Creating Efficiencies with Improved Line Design & Checks

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Line checks are standard procedures for the Executive Chef to conduct before each shift. The primary purpose is to ensure proper temperature and quality of the food being stored on the line. It is also the check for the general layout of the line. This includes utensil assignments and pan sizes. However, the line check process can assist in increasing efficiency if it is structured properly. In many cases, opportunity for inefficiency is created based on the layout of the line.

The first example to be addressed is pan sizes. Too many times the pan size is ignored as part of the layout of the line. Larger pan sizes, for an example, can lead to overproduction and overstocking. As an example, a 1/3 pan that is half full may be viewed as being stocked low when in actuality, there may be plenty of product for the day. The natural response would be to produce more to top off the pan for the day regardless if the production is required. Immediately, the opportunity for greater waste is created.

In terms of layout, the restaurant may benefit more by placing the smallest pan size possible (1/9) to limit the risk of overproduction and overstocking. The quality of the product will also improve due to this practice. Larger pan sizes translates to product residing on the line for longer periods of time. Ideally, smaller pan sizes on the stations should be a goal of the operations.

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If a product has a higher volume usage than the smallest pan size (1/9), simply bring up multiples of the pan. Do not increase the pan size. This creates a new discipline to only make available product as it is needed. It is acceptable to have on the line three 1/9 pans versus one large pan.

The second area where the line check can assist is reviewing the required utensils. The Executive Chef should identify the smallest utensil that is needed for each pan. For example, we have identified that hollandaise sauce is used in three menu items that are prepared by the station. The quantities of hollandaise used by the three recipes are 1 ounce, 2 ounces and 3 ounces. The line check should identify a utensil of a 1-ounce ladle for the hollandaise. If a 2-ounce ladle was placed on the station instead of a 1-ounce ladle, it creates the opportunity for over portioning. The menu item that receives an ounce of ladle may easily receive more than an ounce using a 2-ounce ladle. The menu item that is to receive 3 ounces of hollandaise may also receive more as the 2-ounce ladle needs to be used multiple times to complete the dish. The most accurate ladle to utilize for all the dishes is the 1-ounce ladle. Depending on the sales volume of the menu items produced by the line, there can be quite a bit of waste occurring. The term "ladle down" is used for these cases, but the practice is not one commonly used. The same practice can be applied to other utensils as well (i.e. spoodles, dishers, etc.).

The line check process can be used to assist in the enforcement of smaller pan sizes and utensils. This is the opportunity for the Executive Chef to ensure not only the quality of the food on the line, but also that his operation is positioned for a more successful shift. Time should be taken to review the layout of the line in great detail. If needed, create a drawing of the line to assist in the plan. To many cases, the line layout creates an inefficient operation. Any instance the operation can take to reduce inefficiency and waste should be implemented.