**Truth in Menu Laws**

Pre-reading task

1. Learn the following words and phrases. Read the explanations and examples.

**A generic product** is something that is sold under the name of the product, i.e. what it actually is, rather than having a brand name.

Generic products are less expensive than the branded products and do not have a widely recognized name or logo on them. Many consumers claim that these products are as good as the branded or expensive ones.



branded product generic product

**cover charge** is a charge for service added to the basic charge in a restaurant. This charge is for the service of setting out the tablecloth, napkin, and cutlery.

**technique** (noun) a way of doing something that needs skill or thought:

*technique for (doing) sth*

**on premises** inside a building or on the area of land that it is on:

*Full meals are available at restaurant on premises.*

*No smoking on premises.*

**label** (noun) a word or a phrase that that describes or names something or someone

**label** (verb) to use a word or phrase to describe someone or something **claim** (noun) a statement that something is true or is a fact

**premium** (adjective) describes something that is of higher than usual quality

2. Complete the text using the suggested words.

secret shoppers / delicacy / premium / inferior / fines / charging / false marketing / mislabelled / claim

A close inspection of sushi restaurants in a certain area in California revealed

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|  |  | . | Some establishments | |  |  | local seafood on |
| menus. |  | |  | visited restaurants ordering from menus that adver- | | | |
| tised “California spiny lobster rolls" | a high-end, regional | | | | | |  |  |

harvested between October and March that can fetch upwards of $ 28 per pound. Samples were carefully collected and shipped to a lab for DNA testing. Of the

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| eight shops serving spiny lobster (and |  |  | spiny lobster prices), | |
| DNA testing revealed that all eight were using | |  |  | fish. Pol- |

lock and crawdads, which might sell for $ 5 per pound, were used, instead of the

pricier lobster meat. The eateries ultimately paid high . For

the sushi bars, the difference between a big flne and perfectly legal menu ter-minology is often a few simple words. The menu item may just be labelled as ‘seafood roll’ | because ‘seafood’ could mean a number of different things. It

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| was absolutely wrong to | |  |  | that the dishes contained ‘lobster’ |
| and sell the rolls as a |  |  | seafood product at a premium price. | |
| Reading | |  |  |  |
|  |  | Truth in Menu Laws | | |

A hospitality manager has a right to advertise food and beverage products in a way that presents them in their best light. The key is honesty in menu claims, both about the price that is charged and the food that is served. If your hamburgers contain 8 ounces (226,80 grams) of ground beef, you are free to use that attribute in your advertising or in your menu. You are not free, however, to misrepresent your products. If you describe your product falsely, you violate *Truth in Menu* laws. The name *Truth in Menu* is given to various lawsand regulations that ensure accuracy in the wording of menus. These laws are designed to protect consumers.

First of all, menus should accurately reflect the price of a dish. If one dozen oysters are to be sold for a given price, one dozen oysters should be served on the plate, and the price charged on the bill should match that on the menu. Also, if the menu price includes a *service charge or cover charge,* the guest must be informed about it. If a restaurant advertises a fixed price dinner with four courses and a choice of entrees, the guest should be told the price of the dinner, which courses are included, and the types of entrees they may choose from.

Accuracy in menu is not just stating a price honestly and precisely. It also means describing carefully many food attributes, including *the preparation* *style, ingredients, origin, portion size, and health benefits.* This areais extremely complex, and consumers demand more accurate information from restaurants. That is why the National Restaurant Association (NRA) in the

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USA provides educational material that helps foodservice operators to write and prepare menus. The publication is called \A Practical Guide to the Nutrition Labelling Laws". It provides instructions for describing menu items accurately.

Food description standards deal with the following areas.

* + *Certain items and preparation techniques must be carried out in a very precise way.* For example:

Grilled: Items must be grilled, not just mechanically produced with “grill marks", then steamed before service.

Homemade: The product must be prepared on premises, not commer-cially baked.

Fresh: The product cannot be frozen, canned, dried, or processed.

* + *The listing of ingredients that actually go into making up a food item should be accurate.* There are specific situations when the ingredientslisted on a menu must precisely match those used to make the item, for example, brand-name products.
  + *The origin* of the product or its ingredients is very important. Manyconsumers prefer Colorado trout to generic trout, Washington apples to those from other states, and Bluepoint (Long Island) oysters to those from other areas. It can be tempting to use these terms to describe similar menu items from other places, which may cost less to purchase, but to do so is dishonest and illegal.
  + *Product size* is, in many cases, the most important factor in determininghow much a guest is willing to pay for a menu item. For example, a steakhouse could offer different cuts of beef and price them according to size. An 8-ounce steak might sell for $17.95, while the 12-ounce might sell for $23.95 and the 16-ounce for $25.95.

Comprehension check

1. Answer the questions.
   1. What laws do restaurant mangers violate if they describe their menu items falsely?
   2. What aspects of the dish should be represented accurately?
   3. What is cover charge?
   4. How should a fixed price meal be represented on the menu?
   5. In what situations should the ingredients listed on the menu precisely match those that were used to make the item?
   6. Why is it tempting to use a brand name product instead of a generic product in a menu claim?
   7. What food preparation techniques are often misrepresented?
   8. What factors determine how much the guest is willing to pay for a menu item?

1. Comment on the following:
   1. What kind of product do the words describe?

Restaurants, from big chains to independent operators, are using such attributes as “organic", ”locally-sourced", “cage-free", “wild-caught", and “premium". It is difficult for the average consumer to determine the authenticity of ingredients, and dishonest restaurant operators may serve inferior product at higher prices."

* 1. Would you agree with the interpretation of the attribute “fresh-squeezed"? What are the damages if the orange juice was not squeezed on the premises? While a diner might assume that refers to juice squeezed daily on the restaurant premises, the restaurant or food distributor might argue that juice “fresh-squeezed" off the tree and then frozen would meet the same standards".
  2. When it comes to determining whether a restaurant is violating Truth in Menu laws, it is the duty of the consumer to prove that customers were deceived and that the gap between what consumers spent and what they received was significant. That’s why if the restaurant does not serve what they say they’re serving, it is di–cult to punish them for that legally. It is only possible to \frighten" the restaurant and make the restaurant flx its practices and be more accurate in menu claims."