

## B a k e r y

# Ten Steps

## TO A BETTER OPERATION

**Giving customers their daily bread is only the beginning of building a successful department.**

By Diane Chiasson

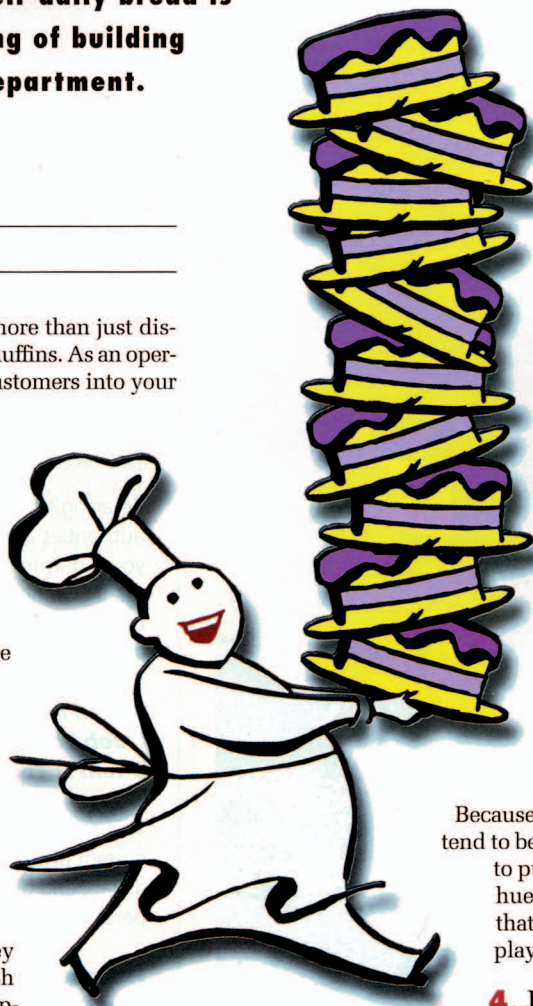
Running a bakery operation takes much more than just displaying the regulars like fresh bread and muffins. As an operator, you must consider what will lure customers into your bakery and how to incorporate creativity into the mix to ensure loyalty for years to come. Freshness is an obvious key factor. Nothing older than a day should go on the shelves unless it is reduced in price. Remember, the in-store bakery is the only department that offers consumers a full sensory experience, so be sure to pique customers' interest during constant intervals with the use of fresh baked aromas to stimulate impulse sales. Of course, much more thought and work must come into play if you want your bakery operation to be a huge success. Here are 10 recommendations to help you build a better bakery operation.

### 1. RESEARCH RITUALS.

Because you want to serve your customers as well as possible, it is important that you know them inside out. Survey your customers to see what they think of your bakery items. Ask them what they like and what they think you could do better. Are your items as fresh as possible? Are your staffers as friendly and helpful as they could be? It is equally crucial to research the competition, and remain one step ahead.

### 2. IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME.

Yes, this is a familiar saying, but nothing could be closer to the truth. Operators should build bakery displays to be visible across the facility. Use only the freshest ingredients and food items in your display. Display bakery items, such as bagels, baguettes, cookies, and dessert bars using unique plates, dishes, and rattan baskets. Add fresh fruits, fresh and dried flowers, and ears of wheat and corn to



your displays. Custom-design wood tilted racks to display breads, pies, and Danish so your customers' mouths will water from the minute they walk in the door. Don't forget to change your display every 10 days, and label each item so shoppers know what they are buying. Your display could be the best on the block, but your customers will get bored if they see the same thing every time they enter your facility.

### 3. CREATING COLOR EYE-CATCHERS.

Color is one of the most important factors when dealing with bakery display. Because most of the colors in bakery items tend to be browns and beiges, it is necessary to pump up your operation with bright hues, such as red, orange, or yellow, that will complement any bakery display you build.

