

FOODSERVICE CONSULTANT

Postcards from the edge

Operator tales from the front line of foodservice

Hidden talent?

Why Covid also spread a new set of staff challenges

Ghetto blast

Firing up social conversations with Ghetto Gastro



*The way
forward*

How the hospitality sector
can rebuild and recover
from the Covid-19
pandemic

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The times they are a-changin’

As the months roll by we are all still laboring under the Covid pandemic. But an interesting thing is beginning to occur. As the old Bob Dylan song shouts out: *The Times They Are A-Changin’!*

I have enjoyed speaking to our members around the globe more often since the advent of this virus. From stunned disbelief, to a sense of reality, to now – a vision of the future and a roadmap to recovery, marking the revolutionary trend that has emerged.

Europe and Asia are ahead of the Americas in recovery, but that has not deterred our members everywhere in saying that a light at the end of the tunnel, although dim, is beginning to appear.

The words: economic depression, business interruption, chaos and uncertainty are giving way to phrases such as: hope, opportunity, new business

horizons and colleagues helping colleagues.

We see the interest shown by record numbers of our members to join FCSI webcasts, podcasts, ‘5 minutes with...’ and ‘In My View’ interviews, sponsored roundtable discussions and all sorts of industry-relevant content. Why? Because they are part of our worldwide family, which is inclusive of our Professional and Allied members combined as one strong force to be heard around the world.

When members email me and say they miss the interaction among friends and colleagues, even offering to host meetings and functions in their hometowns, then we know we have something special going on for FCSI Worldwide.

Keep the faith. We will get through this bigger and better than ever. Then, let’s watch what the economy does and the positive effects on our businesses.



**William Caruso FCSI
President, FCSI Worldwide**

**We share,
we support,
we inspire**

**We want to hear your views
feedback@foodserviceconsultant.org**

Perseverance and resilience



**Eric Norman FCSI
Chair, FCSI The Americas**

The last few months have been anything but ordinary. Daily life is still dominated by news of new virus outbreaks and local and state economies dealing with ongoing ups and downs of the pandemic.

Unfortunately, the foodservice and hospitality industries have borne the brunt of the Covid-19 impacts. With ever-changing guidelines, rules and regulations, and fear of the unknown – operators, manufacturers, rep groups and consultants have all had to adapt to meet the current needs of the marketplace.

And it is the creativity and ingenuity of our industry that will get us through to the other side. Manufacturers shifting production to safety and hygiene items, reps pivoting sales strategies to a virtual approach, and consultants designing and managing projects remotely, gives me hope that this evolution will enable us to outlast the devastating impact of the pandemic on our industry and the wider economy.

We all realize there may be tough times still ahead. Where we were once hopeful

that this may last only a few months, we are now looking to a year or more of direct effect. I trust our members and wider industry partners will continue to look at ways to adapt and thrive in this difficult business environment. Perseverance and resilience have gotten us all through challenges in the past and these traits will again be relied upon to sustain.

I have missed seeing you at our FCSI and industry events and I look forward to a time in the not too distant future where we are all able to raise a glass to a prosperous future.

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(allowing for social distancing both front- and back-of-house), hygiene (which has always been important in foodservice and is now doubly so) and technology (embracing contactless technology and remote control of appliances to cut down on contact points)

“It could be that 40% of US restaurants will never reopen. For the midmarket, the independents, this could be fatal”





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DIGITAL UPDATES

A wealth of extra content is waiting on the *Foodservice Consultant* website. Go to fcsi.org for digital-only interviews, regular blogs, event coverage and expert analysis of the latest industry news. You can also sign up to the *Foodservice Consultant* weekly newsletter, a comprehensive roundup of the stories affecting the global food and beverage industry. The *Foodservice Consultant* app is also available on Apple and Android devices. Top online stories include:

● FCSI's successful 'In My View' series of Professional member video interviews continues, with Brett Daniel

FCSI, BIM Manager & Project Manager at Camacho Associates. Daniel discusses his dreams as a young man of becoming an animator for Pixar; his recommended go-to tourist meal in his home town of Atlanta, Georgia; his fascination with chef Gordon Ramsay and how a medium-rare steak changed how he viewed cuisine.



● Regular blogger Marius Zürcher, co-owner & founder of start-up 1520 in Apeldoorn, Netherlands, addresses the subject of minimum wage, tipping and attracting labor in a post-pandemic foodservice environment.

● The launch of FCSI's Sustainability Lowdown podcast, the first two episodes supported by Meiko, will tackle food waste and energy efficiency. Plus, a wide range of new videos and audio podcasts – featuring Professional member consultants, hospitality owners and professionals and manufacturers – will discuss how foodservice operators can prepare for life after Covid-19.



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AROUND THE WORLD

Here's a selection of some of the leading construction projects being planned and built across the globe

Copenhagen Islands, Copenhagen, Denmark

Architect **Marshall Blecher, Magnus Maarbjerg**

Builder **Fokstrot**

Opens **2020**

A project involving hand-crafted islands on the Danish capital Copenhagen's waterfront is set to create a completely new genre of public parks. The architects are calling it a 'parkipelago' and say the islands will be moved seasonally between underutilized and newly developed parts of the harbor, creating a catalyst for life and activity. Each island will serve as a platform for different activities – forming swim zones, floating saunas, floating gardens, floating mussel farms and a floating sail-in café. The first prototype island was launched in 2018 and it will be followed by three more islands to be launched in 2020, with plans for more in the coming years.



Waldorf Astoria, Cancun, Mexico

Architect **SB Architects**

Builder **TBC**

Opens **2021**

The Waldorf Astoria Cancun will feature 150 guest rooms and suites, with waterfront or mangrove-facing terraces and private balconies. The property will also house the signature Waldorf Astoria spa, integrating Mexican healing traditions with native ingredients, in addition to state-of-the-art fitness facilities, two plunge pools, a signature restaurant, an all-day brasserie and a beachside lounge and poolside bar. Guests will also have the opportunity to enjoy locally sourced Yucatecan cuisine at additional dining experiences throughout the property.





Valley, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Architect **MVRDV**

Builder **TBC**

Opens **2021**

Made up of four intersecting structures – a base for commercial and office spaces and three towers or ‘peaks’ of varying heights – Valley is part of Amsterdam’s ambition to transform its business center into a more liveable urban quarter. A landscaped center, or ‘valley’, which is accessible to the public, surrounds the central tower on the fourth and fifth levels, while a sky bar spans the top two floors of the tallest tower, offering panoramic views of the city. There is also a restaurant on the second floor and other F&B outlets on the first. The abundance of outdoor spaces and communal green areas promotes health and well-being as well as contributing to the building’s green ambitions.

