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MANUFACTURERS OF DECORATED APPAREL



CUSTOM RESTAURANT UNIFORM AN 8 STEP GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Did you know employee uniforms are the single-most impactful element in a customer's perception of your restaurant? Okay... that's a huge exaggeration, but employee uniforms actually do play an important part in a customer's experience.

Not only do uniforms act as visual cues to create the experience you want for your customer, uniforms also play a part in the comfort level of the employee. If your employees have some sweet new coordinating threads to rock, it will promote camaraderie and can instill a sense of pride in employees (which contributes to the good vibes your customers can sense).

Now, I know purchasing custom uniforms for your restaurant may seem daunting. If you don't have experience or have had a bad experience, you may not know where to begin. This informational paper will help you get sorted. By considering the expert advice given here, you will be ready to contact a decorator and start ordering snazzy custom designed uniforms for your fine eatery.

Well designed uniforms can put your customers at ease and separate you from the pack. There are a number of factors that should be considered in order to select the right decoration for the right garment. This in depth guide will take you through the decision making process.

STEP 1: UNIFORM LAWS

Right out of the gate, you've got to consider some dry legal stuff (at least its not the health inspector). The U/S Department of Labor's (DOL) Fair Labor Standards Act has rules regarding employee restaurant uniforms. If an employer requires a specific type and style of clothing to be worn by an employee, like a a tuxedo shirt, the DOL considers it a uniform. If the employer gives only basic guidelines for work apparel, like black pants and white shirt, it is not considered a uniform.

If a uniform is required for minimum wage employees, the employer is responsible for providing and maintaining the uniforms. Employers can ask such an employee to purchase the uniform before beginning work, but he or she must be reimbursed no later than the next regular payday. Workers earning cash wages above minimum wage can be asked to purchase their uniform as long as the purchase does not bring them below minimum wage.

In the case of custom restaurant uniforms, the employer is responsible for cleaning costs unless the uniform can be washed at home. If the uniform does not have any special instructions, such as dry cleaning, the employer is not responsible for cleaning.

Alright, that's out of the way. Now, the fun stuff.

STEP 2: IMAGE

Your employees are on the front lines, where you can't be 24/7. So, you want your people to leave the same impression you would if you were there. They need to set the right tone because they are the hosts. You just can't have Pete the waiter wearing the same tee shirt he slept in when he's serving your customers their filet mignon.

Obviously, you want your business to come across as clean, organized, reputable, and professional. What else do you want the customer to know about your establishment? What is your restaurant all about? What kind of cuisine do you serve? What kind of atmosphere do you want to create? From ultra-modern to down-home-cozy, from sports focused to family-oriented, your image is established by the uniform worn by the employees. The style of apparel plays a large part in this. For example, a bartender may wear a t-shirt in a casual laid back atmosphere or a fitted dress shirt may be in order for a bartender in an upscale dining establishment.





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STEP 3: BRANDING

Your brand is unique to you, like a fingerprint. You've considered it in terms of color, style, your business logo and the atmosphere right down to the music playing just under the conversation level. Now its time to apply all of that consideration to the uniforms. You might want to print or embroider your logo on the various pieces of apparel your employees will be wearing. Just keep in mind a rule of thumb, embroidery is generally used for apparel like polos and aprons, while screen printing is used most often on t-shirts. By branding your uniforms customers will associate the experience with the restaurant name.



STEP 4: IDENTITY

What's that old saying? Variety is the spice of life? It seems to apply to just about everything. Uniform variation is useful as a tool for making the customer experience a pleasurable one. Different uniforms for the management, host/hostess, servers, bartenders, bussers and chef make it easy for the guests to identify the different staff members. Should the customer need assistance, it will be easier for them to know who can help them. The variation can be as simple as a change in color or the addition of an apron.

There's all kinds of other ways to get the variety needed for a great visual experience, too. For example, new chefs may wear red chef hats and fully trained chefs may wear white hats. Add embroidered stars to uniforms when employees reach milestones. Celebrate birthday's and anniversaries with special t-shirt colors or unique prints. Another great idea is to celebrate holidays with your customers by having special uniforms for special days.

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STEP 5: FABRIC AND FUNCTION

The uniforms an employee wears should be comfortable for the employee to wear. This means no more of those old timey deep sea diving suits at your sea food spot. Also, you don't want to be shelling out tons of clams (pun intended) for new uniforms on a weekly basis. Some custom uniforms can be made with materials that have a special finish bonding to garment fibers to prevent staining. Cotton-polyester blends are a popular choice because they have better washability, durability, color retention and are permanent press.

There are many options and your decorator can help with your selection, but here's some of the basics:

100% Cotton - Natural. Breaths well but does not dry quickly. Resists pilling. Tends to wrinkle and/or shrink.

