

The **BREAKFAST** *Effect*

Unlocking New Value for Guests and Your Business



Inside this guide

- ✓ Find new opportunities to grow revenue and reduce waste
- ✓ Create a memorable and valued breakfast experience
- ✓ Access a 90-day action plan with practical tools & templates



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Unlocking the Breakfast Opportunity

For many hospitality customers, breakfast is a defining part of their trip. It's an experience customers' actively notice, remember and talk about. When done well, it can also be a powerful driver of revenue and business performance.

This is the Breakfast Effect. Breakfast shapes how customers perceive value and the lasting impression they take away.

Yet because breakfast happens every day, it can easily become routine. Breakfast has the potential to be one of the most influential touchpoints in the customer journey. It is often the first and last real food and beverage impression of the stay, making it a powerful driver of both customer satisfaction and commercial success.

Beyond the customer experience, breakfast can deliver measurable business benefits. It creates opportunities to increase breakfast capture and non-resident revenue, while improving control of food costs, labour costs and waste.

Building on Fáilte Ireland's existing breakfast resources, this guide has been developed to help you and your team measure, review and rethink the role of breakfast in your business. With practical tools, templates and guidance, it will help you assess performance, identify opportunities and explore new ways of thinking beyond the standard buffet.

Whether you're already investing significantly in breakfast or looking for new opportunities to enhance it, this guide will help you make the most of the Breakfast Effect, creating lasting value for both your customers and your business.

CHAPTER ONE

Why Breakfast Needs a Rethink



In this section

- The Operator Challenge
- Breakfast health check
- Key takeaway

Breakfast has changed

For many guests, it is no longer just something included with the room. It is a meal they compare with cafés, bakeries, brunch venues and coffee shops.

This matters because the wider out-of-home breakfast market is growing. Kantar reported that breakfast was the fastest-growing out-of-home occasion in 2024, increasing by 13.7% year on year (1).

For hotels, this creates both a risk and an opportunity. The risk is that guests sleep in the hotel but spend their breakfast money elsewhere. The opportunity is that breakfast can become a stronger commercial and guest experience driver.

THE OPERATOR CHALLENGE

Many hotels still manage breakfast around old assumptions.

- They assume guests will come because breakfast is available
- They assume the buffet is the easiest model
- They assume the price is right because it has always been that price
- They assume breakfast is a resident-only meal
- They assume the same offer should work Monday to Sunday



WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

A hotel should be able to answer these questions:

- ☑ How many guests slept in the hotel last night?
- ☑ How many ate breakfast?
- ☑ How many had breakfast included?
- ☑ How many paid for breakfast?
- ☑ How many chose not to eat?
- ☑ How many non-residents came in?
- ☑ What did breakfast cost to produce?
- ☑ What was wasted?
- ☑ What did guests say about it?
- ☑ What would make more guests buy it?



If the hotel cannot answer these questions, breakfast is being delivered, but it is not being properly managed.



♥ Breakfast health check

Use this as a simple starting point.

Question	Why it matters	What to do next
☑ Do we know our breakfast capture rate?	Shows how many sleepers are eating breakfast	Track sleepers versus resident breakfast covers daily
☑ Do we know paid versus inclusive covers?	Shows whether breakfast is driving revenue or only included volume	Non-inclusive paid, inclusive and non-resident covers in the till
☑ Do we know breakfast food cost?	Shows whether the price protects margin	Cost key buffet categories and top dishes
☑ Do we know breakfast labour cost?	Shows whether the model is efficient	Review labour by covers and peak periods
☑ Do we track waste?	Shows where money is being lost	Track waste by category for two weeks
☑ Do we review guest feedback?	Shows what guests actually notice	Review Google, OTA and internal feedback monthly
☑ Do we know why guests decline breakfast or choose room only rate?	Shows the barriers to conversion	Ask reception/reservations to capture reasons for two weeks

Key takeaway

Breakfast should be managed like a revenue stream, not simply delivered like a routine.



CHAPTER TWO

Understanding
The Breakfast Guest



In this section

- Different guests, different needs
- Two-week guest observation exercise
- Key takeaway

A better breakfast starts with understanding who it is for

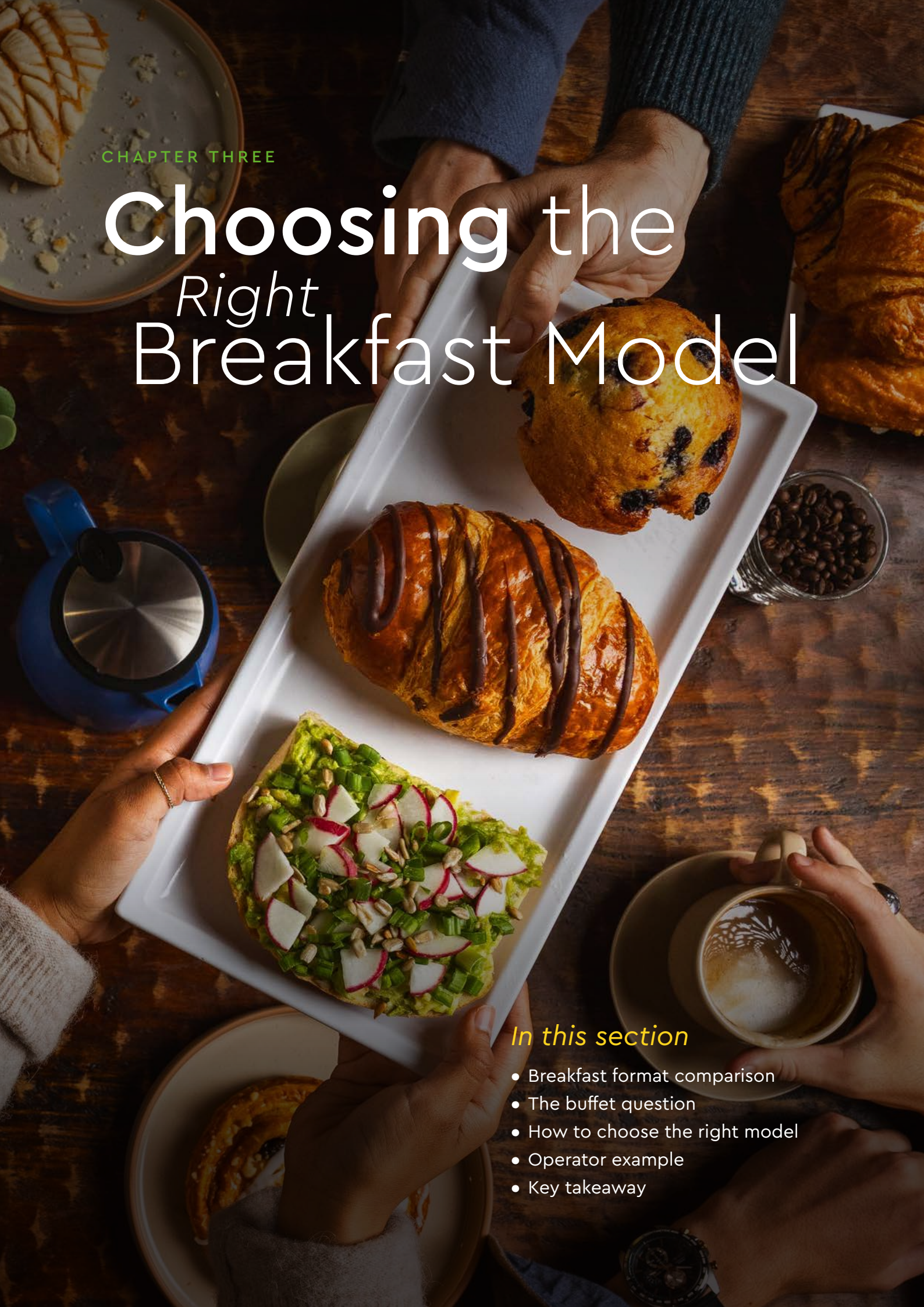
Not every guest wants the same thing. Not every guest has the same amount of time. Not every guest sees breakfast as good value.

