



# Applied Methodology for the Reengineering and Standardization of Manual Culinary Processes: From the Chef-Driven Kitchen to a High-Load Chain Format (the Laghman Express Model)

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## Abstract

*This article examines an applied methodology for reengineering and standardizing manual culinary processes during the transition from an auteur, chef-driven model to a high-volume chain format, using Laghman Express as a case study. The relevance of the study is conditioned by the need to scale authentic ethnic cuisines amid a shortage of qualified personnel, rising operating costs, and the U.S. market's demand for consistent quality at high service speed. The purpose of the article is to develop and provide theoretical substantiation for a methodology that enables formalizing and replicating complex manual techniques without forfeiting the product's gustatory identity. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the proposed model, which combines the decomposition of culinary competencies, the adaptive standardization of process physics, the conveyor-based organization of a kitchen without semifinished products, and a management system that synchronizes staff motivation with quality standards. It is concluded that translating chefly intuition into measurable parameters, station-based certification, an open kitchen, and multifactor KPI metrics enables overcoming scaling barriers, increasing productivity, and preserving product authenticity in a chain format. The article will be useful to HoReCa researchers, operations managers, restaurateurs, and developers of scalable gastronomic concepts.*

**Keywords:** Culinary Process Reengineering, Standardization, HoReCa, Ethnic Cuisine, Laghman Express, Operational Management.

## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary food service industry in the United States is undergoing a period of transformation driven by technological advances, a shift in the labor paradigm, and the profound diversification of consumer preferences (Lee et al., 2024). Under conditions in which the New York market functions as a global incubator of culinary concepts, traditional ethnic cuisines, once regarded as niche, are receiving impetus for large-scale development (Lane & Opazo, 2023). However, the principal problem in moving from the format of a single authorial establishment to a high-load chain lies in the critical dependence on bearers of unique mastery, whose skills are difficult to formalize and replicate.

The purpose was to develop a new methodology which theoretically supports the design of a systematic tool to transfer non-automated cooking processes into an optimized, high-speed chain enterprise. The conventional method of standardizing work processes often leads to a loss of quality. The Laghman Express model represents the digitization of

both the physics of the process and the psychology of labor (Zhang, 2025). The evidentiary base of the methodology rests on the successful functioning of three locations, a total staff exceeding 100 employees, and the servicing of guest traffic generating thousands of reviews with a U.S.-market-high rating of 4.9.

The methodological foundation of the study is grounded in the principles of Lean Six Sigma 4.0, the theory of constraints, and the ergonomics of high-load systems (Macias-Aguayo et al., 2022). The work consistently unfolds the stages of engineering analysis of the product, the design of a conveyor-based kitchen architecture without the use of semifinished products, and the construction of a management system that minimizes micromanagement by synchronizing motivation and standards. This methodology comprises both operational procedures and an integral philosophy for transforming the chef's intellectual capital into a scalable financial asset.

## CHAPTER 1. DIGITIZING TRADITION: THE ENGINEERING OF AN AUTHENTIC PRODUCT

The reengineering process in culinary production

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begins with a deep analysis of the product’s structure. The traditional chef-driven model is characterized by a syncretism of functions, wherein one master performs all stages of preparation, relying on intuition and accumulated experience (Ekincek & Aktaş, 2022). Creating a high-load chain requires transitioning to the analytical deconstruction of the recipe.

### Separation of Competencies: The Layer Matrix

It is advisable to partition the cooking process into functional

levels of complexity, to optimize the human resources and to ensure a constant quality (Kovalchuk, 2025). This gives rise to the Layer Matrix, which divides the operations into the stable layer and the craft layer. Tasks within the stable layer, such as peeling and cutting vegetables, cutting meat, or preparing dough, can be easily systematized, while tasks in the craft layer, such as hand-stretching the noodles using the laghman technique, are the defining processes of the dish. Table 1 presents the distribution matrix for production layers and competency requirements.

