



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



3

RE-ENGINEERING YOUR BREAKFAST MENU



Re-engineering your breakfast menu

This topic at a glance ...

Re-engineering your breakfast menu sounds great, but where do you start? This topic looks at everything from simplifying and innovating your menu, to working with the seasons, to healthy options, to local flavour. Once you've decided to change your menu, then check out the 'Tips on Design and Layout'.

Support tools include examples of different menu templates (for all-inclusive and for à la carte) and tasty ideas for a breakfast bag to go.

Driving efficiencies and responding to customer preferences

For some, the idea of completely redoing their breakfast menu will fill them with excitement and they'll already have lots of ideas. For others, the enthusiasm might be there but they'd welcome some suggestions and ideas.

Wherever you are on the ideas front, take a look at the seven topics below (each is explored in more detail over the following pages) and get started on a fresh, new exciting breakfast offering. It will drive efficiencies in your kitchen, cut down on waste, and your customers will thank you for it. Make their gorgeous breakfast one of the standout experiences from their stay with you.

1.

**Simplify and
innovate**

2.

**Health
and vitality**

3.

**What's
in stock?**

4.

**What's in
season?**

5.

**Local
flavour**

6.

**Too much
meat?**

7.

**Make your own or
buy in the best**

1. Simplify and innovate

Your breakfast offering can be appealing and cater to everyone's needs without being overly extensive.

A well communicated, short, core offering - with flexibility for customisation - can contribute to operational and cost efficiencies, while still giving the customer the choice level they expect.

Short core menu with customisation

- ▶ Create a short core menu of main breakfast items for order from the kitchen. Use ingredients that can be mixed and matched in the different dish options offered to guests.
- ▶ Working from that base of core menu items, offer simple customisations to give guests choice and flexibility.
- ▶ Set out the options clearly and simply on your menu.

How does this affect food costs & operations?

- ▶ Balance costs across your menu: if you add one or two lower margin items to enhance/innovate your selection, compensate for this with some popular high margin dishes.
- ▶ Balance operational efficiencies across your menu: a mix of cook to order options and items which are largely prepared in advance and easily assembled.



TIPS

- **Source quality:** Use the best quality core ingredients that you can.
- **Small is beautiful:** With high quality items - like sausages and rashers - you can serve a little bit less but actually increase customer satisfaction and reduce plate waste.
- **Shop local:** Use local suppliers where possible: this will elevate your breakfast to a new level and gives you a good story to tell.
- **Four seasons:** Add some excitement to core ingredients with changeable seasonal ingredients. Preserving fruit and vegetables is cost effective.
- **Local flavour:** Complement core ingredients with changeable local ingredients.
- **Vegetarian and plant-based:** Include enticing vegetarian options (ideally which can be customised to be fully plant-based).
- **Eggs and more:** While eggs are a wonderful basis for many low-cost breakfast dishes, try to have at least one option that is not egg-focussed.
- Make your breakfast accessible to cater for different dietary needs such as coeliac, vegan, vegetarian and dairy free.

Benefits and efficiencies of a short core menu

Improves order efficiency helps guests choose more quickly

Reduces the number and quantity of ingredients you need to stock

Improves operational efficiencies in the kitchen



On the one hand, variety is the spice of life and guests are used to having plenty of choice at breakfast time. On the other hand, an efficient breakfast operation requires that you keep stocks and food costs in check and minimise waste.

But keeping the offer tight and cutting down on the range of options doesn't mean sacrificing quality or customer satisfaction. In fact, quality or customer satisfaction can be greatly enhanced by offering guests enticing menu items and a bit of local flavour.

2. Health and vitality

With consumers wanting to live healthier lifestyles, understanding nutrition and food science are key to developing healthier menus.

The opportunities and potential role that chefs can play in the health and wellbeing of their customers are growing.

It is widely known that a healthy immune system can decrease the risk of a wide range of illnesses and several breakfast items can play an important role in this regard.

Because they stimulate the immune system, here’s why you should think about including probiotics and prebiotics on your breakfast menu:

- ▶ **Probiotics** improve the balance of bacteria in the gut
- ▶ **Prebiotics** encourage the growth of good bacteria in the gut
- ▶ **Synbiotics** are foods that have combinations of probiotics and prebiotics



Nutrition

Food science

Culinary nutrition

Breakfast is often described as one of the most important meals of the day. Studies have shown positive effects on academic achievement, quality of life and cognitive performance.