New Slussen Masterplan, Stockholm, Sweden

Architect **Foster + Partners**

Builder **TBC**

Opens **2025**

The construction of the New Slussen is one of the largest urban transformation projects in Sweden. A new civic quarter for all, it will provide state-of-the-art transport links alongside prominent new public buildings. A central feature of New Slussen is the ‘Water Plaza’, a pedestrianized public space arranged around the new navigation lock and realigned quayside, enlivened by new restaurants, cafes and cultural amenities.



Qiddiya, Saudi Arabia

Architect **Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG)**

Builder **TBC**

Opens **2023 (first phase)**

In 2019, Saudi Arabia unveiled the master plan of its Qiddiya entertainment city project, which is set to become a “Capital of Entertainment, Sports and the Arts”. Located 45km (28 miles) from the capital Riyadh, it will include training academies, desert and asphalt tracks for motorsports enthusiasts, water and snow activities and a range of retail, residential and community services. The Resort Core of Qiddiya is a 150,000 sq m (180,000 sq yd) retail, dining and entertainment ‘spine’ complete with a portfolio of hotel offerings. Adjacent to it will sit a major outdoor entertainment venue capable of hosting events for 4,000 to 40,000 visitors in a park-like setting, along with an ice pavilion and a skate park.



THE INTELLIGENCE

News, insight, opinion and reviews



New liquor laws lift industry spirits

Cocktails to-go is one by-product of the Covid-19 pandemic that is set to stay, as Amelia Levin reports

Several states and municipalities have made changes to their liquor laws, helping restaurants boost their revenue through serving to-go cocktails amid a pandemic that has closed dining rooms and drastically reduced overall sales. Some have even described these as the biggest changes to alcohol laws since Prohibition was repealed nearly 90 years ago.

At the time of going to press, more than 30 states in addition to the District of Columbia, were temporarily allowing restaurants and bars to sell cocktails to-go. Iowa became the first state to make to-go cocktails permanent, when Governor Kim Reynolds signed a bill – just in time for the Fourth of July – allowing bars to sell cocktails and alcohol for takeout and delivery. Other states, including Texas, Florida and Ohio, are considering similar moves.

“Making cocktails to-go permanent provides a much-needed

source of stability and revenue for local bars, restaurants, and distilleries as they begin to recover,” said Dale Szyndrowski, vice president of state government relations at the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

In Chicago, several restaurants are leveraging online ordering and reservation platforms, such as Toast and Tock, to allow customers to order cocktails to-go to pair with their meals to-go. For example, Funkenhausen is using Tock to sell bottled cocktails such as the Wunder Punsch (cherry, vodka, lime and bitters) and Bourbon Peach Sun Tea (sweet tea, bourbon, peach and lemon), along with boozy freezer pops. El Che Meat & Provisions (part of El Che Steakhouse & Bar) offers small juice bottles filled with cocktails like La Mano de Maradona (vodka, blue curacao, lemon, soda) and white wine Sangria via Toast for pickup from its new to-go window.

The city began allowing restaurants to offer this service in mid-June after business owners pleaded with local government, stressing that cocktails to-go are more profitable than cocktail kits, which don't include the alcohol.

Some restaurants are slightly skirting the law by selling margaritas

and sangria in plastic cups that patrons can sip while waiting for a table or walking around. To-go cocktails are only available for pick-up; third-party companies are prohibited from delivering the drinks to homes.

Set for the future

State restaurant associations, in addition to conglomerates of restaurant and bar owners, lobbied for these changes. The Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association was behind the passage of HB 5811 in that state, with president and CEO Justin Winslow saying in published reports: “We’re not going back to an era where dine-in is as predominant a percent of sales as it was; if you’re going to get tacos, why not get a mixed margarita to go with it?”

In June, the Texas Restaurant Association submitted a proposal to the Governor’s office to allow customers to pick up alcoholic drinks via drive-thru or curbside pickup. With more permanent changes like these on the horizon, consultants should consider how that might factor into their packaging recommendations and specifications. Plastic and even glass bottles, as well as labeling might be a new part of the restaurant and bar repertoire. ■

IN MY VIEW

Expanding horizons

FCSI Associate **Joey Navarro** is principal of Whitestone Food Service Design in Georgia, US. He talks about his career in foodservice and the importance of collaboration

I specialize in food service design for schools, arenas, stadiums, hotels, restaurant chains, mom-and-pop restaurants. I work from receiving to serving and everything in between. Many times, I design the dining areas as well. I spend an extra amount of time with specifications of equipment as per the needs of the client, both functional and budgetary. I do a full layout, schedule, electrical, plumbing, elevations, fabrication, hoods and walk-in drawings. I want the client to be in complete control of their project so I write a very tight spec, keeping change orders to a minimum.

It is fantastic to collaborate with others in the foodservice sector, to learn new things and expand horizons. The most exhilarating part is when someone puts their trust in you to make a seemingly impossible task work.

When I was a child, I wanted to be a baseball player.

I started as a butcher's helper when I was 13 years old. From there, I worked in fast food, fast casual, a country club, a catering company, as a volunteer helping the needy and in a number of other food facilities. One day I walked into Atlanta Fixture for a client and found out the contract sales division was hiring. At the age of 27, I found myself designing and quoting full foodservice projects.

Working for an equipment dealer, my interaction with FCSI was strictly third party. Once I opened my own consulting firm, I spoke to several consultants and reps and they all thought joining was a great idea.

Our biggest challenge right now is Covid-19. I view our industry as a bow with an arrow on the string. It is pulled back as far as it can go and once something pushes the trigger, 'boom', our industry will take off at breakneck speed.

One thing I have learned about being a consultant is to listen. I learn more from chefs than anyone else. They may do the same type of work as any other chef, but go about it entirely differently. Things like this you tuck away to use with another client/chef down the road.