Ring Spun and Combed Cotton - Natural cotton fiber that has been processed or spun creating a much softer feel and extended durability.

Polyester - Synthetic. Wrinkle and stain resistant. Holds shape and color. Durable. Garment feel is less popular than cotton.

Spun Polyester - Synthetic fiber with a much softer feel.

Jersey - Knitted instead of woven. Soft and breathable. Slight stretch. Softens with washing.

Pique - Knit fabric characterized by raised cords or ribs in an all over waffle, honeycomb, or diamond patter. Popular for polo or golf shirts.

Rayon - Synthetic. Excellent softness and drape like silk. Absorbent. Tends to wrinkle and shrink.

Satin - Synthetic polyester fabric with silky, shiny finish. Dry clean only.

Twill - Cotton or cotton/poly blends. Woven with distinct diagonal lines on the face. Strong and durable.

Spandex - Super stretchy. Retains shape. Resistant to washing and perspiration.

Prewashed/Preshrunk - Fabric has been washed or treated before construction to prevent shrinking.

Stain Resistant/Stain Release - Fabric has been treated to resist stains or release stains when washed.

Moisture Wicking - Draws moisture away from the skin to be quickly evaporated.

Anti-Microbial - Treated or natural benefit of the material (such as bamboo) to reduce odor causing bacteria.

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STEP 6: DECORATION

Screen printing, DTG, DTF, and embroidery are your primary, tried and true means for applying your logo to apparel for custom uniforms. Each method of decoration has it's own set of pros and cons depending on the logo design, fabric type and style of garment. It's best to consult with an expert at a print shop, embroidery house or manufacturer of decorated apparel to determine which process will achieve the best result. In general, screen print is more casual, embroidery has a higher perceived value, and digital may be the perfect solution in a pinch.



STEP 7: VALUE

Everyone knows its "all about the Benjamins" and price is a major consideration for all purchases for your restaurant business. The old adage "you get what you pay for" is especially true for restaurant uniforms. Restaurant uniforms must be able to withstand a lot of wear, washing and spilled Coca Cola. It's a good idea to throw down a little more on quality fabrics and reputable brands so you don't end up spending more in the long run by having to frequently replace worn out or faded uniforms.

Purchasing larger quantities can save you money as well. Consider investing in some uniforms to keep on the shelf for new hires and replacements.

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STEP 8: FIT

Depending on the type of uniform, you may need to measure employees for a custom fit. When ordering unisex or men's sizes for women, you will generally order one size smaller than what the women's size would be. Always measure the body. Never measure over shirts or slacks.

Here's a few things to keep in mind:

Men
Neck: Measure around the base (lowest part) of the neck. The number of inches equals the neck size.

Sleeve Length: Start from the center of the back of the then neck and measure across the shoulder to the elbow and down to the wrist.

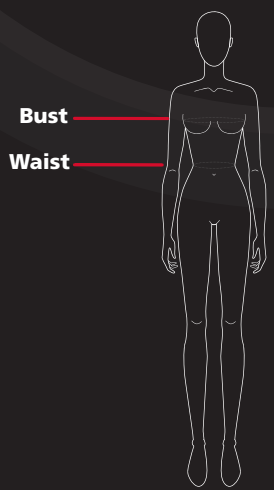
Chest: With arms at sides, measure across the fullest part of the chest, under the arms and across the shoulder blades. Keep tape measure straight across the back.

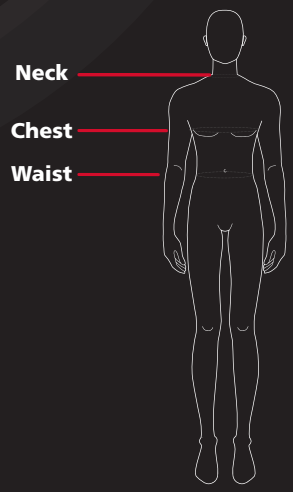
Waist: Measure your natural waist at the height you normally wear pants. Keep tape measure firm but not tight.

Inseam: Measure the inside of the leg from crotch down to the top of the shoe. You can also measure from the crotch to the hem of a similar style of pant that fits well.

Women
Chest: Measure across the fullest part of the bust keeping arms relaxed at sides. Keep the tape measure straight and parallel to the floor.

Waist: Measure at your natural waistline at it's smallest part.





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BEYOND UNIFORMS

Want to take your image and brand to the next level? While you are purchasing decorated apparel items consider extending your reach through a retail program. Loyal customers will spread the word about their great experience by sporting your threads.

CLICK THE BUTTON BELOW TO CONTACT A REP FOR A FREE CONSULTATION!