**Table 1.** Matrix of distribution of production layers and requirements for competencies according to the Laghman Express model

Production Layer Type	Nature of Operations	Formalization Method	Qualification Requirements	Contribution to Product Value
Stable Layer, Foundational	Calibrated slicing, primary processing, base sauces	Strict process cards, g/mm	Line Cook	Ensures volume and structure
Craft Layer, Artisanal	Hand-stretching dough, wok temperature control	Visual benchmarks and texture physics	Station Lead	Shapes the unique flavor
Assembly Layer, Finalization	Portioning, garnishing, packaging	Photo standards and time slots	Dispatch Operator	Speed and visual presentation

To transfer this model to an operating laghman outlet, the dish should first be decomposed into operations by layer, and a distinct control method should be assigned to each layer. Into the stable layer should be placed dough mixed to a fixed hydration, calibrated vegetable slicing, meat preparation by weight, and the boiling of the base sauce for the specified time and temperature. Then, for each action, specify a tolerance, execution time, and defect indicator. For laghman, this means that the line cook receives an already predictable foundation in which fluctuations in gravy thickness, cut size, and portion yield are eliminated. The craft layer should be retained only where the dish’s recognizability emerges, namely in noodle stretching and in heat control during the final integration of components.

In practice, this is implemented through a short cycle of shift launch and training focused on a single dish. First, over several days, the team rehearses only one reference laghman with predetermined parameters for flavor, noodle density, meat mass, sauce volume, and total assembly time. Thereafter, the shift supervisor compares each portion to the benchmark for appearance, noodle elasticity, and service speed, immediately eliminating discrepancies by adjusting the action card. If flow increases, the volume of prep in the stable layer is increased while preserving a narrow circle of employees authorized to perform noodle stretching and final stir-frying. Such an approach allows the taste of laghman to remain recognizable even under high load and during rapid onboarding of new employees.

This division allows the enterprise to form narrowly specialized teams in which each participant focuses on a particular operation to automate. This reduces staff cognitive

load and minimizes the risk of errors during peak load periods (Patel & Naini, 2025).

### Standardizing the Physics of the Process: Observations from Practice

The standardization of manual labor is impossible without accounting for external factors that affect raw materials. For dough for hand-stretching, air temperature and humidity in the kitchen zone are critical. A traditional master feels the dough, but for a chain format, this feeling must be digitized. Observations from Laghman Express practice indicate that a 10% change in humidity requires a 2–3% adjustment in dough hydration to preserve its rheological properties.

Even when the formula remains unchanged, dough reacts to the environment as though it were a hidden technological parameter. Humid air reduces the rate of moisture loss from the surface of the piece, intensifies the sensation of softness, and increases the risk that the mass will become excessively pliable already in the first minutes of stretching. In such a situation, the previous water volume in the mix may create a false sense of proper consistency, although in practice the dough loses structural elasticity more quickly, adheres more strongly to the hands, and holds uniform elongation less effectively. Drier air initiates the opposite scenario. The surface dries more rapidly, the outer layer begins to contract, and internal tension is distributed less evenly. As a result, the dough seems denser, resistance to stretching increases, and the risk of tearing shifts from the final stage to the early one. Recent studies confirm that water absorption, the mobility of bound moisture, and the extensibility of the dough system change significantly with shifts in hydration conditions and environmental composition. Consequently, the adjustment

of water content and the resting regime must be considered an obligatory part of the standard (Sun et al., 2023).

The temperature of the kitchen zone exerts an even deeper influence on the process because it changes the rate of swelling of protein fractions, the tempo of internal structure formation, and the moment at which the dough enters the working window of plasticity. At elevated temperatures, maturation proceeds faster, the mass reaches a workable state earlier, and exits it just as quickly if the cook delays dividing or stretching. At lower temperatures, hydration slows, internal bonds retain stiffness for longer, and even with a formally correct recipe, the dough may remain tight, spring back more strongly than expected, and require either more water or a longer pause after mixing.

The intensity of mechanical impact also has additional significance. Mixing speed and the order of water addition can alter the final structure nearly as perceptibly as the recipe itself, since they determine how fully the flour binds moisture and how energy is distributed within the mass. This means that, for hand-stretching, adaptation must encompass three variables at once. An adjustment is required for air humidity, room temperature, and the current mixing dynamics. Such an approach better preserves stable density and renders the results reproducible across shifts and locations (Parenti et al., 2021).

The methodology provides for the introduction of adaptive recipe protocols. This means that the basic process card is supplemented with a table of coefficients, allowing the senior station cook to adjust the mixing process based on current environmental conditions. Thus, the physics of the process

becomes predictable, and the result becomes independent of the cook's subjective condition.

For manual stretching of laghman a card with pre-prescribed environmental corrections should be implemented. At the start of each shift, the senior cook records the temperature in the kitchen zone, the air humidity, and the mixing duration, after which the appropriate correction for water and resting time is selected. If the air has become more humid, the proportion of water in the dough is reduced, and the pause before stretching is shortened so that the mass does not drift into stickiness and slackness. If the air is drier, water is increased, and resting time is lengthened so that the dough can develop extensibility and not tear at an early stage. This order is especially important for laghman, where an error of just a few percent in water content rapidly manifests as uneven noodle thickness, loss of elasticity, and a slowing of the entire line.

