities and the parameters within which the catering department must function, documented in the form of budgets.

The methods of payment used by different catering facilities each warrant a different type of control system:

1. In some operations only cash payment is accepted which is paid directly to the cashier at the end of the cafeteria line. In others, luncheon vouchers may be used in part or total payment for the meal.
2. Payment may also be made directly to a member of the service staff in waiter service restaurants or at a sufficiently high managerial level patrons may only need to sign their bills at the end of the meal and no cash is exchanged, except perhaps for alcoholic drinks. In-house credit cards may also be used, enabling patrons' accounts to be directly debited so that no cash payment occurs.
3. In some operations no cash is handled within the catering outlet; instead patrons purchase meal tokens prior to entering the restaurant, according to the number of menu items they wish to have. However, the token system is not as widely used today as it could be in industrial catering, for a number of reasons. First, there is the additional administration involved in producing the tokens; second, tighter control is needed to ensure that the meals are being exchanged for tokens and not being given away to some customers free of charge; third, physical control is needed so that today's meal tokens cannot be 'recycled' for tomorrow's meals; and finally, once a customer has chosen the menu items and purchased the required number of meal tokens, the 'impulse buying' factor is removed from the cafeteria line.
4. The use of cashless systems in industrial catering situations enables detailed sales information to be produced for performance evaluation by management. All reports contain an audit voucher number which increases in strict numerical order each time a report is taken, enabling a check to be made that all reports are consecutive.

Measurement of Performance of Contract Caterers:-

All of the previous detail is relative to the measurement of performance by caterers of their unit(s), whether it is an in-house catering situation or a contract caterer.

The measurement of performance by a client of the catering contractor is something which may be done periodically but should always be reviewed well in advance of the end of the current contract period, so that should the present contractor be found unsuitable, time would be available to seek out a new contractor.

The measurement of performance would include the following:

1. **Relationship** - A satisfactory business relationship during the period of the contract, between the client and management of the catering contractor.
2. **Cost to the Client** - The maintenance of the operation within the agreed prescribed limits, for example for food costs; this could have been agreed on a per head of employee, or per employee served, basis. The cost of other operational expenses could be on a comparative basis with previous trading periods or relative to the number of meals served.
3. **Prices paid for Raw Materials** - Prices paid for all food and beverage items to be seen to be of an acceptable fair level. Comparisons of prices paid would easily be made against published prices of major wholesalers and price indices published in the major trade journals. The level of discount given by the catering contractor for food and beverage items is usually only a small percentage of what the contractor receives, and it is for this reason that the client needs to monitor the prices paid, as suppliers will willingly inflate prices and then discount them to the contractor to an agreed level.
4. **Maintenance of Standard of Product** - The standard of product achieved by the contractor on a day to day basis, should be at least of an acceptable consistent level. This can be measured by the number and type of comments received often from a users' committee and by the percentage of uptake by the employees.
5. **Maintenance of Hygiene Standards** - The standard of hygiene set by the client and achieved by the contractor should be as high as is operationally practical. This should be regularly measured by the catering contractor with the results available for the clients, but also by the local environmental health department for the client, together with any complaints by the customers.
6. **The ability of the Contractor to provide Extra Services** - This could be the provision of back up facilities by the contractor for such things as providing a kitchen and restaurant design service, providing technical advice on energy saving, providing a customer satisfaction survey and analysis, etc., as well as being up to date with current trends in modern business practice, catering trade practice etc.