

The Role of Raw Material Quality in Reducing Guest Complaints in Hotel Culinary Operations

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Abstract. The quality of raw ingredients used in hotel kitchens plays a vital role in shaping guest satisfaction and overall dining experiences. However, challenges such as ingredient perishability, inconsistent flavor profiles, supply disruptions, and varying staff competencies often contribute to dissatisfaction, ultimately affecting hotel reputation. This study explores how the consistent application of high raw material standards can mitigate guest complaints by examining regulatory compliance, causes of quality degradation, and employee-led quality assurance practices. Using a qualitative narrative design, data were collected from 17 purposively selected kitchen employees through online questionnaires and direct observations. The information was analyzed through initial data inspection, reduction, and thematic categorization processes. The findings highlight a predominantly young, diploma-qualified workforce that upholds HACCP and ISO 22000 standards despite supply chain inconsistencies. Guest dissatisfaction commonly stems from unmet expectations, often amplified by digital review platforms. This study underscores the importance of advanced training and sustainable operational practices in enhancing service reliability and guest satisfaction. The results contribute to hospitality literature by providing actionable insights into quality management and operational resilience.

1 Introduction

In the hospitality industry, the quality of raw materials serves as the foundation for every culinary experience, directly influencing guest satisfaction and business performance. Maintaining high-quality inputs ensures food safety, flavor consistency, and overall service excellence. Frameworks such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO 22000 are widely implemented to guarantee product safety and its freshness. Despite these systems, hotels often face recurring challenges related to ingredient spoilage, fluctuating taste profiles, and supply chain inefficiencies, all of which can lead to guest complaints and undermine customer confidence [1] [2]. In many establishments, these issues are further complicated by limited employee expertise, poor coordination across procurement and production processes, and inadequate problem resolution mechanisms. Such weaknesses reduce operational efficiency and impact profitability and the achievement of sustainability goals [3]. Although prior

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studies have addressed food safety and service recovery mechanisms, the interrelationship between raw material quality, employee competence, and complaint mitigation, particularly in relation to inventory management, remains insufficiently explored [4]. This study addresses this research gap by examining how hotels can maintain ingredient quality while minimizing guest dissatisfaction. This study focuses on three key objectives: identifying measures that ensure consistent raw material quality, understanding the factors that contribute to its decline, and evaluating staff-driven initiatives aimed at maintaining standards. By exploring these dimensions, this study provides practical insights for hotel managers and culinary teams seeking to improve operational reliability, guest satisfaction and environmental sustainability.

2 Literature Review

Effective quality control in hotel kitchens is grounded in several key management and service theories that guide safe, efficient, and guest-oriented operation. Central to this foundation are the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), which emphasize a systematic approach to ensuring safety and consistency across the entire supply chain [5] [6]. These frameworks stress preventive quality assurance by integrating procurement, handling, storage, and preparation processes into a single monitoring system. Post-pandemic analyses have revealed how global supply disruptions and changing consumer expectations have intensified the importance of traceability and digital tracking tools in maintaining ingredient standards [7]. Within this context, expectancy-disconfirmation theory provides insight into how guest satisfaction is shaped by perceived quality versus expectations. When product or service quality fails to meet expected standards, dissatisfaction emerges, often amplified by online review platforms and social media channels [8] [9]. Furthermore, human capital theory underscores the essential role of staff expertise and training in sustaining quality and safety performance. Employees equipped with adequate technical and procedural knowledge are better prepared to implement HACCP principles effectively, preventing contamination and maintaining consistency [10] [11]. Complementing this, service recovery theory highlights the significance of prompt, equitable responses to guest complaints, transforming potentially negative experiences into opportunities to strengthen customer loyalty [12] [13]. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how ingredient quality, staff competence, and complaint management intersect in the hospitality industry. Integrating these frameworks enables hotels to enhance service quality, reduce waste, and promote sustainable operational practices that foster long-term guest satisfaction [14] [15].

3 Research Method

This study employed a qualitative narrative methodology to explore the perceptions and experiences of hotel kitchen staff regarding raw material quality and its influence on guest satisfaction [16]. The narrative approach was selected for its capacity to capture participants lived experiences, providing deeper insights into workplace practices and challenges. Data were collected from 17 purposively selected employees directly involved in food preparation and ingredient management. Participants were chosen to represent diverse roles and experiences across the kitchen hierarchy, ensuring that multiple perspectives were considered in the study. Data collection methods included online surveys and direct field observations, which facilitated both self-reported and observed accounts of daily operational realities [17]. Given the time and logistical limitations, this dual collection method enabled efficient triangulation of the findings while maintaining data richness. The analysis process consisted of three primary

stages: initial pattern identification, data reduction to emphasize relevant themes, and thematic organization for interpretation and presentation [18]. This systematic process allowed the researchers to discern recurring themes related to ingredient quality management, staff competence and guest complaint dynamics. By adopting this qualitative design, this study provides nuanced insights into how hotel kitchen teams perceive and address quality-related challenges. The narrative perspective adds contextual understanding, capturing not only procedural practices but also staff attitudes and organizational culture, both of which are crucial for sustaining long-term food quality assurance.