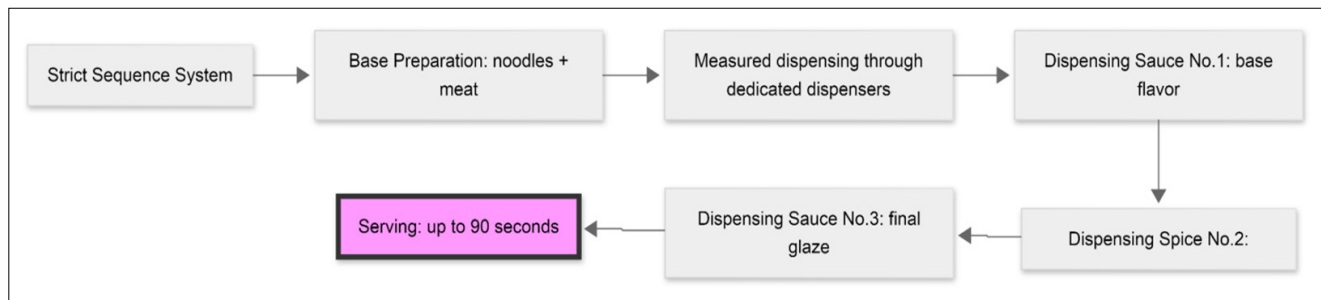
In practice, this is conveniently formatted as a single-station shift protocol. The cook mixes a small control batch, performs a short trial stretch, and checks three indicators: whether the strand stretches evenly, whether the surface adheres to the palms, and whether the dough holds length without sagging. Thereafter, only one corrective action per cycle is introduced: either water is added to the next batch, or resting time is extended, or mixing intensity is reduced. For a laghman outlet, such a regime yields reproducible noodles even under abrupt weather changes, accelerates the training of new employees, and reduces dough losses previously written off due to tearing or excessive softness. More detailed recommendations on the environmental regulation of the Lagman test stretching process are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Environmental Adjustment Guidelines for Lagman Dough Stretching

<b>Environmental Condition</b>	<b>Water Adjustment to Base Standard</b>	<b>Resting Time Adjustment</b>	<b>Mixing Adjustment</b>	<b>Expected Effect During Lagman Stretching</b>
Humidity 10% above normal	reduce by 2-3%	shorten by 5-10 minutes	mix more gently	dough is less sticky and holds length better
Humidity 10% below normal	increase by 2-3%	extend by 10-15 minutes	mix 1-2 minutes longer	dough stretches more easily and the risk of early tearing is reduced
Temperature 5 degrees above normal	reduce by 1-2%	shorten by 5 minutes	no increase in mixing intensity	dough does not become excessively soft
Temperature 5 degrees below normal	increase by 1-2%	extend by 10 minutes	mix more intensively	dough reaches working condition faster
Dough mass is tight and springy after mixing	increase by 1%	extend by 5-10 minutes	prolong mixing by 1 minute	stretching becomes more even
Dough mass quickly becomes sticky and loose	reduce by 1-2%	shorten by 5 minutes	weaken mixing	noodles retain their shape better

### **The From Under the Knife System**

A key innovative solution in the Laghman Express model was the rejection of intuitive addition of spices and sauces during cooking. Traditionally, the cook adds ingredients to taste, leading to variability in the final product and wasted time from unnecessary movements. Within the framework of reengineering, a strict sequence system was introduced, in which all sauces and spices are dispensed through special dispensers in a predetermined order (see figure 1).



**Fig. 1.** Scheme of the conveyor algorithm for preparing a dish from under the knife

For the From Under the Knife system to function in a laghman outlet, all flavor-forming additions should be translated in advance into fixed doses, and a single unchanging assembly route should be assigned to the cook. First, the ready noodles, the meat base, and the vegetable component, in the specified mass, are delivered to the station. Then the cook introduces the first sauce, which establishes the saline and fatty base; after this, a spiced component is added to unfold the aroma; the dish is then completed with the final sauce, which binds the surface of the noodles and meat into a unified taste. Such a sequence removes the chaotic nature of movements, reduces pauses at the work surface, and helps preserve a consistent laghman profile across all portions, even under a dense stream of orders.

