ENTERPRISE PROOF BOOK · AUGUST 2026

Three margin questions. One evidence standard.

MarginChef is a chef-led evidence service for multi-unit restaurant operators. These fictional composites show how a bounded pilot turns purchasing, recipe, yield, waste, inventory, and menu records into a Finance-reproducible and Operations-approved scale-or-stop decision.

TRUTH LABEL: Every company, site, source identifier, assumption, and dollar value in this book is illustrative. Nothing here is a testimonial, realized savings, or a result achieved for a client.

30 days	Up to 10	3 systems	>=3x
BOUNDED PILOT	REPRESENTATIVE SITES	MAXIMUM SOURCE SCOPE	SCALE / STOP GATE

THE REPEATABLE DECISION SYSTEM

01 / RECONCILE	02 / QUANTIFY	03 / DECIDE
Establish control totals	**Challenge the opportunity**	**Assign or stop**
Map each source, fiscal period, pack conversion, recipe version, location, and exception without silent assumptions.	Keep source rows, formulas, confidence, low/base/high cases, overlap removal, and implementation cost visible.	Finance reproduces. Operations accepts, modifies, or rejects. Executives fund only an owned, measurable action.

THE THREE ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS

CASE 01	CASE 02	CASE 03
Multi-brand control	**Menu + yield control**	**Procurement control**
Can a ten-site cohort separate repeatable pack, yield, and site variance from brand and market exceptions?	Can modifier, recipe, prep-yield, portion, and contribution evidence explain actual-to-theoretical drift?	Can contract price, invoice price, pack substitution, and approved-item compliance reconcile across regions?

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE 01 · NOT A CLIENT RESULT

Multi-brand franchise group

Fictional profile: 25 locations across several QSR brands with $100M in illustrative annual food sales. The pilot uses ten representative sites and does not generalize across the portfolio.

DECISION QUESTION	**Is one control repeatable?**	Advance only if the low credible case clears the commercial gate and the operating action remains brand-specific, owner-led, and measurable.

HYPOTHESIS	SOURCE BOUNDARY	CONTROL TEST
What might be true	**What enters the pilot**	**What must reconcile**
Pack substitution, recipe and yield drift, and store-level execution variance may create 50-100 basis points of addressable opportunity - but only after mix, market, timing, and brand exceptions are removed.	Eight weeks of POS and invoices; current recipes and yields; two inventory counts; approved item maps; ten locations; three categories.	Invoice pack and item crosswalk -> recipe unit conversion -> theoretical usage -> actual sales and counts -> exception and overlap controls.

EXPECTED DECISION ARTIFACTS

01	02	03
Evidence ledger	**Action board**	**Scale-or-stop memo**
Finding ID, source trail, deterministic formula, low/base/high case, confidence, exception, and accountable owner.	Site and system owner, operating action, training need, service risk, effort, milestone, and validation measure.	Stop, extend validation, or fund deployment only after both functional owners sign the evidence chain.

CULINARY + OPERATING GUARDRAILS

FOOD SAFETY	GUEST PROMISE	THROUGHPUT
Non-negotiable	**Protected**	**Measured**
No recommendation may weaken HACCP, holding, cooling, allergen, shelf-life, or sanitation controls.	Reject savings that reduce availability, portion integrity, product quality, or the brand promise.	Test labor and service-time consequences before a recipe, prep, or receiving control scales.

Evidence standard: no amount is a result until Finance reproduces the source-to-formula chain, Operations approves feasibility and ownership, overlap is removed, and implementation cost is shown separately.

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE 02 · NOT A CLIENT RESULT

Casual-dining menu + yield region

Fictional profile: ten locations inside a larger casual-dining operator, with high menu complexity, material modifier volume, prep batches, and site-level recipe exceptions.

DECISION QUESTION	**Which drift is controllable?**	Do not publish a savings number until the menu, recipe, yield, waste, and mix chain is reconciled at source-row level and accepted by Finance and Operations.

HYPOTHESIS	SOURCE BOUNDARY	CONTROL TEST
What might be true	**What enters the pilot**	**What must reconcile**
Modifier underpricing, recipe-version drift, prep yield, portion variance, waste capture, and menu contribution may explain part of actual-to-theoretical food-cost drift.	Item and modifier sales; recipe and menu versions; invoice pack sizes; batch-yield tests; waste logs; inventory counts; promotion calendar.	Modifier mapping -> recipe cost and yield -> item contribution -> actual usage and waste -> promotion and mix normalization -> site exception review.

EXPECTED DECISION ARTIFACTS

01	02	03
Evidence ledger	**Action board**	**Scale-or-stop memo**
Ranked ledger of only the variances whose source chain survives item, recipe, timing, mix, and overlap review.	Top-ten control board separating price, recipe, prep, portion, waste, menu, and training actions with named owners.	Approve only the smallest controlled actions that can be measured without disrupting menu identity or service execution.