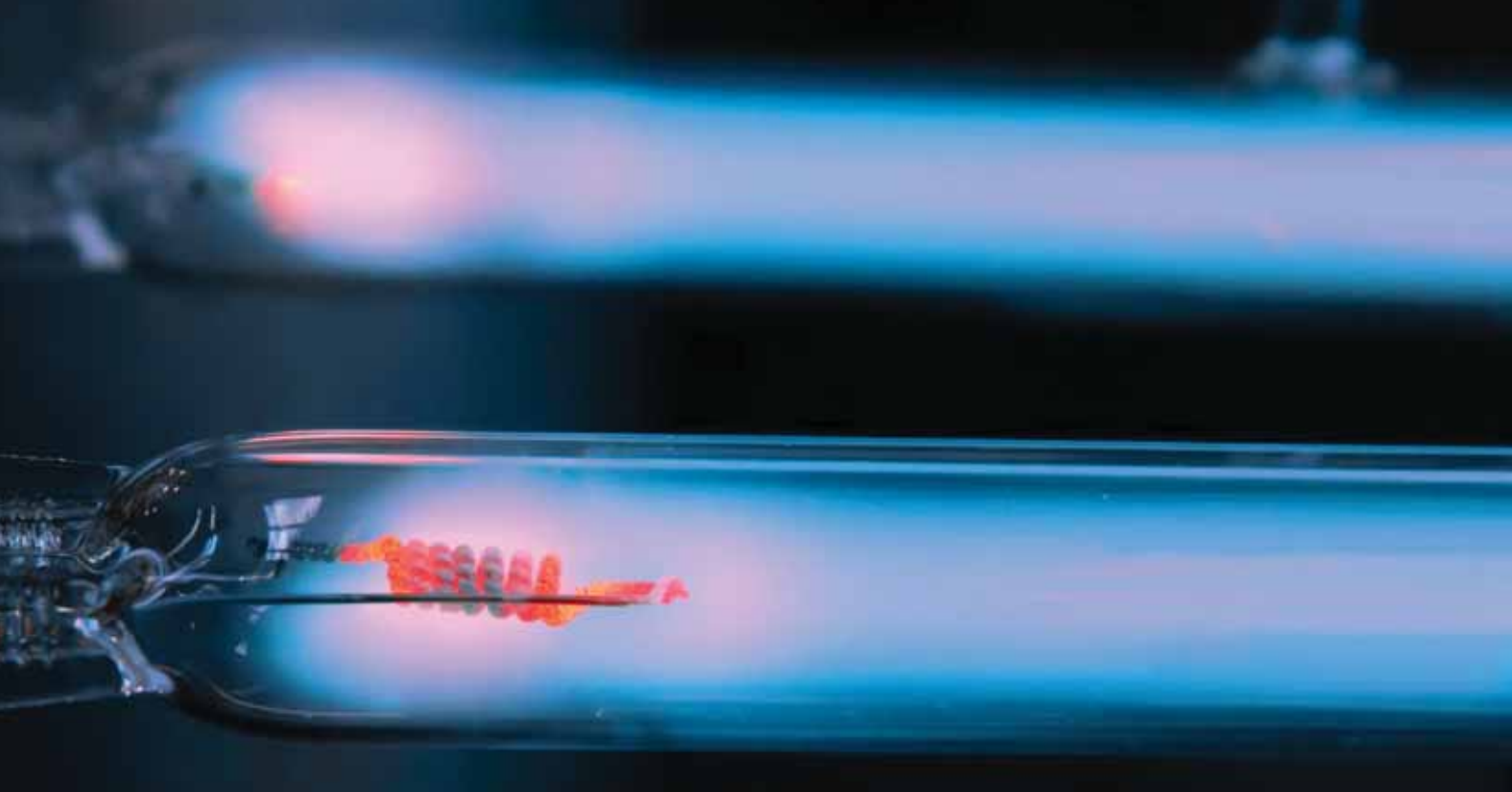
My grandfather instilled in me a sense of business and ethics. Another person who influenced me would be Paul Klein, my old boss from Atlanta Fixture. He was a warm person who cared about his employees, but a formidable man of business.

I relax by going on vacation with my family. I also love to weightlift and box. ■

“The most exhilarating part is when someone puts their trust in you to make a seemingly impossible task work”



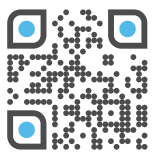
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KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

The Secret Chef struggles to put the Covid-19 pandemic into perspective

MORE TIME TO THINK

There are times when I envy those who bow their heads toward Rome. There must be something freeing about confession although I find the concept a little hard to swallow. I'm from northern European, Lutheran stock and, while I've discarded the religious aspects, the work ethic and vague guilt associated with fun and enjoyment remain. I think that's why writing this column is so liberating: I spend a few hours pretending to be someone I can't be during my daily life and have four joyous catharses a year to enable me to ease the weight on my shoulders.

Here is this quarter's confession: this piece is already a week late for submission. As someone who has spent many years abiding by several dozen deadlines throughout the course of every service, tardiness pains me. It niggles away and frustrates me, especially when I know it is my fault. In the kitchen the chain of command allows for the apportion of blame.

With words instead of dishes, screens instead of plates there is only one person at fault and that is the person sitting at the keyboard.

I generally get a little editorial direction when writing: loose themes on which to base my words. Can you write something on food waste? We need a few hundred words on no-shows. Do you fancy submitting your thoughts on tipping? And, generally, I spend a couple

of weeks thinking about the theme and then coalesce the thoughts into something cogent.

This time, unsurprisingly, it was a biggie: "Focus, in some way, on post-pandemic restaurant life, please."

Easy. A veritable buffet of subjects to gorge on and yet here we are, seven days the wrong side of deadline and still not

Here's the scoop: the pandemic isn't over. There is no clarity of hindsight on which to base my thinking because there is no hindsight. The world spluttered, then coughed and then stopped turning entirely

finished, and I've been trying to figure out why.

And now I know. Here's the scoop: the pandemic isn't over. There is no clarity of hindsight on which to base my thinking because there is no hindsight. The world spluttered, then coughed and then stopped turning entirely.

Every single restaurant on the planet closed their doors – and many of them remain closed, countless of those will never serve another customer. Thousands have taken baby steps towards re-opening with masked servers and temperature checks and plastic screens and have since been ordered to shutter once more. The immediate present is one in which indoor dining is a fading memory and a distant hope – how can I do justice to that ridiculous, previously unthinkable notion?

I can't. That's my second confession: I feel inadequate. Pretty much all the time at the moment. Although I could re-open, my restaurant remains a takeout – the prospect of a second wave of infections as summer rolls into the cooler days and nights of fall is, as far as I'm concerned, an inevitability.

Without a vaccine, other services will be given priority over hospitality, quite rightly. Our kids need educating more than we need to cook a tasting menu. At some point it will be possible to look back at all this and consider what the future looks like. But that time isn't now because, for the moment, we are still right where we are. ■





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TALKBACK

Three foodservice professionals give their views on one question



Russell Stilwell FCSI
Foodservice consultant, Maryland, US

With negative events, there is almost always a silver lining. In this case, my hope is the death of the salad bar and its bad cousin the hot-food bar. Having multiple people serving themselves from the same dish with the same utensils has never been appealing. The saddest thing to me is the loss of so many great restaurants. The permanent closing of restaurants, like Blackbird in Chicago and so many others, is a deep wound to our culinary culture. No one could have been prepared for this type of global pandemic. No one could imagine the shutdown of the world economy.

