

How Do You Write Menu Descriptions?

The Purpose:

- To communicate to patrons what is offered, how the menu item is cooked, presented, and at what price.
- To effectively market (advertise) your menu items for your restaurant operations.

The Rules:

- To be simple, clear, and graphic.
- To present an exact description of what the customer will receive.
- To avoid catchy slang if it will confuse the diner.
- To be accurate: e.g. if the description says it is from Maine, it better be from Maine.

The Truth:

- To avoid irregularities by descriptions.
- To avoid the "switch". Don't indicate one food item and serve another.

Tips for Writing Accurate & Appealing Menu Descriptions

- Use accurate preparation methods, point-of-origin information, and quality representations.
- Use accurate weight or portion sizes.
- Use readily understood terms such as: charcoal broiled, deep fried, sautéed, baked, broiled, poached, roasted, barbecued and smoked.
- Provide nutritional information for any nutritional claims made.

Descriptive Terms to WATCH

Absolute accuracy is a must when using terms in menu descriptions that are affected by the Truth in Menu Labeling Laws. Descriptive words are often the determining factor in the customer's selection of a menu item.

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|
| black angus beef | flown in daily | low-calorie | reduced |
| center-cut ham | heart healthy | low-fat | sugar-free |
| cholesterol-free | heart smart | made from scratch | |
| corn-fed or milk-fed | homemade | natural | |
| fresh | kosher | non-fat | |

Examples of Menu Phrases

- The Salad Course: The Georgia Salad is a delightful combination of roasted pecans, fried green tomatoes and Virginia ham on a bed of spinach, arugula and bibb hearts, with sweet onion slices and buttermilk dressing.
- Entrée: Baby Clams Over Linguine - Baby Clams sautéed with garlic, herbs, clam broth, and white wine over linguine pasta served with an Italian roll.
- Dessert: Peach Melba - Peaches sautéed in rum over vanilla ice cream topped with fresh raspberries and sauce.

Use these adjectives to describe your menu items.

A
aged
aromatic
array / array of
artfully
assorted
an assortment of
authentic

B
baked
beautiful
bite-size
bitter
blazed
a blend of
blended
blunt
boiled
braised
browned
burnt
buttered
buttery
black angus beef*

C
caked
calorie free
candied
caramelized
char-broiled
cheesy
chilled
choice
choice center cut
chocolate
chocolate flavored
cholesterol free*
chunked, chunky
cinnamon
classic

clove
coated
cold
colorful
cool
corn-fed *
country, country
style
covered
crafted
creamed
creamy
crisp
crumble, crumbly
crunchy
cured
center-cut *

D
dazzling
decadent
deep-fried
delectable
delicate
delicious
delight
delightful
distinctive
doughy
dressed
drizzle, drizzled
dry, (dry-aged)
dull

E
elastic
encrusted
ethnic
exquisite
exotic
extraordinary

F
famous
fantastic
fat
fat-free *
festive
finger-food
finger-licking
fizzing, fizzy
filet / fillet, filleted
flaky
flavorful
flavored
fluffy
fragile
free-range *
fresh
fried
frosty
frozen
fruity
full, full-bodied
furry
flown in daily *

G
garlic, garlicky
generous
generous portion
gingery
glazed
gluten-free *
golden
gooey
gourmet
greasy
grilled
gritty

H
hand-rubbed
half, halved

heaping
heartily
heart healthy *
heart smart *
honey-glazed
honeyed
hardboiled
heavenly
hot
homemade *

I
ice-cold
icy
indulgent
infused
intense
intriguing

J
julienne
juicy
jumbo

L
large
lavish
layered
lean
leathery
less
light / lite *
lightly-breaded
lightly salted
loaded
low *
low-calorie *
low-fat *
low sodium *
lemon-flavored
luscious

M

marinated
 mashed
 meaty
 messy
 mild minty
 mixed
 mixture of
 moist
 mouth-watering
 mushy
 made from scratch*

N

nationally famous
 natural *
 non-fat *
 nutmeg
 nutty
 nutritious *

O

oily
 open-faced
 organic *

P

palatable
 peppery
 perfection
 petite
 pickled
 piquant
 plump
 poached
 popular

pounded
 prepared
 prickly
 pulpy
 pungent
 puréed

R

rancid
 reduced *
 refresh / refreshing
 rich
 ripe
 roasted
 rubbery

S

salt / salty
 satin, satiny
 sautéed
 savory
 scrumptious
 seared
 seasoned
 served in
 served steaming
 served with
 sharp
 silky
 simmered
 sizzling
 slow-cooked
 skillfully
 small
 smoky, smoked
 smothered

smooth
 soothing
 southern style
 sour
 special
 spiced spicy
 spiral-cut
 spongy
 sprinkled
 steamed
 steamy
 sticky
 strawberry flavored
 strong
 stuffed
 succulent
 sugary
 sugar free *
 superb
 sweet
 sweet-and-sour
 syrupy

T

tang / tangy
 tantalizing
 tart
 tasteful
 tasteless
 tasty
 tempting
 tender
 terrific
 thick
 thin
 toasted

topped
 tossed
 traditional
 tough

V

vanilla
 vanilla flavored
 velvety
 vinegary

W

warm
 waxy
 wet, wet-aged
 whipped
 whipped-cream topped
 whole
 wild
 wonderful
 woody

Y

yummy

Z

zesty
 zippy