4 Findings and Discussion

The study involved 17 kitchen employees representing various roles and experience levels in hotel culinary operations. Most participants were relatively young, with eight respondents aged between 20 and 29. Most had two years of work experience (10 individuals) and held diploma-level qualifications (11 individuals). This demographic profile indicates a workforce characterized by adaptability and enthusiasm but also by potential gaps in technical depth and managerial experience [19]. Across the sample, there was unanimous recognition of the importance of the HACCP and ISO 22000 frameworks in ensuring food safety and ingredient consistency. Despite this shared commitment, the responses revealed mixed perceptions of supply chain reliability; six participants expressed neutral views, while ten agreed that supply dependability remained inconsistent. Moreover, supply chain disruptions were widely acknowledged, with four participants agreeing and 13 strongly agreeing that such issues regularly affected operations [1] [2].

Environmental considerations were also viewed positively; 11 respondents agreed and six strongly agreed that eco-friendly waste management was vital to sustainable kitchen operations [3]. Regarding guest dissatisfaction, 14 participants agreed and one strongly agreed that complaints often stemmed from unmet expectations. Similarly, spoilage and inconsistency in raw materials were identified as major triggers for negative guest experiences, with 15 respondents strongly agreeing. Many participants observed that such dissatisfaction was increasingly visible through online reviews and social media, amplifying the reputational risks associated with quality lapses [4] [8]. Regarding employee competence, most respondents demonstrated satisfactory awareness of HACCP principles; seven expressed neutrality, while eight agreed that they had adequate knowledge. Training initiatives were particularly valued, as 12 respondents strongly agreed that ongoing education directly improved operational outcomes.

However, ten respondents strongly agreed that skill gaps are linked to inefficiencies in production and service flow [10] [11]. When addressing guest complaints, staff members emphasized fairness and timeliness as the most effective strategies. Fourteen participants agreed that equitable treatment strengthened guest trust, and 12 strongly agreed that prompt action minimized reputational harm. Conversely, the introduction of robotic or automated solutions in complaint management faced mixed reactions, with seven participants expressing disagreement, suggesting concerns about depersonalization or reduced empathy [12] [13]. These findings underscore the interconnectedness of staff competence, supply reliability and service quality. The results reinforce the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier, particularly expectancy disconfirmation and human capital theories, which highlight how training and expectation management influence guest satisfaction. The data also align with prior studies suggesting that consistent staff development, technological integration, and sustainable supply chain practices are key to operational resilience and improved service outcomes in hospitality [14] [15].

Based on these findings, several actionable recommendations are proposed to strengthen ingredient quality management and reduce guest dissatisfaction in hotel culinary settings. First, hotels should intensify staff training programs that focus on HACCP implementation, food safety awareness, and quality assurance procedures. Integrating these initiatives with digital learning platforms can improve training accessibility and consistency across departments. Additionally, adopting data-driven tools for monitoring storage conditions and supplier performance can help ensure that raw materials meet safety and freshness standards throughout the supply chain [20] [21] [22] [23]. Second, management should prioritize waste reduction strategies that combine eco-friendly practices and operational efficiency. Initiatives such as optimized inventory control, composting of organic waste, and collaboration with sustainable suppliers can minimize both environmental impact and cost inefficiencies. These actions support broader corporate sustainability objectives while improving a hotel's brand reputation [3].

Third, implementing transparent and equitable complaint resolution mechanisms is essential for maintaining guest trust. While emerging technologies, such as AI-assisted service systems, can streamline complaint tracking and feedback analysis, their use should complement rather than replace human interaction. Hotels are advised to approach robotic solutions cautiously, ensuring that automation enhances, rather than diminishes, the guest experience [12] [13]. Finally, future research should expand the sample diversity by including employees from various hotel categories and geographic regions. Longitudinal studies could also assess how continuous training, digital transformation, and sustainability practices influence guest satisfaction. Such research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how raw material quality management contributes to resilience and competitiveness in the hospitality sector [20] [21] [22] [23].

5 Conclusion

This study highlights the critical influence of raw material quality on reducing guest dissatisfaction in hotel culinary operations. The findings demonstrate that maintaining high ingredient standards, supported by consistent adherence to HACCP and ISO 22000 protocols, plays a decisive role in ensuring food safety, taste reliability, and service excellence. Despite participants' strong commitment to these standards, challenges persist in areas such as supply chain stability, inventory management, and staff competency. The research further reveals that most kitchen employees are young and qualified; however, their limited experience underscores the importance of continuous professional training. Guest dissatisfaction was found to stem mainly from unmet expectations and occasional quality lapses, issues that are increasingly magnified by the immediacy of online reviews and digital feedback channels. Addressing such concerns through timely and fair complaint-handling strategies is essential for maintaining guest trust and loyalty. By connecting theoretical perspectives, such as expectancy disconfirmation, human capital, and service recovery theories, with practical hospitality operations, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how ingredient quality directly and indirectly shapes guest perceptions. The results advocate for targeted staff training, strengthened supply chain coordination, and environmentally responsible practices as pathways to enhance operational resilience and guest satisfaction in the post-pandemic hospitality landscape.

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