What we have seen coming out of this period is the humanity, resilience, and creativity of so many chefs, restaurant and food operators, manufacturers, and American workers. It is amazing to see the community feeding their workers and the jobless, reinventing their businesses, and standing together through Covid-19, the collapsed economy, riots. We are still here – ready to re-open, to serve, to feed.

The main lesson is: be prepared, it will happen again. Add that carry-out/pick-up station, ghost kitchen, meal delivery, patio – whatever will give you a backup revenue stream. Keep positive and adapt quickly. Build a rainy-day fund, the government may not always be prepared to print money and give it away. Be grateful if you still have a business, and show your staff your appreciation for the hard work they do.



Agustin Ferrando Balbi
Chef, Hong Kong

We were two weeks into opening our restaurant Andō when the third wave of infections hit Hong Kong, and increasingly severe restrictions started kicking in. First, banning dine-in service from 6pm to 4.59am so we had to close after only 15 days. That said, the team is in high spirits, we're taking the time to develop new recipes and have also launched our home-dining experience for delivery/take-away, At Home with Andō.

The biggest impact is the full closure or the limits on restaurant capacity. Limiting seats means limiting revenue and that affects the chain further down. A restaurant is not only about the food, others are involved – workers, suppliers, producers and distributors – affecting one link in the chain affects all the others.

I have found the situation challenging, but we need to look forward, using this time to regroup and think how to improve the whole experience for our guests.

We will come out of this learning to adapt. This is also a time for reflection, it has allowed us to pay close attention to every single detail of the operation. Sometimes money can hide problems but now we are forced to look at the whole operation and tweak things to make sure we can survive this period. Most of us have built in measures such as take away menus and other different alternatives to the usual restaurant life.



Eneko Atxa
Chef, Bilbao, Spain

My restaurant, Azurmendi, was shut for nearly four months – we closed the doors on 12 March and reopened on 1 July.

I decided that my other restaurants will remain closed for now; it seems the prudent course of action to go slow and see how things develop as we hopefully return to a semblance of normality.

The response to our reopening has been fantastic, better than anything we imagined. We are taking all the precautions, including sanitation and distancing, to keep everybody safe. Right now the most important ingredient is not on the plate, it is the safety of our customers.

The impact on hospitality is already huge. We are lucky at our level of dining because we have a certain visibility, but all the smaller restaurants who don't have this facility will struggle. Many have closed already and many more will follow.

I think society as a whole can learn a lot from the pandemic. We have to remember the basic elements we need in life. We are so used to getting what we want when we want it. We need to prioritize education, investment in science and culture, we need to encourage cooperation and tolerance. Those are the important values in society.

For hospitality, it feels like we have been in constant crisis for a long time, so we are naturally financially conservative. Post-Covid we must continue to keep what we can aside for a rainy day. This has shown us that there could always be something unpleasant waiting around the corner. The pandemic has taught us that even something that we could never even imagine was possible.

What can hospitality learn from Covid-19?



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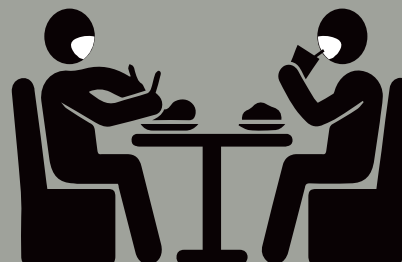
OF OPERATORS ARE **USING THIRD-PARTY DELIVERY SERVICES** (GRUBHUB, UBER EATS, ETC.) **MORE THAN EVER**; THEY ARE A BIG PART OF OPERATOR SURVIVAL PLANS



OPERATORS REPORTING **SALES DECLINES**

76%

COMPARED TO **BEFORE THE PANDEMIC**



MENU SIMPLIFICATION HAS ACCELERATED, DRIVEN BY ON-SITE AND NON-COMMERCIAL SEGMENTS

NARROWED / LIMITED MENU OFFERINGS	58%
ADDED REFRIGERATED, FROZEN "TAKE AND BAKE" ITEM	19%
ADDED MORE "COMFORT FOOD" TYPE MENU ITEMS	16%
ADDED PRICE DISCOUNTS / COUPONS/ MEAL DEALS	13%
ADDED "HEALTHY / BETTER-FOR-YOU" MENU ITEMS	7%
HAVE NOT MADE ANY MENU CHANGES	21%

SOURCES: DATASSENTIALS THIRD WAVE OF OPERATOR-FOCUSED CORONAVIRUS RESEARCH

NEWS & VIEWS:

Foodservice reopening after Covid-19 lockdowns

INDUSTRY NEWS

Uber buys Postmates

After failing to buy Grubhub, Uber has agreed to buy Postmates for \$2.65bn in an all-stock deal that's expected to close in the first quarter of 2021. "Uber and Postmates have long shared a belief that platforms such as ours can power much more than just food delivery – they can be a hugely important part of local commerce and communities, all the more important during crises like Covid-19," said Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi in a statement, further noting that a growing percentage of Uber riders are also using UberEats. According to The Freedonia Group's National Online Consumer Survey conducted in May 2020, 30% of adults are using restaurant delivery more because of the coronavirus pandemic and 51% are using restaurant curbside pick-up options more frequently.



Restaurants go grocery

During the height of the restaurant dine-in closures due to the pandemic, some operators chose to shift gears, not only offering takeout, but also groceries, such as meats, wine and pantry items. In Chicago, El Che Steakhouse has opened El Che Meats & Provisions, opening up a virtual butcher shop for pick-up of raw meats, chorizo sausage and the restaurant's popular housemade chimichurri. The temporarily shuttered Bar Biscay has launched Bodega Biscay to offer not only hot meals, but also local produce, wine, take-and-bake cookies, and "kitchen kits" for grilling, making waffles and more. Even large restaurant chains like Panera have pivoted to begin offering some grocery items, such as bread, milk and fresh produce for pickup or contactless delivery in certain locations.

Though it might seem easy for a restaurant to sell items directly to customers, there are safety and legal considerations. FCSI Associate Jay Bandy, president, Goliath Consulting Group, says in Georgia, where he is located, there is a new variance that allows restaurants to legally sell groceries, but products like meats should be sold in their original vacuum-sealing from the processor and stamped with use-by dates. These products must be held at proper refrigerated temperatures at all times until pickup by the customer. "As long as you properly label these items, you can sell all types of meats," says Bandy, who consults a number of independent and chain restaurants. Bandy notes that selling groceries can cause an increase in inventory and a potential need for more cold and dry storage space. That needs to be balanced with the same needs for any take-out or patio-dining food preparation. "It's best to sell items that relate closer to the menu so you're not doubling up on other items like toilet paper that doesn't make a lot of sense to sell right now," he says.

