Find the Food-Cost Cause

We took the notes. You put them to work.

Companion to: Why Is My Restaurant Food Cost So High?

THE PROBLEM, NAMED

Food cost is above target, but the percentage alone does not identify which operating process caused it.

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER

- A food-cost percentage is a signal to investigate, not a diagnosis.
- Check counts, purchases, sales, pricing, portions, and waste before assigning blame.
- Fix the proven cause and compare a consistent period before calling it solved.

WHAT TO NOTICE

- Look for count errors, unexplained inventory movement, high waste, or recipe drift.
- Compare like-for-like periods and distinguish price changes from usage changes.

TRY THIS NEXT SHIFT

1. Confirm the dates and source accuracy for sales, purchases, and inventory.
2. Select one high-value ingredient and trace count, receiving, prep, and portion.
3. Correct one verified variance, then repeat the measurement.

RECORD ONLY WHAT YOU SEE

Ingredient / period: _____

Expected vs. actual usage (same units): _____

Observed cause / correction owner: _____

HOW TO KNOW IF IT HELPED

- Recount and compare usage or waste after the correction, using the same method.
- If evidence is incomplete, write ’not proven’ and keep investigating.

Use safe food handling and approved recipes. Do not infer theft from a variance.