



There is a growing worldwide trend amongst food establishments to provide extra support for customers affected by dementia.

Why dementia-friendly dining matters:

- **Enhanced customer service:** Catering to the needs of people living with dementia demonstrates your business's commitment to inclusivity.
- **Social connection:** It allows people affected by dementia to continue to enjoy the experience of dining out and helps them maintain their social connections and create new ones.
- **Business opportunity:** Dementia-friendly services open your business up to new customers and promote a positive reputation within your community.

Establish dementia-friendly dining hours or events

Dementia-friendly dining hours can create a welcoming, safe environment for customers living with dementia.

Tips for organizing dementia-friendly dining:

- **Choose the right time:** Offer inclusive dining hours during quieter times of the day when fewer customers are expected. Many people living with dementia feel fatigued and confused later in the day, so aim for earlier times.
- **Warm welcomes:** Have staff greet customers at the door, or in a drop-off area, to make them feel comfortable.
- **Tip:** Have staff members wear name tags that are legible and greet customers at the entrance in order to help them get oriented and settled in, particularly if their companion is busy parking the car or taking off their coat.
- **Adjust the environment:** Lower the volume of the background music and adjust the lighting for a calm atmosphere (avoid lighting that is too dim or too bright as this can make it difficult to see).
- **Tip:** Ask your regular customers what music they enjoy and create playlists that are familiar.
- **Seating arrangement:** Avoid seating guests directly beside other tables or in noisy sections to reduce distractions.
- **Staff training:** Pair new staff with those experienced in dementia-friendly service, ensuring they know how to engage and assist customers.

- **Simple menus:** Offer clear menus with fewer options and pictures to make choices easier.

Tip: Allow customers to bring a copy of the menu home for future visits. This can support them in planning ahead of time, encourage repeat business and help customers to order take-out if the option is available.

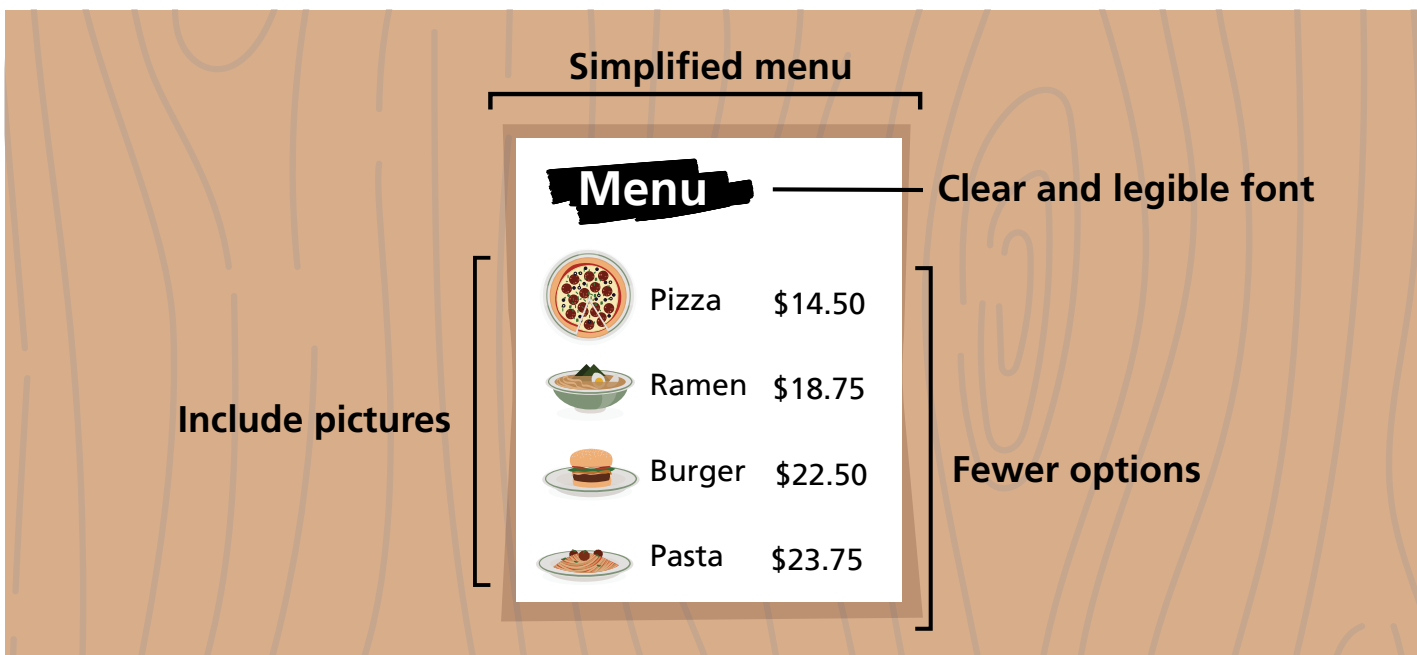
- **Consistency is key:** Once your menu is set, avoid frequent changes to prevent confusion.

Staff training and customer interaction

Everyone in your establishment plays a role in creating a dementia-friendly environment. The key is ensuring that all staff can recognize and respond appropriately when serving people living with dementia.

Consider the following tips for dementia-friendly practices:

- **Learn more about dementia:** Provide training to your staff so they are more aware of the signs and symptoms of dementia, can better understand what it might be like to live with dementia and can identify when a customer might be living with dementia and how they can offer support. To learn more about the next steps you can take in becoming dementia friendly, visit alzheimer.ca/dfc.
- **Clear communication:**
 - When booking reservations, allow extra time for the customer to process information and ask questions. To learn more, please review the tip sheet for dementia-friendly phone calls at alzheimer.ca/dfc/resources.
 - Use simple, straightforward language and summarize key details at the end of each conversation.