The strongest breakfast offers are designed around different guest needs, not around one generic buffet.

DIFFERENT GUESTS, DIFFERENT NEEDS

	The business guest This guest often wants speed, good coffee or fresh juice/water and consistency. They may not want a long breakfast experience. They may want strong coffee, eggs cooked well, fresh fruit, yoghurt, porridge or something to take away.	What to do in practice ✓ Offer fast coffee ✓ Make takeaway coffee easy ✓ Create an express or 'To Go' breakfast option ✓ Make payment simple for non-inclusive guests ✓ Keep timings clear ✓ Avoid slow made-to-order processes at peak business times
	The leisure guest This guest is more likely to see breakfast as part of the stay experience. They may have more time. They may value atmosphere, local produce, made-to-order dishes and a sense of generosity.	What to do in practice ✓ Extend weekend breakfast where demand supports it ✓ Add one local or signature dish ✓ Improve bakery and coffee quality ✓ Use simple supplier stories ✓ Create a slower, more relaxed weekend rhythm ✓ Add brunch dishes in other venues menus
	The family guest This guest wants ease. Families value clear pricing, simple choices, child-friendly options, fast seating and low friction.	What to do in practice ✓ Create a simple child price ✓ Offer children's plates or smaller portions ✓ Make highchairs and family tables easy to access ✓ Keep cereals, fruit and bakery easy to reach ✓ Avoid confusing rules around what is included

	The wellness-led guest This guest is looking for freshness, balance and quality. PwC Ireland's Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024 found that 46% of Irish consumers intended to increase their intake of fresh fruit and vegetables, while 22% planned to reduce red meat consumption (2). This supports the need for stronger fresh, lighter and more balanced breakfast choices, alongside traditional cooked items.	What to do in practice ✓ Improve fresh fruit quality and display ✓ Offer yoghurt, grains, seeds and nuts ✓ Add overnight oats or seasonal porridge ✓ Include good egg and protein options ✓ Add at least one credible plant-based cooked dish ✓ Reduce the reliance on heavy cooked items only
	The local guest This guest is not already in the building. They need a reason to visit. They are comparing the hotel against cafés, coffee shops, bakeries and brunch venues. They will not visit because the hotel serves breakfast. They will visit because the offer feels visible, appealing and worth choosing.	What to do in practice ✓ Make breakfast visible on the website and Google Business Profile ✓ Promote weekend brunch or local breakfast occasions ✓ Create a coffee and fresh in-house bakery reason to visit ✓ Use exterior signage where appropriate ✓ Make non-residents feel welcome ✓ Avoid making the hotel feel closed to the local market
	The early departure guest This guest may not be able to use the main breakfast service. If nothing is offered, the hotel loses the chance to create value.	What to do in practice ✓ Offer pre-ordered breakfast to go bags or breakfast picnic ✓ Provide early coffee ✓ Create a simple grab-and-go fridge that could be serviced from reception till or simple self-pay station within eyeline of front desk ✓ Include items that travel/hold well ✓ Make ordering or self-serve option clear at check-in and on website at booking ✓ Track take-up and waste



CHAPTER THREE

Choosing the *Right* Breakfast Model

✔ Two-week guest observation exercise

Before changing the breakfast offer, spend two weeks observing the current one.

Ask the team to track:

- ✔ What time guests arrive
- ✔ What time queues form
- ✔ What items run out
- ✔ What items are left over
- ✔ What guests ask for
- ✔ What guests complain about
- ✔ What room-only guests say when they decline breakfast
- ✔ What non-residents ask when they enter the hotel
- ✔ Which dishes are mentioned in reviews
- ✔ Which nearby cafés are busiest and why

Key takeaway

The aim is not to offer more breakfast. The aim is to offer the right breakfast for the guests the hotel already has and the guests it wants to attract.

In this section

- Breakfast format comparison
- The buffet question
- How to choose the right model
- Operator example
- Key takeaway

There is no single right breakfast format

A full buffet may be right for one hotel and completely wrong for another. A short à la carte menu may work beautifully in a boutique hotel but fail in a high-volume group-led property. A grab-and-go offer may feel convenient in one hotel and poor value in another.

The right model depends on:

- ✓ Guest mix

✓ Occupancy

✓ Volume

✓ Labour availability

✓ Kitchen capability
- ✓ Price point

✓ Space

✓ Service style

✓ Waste levels

✓ Commercial ambition

BREAKFAST FORMAT COMPARISON

Model	Best suited to	Commercial advantage	Risk	How to improve it
Full buffet	High-volume hotels, resorts, groups	Fast service and high throughput	Waste, overproduction, quality drop-off	Use smaller trays, tighter replenishment and fewer low-value items
Assisted buffet	Hotels needing more control	Better portion control and presentation	Needs labour at the right points	Use support only where it adds value, such as hot items or carving
Hybrid buffet and made-to-order	Quality-led hotels with good volume	Combines choice with freshness	Can slow the kitchen	Keep made-to-order items limited and well-engineered
À la carte	Boutique, luxury or lower-volume hotels	Stronger experience and better portion control	Higher labour and slower service	Use a short menu and prep-led dishes
Continental	Limited-service or lighter-demand hotels	Simple and lower production	Can feel poor value	Make coffee, bakery and fresh items excellent
Grab-and-go	Business, airport, early departure guests	Convenient and low friction	Can feel like an afterthought	Use good packaging, strong products and clear display
Coffee and bakery counter	Hotels with lobby footfall or local demand	Adds secondary spend	Needs visibility and retail discipline	Treat it like a real retail offer
All-day breakfast	Lifestyle, city, leisure or café-led spaces	Extends the revenue window	Can add complexity	Limit it to 4 to 6 simple, high-demand dishes

? The buffet question

The buffet is not the enemy.

- The problem is when the buffet becomes the default answer for every hotel, every guest and every day.
- Buffets work well when volume is high and speed matters. They can also help guests feel they have choice.
- But they can create waste, reduce quality and hide true cost.
- This is especially important because food waste is a real cost for Irish hospitality. AIB's Hotel & Accommodation Sustainability Guide states that 23% of total Irish food waste came from the hospitality sector, including hotels and B&Bs, and that 66% of hospitality food waste was avoidable (3).
- So, the breakfast format is not only a guest experience decision.
- It is a commercial and sustainability decision.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT MODEL

Use these questions before changing the format.