San Francisco chefs open incubator for out-of-work chefs

A group of three San Francisco chefs with Hi Neighbor Hospitality Group have opened an incubator to help out-of-work cooks and budding restaurateurs try out a new concept (at time of writing for pick-up and delivery only). The Hi Neighbor Incubator currently features three concepts, along with a to-go cocktail program, run out of the kitchen at Corridor, sister restaurant of the Vault, where incubator co-founder Robin Song served as executive chef before he was furloughed from his job during the pandemic. The current concepts are: Song's JunJu, a modern California-Korean concept inspired by his heritage and childhood memories; Ines, an Argentine- and Uruguayan-inspired concept by Nicole Zell, sous chef at Trestle Restaurant; and Schmalz, featuring elevated Jewish comfort food with a modern American twist by Corridor sous chef Beth Needelman.



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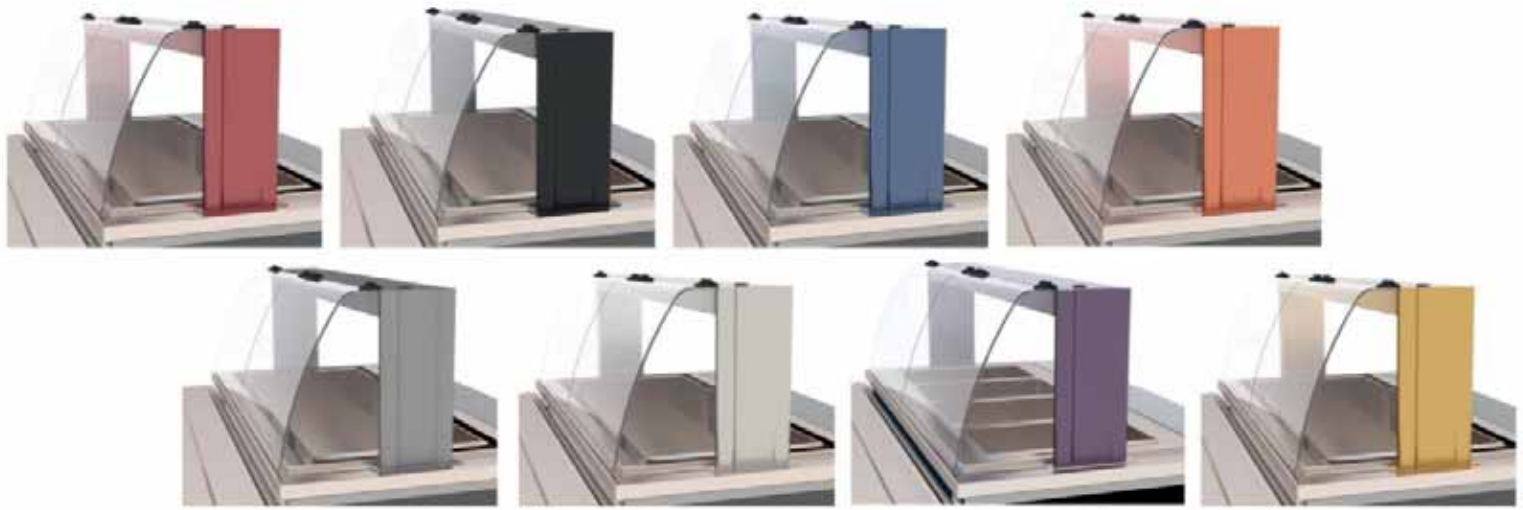


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OPENINGS

Nobu Hospitality, the global brand founded by chef Nobu Matsuhisa, Robert De Niro and Meir Teper, began the first phase of opening Nobu Hotel Chicago in July by offering limited seating for The Rooftop, an airy restaurant and bar with panoramic views of the city's skyline. Situated in Chicago's vibrant West Loop, the hotel will feature 115 guest rooms and suites and a signature Nobu restaurant (due to open at a later date). Nobu Hospitality has introduced safety protocols, such as taking staff temperatures, masks, reconfiguring layouts for social distancing and upgrading cleaning and disinfecting products.



PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Refrigerated Solutions Group (RSG) named Dan Hinkle vice president of sales. Anthony Lorubbio, RSG chief transformation officer, will assume responsibility for sales operations and customer experience, both reporting to Kevin Fink, CEO of RSG.



The School Nutrition Association

Reggie Ross, SNS, is SNA president for the 2020-2021 school year. Ross, school nutrition consultant for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, will represent the association's 55,000 school nutrition professional members.



Restaurants

ServSafe has a new course, ServSafe Reopening Guidance: COVID-19 Precautions, to help restaurant employees preparing to reopen a dining room following a state shutdown during the coronavirus outbreak. The video is, available in English and Spanish, and can be viewed on-demand at [ServSafe.com/freecourses](https://www.servsafe.com/freecourses). In addition, The National Restaurant Association (NRA) has released a Blueprint for Revival that (at press time) Congressional delegates were considering as they finalize their coronavirus response bill. The NRA estimate the restaurant and foodservice industry lost \$120bn during the first three months of the coronavirus pandemic.

Hotels

The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) released the Safe Stay Guest Checklist for guests on how to travel safely, while also creating a standardized safety experience nationwide. It includes recommendations such as face coverings in all indoor public spaces and social distancing in all common areas; contactless options, where available, including online reservations, check-ins, and payments; bypassing daily room cleaning and requesting contactless room service delivery. Executives from top hotel companies, including Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott International, Radisson Hotel Group, IHG, Loews Hotels & Co., supported the guidelines and said in a statement they were making changes to their operations to enhance safety measures.



MGM Resorts International released its Seven-Point Safety Plan, featuring a multi-layered set of protocols and procedures to mitigate the spread of the virus, including guidelines recommended by the AHLA in addition to creating floor guides serving as reminders for social distancing; installing plexiglass barriers and standalone handwashing stations on casino floors; developing contactless check-in that allows guests to use their own personal devices and spraying large public spaces with electrostatic sprayers.

According to a survey conducted by Morning Consult and commissioned by the AHLA, only 44% of Americans were planning overnight vacation or leisure travel in 2020, with high interest in road trips, family events, and long weekends over the summer months. However, 68% of these expectant travelers say they are likely to stay in a hotel.

FCSI EF for the future

As the world looks to move on from Covid-19 **Ed Norman**, FFCSI (PP), shares the latest news from the FCSI Educational Foundation

The global pandemic has affected everyone in FCSI, from huge multinational corporations to one-person consultancies and everyone in between. We are all challenged to rethink what our new business environment might look like, and the FCSI Educational Foundation is no different.