For practical implementation, it is sufficient to compile a simple sequence map and attach the time for each action. If a cook's laghman turns out too sharp at one time and too pale in flavor at another, the cause is sought first of all in a violation of sequence, dispensing volume, and the point at which the addition is introduced. Therefore, at the beginning of the shift, a control portion is prepared according to the benchmark. Flavor, noodle gloss, and aromatic saturation are checked, and only then is the line launched with the set of dispensers that has passed verification. For laghman, this is especially important because the displacement of even one step changes how the sauce is absorbed into the noodles, how the meat unfolds, and how integrally the dish is perceived in the first seconds after service.

This transformation enabled reducing the average dish service time from 15–20 minutes to a fast-food standard of under 10 minutes, while preserving the restaurant-quality preparation from under the knife. Optimizing the cook's movements by minimizing unnecessary displacement increased the throughput of a single station by 40%.

## CHAPTER 2. KITCHEN ARCHITECTURE: A CONVEYOR WITHOUT SEMIFINISHED PRODUCTS

The architectural solution for kitchen space in a high-volume chain must ensure maximum flow efficiency with minimal time spent transferring the product between stages. The Laghman Express concept is based on creating an open, transparent production line in which product freshness is part of the value proposition.

### Auditing Bottlenecks During Peak Hours

Applying the theory of constraints to a restaurant kitchen enables identification of the elements limiting the system's overall productivity. In laghman production, the hand-stretching station is traditionally the bottleneck, requiring significant physical effort and time. Analysis of Laghman Express data showed that without optimization, this station can process no more than 40 portions per hour, which is insufficient to meet peak demand.

To relieve this constraint, a dynamic buffer system was introduced. A portion of the prep is produced immediately before peak hour under strict timing control, allowing the assembly line to function at maximum speed without waiting for the stretching of each individual portion. Importantly, this does not convert the product into a semifinished one, since the lifetime of the prep in the buffer does not exceed 20 minutes.

In full seating and catering operations, the load is distributed through a rigid separation of operations based on time-criticality. The bottleneck must be freed from everything that can be moved into pre-shift preparation without loss of quality. Dough mixing, primary fermentation, division into portions, weight equalization of dough pieces, preparation of sauces and broth, and slicing are all performed in advance under strict control to ensure a predictable shelf life. This reduces pressure on the line at peak demand and preserves the capacity of the hand-stretching station for the actions that truly determine the dish's final texture and appearance.

Operations with a short quality window must remain in the zone of immediate execution. Hand-stretching, final noodle finishing, integration with broth, heating to the required temperature, the introduction of fresh components, and final assembly require direct-service mode, because it is precisely here that the product most rapidly loses its required properties when delayed. If too large a share of these actions is moved forward prematurely, the line will obtain an illusory gain in speed, whereas in fact losses will increase in consistency, elasticity, and service stability. Therefore, each recipe element requires its own threshold for permissible waiting, beyond which the prep no longer meets quality standards.

The kitchen must manage flow density through the buffer. Before an expected peak, a limited stock of components with

a predetermined lifetime is formed, after which production proceeds in short series, with calibration maintained against dining room load and actual service speed. Even dough parameters in such a model require adaptation to the current environment. With increased air humidity, the prep retains its softness more quickly and reaches a workable state earlier. In dry air, the outer layer densifies more quickly. Consequently, the mixing and hydration regime must be corrected in advance. Such a distribution of load allows productivity to be preserved without compromising quality, because only those elements that withstand control by time, temperature, and structure are prepared in advance. Everything determining final freshness remains in the present moment.

To relieve overload at the laghman hand-stretching station during peak hours, the maximum shift throughput should be defined in advance, and production should be built around it. Twenty to thirty minutes before the expected rush, a limited buffer of prep with a rigidly specified lifetime should be prepared, for example, for 12–15 portions, after which it is replenished in small series as actual depletion occurs. Every few minutes, the shift supervisor should compare the remaining buffer, the tempo of incoming orders, and the service time to launch the next series in a timely manner and avoid line stoppages or the accumulation of prep whose quality window has expired. For laghman, this yields a direct

effect because hand-stretching ceases to inhibit the entire flow, while the noodles retain working elasticity and uniform texture at the moment of assembly.

In practice, for laghman it is useful to divide all actions according to the criterion of permissible waiting and to move ahead of peak hour only those stages that are stable over time. Dough mixing, dough division, weight equalization, preparation of sauces, broth, and slicing are performed before the rush. Noodle stretching, final heating, integration with broth, and assembly are maintained in immediate execution mode. If flow accelerates during the shift, the supervisor first increases the frequency of short buffer series, then reallocates personnel from auxiliary operations to assembly and service. Such an order helps maintain laghman within the target service time without failures in density, temperature, and appearance.

