Keep 'em comin' back!

How to welcome your "customers" and help them make nutritious food choices

LESSON Content

- Attitudes that create customer satisfaction
- Suggestive selling techniques
- Food presentation tips

LEARNING Objectives

- Participants will recognize the value of a positive attitude toward customers
- Participants will be able to create suggestive selling sentences for items on the school menu
- Participants will be aware of the importance of eye appeal when presenting foods.

Lesson TIME: 10-15 minutes
Preparation TIME: 30 minutes to review the script and make copies of handouts

MATERIALS Needed

- Overhead projector (or handouts) and flip chart or writing board.
- Handouts

SCRIPT

The script on the following pages is provided for your use. Notes to you are in ***bold italics*** – they are not part of the script. Handouts can be made into transparencies or copied and distributed along with your talk.

We are in the food business, right along with McDonald's, Dominos and Arby's. And like any other food business operation, our customers are our most important asset. Without them we are out of business. We are dependent on our customers, they are NOT dependent on us. They are the reason for our work, not an interruption to it. The customer does us a favor by giving us the opportunity to serve him or her.

Children, teachers and other staff are our customers. Everyday they come to us with their wants and needs, their preferences, their likes and dislikes. It is our job to handle them. How well we handle them is the basis of their perception of our food service.

Three factors influence how well our customers like our service and which foods they select to purchase.

- Attitude of staff
- Suggestive selling of food
- Presentation of food.

No matter how nutritious and healthful our school meals are, if our customers are unhappy, if they feel un-welcomed, and discouraged they won't eat our meals. How we interact with our customers creates their appetite and their attitude toward the school meal.

There are a few things we should remember about attitude:

- We should put ourselves in our customers' shoes in order to see the food service from their point of view.
- We should remember that our job is sales and service, not discipline.
- We can't control how others act, but we can take charge of our own actions and attitudes.

(Ask employees to brainstorm about actions, body language, attitudes, expressions and words that show good, customer-oriented attitudes. Use a flip chart or have one of the participants list ideas on paper as you lead the discussion. Possible ideas include smiling, speaking in a pleasant tone of voice, making eye contact and welcoming customers by name.)

Interestingly what we say to students can also influence which foods they select from the cafeteria line. This is called "suggestive selling." We can actually motivate our customers to make good food choices. Some examples of suggestive selling are saying:

- A salad would go great with the spaghetti
- Would you like lettuce and tomato with your sandwich? (And nod "yes" when you ask them!!)
- Have you tried the low-fat ranch dressing with the broccoli and carrots?

(Ask for other examples that can be used in your school for increasing sales by suggestive selling, such as developing a catchy sales pitch to encourage students to make healthy choices. Record these suggestions.)

The last factor we are going to talk about is presentation of food. We buy food with our eyes. This is true in restaurants and in our school cafeteria. Our customers do not need to come to our cafeteria. It is our job to attract them and hold them as customers.

Let's look at some ways we can make food look more appetizing and appealing on the serving line.

- When arranging trays of food and self-service areas, pay attention to colors – mix bright colored fruit and vegetable serving pans with duller colored starch and protein dishes.
- Create appealing names for dishes. For example, "tri-color" or "confetti" salad sound more interesting than 3-bean salad.
- Use garnish to accent an otherwise colorless dish. For example, chopped parsley sprinkled over a pan of macaroni and cheese.

(Ask your employees for other suggestions that you might implement in your cafeteria.)

To keep our customers, we want to:

- Practice a positive attitude and show it with a smile
- Make suggestive selling comments about foods on our menu
- Arrange our food to appeal to the eye as well as the palate.