



Weigh up the taste, quality and costs with such options and try different options to achieve the most efficient outcome for your own circumstances.



TO LEASE OR NOT TO LEASE? THE DECISION TO MANAGE YOUR CLUB'S KITCHEN

For a number of small to medium sized clubs it is a quandary as to whether to lease-out your kitchen or to manage the operation in-house yourself.

From a parity point of view, the adage that 'a family run operation doesn't need to pay minimum award wages' is pretty obsolete these days, especially when you calculate the cost of living in Australia!

Written by Andrew Lloyd
CCV Manager Operations and Governance

More aptly, if the club can't make a profit from its own catering operations, how would you expect a contractor to survive and make a go of it?

Clearly it is not as simple as the above propositions and in this article we will cover some important considerations for clubs when reviewing food service operations at your venue.

Many people will have watched 'Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares' television series, and love him or hate him, Gordon Ramsay gets back to basics when examining why a food service operation is not performing. Have a watch of his episodes on YouTube, while very entertaining, from a serious perspective they can be insightful - each episode has a lingering stand-out lesson of real value.

In lieu of CCV's own Gordon Ramsay impersonator visiting your club, here are some important things to think about...

LEGAL AND CONTRACTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Clubs come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and each operation is different, but one careful consideration when contemplating contractors is the issue of who "owns" the kitchen from a contractual and business sense, and who your members and guests will identify the kitchen being linked to. If your club is considering a contracted-out model, indelibly the issue of who covers payment of utility costs and how you treat the value of a fully equipped kitchen in situ on the premises will also come up.

In addition, with 'contracting out' you will need to consider the VCGLR liquor licensing rules relating to your liquor license and ensure that all staff comply with Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) guidelines. You should also discuss any operational changes with your Insurance Broker to understand whether you are required to make any amendments or changes in relation to your commercial insurance policies.

Accordingly, it is important to seek independent legal advice concerning any agreement or contract being entered, so that no unintended consequences are created in the longer term, such as claims relating to business 'good will' and assets.

If you are proceeding with plans to introduce a contract caterer, initiatives such as a rent-free period

and a staged application of outgoings can be a good way to support the new business while it is establishing its patronage and market penetration into the local community.

Be careful when it comes to facility expenses though. The old argument that the club will make back in revenue any expenses absorbed by the club applying generous concessions to cover expenses usually just doesn't stack up when you do the numbers.

In the event that you do go down the path of contracting out your catering, a key aspect of the successful outcome will be developing and maintaining a good rapport with the operator so that there is a mutually supportive and open relationship that works on goodwill, rather than what is

contained within an enormous commercial contract with appendices, schedules and clauses. As an example, look at some recent cases that have been featured on channel 9 news that are before the Federal Court currently concerning Franchisee Operators suing Franchise Groups alleging breach of contracts.

GETTING THE RIGHT TEAM

The lynchpin to success for many in-house operations is cultivating a cohesive and happy team of chefs and kitchen hands that work well together and appreciate the importance of meeting labour and food cost benchmarks.

MONITORING COSTS

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costs relating to rosters and food costs on a daily or weekly basis to ensure that there are no cost 'run-aways' with respect to these areas. By careful monitoring and sharing information with staff and taking agreed actions this will ensure viability and certainty for everyone.

BREAKING IT DOWN - COSTINGS

To run a successful business, you need to regularly analyse key aspects of your operation, including the question of 'To Make or to Buy-in?' There are a lot of high-quality products that can be sourced as ready-made, pre-prepared or par cooked to assist with time and cost issues. Weigh up the taste, quality and costs with such options and try different options to achieve the most efficient outcome for your own circumstances.

Standardisation and Dish Costing is another area where chefs learn these important skills at TAFE or Trade School but sometimes seem to forget the application when it comes to the real-world. There are several consultants, programs and apps available these days to list dish ingredients, generate individual costing calculations and

display a photo of how the meal is to be plated up and served in your bistro every time, so that customers receive consistency! Don't underestimate the value of consistency! When a customer has a great meal and comes back to order the same item but receives something that doesn't taste or resemble the last experience... they are "not happy Jan"! (I just love that old Yellow Pages Advert from years ago... but it's very applicable in this customer satisfaction sense).

CCV can assist with analysing your food service operation and draw on both our staff's professional experience, training and the club networking of shared experiences.

SNAPSHOT - AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

CCV Member, Altona Sports Club has recently worked through a process to take back control of their bistro that was contracted out for some years. The re-launch of the Sports Club's Bistro has been a great success and the quality of meals have been highlighted by many glowing customer compliments and reviews.

As part of the re-launch, ASC identified a need to offer gluten free meals, and, in conjunction with Coeliac Australia, have undertaken an extensive accreditation program to meet stringent standards to ensure that diners with these special dietary needs can have complete confidence when ordering meals. Standards for the kitchen have included:

- Staff education and training concerning standards and procedures relating to purchase, storage, production and service of meals
- Specially coloured crockery for service of gluten free meals
- Food preparation and storage undertaken in separate areas to ensure no cross contamination
- Dedicated cooking equipment and utensils for gluten free meals

This is a wonderful example of a club focussed on delivering high standards through a rigorous accreditation process to meet a community need.