### Conveyor Assembly

The ergonomics of kitchen stations are designed to eliminate personnel flow crossings. The traditional kitchen work triangle in the Laghman Express model is transformed into a straight production line. Each station, from dough mixing to final packaging, is arranged sequentially. Table 3 shows a comparative analysis of productivity and ergonomics in traditional and conveyor kitchens.

**Table 3.** Comparative analysis of productivity and ergonomics of traditional and conveyor kitchens

Efficiency parameter	Traditional layout	Laghman Express assembly line	Impact on operating results
Product movement distance, m	12–18	4–6	35% reduction in assembly time
Number of staff path crossings	High, injury risk	None, zoning	Improved safety and speed
Throughput, portions/hour	45–60	110–130	Higher revenue per square foot
Training time per position, days	14–21	3–5	Lower onboarding costs

For conveyor assembly of laghman to deliver a real gain in speed, the kitchen must be arranged as a single straight chain of actions with a predetermined order of product transfer. First comes the dough and prep section. Then comes the hand-stretching section. After it comes the broth, meat, and sauce section. At the end, there is the final assembly and packaging point. For laghman, this is especially important because the dish rapidly loses the required elasticity and temperature during unnecessary movements. If the cook turns around, searches for the necessary ingredient, or intersects with another employee, the delay is immediately reflected in noodle density, broth temperature, and service integrity.

In practice, before launching the outlet, the path of each portion from dough to service should be measured and all superfluous movements eliminated. Each employee should work only within the bounds of the assigned station and pass the laghman further down the line without returns and counterflow crossings. For peak hour, it is useful to define in advance the maximum time for each operation. For example, noodle stretching occupies one fixed interval,

integration with broth a second, and packaging a third. If the line begins to slow, the transfer section between stations is checked first, then the distance to the sauces, and then the load density at the final assembly. Such an order makes it possible to identify the overload point quickly and restore rhythm without lowering quality.

For laghman, it is most convenient to introduce conveyor assembly through one reference route of the portion and one reference tempo of the shift. At first, over several days, the team rehearses only the direct transfer of prep along the line and achieves identical timing at each section. Thereafter, the permanent arrangement of inventory, containers, broth, meat, sauces, and packaging is fixed. If the hand-stretching station begins to outpace assembly, the end of the line is reinforced. If assembly outpaces stretching, the density of prep before that point is increased. For laghman, such a scheme is useful because each portion traverses the same path, and flavor, temperature, and appearance depend less on accidental movements and shift fatigue. Figure 2 shows the optimal station arrangement and the product flow.

