

# SOP: Menu Item Availability and Substitution Guidelines

This SOP defines the **menu item availability and substitution guidelines**, detailing procedures for managing the availability of menu items, communicating shortages, approving substitutions, and ensuring consistent customer satisfaction. The guidelines aim to maintain menu integrity, optimize inventory use, and provide clear communication to kitchen staff and customers regarding any changes in menu offerings.

## 1. Purpose

To ensure timely and accurate management of menu item availability, minimize disappointments due to unavailability, and handle substitutions in a way that upholds quality and customer satisfaction.

## 2. Scope

This SOP applies to all food and beverage service staff, including kitchen, waitstaff, and management, across all operational hours.

## 3. Responsibilities

- **Kitchen Staff:** Monitor ingredient inventory and promptly report potential shortages.
- **Management:** Approve menu changes and substitutions, and oversee communication procedures.
- **Serving Staff:** Inform customers proactively about unavailable items and recommended alternatives.

## 4. Procedures

### 4.1 Monitoring Menu Item Availability

1. Conduct ingredient inventory checks at the start and end of each shift.
2. Report any item below par levels immediately to the shift manager.
3. The manager updates daily availability lists and communicates to all staff.

### 4.2 Handling Out-of-Stock Items

1. Mark any menu item “unavailable” on digital/printed menus and at POS ordering stations.
2. Notify all service staff to inform guests at the earliest opportunity.

### 4.3 Approving Substitutions

1. Kitchen recommends suitable substitutions to the manager.
2. The manager approves substitutions based on guest satisfaction and inventory impact.
3. All substitutions must meet or exceed the original item's quality standards.

### 4.4 Communicating Changes

1. Serving staff must explain changes or substitutions to the customer before order confirmation.
2. Offer at least one recommended alternative for each unavailable menu item.
3. If customer declines substitution, offer opportunity to select another menu item.

### 4.5 Documentation and Review

1. Document unavailable items and substitutions each shift.
2. Review daily logs weekly to identify trends or recurring issues for corrective action.

## 5. Approved Substitution Chart Example

Original Item	Reasons for Unavailability	Recommended Substitution(s)	Approval Required?
Grilled Salmon	Out of fresh salmon	Grilled trout or seared ahi	Manager

Caesar Salad	No romaine lettuce	Mixed greens Caesar	No
Seasonal Soup	Soup batch depleted	Tomato basil soup	Manager

## 6. Training

All staff must be trained on this SOP upon hiring and upon any updates. Refresher training should occur at least annually.

## 7. References

- Inventory Management Policy
- Customer Service Policy
- Food Quality Assurance Guidelines

## 8. Revision History

Date	Version	Description	Author
2024-06-10	1.0	Initial creation	Quality Assurance