All of our fundraising efforts for the year have been put on hold; this is not the time to try to raise money for educational grants and scholarships. Our investments have taken a hit thanks to the fluctuations in the stock market. Our ability to connect with members at the Americas division conference was lost with the cancellation of that event.

But it is not all bad news. During the first stages of the pandemic, we received a grant application from Dan Jin, a graduate student doing her thesis on consumer behavior in the restaurant industry. She is examining customer touch points in relation to food and service in the restaurant industry.

She requested a grant from the Foundation to complete her thesis by empaneling focus groups as well as collecting data from a Qualtrics online survey. Through her agreement with the Foundation, Dan will make the final research report available to the Foundation for sharing within the FCSI community. She is also willing to share her findings through an article and a live presentation. She is going much deeper into the touch points than has been done



Above: Dan Jin, who has received a grant from FCSI EF

so far. She is exploring many variables that influence the customer experience against what company training manuals and videos desire of employees.

The Foundation board was enthusiastic about this grant application because:

- it would provide original research into an area that would be beneficial to the consultant community
- it would allow the applicant to complete her graduate degree
- it would support an individual who may consider a future career as a foodservice consultant.

The process will take almost a year to complete, so watch out for the Q3 2021

edition of *Foodservice Consultant* for more information and an update.

We are still waiting for the Covid-19 pandemic to settle down so we can once again work on getting an internship program set up for Rodrigo Matamoros, from Mexico. We just about got things underway when the virus hit so we tabled his internship until we can circle back and put a program together for him.

Stay healthy and safe everyone. ■



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Finding balance in the new normal

A veteran of home working, **Laura Lentz** FCSI shares her tips on how to balance a home office with home life

For the foreseeable future... your “new normal” home office. It’s funny to think about, but that’s all I hear at the moment. We are in this new normal for the foreseeable future. Many of us are now working from home indefinitely and, while I’d have loved to have come up with a topic for this column that did not include thinking about Covid-19, it seems that it’s still all any of us can think about. But I am going to try for a more positive spin, so, how about working from home?

Are you sitting a lot? Do you eat lunch at your desk? I know we’re all still in the crazy thick of this pandemic, so here are some tips that I’ve learned about working from home. At my firm, Culinary Advisors, we all work from home, primarily, and have done for over 27 years.

We have a central office and we regularly meet there, hold company meetings, have reps visit and so on, but in our day-to-day lives we all have home offices. This was one of the reasons I loved the company from the start.

As a project manager, I was always on the road to client offices and job sites, so the thought of having some days at home to work and just have less to deal with was extremely appealing.

I have found it actually takes eight months to really get acclimated to working from home, so if you feel like you’re on a roller coaster, don’t worry, it gets better. For me, I spent the first couple of months doing laundry, loading the dishwasher, doing

house chores and generally mixing work life and personal life. Then I realized I wasn’t getting enough done at work, so I went turbo and didn’t leave my desk for a couple months, and – shocker – that didn’t work either.

With time, I found a balance and you will too. For our founders, there really

For our founders, there really isn’t a work life and a personal life, it’s all so blended it’s just life



isn’t a work life and a personal life, it’s all so blended it’s just life.

Each person in our firm has created their own reasons to get up, get out and socialize. It might be going out to get lunch (curbside these days), going to the store, or going for a walk. As a company, we are all regularly getting out of the house by walking dogs, running errands and getting exercise.

I’ll admit that lately it’s even been a little nicer, because I can have lunch with my family. But you should take advantage of the time you are saving by not having to commute and go into an office by doing something that makes your life better.

It is also important because working from home, especially if you live alone, can get lonely.

We are often intentional about talking with others within our company. We have a company happy hour once a week and we have weekly pipeline meetings with our whole team. It’s not uncommon for one or more team members to open a Zoom line for a couple of hours to work through a design or a proposal. If you find you are looking for companionship, reach out and connect with someone and make sure you are doing things as a company to stay connected.

I’ve got a standing desk and I love it. When I feel sedentary or just want another view over my computer screens, I stand up. Other folks in our company use watches to track steps and activity.

We do keep some basic etiquette in consideration of our time and everyone else’s. We try to text ahead of just blind calling someone to coordinate on when schedules may work best to talk. We also use a chat app for smaller things in lieu of text strings.

At the end of the day, whatever your preference is, hopefully we all get to work in the place that we want to – and it can be a choice instead of a need. We are a great force when we can all work in the way that makes us our best. ■

Precaution versus practicality

FCSI Associate **John Reed** explores the options for kitchens implementing social distancing



The struggle for foodservice recently has been interpreting social distancing guidelines and operational restrictions that have been largely painted with a broad brush.

Most of the precautionary measures are customer focused, to allow operators to gradually increase service of guests on-premises. There has been little guidance on back-of-the-house operations in the areas of kitchen, warewashing and other key functions. Operators have used their intuition and creative thinking to make the changes in their spaces.

The design trend over many years has been to reduce kitchen space, improve production efficiencies with advanced cooking systems, processed food stuffs and reduced labor. These advanced designs weren't built around social distancing or effective sterile workspaces.

Innovations such as touch screens and table-top units that require staff to directly touch a unit cause challenges. Smaller, linear kitchens are designed for staff working in close proximity, as are single expediting stations with close contact points between service staff and the culinary team. These are contradictory to social distancing and high frequency sanitation procedures.

The culinary industry as a whole is well prepared, with food safety protocols from health department inspections,

New projects are in a better position to make changes to future designs, but the challenge is being flexible

HACCP programs and certification training of its personnel. These are all focused on the food itself but, until now, not a contributing factor to transmission.

Food safety does not address the need to incorporate social distancing issues in the kitchen, when customers who remove their masks to dine where HVAC and airflow issues may play a part in the transmission system. Without protocols in place, the act of eating can contribute to the spread of cases, as has been seen in some markets that may have opened too soon and are now seeing staff as well as customers contracting the virus.

We need precautions to create a safe workspace, as well as a welcoming dining room where guests can receive an enjoyable guest experience. Operational adjustments in foodservice are more critical than in other retail environments.

The practicality for the kitchen itself is more difficult. The financial impact on established operations to modify designs or make drastic changes to equipment is less feasible in the short term. Federal relief packages are designed to maintain operations, not for new investments or growth. New projects are in a better position to make changes to future designs, but the challenge is being flexible. Operators need to maximize current facilities and equipment packages with the unforeseen long-term impact of Covid-19 on foodservice in mind.

Here are some practical measures that established operators can make.