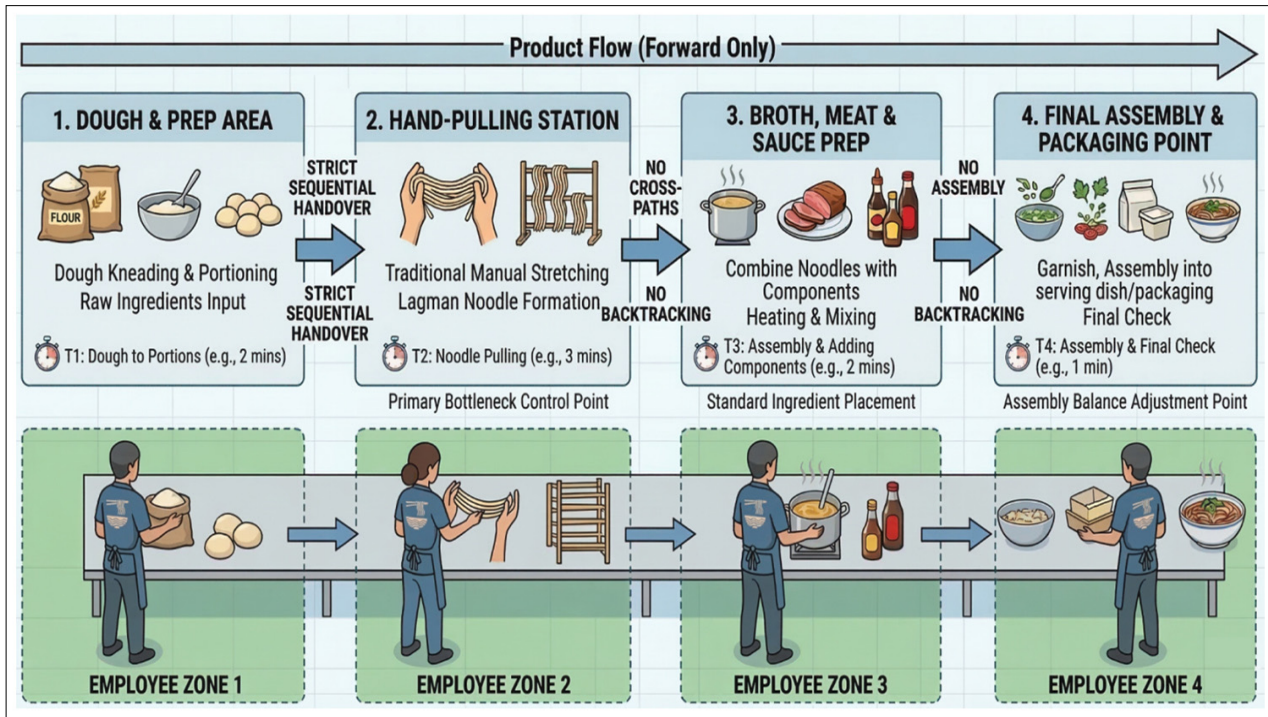


Fig. 2. Optimal station arrangement and the product flow

Such an architecture allows personnel to work in a state of flow, where each movement is synchronized with the overall rhythm of production. This significantly reduces physical and mental exhaustion among employees, as confirmed by studies on the human factor in the food industry (Lippert et al., 2021).

### The Open Kitchen as an Instrument of Trust

The integration of visually compelling manual processes into the guest's field of view performs a dual function: marketing and control. Under U.S. market conditions, where skepticism toward ingredient quality in fast-food chains is increasing, the open kitchen at Laghman Express serves as evidence of authenticity and freshness. The guest becomes a witness to how a piece of dough is transformed within minutes into the thinnest noodles, thereby creating an emotional attachment to the brand.

From an operational point of view, the open kitchen is a tool for staff self-control. The public nature of the process compels employees to adhere strictly to standards of appearance, hygiene, and sequence of actions. This excludes the possibility of hidden violations of the technological process and forms a culture of professional pride.

To strengthen trust in laghman, the open kitchen should showcase precisely those stages that best demonstrate freshness and manual labor, bringing them into the guest's visual field. First and foremost, these are noodle stretching, brief finishing in the working zone, and final portion assembly. The guest must see that laghman is assembled from a living process, where the dough passes through the cook's hands, the noodles are stretched at the moment of order, and

the broth, meat, and vegetable components are integrated without prolonged waiting. Such a format is especially useful for laghman because the preparation itself becomes proof of quality, while the spectacle of manual stretching heightens the dish's memorability and increases the guest's readiness to trust the flavor even before the first spoonful.

For practical implementation, it is sufficient to design the line so that the guest has a direct view of those operations most sensitive to trust, while simultaneously fixing a strict visual standard of behavior for the staff. Cooks must work at a unified pace, maintain a clean surface, preserve precision of movement, and observe an unchanging assembly sequence. If the guest sees that laghman is stretched, assembled, and served according to a single, intelligible scenario each time, trust begins to build around repeatability. In the case of laghman, this is especially valuable because process transparency makes the manual technique part of the outlet's reputation and reduces doubts about the dish's freshness, authenticity, and quality.

### CHAPTER 3. BUILDING A SYSTEM FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF MASTERY AND MANAGEMENT

The scaling of a concept founded on manual labor requires the creation of an effective mechanism for skill reproduction. The Laghman Express methodology proposes reconceptualizing training as a continuous part of the production cycle.

#### Rejecting the Search for Ready-Made Stars

The traditional approach of hiring chefs with extensive experience often proves counterproductive when scaling a chain. Experienced masters bring established habits and their own vision of the recipe, which undermines uniformity

in standards. The Laghman Express methodology is based on hiring line personnel without specialized experience and training them in complex techniques from scratch.

