

Read your menu in four ways

Menu performance | popularity x food-only contribution



Use four categories to choose an action, not to label a dish good or bad. This is a generic management tool, not a quality, safety or nutrition rating.

SET A FAIR COMPARISON FIRST

- Compare like with like:** use one menu group and the same sales period. Record actual net price, unit sales and current portion food cost.
- Define your cutoffs:** document what counts as high popularity and high contribution before classifying. No universal cutoff fits every business.
- Keep context:** availability, promotion, dietary needs, labor and waste can explain a result. A short run or stockout can distort popularity.

Food-only contribution per sale = net selling price - portion food cost
Popularity share = item units sold / total units sold in its comparison group

Category	Popularity / contribution	Suggested next action
Signature	High / high	Protect consistency and availability.
Core	High / low	Review portions, purchasing and price.
Elevate	Low / high	Test description, placement or sampling.
Reserve	Low / low	Investigate before revising or removing.

These are four categories, not a best-to-worst ranking. Contribution here excludes labor and overhead; it is not net profit. A high food-cost percentage alone does not decide whether to keep an item.

Sources: BCcampus: Menu Engineering