Demand	Kitchen capability
✓ How many covers do we serve on weekdays? ✓ How many covers do we serve at weekends? ✓ What is our peak 30-minute period? ✓ Do we have group demand? ✓ Do we have leisure demand? ✓ Do we have business demand?	✓ Can the kitchen handle made-to-order items at peak? ✓ Which items slow the team down? ✓ Which items can be batch cooked without quality loss? ✓ Which items are most often wasted? ✓ Which items create the most complaints?
Service capability	Commercial performance
✓ Do we have enough team members to host, clear, serve coffee and replenish? ✓ Where do queues form? ✓ How long does coffee take? ✓ Do guests understand what is included? ✓ Can non-residents access breakfast easily?	✓ What is our average breakfast spend? ✓ What is our food cost? ✓ What is our labour cost? ✓ What is our waste cost? ✓ Does the price reflect the format? ✓ Does the format support upselling?



 Operator example

A 120-bedroom hotel has a full buffet every day.

Weekdays are mainly business guests, with a sharp peak between 7.30am and 8.30am.

Weekends are leisure-led, with guests arriving later and staying longer.
The hotel may not need one breakfast model.

It could use:

- ✓ A faster weekday buffet with strong coffee, fresh fruit, porridge, eggs and grab-and-go.
- ✓ A more relaxed weekend hybrid offer with one or two made-to-order dishes.
- ✓ A coffee and pastry counter that continues after breakfast closes.
- ✓ A Sunday brunch test for local and leisure guests.

**The change is not about making breakfast more complicated.
It is about matching the offer to the rhythm of demand.**

Key takeaway



The best breakfast model is the one that protects quality, controls waste and matches how guests actually use the hotel.

CHAPTER FOUR

Finding the Missed Revenue



In this section

- The number every hotel should know
- What a low capture rate might mean
- Resident revenue opportunities
- Non-resident revenue opportunities
- Meetings and events opportunities
- What to measure weekly
- Key takeaway

Breakfast revenue is often lost quietly

- It is lost when room-only guests do not convert.
- It is lost when guests leave for coffee.
- It is lost when early departures receive nothing.
- It is lost when non-residents do not know they are welcome.
- It is lost when breakfast is included at a price that does not protect margin.
- It is lost when the hotel measures covers, but not the opportunity behind the covers.

THE NUMBER EVERY HOTEL SHOULD KNOW

Breakfast capture rate

FORMULA:

Resident breakfast covers ÷ number of sleepers x 100

EXAMPLE:

- 180 sleepers
- 108 resident breakfast covers
- Capture rate: 60%
- That means 40% of resident guests did not eat breakfast in the hotel.

The number is not the answer. It is the start of the investigation.

WHAT A LOW CAPTURE RATE MIGHT MEAN

Possible issue	How to check	What to do
Breakfast feels too expensive	Ask room-only guests why they declined	Test pre-arrival pricing or a lighter option
Guests prefer local cafés	Benchmark nearby cafés and coffee shops	Improve coffee, bakery and atmosphere
The offer lacks appeal	Review photos, menus and reviews	Improve hero items, imagery and descriptions
The service window is too narrow	Track late arrivals and missed demand	Extend weekend times or offer lounge breakfast
Guests leave early	Track early departures	Offer early coffee and breakfast bags
Reception is not converting	Listen to check-in language	Create a simple breakfast upsell line
Breakfast is not visible online	Review booking journey and website	Add photos, menu, pricing and value message
Non-residents feel unwelcome	Walk the guest entrance as a local	Improve signage, access and messaging

Resident revenue opportunities

Most hotels have several chances to convert resident breakfast.

The opportunity is not only at check-in.

1 At booking

- ✓ Position breakfast as part of the stay value
- ✓ Use clear language and strong imagery

Example:

"Add breakfast and start the morning with fresh coffee, cooked dishes and local produce before heading out for the day."

2 Pre-arrival

- ✓ Use pre-arrival emails or digital check-in to offer breakfast
- ✓ This can help forecasting and improve capture before the guest arrives

Example:

"Would you like to add breakfast before you arrive? Pre-book today and we'll have everything ready for your morning."

3 At check-in

- ✓ Give reception a simple and confident line

Not:

"Do you want breakfast?"

Better:

"Breakfast is served in the restaurant from 7am. We have fresh bakery, cooked options and barista coffee. I can add that to your stay now if useful."

4 During the stay

- ✓ Use in-room information, lift signage, lobby display, QR codes or digital compendiums
- ✓ The message should be clear Where is it?

Flood the message

- What time is it?
- What does it include?
- How much is it?
- Why is it worth it?



 Non-resident revenue opportunities

Non-resident breakfast can be a strong opportunity where the hotel has the right location, space and offer.

This is especially true for hotels in:

- ✓ Town centres
- ✓ Coastal destinations
- ✓ Business districts
- ✓ Transport hubs
- ✓ Leisure destinations
- ✓ Areas with strong local café culture
- ✓ Locations with parking or meeting space

Possible offers include:

- ✓ Weekend brunch
- ✓ Local breakfast club
- ✓ Business breakfast
- ✓ Coffee and pastry counter
- ✓ Breakfast meetings
- ✓ Community networking breakfast
- ✓ Family breakfast during school holidays
- ✓ Local supplier breakfast special



MEETINGS AND EVENTS OPPORTUNITIES

Breakfast can also support meetings and events. This is often missed.

Hotels can create:

- ✓ Boardroom breakfast packages
- ✓ Breakfast briefings
- ✓ Networking breakfasts
- ✓ Premium coffee and pastry arrivals
- ✓ Healthy breakfast meeting menus
- ✓ Breakfast add-ons for day delegate packages
- ✓ Early conference arrival offers



 What to measure weekly

- ✓ Sleepers
- ✓ Resident breakfast covers
- ✓ Capture rate
- ✓ Paid covers
- ✓ Inclusive covers
- ✓ Non-resident covers
- ✓ Average breakfast spend
- ✓ Breakfast revenue
- ✓ Waste
- ✓ Guest comments
- ✓ Top upsell conversion source



Key takeaway

If the hotel does not measure the gap between sleepers, diners and potential external guests, it cannot see how much breakfast revenue is being missed.



CHAPTER FIVE

Pricing Breakfast Properly



In this section

- The four pricing questions
- The different breakfast prices to review
- Pricing by buying moment
- Premium breakfast opportunities
- Key takeaway

€ Breakfast pricing is often inherited

Breakfast pricing is often inherited.

The price may have been set years ago. It may sit inside a package. It may not reflect food cost, labour cost, inflation, guest value or local competition.

This creates risk.

If breakfast is priced too low, margin is lost.

If breakfast is priced too high, guests opt out.

If the internal package value is unclear, the hotel may not know whether breakfast is contributing properly.

THE FOUR PRICING QUESTIONS EVERY HOTEL SHOULD ASK:

- 1 What does breakfast cost us to serve?
- 2 What does the guest believe it is worth?
- 3 What does the local market charge?
- 4 At what moment is the guest most likely to buy?

THE DIFFERENT BREAKFAST PRICES TO REVIEW

Price type	What it means	What to check
Package value	The value assigned to breakfast inside a B&B rate	Does it protect margin?
Room-only add-on	The price charged to resident guests	Is it clear and easy to buy?
Pre-arrival price	The price offered before arrival	Could it improve capture and forecasting?
Check-in price	The price offered by reception	Can the team sell it confidently?
Walk-in price	The price for non-residents	Does it match the local market?
Children's price	The price for families	Is it simple and fair?
Group price	Tour, coach or corporate rate	Is it commercially viable?
Premium upgrade	Additional dishes or drinks	Does it add value without weakening the core offer?