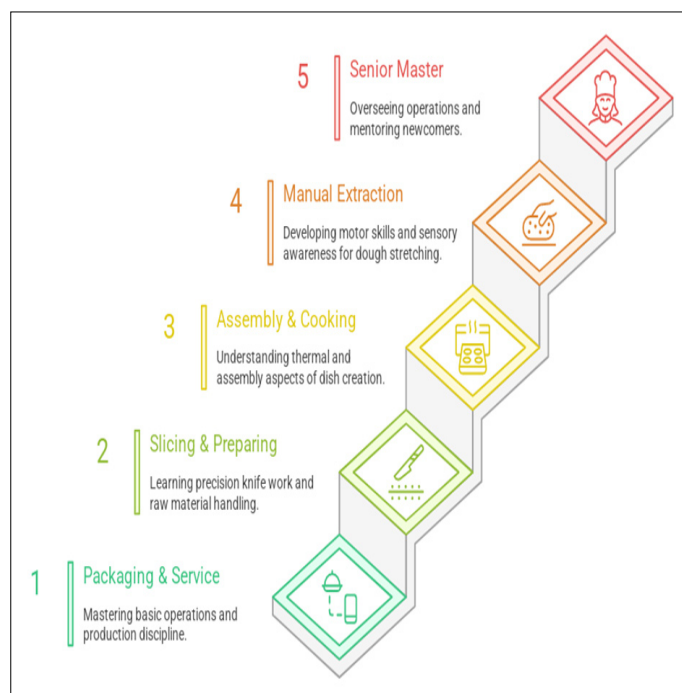
This approach became possible owing to the decomposition of the hand-stretching technique into simple motor elements. Training is conducted according to the principle from simple to complex, in which the trainee first masters the physics of dough through auxiliary operations before being admitted to work at the primary station. This democratizes the hiring process and makes the company more resilient in the face of labor-market shortages of highly qualified personnel.

The approach requires selecting employees based on basic behavioral and psychophysical characteristics, which subsequently enables mastering the methodology from scratch. Suitable for such work are candidates with stable attention, the ability to maintain precision for extended periods during repetitive actions, normal manual coordination, a calm response to high tempo, and a readiness to observe a prescribed order of operations without arbitrary deviations. Receptivity to feedback is important, since training is built on the constant correction of movements, with adjustments to density, hand effort, and work tempo. Sensory attentiveness is also of substantial importance. The employee must be able to notice simple physical differences in the product's condition, distinguish between denser and softer structures, observe changes in the dough surface, and connect these to kitchen conditions. This is especially important where mass density changes in response to air humidity, room temperature, and resting time.

In selection, value is placed on trainability, discipline, and the ability to maintain a standard within flow, since the methodology rests on the stepwise mastering of the process from auxiliary to core operations. The candidate must be prepared to work in a regime of precise instructions, maintain specified timings, and accept the logic of labor division, in which some components are prepared in advance under strict control, while some operations are performed only at the moment of service. For this, diligence, neatness, physical endurance, and an inner disposition toward rhythmic work without loss of quality are required. Such a profile is important because the company trains a person for a specific production system in which the result depends on the reproducibility of actions, on understanding the reasons behind each adjustment, and on the ability to sustain quality even under high load.

### Station-Based Certification

The personnel training system at Laghman Express is built around strict station-based certification. Each employee has a clear development map in which transition to the next stage is possible only after confirmation of mastery at the current stage. Figure 3 shows the skill ladder and the stages of personnel station-based certification.



**Fig. 3.** Skill ladder and stages of station personnel certification

Readiness criteria are quantified: the operation's execution time, the permissible waste percentage, and conformity with the visual benchmark. Such transparency eliminates subjectivity in assessment and motivates employees to pursue professional growth.

Such a certification system is valuable because it links employee development with a confirmed ability to maintain the standard in the real rhythm of production. The transition between stages here signifies admission to a more complex zone of responsibility, where error already affects the line's throughput, flavor stability, and service predictability. For this reason, assessment is structured around observable, measurable indicators. Account is taken of operation speed, movement accuracy, result stability in repetitive cycles, the volume of permissible losses, and the degree of coincidence with the benchmark form of the product. Such an order is especially important in production, where manual labor remains part of the technological core. The employee must prove an ability to reproduce the required result serially, without fluctuations in quality from shift to shift and from one level of load to another.

The quantitative description of criteria simultaneously addresses the tasks of training and manageability. From the very beginning, the employee sees which action is considered mastered, where the tolerance boundary lies, and what result is required for the next stage. This reduces dependence on the mentor's personal opinion and translates professional growth into a clear production logic. Under such conditions, certification becomes an instrument for selecting those capable of working in a high-repeatability system that rapidly assimilates corrections and maintains quality under

flow conditions. For Laghman Express, this has principled significance, since complex operations cannot be transmitted at the level of intuitive execution. They must be pinned only after the employee has confirmed accuracy, discipline, and skill stability at the previous section.