Permanent remote storage

With reduced sales levels, excess equipment, service ware and moveable

assets can be placed in remote or alternative storage locations to make room for additional workstations and increase distances between kitchen staff. This also provides the ability to evaluate current assets and best use of equipment.

Additional expediting spots

Adding additional remote printers to other points in the kitchen and creating a self-expediting process of final inspections, plate assemblies and minimal finishing details by an expeditor can reduce congregating points and create distancing between the staff.

Redistribute production responsibility

Redesigning station responsibilities and reducing menu offerings, where the components of menu items are not produced on multiple stations, prevents the need for close contact when plating or presenting food.

Distribute personal equipment

Providing personal equipment kits with locker storage as part of an employment package can remove the need for shared equipment, provide incentives and improve the work environment.

Design and operations go hand in hand. Collaboration between designers, consultants and operators to share experiences and anticipate the future of kitchen spaces is exciting and evolving. ■

John Reed CEC®, CCA®, Certified Cicerone®, is the owner of Customized Culinary Solutions in Skokie, Illinois, US customizedculinarysolutions.com

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“Nothing in the world lasts, save eternal change”

– Honorat De Bueil Marquis De Racan

In a time of great upheaval **Ruby Parker Puckett**
FFCSI looks at the changes that can be controlled

All of us have lived through changes we never thought could happen, not only personal but career-wise. We now need to move on. Not everything is broken, but we will need to review the way we “used to do it”. As a result we will need to make some adjustments, questioning everything we were doing, talk to our peers and make those adjustments. Move on. We can make this a laborious task or a fun one as we involve staff input. There is no date when we will be back too “normal” so it is time to start a “new normal”

My suggestion is start with the most critical changes or needs. We all know how difficult it is to find and retain staff members. We are going through events that are new with a set of rules that must be followed. There is fear and anxiety. As we move forward it will be very important to involve the staff in decisions that will affect them personally as well as at work.

It will be important to hold meetings and listen to the staff, and their suggestions. The employees need to express their emotions and, as necessary,

refer them to the employee assistant program. They may be concerned with language problems, lack of skills and immigration status. Thank the staff for a job well done, let them express their gratitude as this helps the team to be more aware of what they have faced and may continue to face. Give hope to keep their dreams alive. Develop plans for retention and where possible, pay increases. Provide assistance and encouragement as needed.

Secure copies of – and review – all regulations as some have changed and, as we move forward, there will be others. Carefully read, educate and implement the new changes in the agencies standards such as OSHA, CMS, Food Code 2017, Joint Commission, as well as any local state and facility changes (excellent materials to have on hand as you prepare for an inspection by regulatory agencies). Update the emergency preparedness plan and conduct drills.

What’s on the menu?

Use your experience from the pandemic to evaluate menus. What worked, what didn’t and how you made changes. Was it necessary to simplify the menus or eliminate a lot of items that were difficult to prepare and time consuming? It is now time to develop new menu, preparation and service methods. Many operations are serving ‘bowls’ – where a complete meal is served in a bowl – especially for grab-and-go. Increase plant-based meals, use organic and fresh veggies (grown on the facility property). Try to reduce salt and sugar in the preparation of food.

Implement a ‘no waste’ program using the 5Rs of waste management: rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle. Complete a return plate study to determine what menu items most frequently are returned and evaluate portion sizes. Are too many items offered? The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 30 to 40 tons of US food supply is wasted annually. While reviewing the total service changes in purchasing, preparation, sustainability and waste management, together to reduce overall cost while helping to save the planet. Update standards on food sanitation, safety and pest control.

Embrace technology and use it. Think of an all-digitalized kitchen or artificial intelligence or a computer system for preparation – boring tasks or record keeping that normally required human intelligence. These machines can be programmed to think and mimic the actions of humans.

It is time for change. ■

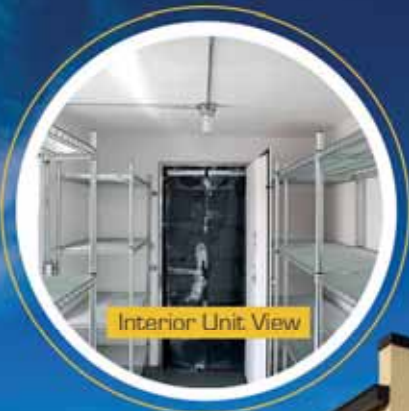
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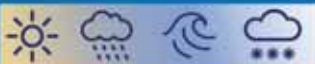
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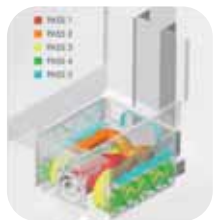
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Time to get creative

The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged the foodservice sector in unprecedented ways. Now it's time for consultants to help clients find creative solutions to navigate a changing landscape, says FCSI Associate **Tim McDougald**

Previously I have talked about the normal things such as the boom in off-premise dining and how commercial kitchens continue to get smaller and smaller. By this point, we've all been subjected to endless news about how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the restaurant industry too.

If you're anything like me, you're probably tired of reading about it by now and just want to get back to sitting down in a booth with two or three of your friends at your favorite local joint and ordering a decent meal. But I would be remiss if I didn't talk about this subject – there's just no way around it at this point.

The restaurant industry is a tough one to begin with. Statistics show that roughly 60% of all restaurants fail within the first year, and roughly 80% within the first five years. That's a tough row to hoe. Now add in the current global crisis and the industry is in a tailspin. If ever there was a point in time where the phrase "adapt or die" was relevant, I think we're living it right now. So, what can we, as designers, do to help?

The successful establishments have been the ones who have found ways to pivot from on-premise dining to things such as take-out or ghost kitchens that are basically boxing complete meals for pickup. Some establishments are better suited for this than others.

The scenario plays right into

the delivery pizza market and the so-called take-and-bake brands are doing well. The pizza industry as a whole has seen massive booms in the past three months, not surprisingly.

But we're even seeing local diners pivot to providing family style meal kits – a local bar owned by a friend of mine even created nacho kits for his family-style meal scenario. Another friend, who owns a cheesesteak stand at the local farmer's market, has transitioned to family style dinners like lasagna, using Facebook Events as the tool to sell his dishes.

Creativity is paramount here. Being able to think outside the box, on a level we've never even seen before, is more

important than ever. As designers, we need to be shedding our antiquated ideas and habits and looking at every possible scenario, every piece of equipment, every available technology that might open up a new avenue of income for our clients.

Are we proposing every possible option? Are we pursuing every possible idea? Our clients hire us for our expertise, they need us to think of the things they don't, or can't. Now, more than ever, we need to reevaluate our ideals, our thought processes and our theories of how typical commercial kitchens function and more importantly, who the target customer is. Because, frankly, I don't think "typical" commercial kitchens exist anymore.