Source: Lundqvist, Vogel and Levin, 2019.

GOOD SOURCES OF

PROBIOTICS

Yoghurt

Kefir

Traditional buttermilk

Kombucha

Naturally aged cheddar

PREBIOTICS

Nuts (almonds, pistachio)

Bran

Oats

Flaxseeds, chia seeds

Bananas, watermelon, grapefruit

SYNBIOTICS

Kefir smoothie with raw oats, honey and bananas

Kombucha with chia seeds

Oat muesli, fresh berries, Greek yoghurt, nuts and flaxseeds

3. What's in stock?

While many traditional breakfast items may be bought in exclusively for the breakfast menu, innovation can come from using items you already stock or prep for use across your other menus.

Have a look at lunch and dinner – what do they feature that could be turned into a clever and exciting breakfast option?

Leftover **mashed potato/champ/colcannon** could make great potato cakes to pair with poached eggs and spinach or bacon for a simple but popular breakfast, easily adapted for a vegetarian version.

Don't forget about fish! Many people enjoy fish for breakfast and a simple pan-fried fillet of fresh fish provides an excellent healthy breakfast option. Why not add fish from the dinner menu as a breakfast special or add a changing seasonal fish option as a staple on your breakfast menu? Consider including smoked fish - smoked trout or smoked mackerel - which, if vacuum packed, have a longer shelf life.



Careful stock management and use of specials to utilise product that is over-stocked or prepped, will cut food waste - saving you money and doing your bit for the planet.



A great way to use up black and overripe bananas are kefir, banana bread, parfaits, ice cream. They can also be kept frozen.



4. What's in season?

Write your menu with the flexibility to include seasonal produce.

Seasonal specials:

Breakfast specials can be used to celebrate the seasons. In autumn, why not add a dish like Pan-fried field mushrooms on sourdough toast (option to add farmhouse blue cheese)?

Seasonal substitutions:

Seasonal sourcing doesn't have to mean creating whole new dishes or re-writing menus. Substituting one or two ingredients as they come in and out of season is a great way to incorporate seasonality. Write your dish descriptions to accommodate this. This is a great way to keep your target margin on a dish as ingredient prices fluctuate.

SEASONAL BREAKFAST IDEAS

Light/Healthy Breakfast

Homemade granola or porridge
with seasonal fruit compote

Strawberries, rhubarb or berries
in summer to apple or pear in
autumn and winter

Vegetarian Breakfast

Poached eggs on sourdough toast
with in-season vegetables

Think spinach, kale, purple sprouting broccoli
as they come into season, to mushrooms, tomatoes,
even asparagus during its short Irish season

Preserve in season:

If you can source fruit and vegetables at a good price at the peak of their season and make compotes, jams, relishes, chutneys, and pickles to preserve them, you will build an incredible larder of garnishes and accompaniments that will really step up your breakfast offering. This is an effective way of making efficient use of labour at times when business is low.



Talk to your supplier to find out what's coming up and where best value and flavour are to be found.



You have heard it before, but the number one thing you can do to make your business more sustainable is to keep your menu seasonal. Maintain dish margin by having the flexibility to substitute ingredients rather than buying the same produce even when prices fluctuate or they're imported. The quality is well worth the effort.



Don't forget the children!

The hotel breakfast is a big occasion for children, and if kids are happy, parents are happy, so make sure they are not an afterthought.

Ensuring you have child-friendly portions/options and calling this out specifically on your menu, or with a dedicated child menu, will make them feel looked after as well as reducing the potential for waste.

Popular dishes for children include French toast or buttermilk pancakes. French toast is a great way to use yesterday's bread while pancake dry mix can be prepared the night before and buttermilk added as and when they're ordered. Both are cheaper options than a cooked Irish breakfast and a more popular treat for children!



5. Local flavour

Businesses need each other's support now more than ever, and what goes around comes around; businesses that support local get it back in spades.

Look around for suppliers in your local area, county or region – or outstanding artisan suppliers from across Ireland. Is there a local food network you can tap into to connect you with local small producers directly? If you work through distributors/wholesalers or have existing contracts in place, ask them to help you source the producers you want to feature.