PRACTICAL PRICING EXAMPLE

A hotel charges €22 for breakfast on the day.

Room-only guests often decline it.

Instead of simply discounting, the hotel could test:

- ✓ €18 pre-arrival breakfast price
- ✓ €20 check-in breakfast price
- ✓ €12 express coffee, fruit and pastry option
- ✓ €28 weekend brunch offer
- ✓ Clear child pricing for families
- ✓ Premium breakfast specials with a supplement

This gives guests choice without reducing the perceived value of the full breakfast.



PRICING BY BUYING MOMENT

1 At booking

- ✓ The guest is already making a stay decision
- ✓ Breakfast should be positioned as convenience and value

Best for:

- Leisure guests
- Families
- Destination hotels
- Guests unfamiliar with the local area



2 Pre-arrival

- ✓ The guest is thinking about the trip
- ✓ This is a strong time to convert breakfast because the decision feels easy and practical

Best for:

- Room-only guests
- Weekend stays
- Resort stays
- Families
- Event guests



3 At check-in

- ✓ The guest is planning the stay
- ✓ Reception can convert if the offer is clear and the team understands it

Best for:

- Business guests
- Late bookers
- Guests who did not notice breakfast online



4 On the day

- ✓ The guest decides in the moment
- ✓ This works when the hotel has visible coffee, bakery, signage or a welcoming space

Best for:

- Non-residents
- Local guests
- Walk-ins
- Guests who only want a light option



PREMIUM BREAKFAST OPPORTUNITIES

Not every breakfast item needs to be included.

Hotels can add spend through premium items, such as:

- ✓ Smoked salmon and eggs
- ✓ A local seafood omelette
- ✓ Steak and eggs
- ✓ Pancake stacks with fruit compotes
- ✓ Signature Irish breakfast
- ✓ Premium coffee
- ✓ Fresh juice
- ✓ Smoothies – with protein and collagen stacked options
- ✓ Bakery boxes
- ✓ Sparkling wine or local sparkling 0% wine or apple juice brunch
- ✓ Weekend specials



The core breakfast must still feel like good value.

Premium options should add choice, not make the standard offer feel weak.

Key takeaway

Breakfast pricing should not be static. It should be reviewed against cost, demand, guest behaviour and local competition.

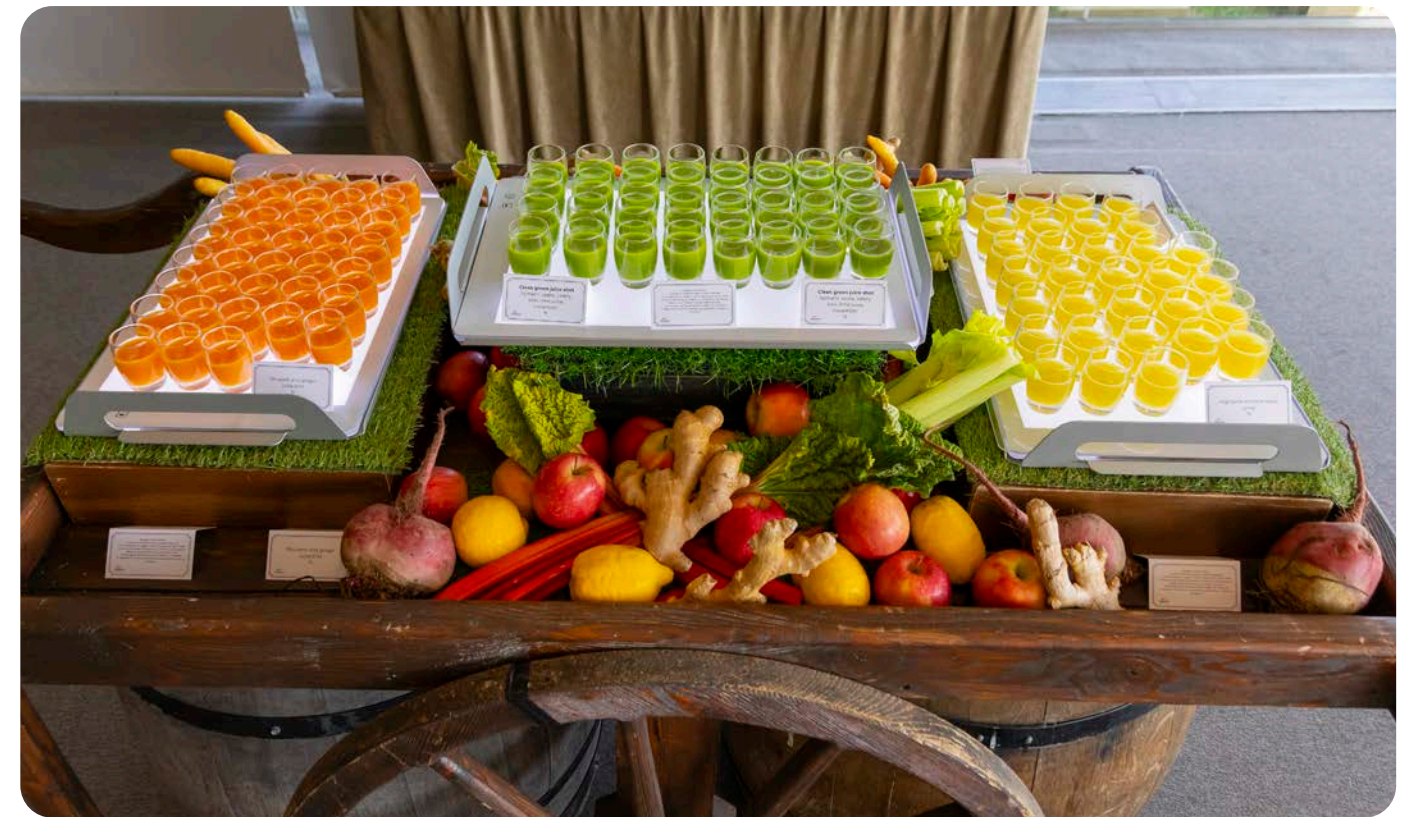


CHAPTER SIX

Designing a Breakfast Guests Remember

In this section

- Why quality cues matter
- The five quality cues
- Creating a hero breakfast item
- Key takeaway



A memorable breakfast does not need to be complicated

- ✓ It needs to give the guest something to notice.
- ✓ That might be excellent coffee. It might be warm pastries. It might be a signature cooked dish. It might be a local product. It might be the way the team welcomes guests into the room.
- ✓ Hotels do not need to improve everything at once.
- ✓ The biggest gains often come from improving the details guests notice most.

WHY QUALITY CUES MATTER

Guests now compare hotel breakfast with cafés, bakeries and brunch venues.

This is important because cafés and coffee shops are a strong part of the wider foodservice market.

Lumina Intelligence reported that UK coffee shops, cafés and dessert parlours reached **£6.1bn** turnover in 2024/25, up **4.1%** year on year (4).

While this is UK data, it is useful context for Ireland because it reflects the wider competitive set that shapes guest expectations around coffee, bakery and casual breakfast occasions.

The hotel is not only competing with the hotel next door – it is competing with the café down the street.



