

Tag the menu. Rotate the bottom 20%. Bring regulars back.

Print one of these for each menu cycle. Six months in, you have a real data trail — and your regulars stop drifting.

RESTAURANT	MENU CYCLE	CYCLE STARTS	REVIEWED BY
_____	_____	_____	_____

1 Tag every dish — Hit, Workhorse, or Dud Owner + chef + 2 senior FOH, agree → it's that

DISH	TAG	SELLS / WK	WHY THIS TAG · NOTES
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____
_____	H/W/D	_____	_____

HIT Top 3 in category · regulars order by name · sacred	WORKHORSE Solid mid-table seller · keep	DUD < 5% category orders OR loss-making · rotate out
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2 Plan the next 2 specials (2-week trial each)

Specials test new dishes without committing to a reprint

Special #1

DISH _____

CATEGORY _____

COST · PRICE · MARGIN _____

TRIAL SELLS · TARGET _____

Promote to menu Run again Kill

Special #2

DISH _____

CATEGORY _____

COST · PRICE · MARGIN _____

TRIAL SELLS · TARGET _____

Promote to menu Run again Kill

3 End-of-cycle review (6-8 weeks in)

Decide what stays, what comes off, what comes on

DISH COMING OFF THE MENU	REASON	DISH COMING ON THE MENU (FROM SPECIALS)	EFFECTIVE FROM
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Rule of thumb: never take a HIT off the menu on its own merit. The only good reasons: supplier reliability, recurring food-safety issue. If you remove a hit, run it as a 2-week farewell first.

Skip the paperwork. Use Blueroll.

Tag dishes, record cost, swap a menu item, reprint allergen labels — all in one place. £14.99/mo · 14-day free trial.

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Reviewed by: _____ Signature / date: _____

Page 1 of 2 · blueroll.app

Why this works (and why the alternatives don't).

A 1-page summary of the framework. Stick this on the kitchen office wall next to the tracker.

1. The neighbourhood-restaurant problem

You don't have a tourist pipeline. Your business sits on 5K-15K adults within walking distance, of whom regulars are 60-70% of revenue. Losing one regular is structurally harder to replace than for a city-centre or destination restaurant.

Conclusion: retention is the entire game.

2. The "everything's fine" trap

Customer satisfaction and customer frequency are different things. Regulars can love you and still drift to other options because they crave novelty — a new dish, a story to tell. Static menus reward first visits but punish repeat ones.

Conclusion: sameness becomes background. Background gets visited 4x/year.

3. The 80/20 rule

80% of menu stays — that's hits + workhorses. 20% rotates — that's duds + one or two workhorses ready for refresh.

- **Hits:** top 3 in category, never move (only supplier/safety exceptions)
- **Workhorses:** mid-table sellers, the safety net
- **Duds:** < 5% of category orders OR loss-making, rotate

4. Specials before menu

Any new dish runs as a special for 2 weeks first. If it outsells 2 existing main-menu dishes in the same category, promote it. If not, kill it without anyone noticing.

Specials are how you find out if a dish actually works at volume.

5. The 6-8 week cycle

Long enough for kitchen to perfect a dish + collect data. Short enough that monthly regulars see something new on each visit. Quarterly is too slow. Weekly is chaos.

Sweet spot: 6-8 weeks. Set a calendar reminder.

6. Common ways to torch it

- Full menu overhaul (loses regulars overnight)
- Removing a hit because the chef is bored
- Sporadic specials (no habit forms)
- New chef → new menu in week 1
- Skipping the trial step, going straight to print

A realistic 6-week cycle in a 12-main neighbourhood restaurant

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| WEEK 1-2 | Two new specials trial. Track sales daily. FOH flags regulars who order them. |
| WEEK 3-4 | One special joins the main menu, replacing the slowest existing main. The other special ends quietly. |
| WEEK 5-6 | Two new specials begin. Cycle continues. Print menu insert (not full reprint) at start of week 5. |

The customer experience: "every time I come, there's something new to try, and the dish I love is still here." That dual signal — comfort + surprise — is what brings neighbourhood regulars back without scaring them off. Over a year that's 6-9 genuinely new dishes, but the hits never moved.

Want this on autopilot?

Blueroll handles recipes, allergens, menu reprints, food-cost tracking — so the rotation cycle takes minutes, not days.
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