

EXAMPLE – FICTIONAL RESTAURANT

Cedar & Rye, Portland, OR

Full service, 74 seats, dinner - only plus weekend brunch. Eighteen dishes, 90 days of sales. Cedar & Rye is invented; the arithmetic is real, and this is exactly what an Optimal report contains.

Dishes analysed	18
Units sold	16,910
Food sales	\$351,920
Total contribution	\$245,496
Blended food cost	30.2%
Average margin per plate	\$14.52

Matrix thresholds: dishes above \$14.52 contribution margin earn more than average; dishes above 658 units (the 70% popularity cut-off) sell more than average. Contribution margin is menu price minus plate cost — not food-cost percentage.

Every dish, costed and classified

90-DAY SALES MIX — PRICE MINUS PLATE COST IS CONTRIBUTION MARGIN

DISH	PRICE	PLATE COST	MARGIN	UNITS / 90D	QUADRANT
Cast-iron ribeye, 12 oz	\$46.00	\$18.40	\$27.60	980	STAR
Cedar-plank salmon	\$32.00	\$9.60	\$22.40	1,240	STAR
Buttermilk fried chicken	\$24.00	\$6.00	\$18.00	1,580	STAR
Braised short rib	\$34.00	\$11.90	\$22.10	860	STAR
Mushroom risotto	\$23.00	\$5.75	\$17.25	720	STAR
House burger, aged cheddar	\$19.00	\$6.27	\$12.73	2,100	PLOWHORSE
Ricotta hotcakes	\$15.00	\$3.30	\$11.70	1,420	PLOWHORSE
Caesar salad, grilled chicken	\$16.00	\$3.20	\$12.80	1,330	PLOWHORSE
Clam chowder, sourdough	\$12.00	\$3.00	\$9.00	1,150	PLOWHORSE
Truffle fries	\$11.00	\$2.42	\$8.58	1,890	PLOWHORSE
Chocolate rye cake	\$11.00	\$2.53	\$8.47	870	PLOWHORSE
Steak & eggs (brunch)	\$26.00	\$10.40	\$15.60	640	PUZZLE
Duck confit	\$31.00	\$10.85	\$20.15	310	PUZZLE
Lamb chops, mint chimichurri	\$38.00	\$15.20	\$22.80	290	PUZZLE
Charred broccolini	\$9.00	\$2.25	\$6.75	540	DOG
Seasonal sorbet trio	\$9.00	\$1.80	\$7.20	460	DOG
Oyster half dozen	\$21.00	\$8.40	\$12.60	380	DOG
Vegan grain bowl	\$17.00	\$4.25	\$12.75	150	DOG

Stars are protected and featured. **Plowhorses** get repriced, re-costed or resized. **Puzzles** get repositioned, renamed and recommended. **Dogs** get removed unless they serve a purpose — dietary coverage or a regular's favourite.

Five moves, ranked. Each with the math.

Never more than five. Together they are worth **\$45,566 a year** if all five land — about 3.2% of annual food sales, which against a 3–5% net margin is close to doubling the bottom line.

THE ONE MOVE — DO THIS FIRST

Reprice the house burger from \$19 to \$21. It is still the cheapest entrée on the menu.

\$16,800

PER YEAR • MATH BELOW

1 • Reprice • House burger: \$19 → \$21

The burger sells 2,100 times in 90 days — 8,400 a year at the same pace — and at 33% plate cost it is priced like it is still 2021. It remains the cheapest entrée at \$21, so we assume no volume loss. $\$2.00 \times 8,400 = \text{\textcolor{teal}{\$16,800 a year}}$.

2 • Reposition • Lamb chops: move them, rename them, train on them

They earn \$22.80 a plate and sell 290 times in 90 days because they sit at the bottom of the entrée list under a flat name. Move them top-right on the entrée page, name the farm, put them on the pre-shift recommend list. Repositioned puzzles typically gain about half again in volume: 290 → 435 per 90 days. $145 \text{ extra units} \times 4 \text{ quarters} \times \$22.80 \approx \text{\textcolor{teal}{\$13,224 a year}}$.

3 • Remove • Seasonal sorbet trio: off the menu

460 sales in 90 days at \$7.20 margin, tying up freezer space and prep. Expect about half its buyers to take the chocolate rye cake (\$8.47 margin) instead. $230 \text{ units} \times 4 \text{ quarters} \times \$8.47 \approx \text{\textcolor{teal}{\$7,792 a year}}$, plus the prep time back.

4 • Reprice • Ricotta hotcakes: \$15 → \$16

The brunch staple, 1,420 plates in 90 days, unchanged through two menu prints. Nobody chooses a brunch spot over a dollar. $\$1.00 \times 1,420 \times 4 \text{ quarters} = \text{\textcolor{teal}{\$5,680 a year}}$.

5 • Reduce plate cost • Clam chowder: \$3.00 → \$2.55

The sourdough portion is oversized — it comes back to the dish pit — and the cream supplier is above market. Smaller bread, new cream quote, same bowl, same price. $\$0.45 \times 1,150 \times 4 \text{ quarters} = \text{\textcolor{teal}{\$2,070 a year}}$.

Where each dish sits

Entrées page

Top-right, first read: cast-iron ribeye and cedar-plank salmon — the two highest-margin stars.

Centre: fried chicken, short rib, risotto.

Repositioned: lamb chops move to the top-right pair with a boxed treatment and the farm name; duck confit moves up one slot with a one-line description.

Burger: stays where it is — volume is not its problem — at the new \$21. **Oysters:** off the printed page, onto the chalkboard as a special while the margin is below average.

Brunch, sides, desserts

Brunch: hotcakes anchor the top of the brunch list at \$16; steak & eggs gets the boxed treatment — \$15.60 a plate deserves better than 640 sales.

Dogs with a purpose stay: the vegan grain bowl (menu-marked vegan — dietary coverage earns covers) and the charred broccolini (the only green side) both remain, deliberately.

Desserts: sorbet trio removed; rye cake and one rotating dessert carry the page.

Thirty days of tracking

This 90-day window is the baseline. When the reprinted menu goes live, the next 30 days of exports are compared like for like: burger volume (did the \$2 hold?), lamb-chop mix (did the box work?), dessert attachment after the sorbet came off. The tracking page reports **actual contribution-margin lift against the \$45,566 projection** — measured, not estimated — plus weekly prime-cost movement. Weekly tracking catches a cost problem roughly three times faster than waiting for the monthly P&L.

TRACKED WEEKLY AGAINST THE BASELINE

MEASURE	BASELINE	WATCH FOR
Burger volume	23.3 / day	Holds above 22 after the \$2 reprice
Lamb-chop volume	3.2 / day	Climbs toward 4.8 after repositioning
Dessert attachment	rye cake 9.7 / day	Absorbs half of sorbet's 5.1 / day
Food cost	30.2%	Drifts down as chowder re-cost lands
Prime cost	watch weekly	65% of revenue is the ceiling

Optimal — menu profitability for restaurants · optimaluniverse.com · Example report for a fictional restaurant. First report free, then \$39 per location per month or \$89 per report.