- **Encourage interaction:** Promote interaction between staff and customers, making sure people feel comfortable asking for help. Ensure staff introduce themselves and their role when interacting with customers
- **Customer familiarity:** Build rapport with regular customers. Know their likes, dislikes and dietary preferences so you can better serve them.
- **Offer assistance:** Be proactive in offering help but also give the customer the choice to accept it. Some may need assistance with ordering, while others may prefer independence.
- **Assist with seating:** Offer to seat customers living with dementia away from areas with distracting sounds or bright lights. Tip: As they walk into the facility, escort them directly to their table.
- **Clear identification:** Design uniforms or name tags to clearly identify staff who are trained to assist customers living with dementia.

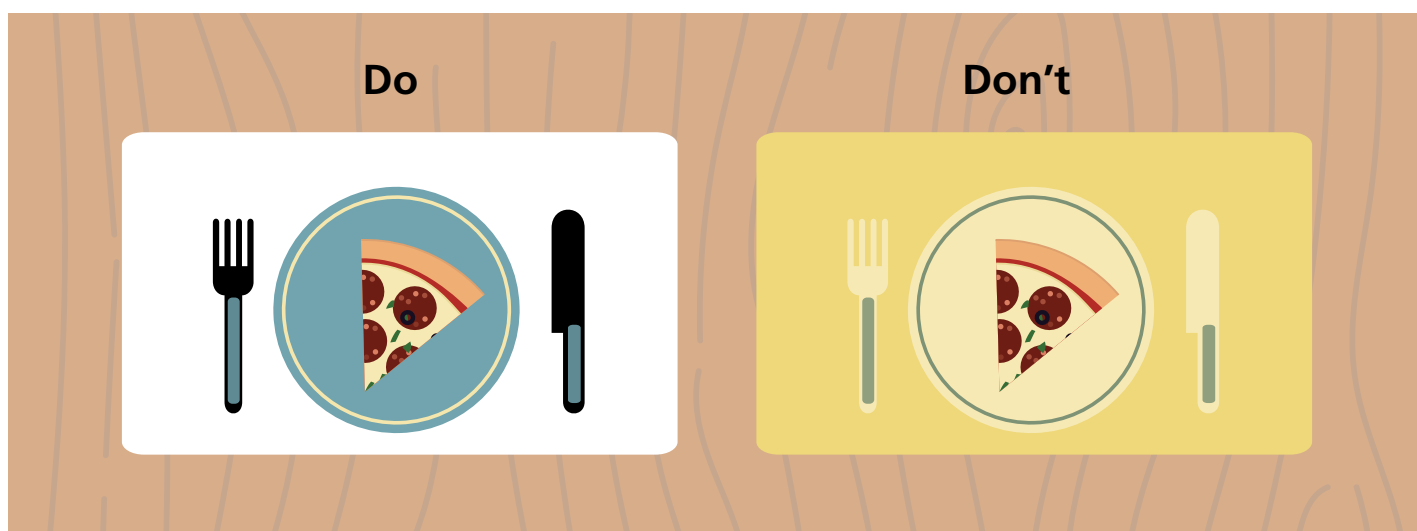
Additional tips

Offer finger foods: If cutlery is difficult to use, offer nutritious finger food options that are easy to eat. Tip: prepare an easy-to-read menu with all finger food options available.

Contrast dishware and cutlery: Offer the meal on dishware that contrasts the food to allow the individual to clearly see the food on their plate (e.g., it is much easier to see mashed potato on a blue plate than on a white plate).

Safety considerations: A person living with dementia may want to walk around during their meal. Ensure the space is safe and clear of clutter, and that the person is visible to their care partner if needed.

Tip: Avoid making assumptions of a person's capability when interacting with them.



Simple changes in the physical environment can have big impact:

The design of your space can play a huge role in creating a dementia-friendly environment. Making small, cost-effective changes can greatly enhance the dining experience for people living with dementia.

Key considerations for the physical space:

- **Accessible and inclusive facilities:** Ensure handrails, ramps and accessible restrooms are available. Provide clear signage for restrooms and consider creating gender-neutral or family restrooms to assist care partners. Tip: check out our dementia-friendly environment tipsheet
- **Visible signage:** Use clear, high-contrast signage to make navigation easier. Ensure signage and symbols are legible and at eye level.
- **Lighting and décor:**
 - Ensure lighting is natural and bright, but not too harsh.
 - Simplify décor, reduce visual clutter and avoid mirrors or highly stimulating designs.
- Use contrasting colours for floors, walls and doorways to help customers living with dementia identify key areas. This includes using bright strips (e.g., yellow or red) on stairs and other changes in elevation. Mark glass doors clearly to avoid accidents and confusion.
- **Clutter-free tables:** Reduce the number of items on tables to minimize distractions, keeping condiments and decorations to a minimum.
- **Quiet zones:** Consider offering quieter areas or designated times for customers who prefer a more peaceful dining experience.
- **Seating options:** Choose chairs that are comfortable and familiar, avoiding modern pieces that may be confusing. Also be sure to have chairs that are not too low to the ground and have armrests for people who need more support getting in and out of chairs independently.

For more information, or to learn more about dementia and dementia-friendly communities, reach out to your local [Alzheimer Society](#) or visit the [Dementia-Friendly Canada website](#).



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