

Bohse and Associates

“DISHING IT OUT” THE BOHSE WAY:

Food and Supply Purchasing

Food purchasing relates directly to the budget, the menu and recipes used, food and supply specifications, receiving and storage capacity, and access to markets and vendors. Effective food purchasing can minimize food and supply costs and ensure quality meal services.

Quantity purchasing affects your cost. As a rule, the less purchased, the more it costs per unit. Vendors often have minimum order requirements in dollars or number of cases. A small operation or one with limited storage capacity and/or funds will likely use local supermarkets or corner markets. Some markets may negotiate discounts to support your program. Savings can also be realized by comparing supermarket sales in newspaper ads and using coupons. Comparison shopping also included contacting several vendors at a time to determine who has the best price on a product.

Smaller operations can increase their purchasing power by combining purchases with other agencies, or joining cooperative purchasing programs through a food bank or healthcare consortium. Paying vendors promptly rather than on 30 or 60-day payment terms can reduce charges as well. Negotiate prices as best you can; try guaranteed annual sales and prompt payment terms. Regardless of the size of your program, it is important to shop around for the best prices for the products you want.

Keep track of your food usage via a log that records the type and number of meals served daily and food used. This record along with receipts of vendor and other purchases can be used to forecast future purchasing needs and meal cost calculations. Vendors and distributors often provide you with a list of your past purchases to use as your master shopping list of products. Such a list, whether prepared by you or a vendor should reflect the established cycle menus (often on a 4-week repeating menu), standardized recipes (to ensure consistency) and portion sizes. Resources are available to determine the quantity of a product needed based on the serving size, number of servings, and how the product is purchased (e.g., by the pound, #10 can, etc.).

Food specifications should reflect the quality and type of products desired. Most government funded programs have established minimum standards of quality for particular products and relate to USDA’s grading standards, e.g., frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are Grade A, meats with minimum USDA Grade Choice, pasteurized Grade A milk. Additional specifications may be added for a product, e.g., orange juice fortified with vitamin D and calcium. A particular brand name, serving or package size may be desired.

Know your storage capacity for dry and refrigerated goods. Greater storage capacity can allow for larger quantity purchases and greater discounts. Or, knowing that you can purchase additional products that may be on sale.

Know what you have in stock. An inventory of all items should be maintained, noting quantities available. You may be required to complete an inventory record daily or monthly (recording items put in or taken out of stock). Ensure adequate product rotation—first in, first out. Larger food services may use computer software systems to help track inventory by linking production with purchasing data.

Product deliveries should be checked as they arrive against your order sheet and invoice. Weigh all items purchased by the pound. Count all case items. Be sure the products arrive in good condition, not soiled, and at the proper temperature. If damaged or dated items are later found, your vendor should be notified to provide a credit or replacement.

Build and maintain good relationships with vendors. Your vendor should provide products of consistent quality, reliable delivery, reasonable payment terms, and employ accommodating people. Have more than one source to buy products from as a back up measure. Split your purchases if possible in order to have more than one vendor provide you with service.

A qualified dietitian or foodservice manager should develop written food purchasing procedures. Although the head chef or food service manager may be responsible for ordering, such procedures should be familiar with other staff, so they can assume this responsibility during the manager's absence. Likewise, crosstraining is important in all aspects of program operations.

Resources on the Web

First Choice: A Purchasing Systems Manual for School Food Service, 2nd Edition

<http://nfsmi-web01.nfsmi.olemiss.edu/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=64>

National Food Service Management Institute (also check out related links)

<http://www.nfsmi.org/>

Dietary Managers Association

<http://www.dmaonline.org/>

Food Profile

<http://www.foodprofile.com/>

Food Management

<http://www.food-management.com/>

List of Food Service Management software products

<http://www.capterra.com/food-service-management-software>