The five quality cues

① Coffee	Questions to ask
Coffee is one of the fastest ways to improve or damage the breakfast experience.	✓ Is our coffee good enough for a local guest to buy?
Guests notice poor coffee.	✓ How long does coffee take at peak?
They also notice slow coffee.	✓ Can guests take it away?
	✓ Is barista coffee included, charged or upgraded?
	✓ Does coffee continue after breakfast closes?
	✓ Is the machine capacity right for the volume?
	Ways to improve
	✓ Taste coffee against three local cafés
	✓ Review machine capacity
	✓ Train the team on consistency
	✓ Offer takeaway cups where appropriate
	✓ Add a lobby coffee point if footfall supports it
	✓ Make coffee visible, not hidden

② Bakery	Questions to ask
Bakery creates instant visual appeal.	✓ Are pastries fresh?
A tired pastry on a buffet does not meet modern guest expectations.	✓ Are they warm where possible?
	✓ Are they displayed well?
	✓ Could a local bakery partnership improve quality?
	✓ Do gluten-free guests have a good option?
	✓ Are we putting too much out at once?
	Ways to improve
	✓ Reduce the number of average items
	✓ Improve two or three bakery items
	✓ Use smaller replenishment trays
	✓ Refresh display more often
	✓ Trial a coffee and pastry offer after breakfast
	✓ Add local breads or soda bread where relevant

③ Eggs and cooked items	Questions to ask
Cooked breakfast still matters.	✓ Are eggs cooked fresh or held?
But quality drops quickly when food is held too long.	✓ Which hot items sit too long?
	✓ Which hot items are always wasted?
	✓ Can the kitchen handle made-to-order at peak?
	✓ Is the cooked breakfast memorable?
	Ways to improve
	✓ Add one signature egg dish
	✓ Keep made-to-order focused
	✓ Use batch cooking
	✓ Review hot buffet quality every 20 minutes
	✓ Remove low-value items that guests do not care about
	✓ Use better ingredients where they are most visible

④ Local produce	Questions to ask
Local produce gives breakfast a sense of place.	✓ Which local products genuinely improve breakfast?
It should be simple and visible.	✓ Are they visible to guests?
	✓ Are supplier stories short and clear?
	✓ Does local produce support the price point?
	Ways to improve
	✓ Highlight one or two suppliers.
	✓ Add a small table card or menu note.
	✓ Build a signature Irish breakfast.
	✓ Use local honey, yoghurt, eggs, cheese, preserves or smoked fish.
	✓ Avoid over-explaining.

⑤ Fresh and lighter choices	Questions to ask
Freshness matters to more guests than hotels sometimes assume.	✓ Is the fruit actually fresh and appealing?
PwC Ireland's consumer research supports this, with consumers showing intent to increase fresh fruit and vegetable intake (5).	✓ Are lighter choices as attractive as cooked items?
	✓ Are plant-based options treated seriously?
	✓ Are there good protein options?
	✓ Are we relying too heavily on sugar-led items?
	Ways to improve
	✓ Improve fruit quality and cutting.
	✓ Add a yoghurt and toppings station.
	✓ Add overnight oats.
	✓ Add seasonal porridge.
	✓ Offer one plant-based cooked option.
	✓ Add grains, seeds and nuts.
	✓ Make healthy options look generous, not punitive.

★ Creating a hero breakfast item

A hero item gives breakfast identity.

It could be:



- ✓ A signature Irish breakfast
- ✓ House-made soda bread
- ✓ Local honey and yoghurt
- ✓ Regional smoked fish
- ✓ Seasonal porridge
- ✓ A breakfast bap using local produce
- ✓ A bakery item from a local supplier
- ✓ A made-to-order omelette
- ✓ A weekend pancake special
- ✓ A breakfast board for two

The hero item does not need to be expensive.
It needs to be consistent, easy to explain and worth remembering.

What to avoid



- ✓ Adding more items without removing anything
- ✓ Introducing complicated dishes the kitchen cannot deliver
- ✓ Making the buffet bigger when quality is the issue
- ✓ Using local produce without telling the guest
- ✓ Offering plant-based dishes as an afterthought
- ✓ Letting coffee become the weakest part of the meal

Key takeaway



Do not try to make every part of breakfast special. Make the most visible and valued parts better.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Breakfast
as an Occasion

In this section

- What breakfast can become
- Moving beyond the 7am to 10am window
- All-day breakfast
- Brunch as a higher-value occasion
- Four-week brunch pilot
- Competing with cafés
- Key takeaway

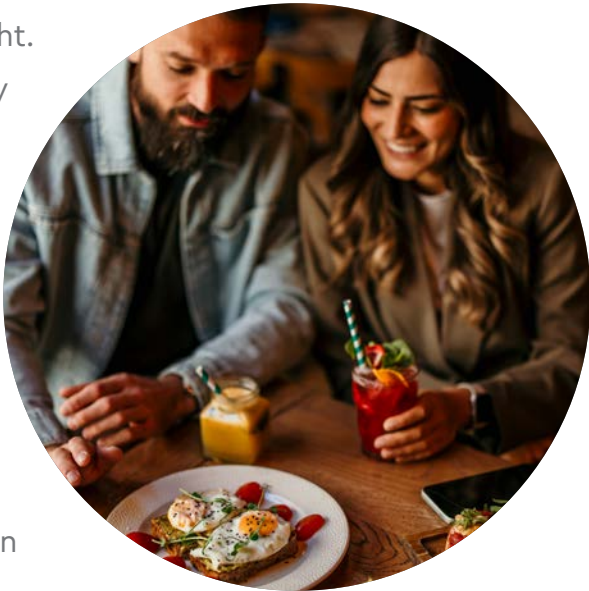
Breakfast is no longer only a hotel service between 7am and 10am

For many guests, breakfast is now a meal in its own right.

This shift has been shaped by cafés, bakeries, speciality coffee, brunch venues and all-day dining. Guests are used to choosing breakfast based on mood, timing, quality and occasion.

Kantar's foodservice trends data supports this shift, showing breakfast as the fastest-growing out-of-home occasion in 2024. Kantar's wider Appetite for Growth 2025 work also highlights the importance of flexible eating moments, which supports the idea that guests are no longer always eating around fixed meal occasions (6).

For hotels, this means breakfast should not only be seen as a buffet service. **It can become a product.**



WHAT BREAKFAST CAN BECOME

Occasion	Guest need	Hotel response
Early start	Speed and convenience	Early coffee, breakfast bag, express counter
Working/meeting breakfast	Quiet space, good coffee, light food	Business breakfast menu or meeting package
Leisure breakfast	Relaxed, generous, local	Later weekend breakfast and made-to-order dishes
Family breakfast	Ease and value	Family pricing and children's plates
Local breakfast	A reason to visit	Weekend brunch or local supplier specials
Mid-morning occasion	Coffee, bakery, light food	Lobby café or pastry counter
Brunch	Social, higher spend	Weekend brunch menu and premium drinks
All-day breakfast	Flexibility	Short breakfast section on the lounge menu

Moving beyond the 7am to 10am window

-  The traditional breakfast window still matters.
-  Many guests need breakfast during that period.
-  But it should not be the only way the hotel thinks about breakfast.

Hotels can explore:



- ✓ Early coffee for business guests
- ✓ Breakfast bags for early departures
- ✓ Late breakfast at weekends
- ✓ All-day breakfast dishes in the lounge
- ✓ Bakery-led lobby offers
- ✓ Mid-morning coffee and pastry
- ✓ Breakfast meetings
- ✓ Post-checkout brunch
- ✓ Weekend brunch for locals

ALL-DAY BREAKFAST

All-day breakfast can work well when the dishes are simple, popular and operationally easy.

