High Line Café — Fall/Winter Menu Strategy

Q4 2024 – Q1 2025 Planning Document

Generated output based on 6-month POS export and owner planning notes

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Section 1: Data Summary & Key Findings

What the Numbers Say

Revenue leaders (by category): 1. Latte (12 oz): 6,017 units | $30,085 — your anchor item; growing every month 2. Oat Latte: 3,780 units | $20,790 — second-fastest growing item; up 81% March→August 3. Cold Brew: 1,823 units | $12,761 — massive summer seasonal; predictably collapses in fall 4. Pour Over: 1,152 units | $8,064 — growing steadily; highest revenue-per-transaction of the filter category 5. House Blend Retail: 560 units | $8,960 — steady, reliable retail performer

Items on clear decline: - **Cappuccino:** 312 (March) → 251 (August). Down 20% over 6 months. No recovery signal. - **Americano:** 280 (March) → 218 (August). Down 22% over 6 months. No recovery signal. - **Mocha:** 201 (March) → 131 (August). Down 35% over 6 months. Steepest decline in the lineup. - **Drip coffee:** 410 → 279. Down 32%. Being displaced by cold brew in warm months; likely to remain soft. - **Banana bread:** 142 → 88. Down 38%. Weakest performing food item. - **Turmeric Latte:** 78 → 38. Down 51%. This one is done. - **Decaf retail bag:** 21 → 14. Near-dead SKU.

Breakout performers: - **Honey Cardamom Latte:** Launched June at 125 units, grew to 412 in August. This is the clearest signal in your data — an intentional seasonal launch with a specific story accelerated faster than any established item. - **Dirty Matcha:** Launched June at 89, grew to 189 in August. Low barrier to add; high response rate. - **Matcha Latte:** 155 (March) → 208 (August). Slow, steady, consistent growth — no seasonal dependency. - **Oat Latte:** Growing every single month with no plateau yet. - **Cortado:** Small but growing every month — up 39% from March to August. Interesting.

Key insight: Your data tells a clear story. The center of gravity in your business has shifted from "classic coffee drinks" (Americano, cappuccino, drip) toward "intentional, textured, narrative-driven beverages" (oat latte, pour over, cold brew, seasonal specials). The customers you're attracting are not the ones who want a simple drip coffee. They want something specific, seasonal, and worth talking about.

Section 2: Fall/Winter Menu Recommendations

Items to Retire or Restructure

Item	Recommendation	Rationale
Turmeric Latte	**Retire by October 1**	51% decline; no seasonal story for fall; actively dragging menu
Decaf retail bag	**Retire or replace**	Near-zero velocity; shelf space wasted; replace with decaf that has a story
Mocha	**Consider restructuring**	35% decline; feels dated; if keeping, reframe as "Dark Chocolate Latte" with specific origin chocolate; don't just delete it without a replacement
Banana bread	**Swap for seasonal**	Underperforming and non-seasonal; replace with something fall-appropriate (see food recommendations)
Cappuccino / Americano	**Keep for now, don't promote**	Declining but still 250+ units/month each; removing abruptly will frustrate regulars; let them fade naturally; don't feature them in seasonal marketing

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Fall/Winter Seasonal Drink Recommendations

Seasonal Special #1: Brown Butter Cardamom Latte *(replace Lavender Latte)* **Launch:** October 1 **Story:** The Honey Cardamom Latte taught you that cardamom resonates with your audience. Brown butter is a flavor that reads as autumnal, warm, and specific — without being a pumpkin spice derivative. You can make a brown butter syrup in-house with 4 ingredients. The name communicates warmth and craftsmanship. It's specific enough to be worth trying, familiar enough to be non-threatening.

Suggested pricing: $7.50 (12 oz) **Suggested description:** *Brown butter, cardamom, a little bit of salt. The drink we made when the temperature finally dropped.*

Seasonal Special #2: Maple Miso Latte *(Q4 statement drink)* **Launch:** November 1 **Story:** The savory-sweet combination is genuinely trending and aligns with your "specific, not

generic" positioning. Maple is seasonal. Miso reads as a craft ingredient that tells a story. This is the kind of drink that gets photographed and shared because it sounds unusual but tastes coherent. Good for generating word-of-mouth in November–December.

Suggested pricing: $7.75 (12 oz) **Suggested description:** *White miso, maple, oat milk, espresso. Sounds strange. Tastes right.*

Warm Cold Brew Equivalent: Slow-Steep Hot Brew *(replace cold brew energy in winter)* **The problem you identified:** Cold brew drops in fall/winter but people still want that smooth, low-acid, grab-and-go coffee experience. Regular drip isn't the answer — it's already declining.

Recommendation: Introduce a "lodge-style hot brew" — your house blend brewed at double strength via your Fetco, then served over a warming stone or as a 6 oz concentrate cut with 2 oz of hot water to order. Position it with the same language as your cold brew: smooth, slow, strong. Name it something tactile ("The Hot Slow" or "Winter Steep"). Price it at $5.50 — slightly higher than drip, lower than cold brew.