### An Authorial System of KPI and Staff Retention

Under U.S. market conditions, with its anomalously high

**Table 4.** Structure of multifactorial KPI and metrics for evaluating kitchen staff

Metrics Group	Key Indicator, KPI	Measurement Method	Impact on Bonus Component	Psychological Effect
Productivity	Number of portions per labor hour	POS system data	40%	Focus on speed
Process Quality	Texture and slicing perfection index	Station Lead evaluation, checklist	30%	Pride in the product
Customer Feedback	Dish rating in reviews, UGC	Google/Yelp monitoring	20%	Connection with the guest
Lean Efficiency	Percentage of write-offs and waste	Weekly inventory	10%	Responsibility for resources

The synchronization of motivation and standards leads to a situation in which the cook becomes personally interested in complying with the technology. This phenomenon is psychological ownership, in which the employee perceives the station’s work results as a personal achievement, thereby radically reducing labor turnover.

For staff retention at a laghman outlet to work toward the result, the variable portion of the cook’s income should be tied to those indicators that directly affect speed, flavor, and line stability during the shift. For the laghman station, this is conveniently calculated through the number of portions served per hour, the share of portions without defects in noodles and assembly, the volume of write-offs for dough and meat, and guest evaluations of the dish itself. Then the employee understands the direct connection between earnings and how evenly the noodles are stretched, how precisely the portion is maintained, and how stably laghman is served during peak flow. If the cook accelerates at the cost of dough tears or quality loss, the final result declines. If tempo is maintained, noodle texture is preserved, waste is reduced, and guests respond positively, the final result improves. Such a scheme makes the standard the employee’s daily personal interest and helps retain strong cooks at the key station.

### Management Without Micromanagement

The introduction of detailed standards and a transparent KPI system makes it possible radically to reduce the need for constant supervision. In the Laghman Express model, quality control is delegated to employees through a system of cross-verification: the cook at the next station does not accept the prep if it does not conform to the standard, since this will affect that cook’s personal metrics.

This transforms the manager from an overseer into an

labor turnover in the HoReCa segment, traditional hourly pay has become an ineffective retention tool. The Laghman Express methodology proposes transitioning to a multifactor KPI system aligned with brand standards. The cook’s income consists of a base component and a variable bonus dependent on specific performance metrics. Table 4 presents the structure of the multifactor KPI and the metrics used to evaluate kitchen staff.

operational leader whose task is to ensure continuity of supply and sustain team spirit. This management model is especially effective when scaling into new markets, for example, from New York to Atlanta, because it makes it possible to preserve brand identity without the founder’s presence at every location.

For the management of a laghman outlet not to turn into constant manual pressure, each station should be granted the right to reject the result of the previous section according to predetermined measurable criteria. Dough prep is transferred onward only at the required mass and density. Stretched noodles are accepted into assembly only if they meet the required thickness and integrity. The final portion is released for service only when the weight, temperature, and visual benchmark are observed. Then the cook at the next stage becomes a participant in control, because another person’s error immediately worsens that cook’s own result in terms of speed, quality, and write-offs. For laghman, such a scheme is especially useful because the dish quickly reveals any breakdown in the chain. If the dough overmatures, the noodles tear. If stretching is weak, assembly slows. If the assembly is inaccurate, the guest receives an unstable flavor. In this model, the shift supervisor sustains the line’s rhythm, replenishes resources in a timely manner, relieves overload at narrow sections, and analyzes only those recurring deviations that the team has failed to extinguish within the process itself.

### CONCLUSION

The methodology for the reengineering of culinary processes implemented in the Laghman Express model demonstrates the viability of a scientific approach to traditional manual labor. The digitization of competencies, physical production parameters, and the motivation system enabled the creation

of a product unique to the U.S. market: an authentic cuisine capable of operating with the efficiency of a high-tech conveyor.

The principal conclusions of the methodology underscore that the main asset of the contemporary restaurant chain is intellectual capital in the form of standards and process cards. The transformation of cheffy intuition into measurable parameters enables overcoming the glass ceiling of scaling while preserving consumer loyalty, as evidenced by high ratings across different states.

For the U.S. market, the significance of this methodology lies in providing a functioning model for combating labor shortages and rising costs by increasing labor productivity without degrading quality. Laghman Express's experience serves as an example of how one leader can shape a new market category by combining cultural identity with modern operational management. In the long term, success will belong precisely to those concepts capable of finding a balance between human mastery and rigorous technological discipline.

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