

My menu trim-down plan

Print it out. Fill it in. Cut what's holding you back.

How to use this worksheet

Work through these steps in order. Don't skip anything that makes you uncomfortable. Brutal honesty.

What's inside:

1	How many items do you actually have?
2	What's working? What isn't?
3	What takes long and gets ordered little?
4	What are your customers saying?
5	What is your highest overhead item?
6	If you HAD to keep just 10 items, what would they be?
7	Ideas for testing a smaller menu
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1

Take full inventory before anything else.

How many items do you actually have?

List every item on your menu right now — pizzas, apps, salads, sandwiches, desserts, drinks. Don't skip anything. The number will probably surprise you.

Pizzas	Sandwiches / subs	Salads / sides	Drinks / desserts

Total item count right now:

Target item count after trim (aim for 10–15 for most shops):

How long has the menu been this size?

When did you last remove an item — and what was it?

Any items on there that you personally never order? List them:

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2

Pull your last 30 days of sales data.

What's working? What isn't?

Sort every item by units sold. Fill in the table below. If you don't have the data yet, estimate — but commit to pulling the real numbers this week. Be ruthless with the verdict column.

ITEM	UNITS SOLD (30 days)	% OF TOTAL SALES	VERDICT: KEEP / CUT / FIX
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			

What surprised you most about these numbers?

3

Operational drag kills your busiest hours.

What takes long and gets ordered little?

Some items take 3x the effort for a fraction of the orders. These are almost always the first to cut. Be honest about prep time, skill required, and order frequency.

ITEM	PREP TIME	ORDER FREQUENCY	WORTH KEEPING?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

Which item is your biggest time-waster relative to what it earns?

What would your Friday night look like without it?

4

Reviews, comments, and direct feedback.

What are your customers saying?

Check your Google reviews, Yelp, social comments, and anything customers say in-store. Look for patterns — what do they love? What do they never mention? What do they wish you had?

Items customers specifically praise, mention, or come back for:

Items customers complain about, mention negatively, or never reference:

Items they wish you had (but you don't):

What's the most common compliment you receive?

What's the most common complaint or request?

5

Cost of goods, prep time, and waste combined.

What is your highest overhead item?

Some items look popular but cost you too much to make. Factor in food cost %, waste, and the labor to prep it. A pizza that costs 40% to make is hurting you even when it sells.

Highest food cost % item (and what's the %?):

Item with the most waste or spoilage:

Item with the highest labor / prep burden:

Item that requires an ingredient used only for that one dish:

If you raised the price on your highest food cost item, what would happen?

Based on steps 1–5, which 3 items are most likely to get cut? Write them here:

6

The gut-check that cuts through everything.

If you HAD to keep just 10 items, what would they be?

Forget everything else for a minute. If you had to open tomorrow with only 10 items — the ones you're most proud of, most confident in, and most known for — what are they? Don't overthink it.

#	ITEM	WHY THIS ONE MAKES THE CUT
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

What did you leave off that list that you thought would make it? Why didn't it?

What does this list tell you about what your shop is actually for?

7

Start small. Learn fast. Commit only when it's working.

Ideas for testing a smaller menu

Don't change everything at once. Pick one test, run it for 2–3 weeks, and measure. Check the approaches below you want to try and add notes on how you'd execute.

- Run a 'limited menu' week — pull your 3 slowest items and track what happens
- Remove your slowest item for 2 weeks. See if a single customer asks for it.
- Test a lunch-only simplified menu with 5–6 items to improve midday speed
- Post on social: 'What's your go-to order here?' — let customers tell you what stays
- Simplify your online ordering menu even if the in-store menu stays the same
- Replace a cut item with a 'chef's pick' rotation — one slot, always changing
- Run a weekend-only special using an ingredient from a cut item to clear inventory

Other test ideas I want to try:

The first test I'm going to run (and when):

How I'll measure whether it worked:

8

Know your customer before you write a single item.

Who are you building this menu for?

The best menus are built around a specific person. A family on a Friday night? A solo lunch customer? A late-night crowd? Define them clearly — everything else follows from this.

Describe your core customer in 2–3 sentences:

What do they care about most? (price / speed / quality / variety / familiarity)

What do they order most consistently?

What would make them come back twice a week instead of once?

What type of customer are you NOT trying to serve?

9

Every great menu has a point of view.

What's your menu's identity?

Garson Super Slice built around one style of pizza nobody else in Salem was doing. What's yours? Classic NY? Wood-fired Neapolitan? Detroit? Define it clearly — it should be impossible to confuse your menu with the shop down the street.

My menu's style / identity in one sentence:

What am I doing that nobody else nearby is doing?

The one item I want to be known for:

If someone described my shop to a friend, what would I want them to say?

Does my current menu reflect that identity? What doesn't fit?

11

Ask these questions about each one. Be honest.

Stress-test every item before you launch

Go through your new menu item by item and run each one through this checklist. If any item fails more than two of these, it needs more work before it goes on the menu.

- I'm proud to serve this item and would order it myself.
- My team can make this consistently at full speed on a Friday night.
- This item fits our identity — a customer who knows us would expect it.
- The food cost on this item is at or below 30%.
- I could describe this item to a first-time customer in under 10 seconds.
- This item doesn't rely on a skill or ingredient only one person on the team has.
- If this were the only item on the menu, I'd still be proud of the shop.
- This item is something I can see us still serving in 3 years.

Which items failed the stress-test? What needs to change before launch?

What's the one item on this new menu you're most confident in? Why?

YOUR COMMITMENTS — WRITE THEM DOWN, THEN DO THEM

1 item I'm cutting immediately:

1 item I'm going to make significantly better before anything else:

1 item I'm committing to being known for:

Date I'll run my first smaller-menu test:

Date I'll launch the new menu:

One owner I'll talk to before making final decisions:

THE BIGGER PICTURE

In one sentence: what is this menu trying to say about my shop?

What will a customer feel when they look at this new menu for the first time?

Remember: a shorter menu is a promise to your customers.

It says: we do these things. We do them well. Come back for them.