

THE COUNTRY CLUB'S RESTAURANT PROBLEM

OF THE various problems golf clubs have confronted through the years, one of the most consistently annoying, from a financial viewpoint, has been the operation of the club restaurant.

Despite the fact that most clubs expect a financial deficit in the restaurant, there are some club managers who have been able to show a slight profit. One of these is Edward Sandrow, Manager of the Lu Lu Temple Country Club, North Hills, Pa.

Sandrow, who is a director of the Club Managers Association of America, believes the financial status of the restaurant is largely dependent upon the policy of the House Committee.

"I think the club officers should establish a policy, then allow the manager to be the executive," he writes. "No committee should be allowed to interfere with the smooth operation of a club. The largest problem a country club manager has to face is the waste and spoilage of food. In trying to estimate the number of meals to be served, there is no set pattern. The weather predominates in upsetting plans. Over the years I have found there is only one way to operate a club restaurant successfully. All meals must be served a la carte. At my club we have roasts on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays only. We are busy on those days and there is no gamble on food. No member is allowed to ask for personal favors that are not available to the entire membership.

"Labor, of course, is a stand-by expense. We have to be prepared to serve at least one-third of our membership at all times. On some days we have more help than diners, but this can't be avoided in unfavorable weather.

"In trying to compare restaurant operations at different clubs, much has to be taken into account, such as the type of club, the eating habits of members, service,



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linen and the section of the country in which the club is located.

Much Depends on Officers

"We have been fortunate in the last four or five years in making a small profit on our restaurant, but I cannot emphasize too strongly that much depends upon the policy of the House Committee and the Directors of the club in allowing the manager a free hand in executing his plans."

There is a variance of opinion among club managers concerning the desirability of luncheons and dinners sponsored by groups outside the club. On this subject John G. Outland, General Manager of the Dallas (Texas) Country Club, has the following to say:

"During a period of several years in which we were allowed to book sponsored luncheons and dinners we were able to level out dining room service so that we had a reasonably even volume of business during the week. However, the Board of

Governors found it wise to discontinue these 'sponsored' parties and since then we have not been able to reach a break-even point financially.

"I think eventually we can operate without a loss, but we face a readjustment problem. To avoid a deficit, a restaurant must have an evenly distributed volume of business. This, along with the necessary controls over quantities of supplies purchased, can make it possible to at least break even."

Paul H. Brown, manager of the Race Brook Country Club, Orange, Conn., says:

"I do not know of any well-managed private membership club that has a financially successful restaurant operation. Primarily the reason lies in the fact that in a private club the manager is confined to doing business with 300 or 400 members and their guests. He cannot advertise or solicit additional business.

"From my observation I would say that one-third of the club's membership is active. The balance is sporadic. The club which accepts too much outside party business will find this practice is resented by the members. The restaurant personnel will be over-worked and a labor turnover will result. The profit which this type of operation might produce is not worth the effort.

"Among the principal causes of deficit club restaurant operations are:

"1—Difficulty in interesting American boys in the cooking and kitchen vocations of our business, which has resulted in a scarcity of labor and increased wages to those now in the business.

"2—The demand at most private clubs for top quality foods at low menu prices.

"3—Club parties and events, the old idea of giving away food at cost and making it up on the bar. Most of these functions fail to pay for restaurant labor, fuel and laundry, as shown on monthly statements.

"4—Off-season lags which prohibit the chance of the restaurant breaking even. This is particularly true of spring and bad weather seasons when working crews must be procured and be ready to start when the weather finally changes."

At the Druid Hills Golf Club, Atlanta, Ga., where Armand C. Chapeau is General Manager, a survey of food operations was made in 1951, resulting in the adoption of a system of controls.

Three Divisions of System

"This system changed our restaurant operation into a profitable one and we are still using it," writes Mr. Chapeau, who is a Regional Director of the Club Managers Association of America. "The system consists of three divisions. First we established a control on the storeroom operations, including the receiving, storing and issuance of merchandise. Next a control was set up on the kitchen preparation of food. Third, we established a control on the sales of food through a food checker.

"Under the storeroom operations, all food purchased is charged to the storeroom man, who is credited with the cost of items issued. At the end of the day he prepares a report of the items he received and those he issued, which, when considered with the difference in inventories, gives the necessary information for preparation of a daily food cost. The report on the last day of the month shows the inventory in the storeroom. This amount, when compared with the value determined by a physical count, shows whether there is a shortage or overage in the storeroom.

"Control of the kitchen operations is accomplished by having the chef determine the number of portions to be prepared for each item appearing on the daily menu. Requisitions are then prepared for the requirements and issued from the storeroom. The amount prepared is then compared with the amount sold, as per record of unit sales prepared by the food checker. This record consists of the checker marking the units sold on the menu of the day.

"The food checker registers on a machine the price of each item or meal served, and the total sales as per register readings are compared in the accounting department with the total as per the checks turned in.

"Look to your food cost potential, set your own margin of profit and you will find a great difference in your profit sheet."