The menu should be short. Possible dishes include:



- ✓ Breakfast bap
- ✓ Eggs on toast
- ✓ Smoked salmon and scrambled eggs
- ✓ Pancakes
- ✓ Granola bowl
- ✓ Avocado and eggs
- ✓ Porridge
- ✓ Coffee and pastry
- ✓ Breakfast board for two

The aim is not to create another full breakfast service.

 The aim is to extend the strongest breakfast items into other parts of the day.

Brunch as a higher-value occasion

Brunch gives hotels permission to stretch breakfast into a more social and higher-spend occasion.

It can support:

- ✓ Weekend trade
 - ✓ Local guests
 - ✓ Leisure guests
 - ✓ Celebration occasions
- ✓ Premium drinks
 - ✓ Family visits
 - ✓ Terrace or garden activation
 - ✓ Seasonal events



Brunch does not need to mean discounting.
It does not need to mean bottomless drinks.
 It can be quality-led, local, relaxed and profitable.



Four-week brunch pilot

Before launching a permanent brunch offer, test it.

WEEK 1: Build the offer



- ☐ Choose one day, such as Sunday
 - ☐ Create a short menu
 - ☐ Use existing ingredients where possible
 - ☐ Add one premium dish
- ☐ Add one premium drink
 - ☐ Agree pricing
 - ☐ Agree labour
 - ☐ Take simple photography

WEEK 2: Promote locally



- ☐ Add it to the website
 - ☐ Update Google Business Profile
 - ☐ Share on social media
- ☐ Tell local businesses
 - ☐ Invite local partners where appropriate
 - ☐ Make hotel guests aware before arrival

WEEK 3: Deliver and observe



- ☐ Track covers
 - ☐ Track spend per head
 - ☐ Track best-selling dishes
- ☐ Track kitchen pressure
 - ☐ Track waste
 - ☐ Collect guest comments

WEEK 4: Review



- ☐ Did it make money?
 - ☐ Did it attract locals?
 - ☐ Did it affect labour?
- ☐ Did it create operational pressure?
 - ☐ Did guests enjoy it?
 - ☐ Should it continue, change or stop?



 Competing with cafés

Hotels need to be honest about the local market.

Ask:

- ✔ Is our coffee better than the café nearby?
 - ✔ Is our bakery better?
 - ✔ Is our breakfast easier to buy?
 - ✔ Does our space feel welcoming?
- ✔ Do non-residents know they can come in?
 - ✔ Does the menu feel worth the price?
 - ✔ Is the hotel visible as a breakfast option?

If the answer is **NO**, guests may still sleep in the hotel but spend their morning money elsewhere.

Key takeaway

Breakfast should not be limited by the buffet or the clock. It should be shaped around the occasions guests are already willing to buy.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Making Breakfast *Work* Operationally

In this section

- Making breakfast growth work
- Re purposing waste
- Key takeaway



↗ Breakfast growth only works if the operation can deliver it

A good idea that adds too much labour, waste or complexity will not last. The strongest breakfast offers are simple to understand, easy to train, well costed and clear to execute.

Labour	Track
"Breakfast labour should follow demand." "Do not staff breakfast only by habit."	✓ Covers by 15-minute period ✓ Peak arrival times ✓ Queue points ✓ Coffee wait times ✓ Buffet replenishment pressure ✓ Table clearing pressure ✓ Kitchen ticket times ✓ Weekday versus weekend differences Ways to improve ✓ Put the strongest host on the door at peak. ✓ Separate clearing and coffee roles where possible. ✓ Staff weekends differently from weekdays. ✓ Prepare for group arrivals. ✓ Use pre-shift briefings. ✓ Remove low-value service steps that slow the team down.



EXAMPLES OF REPURPOSING WASTE

Food Waste Bread

Food Waste – Broccoli

Food Waste – Cauliflower

Food Waste – Chicken

Food Waste – Potatoes

Waste	Track waste by category
"Breakfast can produce avoidable waste because teams often prepare for what might happen, not what actually happens." "The EPA estimates that Ireland generated 835,000 tonnes of food waste in 2023. Restaurants and food services accounted for approximately 175,000 tonnes, or 21% of the total." "The EPA also notes that over 66% of food waste from the food services sector is avoidable, and that hotels have the highest level of food waste within food service."	✓ Hot cooked items ✓ Bakery ✓ Fruit ✓ Dairy ✓ Juices ✓ Cereals ✓ Prepared dishes ✓ Plate waste Ways to improve ✓ Use smaller trays ✓ Replenish more often ✓ Batch cook ✓ Reduce low-value items ✓ Review portion sizes ✓ Track the same items daily for two weeks ✓ Create prep levels by occupancy ✓ Repurpose waste in other dishes/cocktails ✓ Separate preparation waste, buffet waste and plate waste



"The kitchen needs a breakfast rhythm."

Production	Review
"Without this, quality drops and waste increases."	✓ What is prepared too early? ✓ What sits too long? ✓ What runs out? ✓ What is always left over? ✓ What slows the kitchen down? ✓ What creates complaints? ✓ What is difficult to replenish?
	Ways to improve ✓ Create prep sheets by occupancy level ✓ Use different prep levels for 50%, 70% and 90% occupancy ✓ Agree hot-holding standards ✓ Review buffet quality every 20 minutes ✓ Create a close-down waste report ✓ Keep made-to-order dishes limited during peak times



"Service can change the whole breakfast experience."

Service	Review
"The team should know what they are selling and why it matters."	✓ How guests are greeted ✓ How coffee is offered ✓ How tables are cleared ✓ How accessibility and dietary requirements are handled ✓ How non-residents are welcomed ✓ How breakfast is explained at check-in ✓ How complaints are captured
	Ways to improve ✓ Create a short breakfast briefing sheet ✓ Give reception a breakfast upsell line ✓ Give hosts a clear welcome standard ✓ Share guest feedback with the kitchen ✓ Brief the team on the hero item ✓ Make allergens and dietary information visible and easy to explain ✓ Ensure you have quality gluten free and fat free options available for dietary and health conditions



"Front office is central to breakfast conversion."

Front office	The team should know
"Reception should not be expected to sell something they cannot explain."	✓ Breakfast times ✓ Breakfast price ✓ What is included ✓ Where it is served ✓ What makes it worth buying ✓ Early departure options ✓ Children's pricing ✓ Premium options ✓ How to add breakfast to the stay
Marketing and visibility	Review
"Breakfast must be visible before guests can buy it."	✓ Website breakfast information ✓ Booking journey ✓ Pre-arrival emails ✓ In-room information ✓ Lift signage ✓ Lobby signage ✓ Menu boards ✓ Google Business Profile ✓ Social media ✓ Photography ✓ Local marketing
	Common mistakes
	✓ Treating every guest the same ✓ Offering too much choice without enough quality ✓ Not tracking waste ✓ Poor coffee ✓ Weak bakery ✓ No clear resident upsell ✓ No non-resident strategy ✓ No breakfast photography ✓ Pricing based on habit ✓ Ignoring the local café market ✓ Making brunch too complicated ✓ Not reviewing weekday and weekend demand separately

Key takeaway



Breakfast becomes more profitable when the offer, labour model, production flow, pricing and guest communication all work together.