Alternatively: A properly marketed hot oat americano (double shot, 2 oz hot water, steamed oat milk float) can capture cold brew drinkers who want something clean and strong. Simple to execute; high margin.

Non-Coffee Option: Spiced Cacao *(holiday season)* **Launch:** December 1 **For the non-coffee crowd and the "I want something festive" customer.** A proper drinking chocolate (not hot cocoa) made with a single-origin cacao discs, a touch of cardamom or cinnamon, and steamed oat milk. Positioned as an adult alternative to the holiday mocha — no coffee, intense chocolate, intentional sourcing. Pairs naturally with your retail bean story ("we care about where ingredients come from").

Suggested pricing: $7.00 **Suggested description:** *Single-origin cacao, cardamom, oat milk. For the days you want something warm but not coffee.*

Pour Over Expansion Recommendation

Your pour over is growing steadily and drives the highest revenue per transaction in the filter category ($7.00/unit vs. $3.50 for drip). You noted that pour over conversations are the best for connecting with customers.

Recommendation: Lean into this. In Q4, feature the pour over explicitly — add a "why we do pour over" card to the bar, rotate featured single-origin coffees monthly with a one-sentence story tag, and train staff to offer a 20-second pour over pitch when customers seem to be considering

filter options. Consider a "Pour Over Flight" (three 2 oz pours of different origins at $12) as a weekend-only experience.

Retail Strategy for Q4

Your retail sales are growing slowly but the trajectory is right: - House Blend: up 16% from March to August - Single Origin: up 80% from March to August - Decaf: declining

Holiday push recommendations:

1. **Gift bundles:** Package 2 × 12 oz bags (one house blend, one single origin) in a branded box or bag at $36–38. Offer a "gift note" option. Market from November 1. Gift buying peaks November 15 – December 20.
2. **Subscription launch:** Q4 is the best time to launch a subscription because people buy them as gifts. A simple 3-bag subscription at $16/bag/month (same price as retail) with free shipping creates recurring revenue. Promote it alongside the holiday bundles.
3. **Decaf fix:** The decaf bag at retail is nearly dead. Options: (a) retire it entirely, (b) replace it with a decaf single-origin that has a specific story ("water-processed Ethiopia" is something people will pay for). A Swiss Water Process decaf Ethiopian can retail at $18 and has enough of a story to justify the shelf space.
4. **Retail pricing:** Your current pricing ($16 for 12 oz) is competitive for the Seattle market on the house blend but may be leaving margin on the table for single-origin. Many comparable roasters in your market charge $18–20 for 12 oz single-origin. A $2 increase on the single-origin bag is unlikely to impact volume significantly given its growth trajectory — consider testing it.

Section 3: Q4 Menu at a Glance

Permanent Menu (kept from current)

- Latte, Oat Latte, Cortado, Macchiato (growing or stable)
- Americano, Cappuccino (declining but retained — no active promotion)
- Pour Over (featured more prominently)
- Drip (retained; no active promotion)
- Matcha Latte, Dirty Matcha (growing; keep as is)
- Honey Cardamom Latte (retain through Q4 — still growing)
- Avocado Toast, Croissants, Almond Croissant (all performing well)

New / Relaunched for Q4

- Brown Butter Cardamom Latte (Oct 1)
- Maple Miso Latte (Nov 1)
- Spiced Cacao (Dec 1)
- Warm slow-brew alternative (Oct 1 — replace cold brew energy)

Retired

- Turmeric Latte (Oct 1)
- Mocha (consider reformat or retire by Nov 1)
- Cold Brew (natural seasonal wind-down by Oct 15)
- Banana Bread (replace with apple cardamom loaf or similar)

Retail Additions

- Holiday gift bundle ($36–38, launch Nov 1)
- Subscription offering (launch Nov 1)
- Decaf single-origin replacement (consider; launch whenever sourced)

Appendix: Revised Menu — Refined Output

After follow-up requesting investment framework and copywriting for new drinks:

New Drink Profitability Snapshot

Drink	Est. COGS	Sell Price	Gross Margin	Notes
Brown Butter Cardamom Latte	$1.85	$7.50	75%	Syrup made in-house; very low COGS
Maple Miso Latte	$2.10	$7.75	73%	Miso adds ~$0.25 vs. standard syrup
Spiced Cacao	$2.40	$7.00	66%	Lower margin but no coffee cost; net still strong
Warm Slow Brew (6 oz)	$0.90	$5.50	84%	Highest margin of any new item

COGS estimates based on Seattle commodity pricing at typical independent café volumes. Adjust for your actual supplier costs.

Instagram-Ready Drink Descriptions (for menu + social)

Brown Butter Cardamom Latte *"We make the syrup in-house: browned butter, cardamom, a pinch of salt. It tastes like autumn settled into a latte."*

Maple Miso Latte *"White miso and maple sounds like a mistake until you taste it. Rich, a little savory, not too sweet. One of our favorite things we've ever put on the menu."*

Spiced Cacao *"Single-origin cacao from Oaxaca, cardamom, steamed oat milk. No coffee. Just chocolate done right."*