- ▶ For core breakfast items like Irish breakfast meats, there will be a price premium for high quality local produce. Trial cooking, plating and eating these items; can you reduce portion size based on the quality they offer? Good artisan sausages tend to have a much higher meat content and are more filling and flavoursome. Dry cured rashers do not have the high water content found in cheaper rashers and therefore will not lose as much weight when cooked. Plate waste will be reduced by offering customers a small but tastier portion. Enhance these core items with a balance of fruit or vegetables and some fibre, like a little sage and apple stuffing as a bed to your artisan sausage or a slice of baked apple as a base to your local award winning black pudding.
- ▶ Can you move to locally sourced free range or organic eggs? Again, there is going to be a price differential here, but as a relatively low-cost ingredient, this could be a good opportunity, both to elevate your breakfast offering and show your commitment to local suppliers.
- ▶ From yoghurt and preserves, to fruit, cheeses, honey and breads, there are lots of opportunities to tell a local story at breakfast that will enhance your guest's stay and contribute to your local economy



Sourcing direct and local adds to your sustainability credentials by reducing your carbon footprint. It also has the feel-good factor of supporting and being part of your local food community and really elevating the experience for your guest – giving them something to talk about!



Adding local flavour to your breakfast menus enhances your guest experience, raises the quality of your menus and allows you create a menu that has its own local food story and helps give your business greater stand out.

Today's guest has an ever-greater awareness of the importance of buying local – they want to see it in action on your menu too.



Want to break with convention? ...

Focus on a gourmet local breakfast

The changes enforced on us by Covid-19 are hard, but they do present a great opportunity to do things differently. What about a gourmet **Taste of Place** breakfast?

What if you dispensed with all the usual extensive list of cold breakfast items and just offered a really special local and artisan cook to order breakfast?

This could go up on a blackboard daily and offer the best of what's in season.

It is something unexpected but, if done well, could earn you a reputation for really special breakfasts.

Knowing your customer/s and understanding the market/s you operate in will help you make the right decision.



6. Too much meat?

The full Irish breakfast is not going away, but lots of people are moving away from meat and looking for lighter breakfast options. Think about how you can offer vegetarian and plant-based options, as well as light, healthy options that are not fried.



'Vitality'/'Healthy'/'Light' breakfast

This could be about taking items that you currently offer but positioning or selling them differently, for example:

- ▶ Homemade granola, or porridge, with raw local honey
- ▶ Local natural yoghurt, fresh fruit salad (or seasonal fruits)
- ▶ Carrot, orange and ginger juice



Charcuterie & cheese

Do guests really need to be offered a selection of meats as part of the cold breakfast before ordering their main breakfast item?

Instead why not make a charcuterie & cheese board a stand-alone main item on your breakfast menu, rather than as a prelude to a cooked breakfast?

Source a small selection of quality Irish produce, pair with good quality bread and a nice chutney/preserve, and make it a standout item in its own right – and one that can be easily assembled when ordered.



The humble spud

An inexpensive ingredient loved by most people, being creative with potatoes could offer an opportunity to add high margin but appealing dishes to your breakfast menus and is a great way of using up last night's mashed potato or baked potato.



These changes may help guests consume less meat overall at breakfast, making your menu a little more sustainable and also reducing food costs.



Add efficiencies by leaning on menu items already featured on the dinner menu or using up left over prepped ingredients.



7. Make your own or buy in the best

Are there items on your breakfast that you are buying in that could be made in-house?
Do you have the labour and skills available? Could it work out to be more cost-effective?

Items like:

- ▶ **Granola, brown bread, jams** and other **preserves** are very simple to make and allow you to add something unique to your menu.
- ▶ What about **overnight oats**, made up in house and presented in recycled, sterilised glass yogurt pots or small Kilner jars?
- ▶ Even something like **sourdough bread**, which is a long process but very inexpensive to make and normally quite expensive to buy, can be woven into the daily kitchen routine relatively easily if there is someone who takes an interest in it.

Do the costings on ingredients and labour – does it make sense to make them in-house?

Sometimes it can make more sense to leave things to the experts; if you can source a high-quality product from an excellent supplier at a viable price that can be a better option. Do the maths.

A whole team approach to breakfast

Involve the entire kitchen team in reviewing and innovating your breakfast menu – from patisserie, to commis chefs at starters section, to chefs on main course dinner.

Breakfast is too important 'a moment of truth' for guests not to have everyone's input.

Good communication between those responsible for dinner and those responsible for breakfast is essential, even for things like agreeing what leftover dinner ingredients are available for use as breakfast specials.