CHAPTER NINE

The 90-Day Breakfast Action Plan

In this section

- What to measure
- How to improve
- How to grow
- Key takeaway

🔄 Hotels do not need to change everything at once

The best approach is to measure first, improve the most visible issues, then test new revenue opportunities.

DAYS 1 TO 30: MEASURE

Start with the facts.

🔍 Track:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☒ Sleepers | ☒ Breakfast revenue |
| ☒ Resident breakfast covers | ☒ Food cost |
| ☒ Capture rate | ☒ Labour cost |
| ☒ Paid breakfast covers | ☒ Waste by category |
| ☒ Inclusive breakfast covers | ☒ Guest feedback |
| ☒ Non-resident covers | ☒ Local café pricing |
| ☒ Average breakfast spend | ☒ Website and booking visibility |



OUTPUT AT THE END OF 30 DAYS

Create a one-page breakfast performance snapshot.

It should include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☒ Current breakfast capture rate | ☒ Current price position |
| ☒ Paid versus inclusive covers | ☒ Main operational pressure points |
| ☒ Average spend | ☒ Main missed revenue opportunities |
| ☒ Top five wasted items | |
| ☒ Top five guest comments | |
| ☒ Top three local competitors | |





DAYS 31 TO 60: IMPROVE

Choose three to five practical actions.

Possible actions:



- ✓ Improve coffee speed or quality
 - ✓ Upgrade bakery
 - ✓ Add one hero dish
 - ✓ Review buffet layout
 - ✓ Remove low-value, high-waste items
 - ✓ Improve breakfast photography
 - ✓ Add breakfast to pre-arrival communication
- ✓ Create reception upsell wording
 - ✓ Add one early departure option
 - ✓ Add one local supplier story
 - ✓ Review children's pricing
 - ✓ Introduce smaller batch replenishment
 - ✓ Create weekend-specific breakfast planning

OUTPUT AT THE END OF 60 DAYS

Create:



- ✓ Revised breakfast offer
 - ✓ Updated menu or buffet plan
 - ✓ Updated pricing
 - ✓ Team briefing sheet
- ✓ Guest communication improvements
 - ✓ Waste reduction actions
 - ✓ Front office upsell approach

DAYS 61 TO 90: GROW

Test one or two revenue ideas.

Possible pilots:



- ✓ Weekend brunch
 - ✓ Coffee and pastry counter
 - ✓ Non-resident breakfast offer
 - ✓ Business breakfast package
 - ✓ All-day breakfast section in the lounge
- ✓ Breakfast meeting package
 - ✓ Family breakfast offer
 - ✓ Premium breakfast upgrade
 - ✓ Local supplier breakfast special

WHAT TO MEASURE DURING THE PILOT

- ✓ Covers
 - ✓ Spend per head
 - ✓ Food cost
 - ✓ Labour impact
 - ✓ Waste
- ✓ Guest feedback
 - ✓ Repeat demand
 - ✓ Team feedback
 - ✓ Operational pressure
 - ✓ Revenue by sales channel



END OF 90 DAYS: DECIDE

At the end of the 90 days, do not keep everything.

Make clear decisions.

Decision	Meaning
Keep	It worked commercially and operationally
Change	It showed potential but needs adjustment
Stop	It added cost or complexity without enough return
Test again	It needs a longer or better-timed trial

Key takeaway



Small, measured changes can improve breakfast performance quickly. The aim is not to do more. The aim is to make breakfast work harder.

Summary Takeaways



- 1 Breakfast is one of the most familiar hotel services. That familiarity can make it easy to overlook
- 2 The opportunity is bigger than the buffet
- 3 Hotels should understand who is eating, who is not eating and what would make more guests spend. They should choose the right format, price it properly, improve the details guests notice and look beyond the traditional morning service window
- 4 Breakfast can be a resident meal, a local occasion, a working breakfast, a brunch offer, a coffee opportunity and a stronger expression of the hotel's food and beverage identity
- 5 The hotels that improve breakfast will not always be the ones that add more choice. They will be the ones that understand their guests, control their costs, reduce waste, improve quality where it matters and make breakfast easier to buy
- 6 The opportunity is not simply to serve breakfast. The opportunity is to make breakfast work harder



APPENDIX

Practical Tools to Analyse Breakfast

In this section

- Tool 1: Breakfast Capture Rate Calculator
- Tool 2: Breakfast Format Decision Checklist
- Tool 3: Breakfast Waste Tracker
- Tool 4: Breakfast Guest Lens
- Tool 5: Breakfast Occasion Planner



Tool 1: Breakfast Capture Rate Calculator

FORMULA

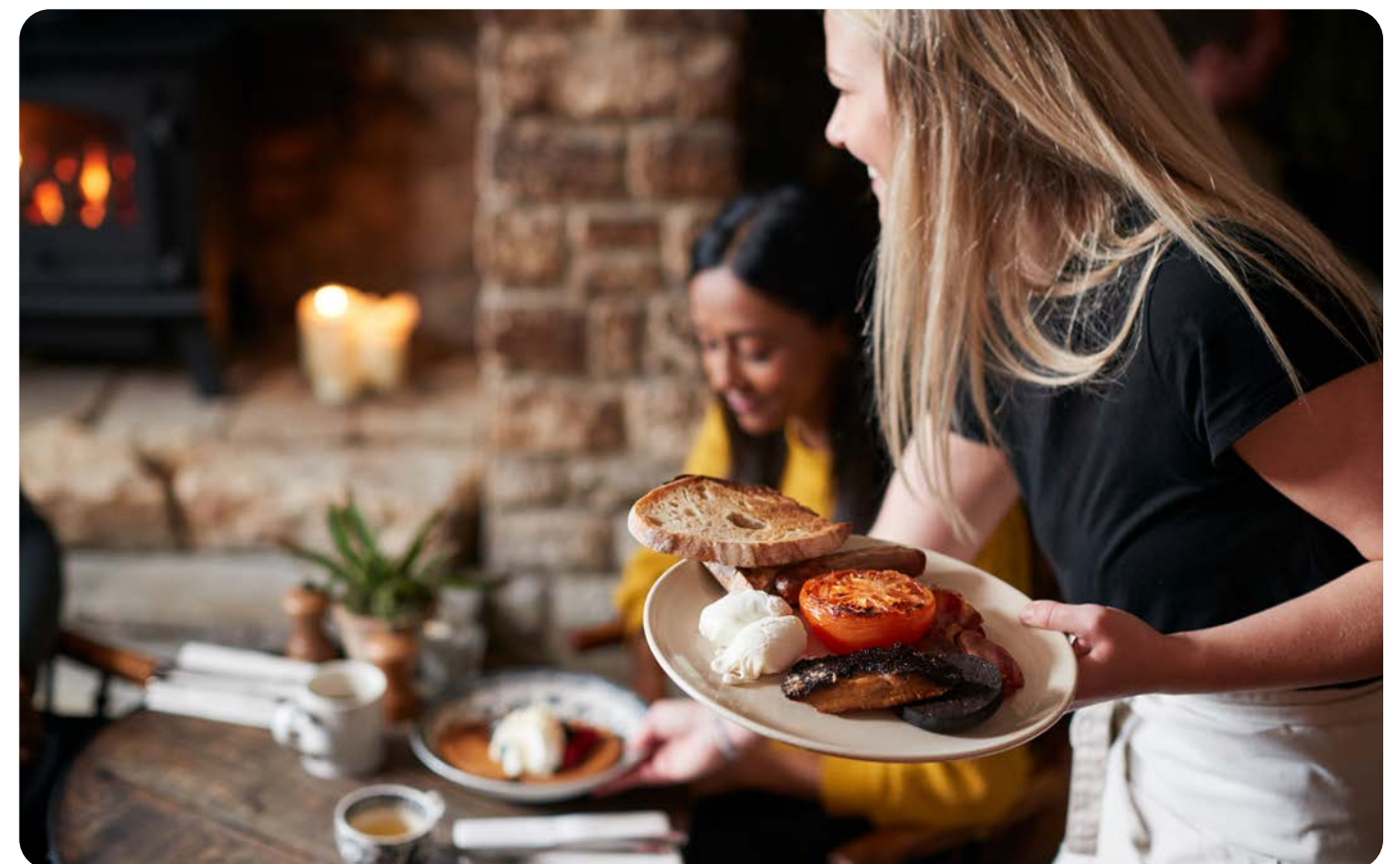
Resident breakfast covers ÷ number of sleepers x 100