CULINARY + OPERATING GUARDRAILS

FOOD SAFETY	GUEST PROMISE	THROUGHPUT
Non-negotiable	**Protected**	**Measured**
Yield changes cannot compromise doneness, cooling, allergen separation, shelf life, or approved reheat controls.	Menu actions preserve portion promise, plating, availability, perceived value, and brand-defining products.	Batch, portion, and modifier controls must be executable at peak, not only in a test kitchen.

Evidence standard: no amount is a result until Finance reproduces the source-to-formula chain, Operations approves feasibility and ownership, overlap is removed, and implementation cost is shown separately.

ILLUSTRATIVE CASE 03 · NOT A CLIENT RESULT

Centralized procurement network

Fictional profile: more than 200 locations across several regions and vendors. The pilot is deliberately limited to one category, two regions, and ten representative sites.

DECISION QUESTION	**Is the variance recoverable?**	Separate recoverable price/pack error from preventable control drift and legitimate exception before assigning an annualized opportunity.

HYPOTHESIS	SOURCE BOUNDARY	CONTROL TEST
What might be true	**What enters the pilot**	**What must reconcile**
Contract price, invoice price, pack conversion, substitution, freight, rebates, and approved-item compliance may not reconcile cleanly across region and location boundaries.	Vendor agreements and price files; invoice lines; item masters; pack maps; receiving exceptions; approved substitutions; eligible volume; rebate rules.	Contract and effective date -> invoice and pack normalization -> eligible volume -> approved exception -> rebate/freight treatment -> ownership and recovery path.

EXPECTED DECISION ARTIFACTS

01	02	03
Evidence ledger	**Action board**	**Scale-or-stop memo**
Price-and-pack ledger separating true variance from timing, freight, rebate, tax, substitution, and local exception effects.	Supplier, procurement, AP, culinary, and site ownership map with recoverability, prevention, effort, and next validation date.	Scale only the controls that remain reproducible across both regions without hiding valid local or supplier exceptions.

CULINARY + OPERATING GUARDRAILS

FOOD SAFETY	GUEST PROMISE	THROUGHPUT
Non-negotiable	**Protected**	**Measured**
Approved substitutions still must meet ingredient, allergen, traceability, shelf-life, and specification requirements.	Procurement value cannot reduce product consistency, availability, or guest-recognizable quality.	Receiving and invoice controls must fit store labor and vendor cadence; central control cannot create site bottlenecks.

Evidence standard: no amount is a result until Finance reproduces the source-to-formula chain, Operations approves feasibility and ownership, overlap is removed, and implementation cost is shown separately.

ILLUSTRATIVE CONTROL LEDGER · NOT A CLIENT RESULT

A number is useful only when management can challenge it.

This fictional ledger demonstrates the evidence shape. Gross findings are not added blindly: overlap is removed, confidence remains visible, ownership is explicit, and implementation cost stays separate from opportunity.

ID	Illustrative finding	Source trail	Low	Base	High	Confidence	Owner
F-01	Vendor pack mismatch	AP-Q1 / MAP-07 / REC-14	$64K	$92K	$119K	High	Procurement
F-02	Prep + yield variance	POS-Q1 / YIELD-04 / BATCH-22	$88K	$138K	$197K	Medium	Culinary
F-03	Portion adherence	REC-14 / POS-Q1 / OBS-10	$44K	$79K	$111K	Medium	Operations
F-04	Waste + spoilage	WASTE-Q1 / INV-Q1 / COUNT-13	$28K	$54K	$76K	Medium	Operations
F-05	Menu contribution mix	POS-Q1 / MENU-09 / PROMO-Q1	$19K	$43K	$65K	Validate	Finance
	Gross annualized findings		$243K	$406K	$568K		
	Less: overlap control		($38K)	($52K)	($84K)	Finance	
	Net credible opportunity		$205K	$354K	$484K	Scale / stop	

$354K	$65K	5.45x	$195K
BASE NET OPPORTUNITY	FIXED PILOT FEE	OPPORTUNITY / FEE	3x SCALE GATE

REAL CASE-STUDY PUBLICATION STANDARD

PERMISSION

Written and specific

Client approves the company name, data scope, periods, values, speaker, quote, and distribution surfaces.

REPRODUCIBILITY

Finance-approved

Baseline, intervention, comparison, formulas, exclusions, opportunity, implementation, and realized value remain distinct.

OPERATING TRUTH

Consequences disclosed

Operations approves feasibility and reports throughput, food-safety, availability, quality, labor, and guest effects.

01

Opportunity is not savings

A source-supported amount can justify action without implying implementation or cash realization.

02

Implemented is not realized

A control change becomes a result only after an agreed measurement period and control comparison.

03

Realized is not permanent

The buyer owns ongoing validation, regression checks, and any decision to scale, modify, or stop.

NEXT STEP

20-minute fit screen

Confirm the operating cohort, Finance and Operations owners, source systems, security boundary, and whether one evidence question merits a 30-day pilot.