### 4. HAVE FUN WITH CROSS-MERCHANDISING.

Cross-merchandising is a unique way to get your point across, and there's lots of ways to merchandise and sell your bakery items with other relevant products. When displaying specialty breads, don't be afraid to merchandise the ingredients as well. Display fresh herb breads near fresh herbs. Then cut up a few loaves so customers can capture the taste. Or cross-merchandise bakery items with the deli and soup counters. Coffee is the next best thing to display with any bakery item. Display beautiful packages of coffee next to your mouth-watering bakery items and both



**Eye-catching display is one of the fundamentals of running a successful bakery operation. And one of the fundamentals of eye-catching display is changing it on a regular basis, so customers don't tire of seeing the same thing.**

coffee and baked goods will fly off the shelves. Also, try bagels with cream cheese, focaccia bread with balsamic vinegar and olive oil, or fruit and lemon cakes with whipped cream.

### 5. SELLING WITH SIGNAGE.

It is important to be clean, concise, and to the point when designing signage for your bakery operation. Make it easy for customers to purchase bakery items in your operation by providing proper signage. After all, the reason for putting up a sign in the first place is to inform your customers about your products so they will buy them! Signage can be displayed in all shapes and sizes, and should be used accordingly. Use small chalkboard signs for muffins, cakes, cookies, and bars, and bigger signs for sectioned areas of your operation. If you insist on handwriting your signs, make them legible and graphically appealing.

### 6. LIVELY LIGHTING.

Lighting should always be considered in designing your bakery display, because it helps to sell your products. Do not over- or under-light key areas of the facility. Lighting is meant to add life to your display, while showing off the details of the products. Strive for a warm, comfortable environment that encourages sales. While you are not expected to conceive and implement a lighting system yourself, you will need to keep an eye on lighting systems to ensure that the fixtures are clean, the beams are aimed accurately, and burned out bulbs are identified and replaced immediately.

### 7. MAKE IT SPOTLESS.

Cleanliness will help ensure your customers will come back for more of your tasty bakery items. The last thing a customer wants to find is a dusty food counter or a spotty sneeze-guard. This goes for three-tier displays, display racks, utensils, shelves, and employee uniforms. Ensure that your staff wears hairnets, hats, and disposable gloves while handling bakery items. Post signage that lets customers know you are in control of your cleanliness.

### 8. KEEP THEM STOCKED UP.

Keeping an eye on your bakery stock is pertinent to running a bakery facility. Make sure to have all the favorite bak-



**It's important both to keep the basics in stock at all times, and to mix things up with a variety of new products that will keep shoppers interested. Use customer feedback to help determine what items to introduce.**

ery items in stock at all times, along with some new and improved items that are sure to knock your competitors off their feet. Feel free to try a variety of products, as your customers will get bored of the same bakery items over and over. Again, keep in mind your customer base. Ask them what they would like to see on your shelves every day and be sure to follow their requests.

### 9. LEGENDARY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Make it your bakery facility's goal to offer the best possible service to your customers. It is important to train your staffers to be the best they can be, while constantly selling and up-selling your products. Provide a script to follow so your staff is consistent on each sale made. This way, there will be a decreased risk of mistakes. Hand out customer comment cards to get feedback. Sampling your bakery items also works as a customer service tool. If you make it easy for your customers to try your food, you will satisfy their cravings and close a sale a lot faster. Sampling also allows you to try out items before adding them to your menu. Provide bakery sample stations near the entrance, at the counter, or throughout your facility. You will see it in the customers' eyes if your new bakery item is a hit or a miss.

### 10. PROMOTIONS AND CONTESTS.

Promotions and contests—two of the biggest possible initiatives to get shoppers bursting through the door—not only help you build rapport with your customers but also provide extra value to your facility. Use national holidays for special promotion periods, or make up one of your own. A popular contest is the business card draw. Keep a fish bowl at your bakery counter and ask people to drop in their business cards for a chance to win a prize. Business card contests are great because they allow you to see who is coming into your facility, while getting the complete contact information to reach customers for future promotions. Hold a bake-off and encourage your customers to show off their secret recipes. Whatever your bakery promotions, be sure they fit your facility's personality or your customers may get confused about your identity.

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