EXAMPLE

108 resident breakfast covers ÷ **180** sleepers x **100** = **60%** capture rate

Follow-up questions?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☑ Who did not eat? | ☑ Was the timing a barrier? |
| ☑ Why did they not eat? | ☑ Did they leave for a local café? |
| ☑ Did they know breakfast was available? | ☑ Could we have captured them earlier? |
| ☑ Was the price a barrier? | |



✓ **Tool 2: Breakfast Format Decision Checklist**

Use this checklist to understand which breakfast format is likely to work best for your hotel.

Score each statement from 1 to 5.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = partly true
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree



Area	Score
Guest volume is high enough for a full buffet	
Kitchen can manage made-to-order items	
Labour can support table service	
Waste is currently controlled	
Coffee service is fast enough	
Non-resident demand exists	
Weekend demand differs from weekday demand	
Guests value experience over speed	
Local café competition is strong	
Breakfast price supports the format	

HOW TO READ YOUR SCORE

Add up your total score.

Total score	What it suggests	Possible breakfast direction
12 to 24	Your current breakfast may need simplifying. The business may not have the volume, labour or demand to support a complex format.	Continental, grab-and-go, coffee and bakery, or a simplified buffet.
25 to 39	Your hotel may need a more flexible model. One format may not work across every day or guest type.	Hybrid buffet, express breakfast, weekend enhancements, or a small à la carte layer.
40 to 52	Your hotel has stronger potential to create a more experience-led breakfast offer.	Hybrid buffet with made-to-order, premium breakfast dishes, brunch, or local breakfast offers.
53 to 60	Your hotel may be ready to treat breakfast as a wider commercial occasion, not just a resident service.	All-day breakfast, brunch, coffee and bakery counter, non-resident breakfast, or a more developed à la carte offer.

WHICH OPTION IS PRESENTING STRONGEST?

Use the score patterns below to guide the decision.

A full buffet may be strongest if:

- ✓ Guest volume is high.
- ✓ Most guests arrive within a short peak period.
- ✓ Speed matters more than experience.
- ✓ The team can replenish and clear quickly.
- ✓ Waste is measured and controlled.



🚩 **Best fit:** high-volume hotels, group-led hotels, resorts, airport hotels or hotels with compressed breakfast demand.

🚩 **Watch out for:** waste, tired presentation, food sitting too long and poor perceived quality.

A hybrid buffet may be strongest if:

- ✓ Guests want choice, but also value freshness.
- ✓ The hotel has good volume but wants to improve quality.
- ✓ The kitchen can manage a small number of made-to-order items.
- ✓ The team can explain what is included.
- ✓ Waste from the current buffet needs reducing.



Best fit: full-service hotels, leisure hotels, quality-led properties and hotels with mixed business and leisure demand.

Watch out for: too many made-to-order items, slow service and kitchen pressure at peak times.

À la carte may be strongest if:

- ✓ Guest volume is lower or more controlled.
- ✓ Guests expect a more premium experience.
- ✓ The kitchen can manage dishes to order.
- ✓ The front-of-house team can support table service.
- ✓ The hotel wants better portion control and less buffet waste.



Best fit: boutique hotels, luxury hotels, smaller properties or hotels where breakfast is part of the experience.

Watch out for: slower service, higher labour demand and frustrated guests during peak periods.

Grab-and-go may be strongest if:

- ✓ The hotel has early departures.
- ✓ Guests are time-poor.
- ✓ Business guests need speed.
- ✓ Breakfast capture is low because guests do not have time to sit down.
- ✓ The hotel has lobby space or a visible collection point.



Best fit: city hotels, airport hotels, corporate hotels, event-led hotels and properties with early guest movement.

Watch out for: poor presentation, weak product quality and making the offer feel like a compromise.

Coffee and bakery may be strongest if:

- ✓ Guests leave the hotel for coffee.
- ✓ The lobby has good footfall.
- ✓ There is local demand nearby.
- ✓ Non-residents could be encouraged to enter.
- ✓ The hotel has strong coffee, bakery or supplier partnerships..



Best fit: town-centre hotels, lifestyle hotels, hotels with street frontage, hotels near offices or hotels in strong local café markets.

Watch out for: treating it like a side table instead of a proper retail offer.

All-day breakfast or brunch may be strongest if:

- ✓ Weekend demand differs from weekday demand.
- ✓ Leisure guests arrive later.
- ✓ The local market supports brunch or café-style eating.
- ✓ The hotel has a lounge, terrace, restaurant or café space that can work beyond breakfast.
- ✓ There is an opportunity to attract non-residents.



Best fit: leisure hotels, destination hotels, lifestyle hotels, coastal hotels, city hotels and properties with local market appeal.

Watch out for: adding too many dishes, under-pricing the offer or creating a service that the kitchen cannot deliver consistently.

FINAL DECISION PROMPT

Before choosing the format, answer these five questions:

1. What do our guests need most: speed, choice, quality, flexibility or experience?
2. Where are we currently losing money: waste, labour, low capture or poor pricing?
3. Which format can our team deliver consistently at peak time?
4. Which format gives us the best chance to grow revenue?
5. Does the same format work every day, or do weekdays and weekends need different thinking?

Key takeaway



The highest score does not automatically mean the most complex format is right. The best breakfast model is the one that matches guest behaviour, protects margin and can be delivered consistently by the team.

 Tool 3: Breakfast Waste Tracker

Track for two weeks.

Category	Prepared	Sold or Used	Wasted	Cost (€)	Reason	Action
Hot items						
Bakery						
Fruit						
Dairy						
Juices						
Cereals						
Prepared dishes						

 Tool 4: Breakfast Guest Lens

Use this before changing the offer.

Guest type	Current offer works?	What is missing?	Action
Business guest			
Leisure guest			
Family guest			
Wellness-led guest			
Local guest			
Early departure guest			



★ **Tool 5: Breakfast Occasion Planner**

Use this to test new revenue occasions.

Occasion	Target guest	Offer	Price	Channel	Measure
Weekend brunch					
Coffee and pastry					
Business breakfast					
All-day breakfast					
Breakfast meeting					
Early departure					
Prepared dishes					



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