Senior chefs and
F&B manager
closing down the
kitchen at night

Good communication
and handover
are essential
between the two

Breakfast chef and
breakfast service
supervisor/manager
the next morning

Pay attention
to the strengths, skills
and interests of your team
members; you may have a
staff member who would really
thrive on taking charge
of making breads and
preserves.



Is your breakfast menu on your website? An appealing breakfast offering may help make the decision to book. Let people know what is special about your breakfast on their booking journey. See the section on 'Upselling and Communications' for more tips.



Grow it yourself: Do you or anyone on your team have green fingers? Is there space in your hotel grounds for a small garden? Think apples, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, tomatoes, herbs ... As well as getting a new appreciation for these items in your cooking, your customers will love them and doing so will also reduce food miles. All in all, it's a great part of your breakfast story.



Trends that will be around well into the future include; supporting local businesses, using seasonal ingredients, a **Taste of Place** and environmentally responsible practices.

Ideas for using breakfast items

No matter how well you plan, invariably there will be some leftovers from breakfast.

1. **Rashers:** lardons for salads, soups, and pasta dishes
2. **Black & white pudding:** croquettes, frittatas, stuffing and crusts for meats
3. **Sausage:** soups, cassoulet, pasta and ragu dishes, hash
4. **Tomatoes:** soups, sauces, salads, side dishes, dressings
5. **Mushrooms:** sauces, risottos, pasta dishes, soups
6. **Bread:** French toast, breadcrumbs, bread and butter pudding



Text highlighted below
contains clickable links

Inspiring breakfasts

If you're looking for inspiration, these interesting and award-winning breakfast menus and concepts should get the ideas flowing and the taste buds tingling.

Run in association with Fáilte Ireland, the **Georgina Campbell Irish Breakfast Awards** celebrate the people and businesses that make the first meal of the day as memorable as any fine dining experience. Some winning and highly commended breakfasts in the 2020 awards programme include:

- ▶ **Limerick Strand Hotel** Overall winner in 2020. A lot of care goes into choosing items for the breakfast menu and highlighting local suppliers. The menu has a clear **layout** with a straightforward offering which references local producers.
- ▶ At **The Twelve Hotel**, Barna, Co Galway, as well as all the classics, the breakfast menu includes slow cooked duck with poached eggs and warm wild rabbit on rosti.
- ▶ **Lough Bishop House**, Collinstown, Co Westmeath is an example of a tourism business where everything for breakfast is either made, reared or grown on site, including eggs, soda bread, plum jam and apple juice from the orchard.
- ▶ **Cliff at Lyons**, Celbridge, Co Kildare is a good example of a concise breakfast menu where everything is prepared to order.
- ▶ Breakfast at **Stauntons on the Green**, Dublin includes an award-winning Irish tea brack sourced from a local artisan producer **The Cupcake Bloke**.
- ▶ At **Sheedy's Doolin Boutique B&B**, Doolin, Co Clare, all products are locally sourced from artisan suppliers and herbs are from their own garden.
- ▶ The breakfast menu at **Ashford Castle** in Cong, Co Mayo is inspired by its former owner, Lord Ardilaun, whose insistence on only the freshest and most varied of produce from local orchards, fields and gardens is maintained today. The hotel won the Breakfast Sustainability Award for its use of local ingredients.
- ▶ **Rua Café** in Castlebar, Co Mayo uses lots of local produce and its breakfast dishes range from Leon chorizo with fried egg, sautéed spuds and spinach to Achill Island smoked salmon with scrambled eggs and home made brown soda bread.



Other great examples include:

- ▶ **The Bloombury (Doyle Collection), London** presents its breakfast menu in a similar style to a dinner menu with beverages at the top, followed by To Start, Mains & Sides. Ordering is clear and simple for guests and it makes breakfast feel like a real occasion. All the food from the breakfast menu is prepared fresh from kitchen upon order.
- ▶ At **Breac House**, on Horn Head in Donegal, breakfast is delivered into a private hatch outside each room for guests to enjoy in their room, on the terrace or in the garden. Local and seasonal produce are to the fore and they have also collaborated on a unique range of pottery designed and made by a local potter.
- ▶ At **Inis Meain Suites** on Inis Meain, Aran Islands, Co Galway, its breakfast box is delivered to each suite without disturbance. Items include freshly baked breads, boiled eggs from their own hens, cured meat, fish, and soft cheese. Most elements change daily and it's designed to give healthy breakfast options for every taste.

