

Food & Beverage - Coffee and Dessert Contest - By Joe Dunbar

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Is your dining room traffic slower due to seasonal changes, economic conditions or local competition?

Savvy operators should look for higher check averages. If there's no big push for seats, guests should be allowed to linger. A strong dessert menu with premium coffee is the hook. With a special thanks to Starbucks, Americans have become comfortable paying more for upscale coffee brews. Whether you feature the Starbucks brand or another recognized option, diners are more likely to pay a higher price for a well known coffee brand.

During the 90s, there was a trend toward larger dessert portions. A couple would order one of these over-sized plates to share (two spoons). In many operations, the dessert portion sizes became massive and priced too high for people like me - travelling businessmen. In Europe and Quebec, hotels and restaurants offer a table d'hote option. This option features a full meal with appetizer, entree, sides, dessert and coffee. The dessert portions are petite. When I lived in Quebec, most of the table chose the table d'hote option when it was offered.

Smaller portions and fresh fruit options could help convert health conscious customers into dessert lovers.

If your pre-dessert check average is \$25 and 10% of guests order a dessert course at an average of \$5, think of the profit involved in increasing the percentage to 50%. Your check average would increase from \$25.50 to \$27.50 (7.8% gain). Let's look at the big picture. A restaurant with sales of \$3,000,000 could see an extra \$235,000 in sales. Dessert and coffee sales have a highly favorable impact on your food cost percentage.

If you gave the wait person with the highest percentage of dessert course sales a trip to Europe, you'd still be a big winner. Hopefully, they'll return with some great dessert ideas.

Thanks!!!

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