I believe we will see a huge rise in ghost kitchens soon. I think it has already happened, but people just aren't recognizing them because they are currently disguised as your local diner. If you think about what defines a ghost kitchen and then consider what these places are doing, isn't that the definition of a ghost kitchen?

From what I'm seeing, the landscape has clearly changed. That much is obvious. What isn't obvious is where we go from here. We need to keep an eye on the industry and continue to find new ways to think creatively and find solutions to the problems our clients are facing.

In the meantime, find ways to support your local restaurateur.

They need our help now more than they've ever needed it before. ■



Being able to think outside the box is more important than ever

Looking for the silver lining

Bill Main FCSI takes the positives from the Covid-19 crisis and its impact on US restaurants

There have been numerous crises in our country's history, from the Wall Street crash in 1929, to the tragedy of 9/11, to the market meltdown of 2007-8.

Covid-19 may be the granddaddy of them all, effectively reducing the universe of competitive restaurants in every segment: fast-food/quick-service, full-service, and the newer and more contemporary fast-casual hybrid surging into relevance with such great operators as Panda Express, Five Guys, Panera, Wingstop and Jimmie Johns.

Depending on the city, state or regional market, the reduction of units has ranged from 30-50%, and the economic carnage has been painful to watch. However, from crisis springs opportunity for the strongest to survive and prosper. This massive reduction in units, seats and competitors will certainly lead to reconcepting and refinement of many brands to address the new normal.

In my management advisory services (MAS) consulting practice, I focus on how to win the reconcepting, retooling and refinement of surviving brands to benefit and grow quickly as a result of this crisis. Most of all, how to

Covid-19 may be the granddaddy of them all, effectively reducing the universe of competitive restaurants in every segment



generate higher EBITDA and cash flow from enhanced sales and streamlined operational platforms.

I see three key areas of opportunity:

Menu

Effectively, all menus can be downsized by at least 20%. Historically operators want a menu offering that appeals to their target segment and offers something for everyone within the framework of their brand. Eliminating the lowest selling items reduces labor and allows for focus on the key items that are the historical winners. Gone are expensive plastic menus. The menu board or handheld menu can be simplified by presenting colorful paper menus that can change as fast as the point of sale (POS) can be re-programmed. This allows extra emphasis on quality control. Remember, the smaller the menu, the more profitable the restaurant. Price points can remain static, thereby generating good will in the community. Ask Five Guys in fast casual and Houston's in full-service.

Labor

Effectively eliminating 20% of the workforce means fewer part-time employees, which simplifies scheduling. Key employees now have full schedules. If sales are robust, overtime becomes a benefit that allows your best employees to prosper financially and solidifies their longevity. I believe that overtime equals profitability.

Just do the math. This economy of scale will be particularly impactful in the kitchen, where base hourly rates can increase by reducing part-time employees. But most of all, management oversight becomes simpler: now you have a smaller staff of dedicated employees that are best in class. Training costs drop precipitously, and operational integrity improves. Fewer staff problems with superstar employees means more focus on guest service, unit cleanliness, speed of service and brand enhancements.

Marketing

With the shift to the smartphone during this crisis, the efficiencies of digital marketing, from Facebook to LinkedIn and the new platforms emerging, have become a huge competitive advantage. The smartphone has become the tip of the sword for reaching the guests that know and love us. Also, the residential and workplace proximity to your brand allows for the delivery services to become a major part of the guest interaction cycle. Moreover, with the exodus of guests from certain markets due to Covid-19, the re-populating of these markets means new residents, which enhances the effectiveness of conventional new resident marketing with such established and 'best-in-class' companies as moving targets. The jumbo postcard, a stalwart of direct marketing forever, now can have increased effectiveness to new residents.

The Covid-19 crisis is therefore a unique opportunity to re-think profitability and rebuild your clients' restaurants in a way that leverages the realities you are facing. Most important of all, the consumer will be less discriminating and most appreciative of your clients' position in the mind of the market, and more forgiving. From this crisis can spring a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. ■

If you have any questions or requested referrals, please email Bill Main: billmain41@gmail.com



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THE BIG PICTURE



Project **WORLDWILD, CHINA**
Architect **BENSLEY**
Builder **Dinglong**
Opens **2024**

Bill Bensley is currently designing his most ambitious wildlife conservation concept to date – WorldWild China or as it's affectionately become known to the team, The (Luxury) Human Zoo. This 'animals first' concept will prioritize animal welfare while offering a unique conservation experience for guests and visitors.

Originally, the firm was approached by Dinglong in China to design a zoo with 2,400 hotel rooms on a piece of land bigger than Central Park. Bensley decided to turn the concept on its head and proposed a wildlife sanctuary and reserve, which dedicated 95% of the land for animals to run free and 5% of the land for people to observe and learn about the animals, but stay confined in "viewing cages" – in this case luxury hotels.

Set in 2,000 hectares in southern China's Guangdong province, the wildlife sanctuary and reserve will house seven luxury hotels with a total of 2,400 rooms, spread across three zones, which represent the three continents of Asia, Africa and Australasia. The hotels will be operated by various brands including Hyatt, Waldorf Astoria and Conrad. One – Kamp Koala – will be a Shinta Mani Bensley Collection Hotel.

There are over a dozen proposed restaurants including several Chinese concepts, as well as a tea room, deli, patisserie, cocktail lounge and wine bar. ■





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WHAT WE DID IN THE PANDEMIC

We have watched, appalled, as Covid-19 spread across the world over the last six months. Schools, factories and offices shut down in an attempt to halt the contagion. And with most people staying at home the foodservice sector lost its purpose – providing hospitality to the hungry and thirsty crowds. Among the wreckage there have been beacons of typical foodservice innovation and generosity. Tina Nielsen talks to some of the protagonists about how they have navigated the rough seas of lockdown



Rasmus Kofoed

chef, Geranium,
Copenhagen, Denmark

The Covid-enforced lockdown afforded chef Rasmus Kofoed the luxury of some time away from the daily grind cooking at his central Copenhagen restaurant, which holds three Michelin stars. Kofoed took the chance to explore new possibilities during time with his family on the remote Danish island of Samsø where he regularly spends his summers.

The result of the considerations is Angelika, a 100% plant-based restaurant, operating in the same space as Geranium and offering a much more casual proposition in style.

The chef confirms that the opening of Angelika is at least partly connected to this year's lockdown due to coronavirus. During his time on Samsø he had the opportunity to do a lot of cooking with his children. The family's meals included dishes such as new potatoes with olives, pickled lemon and black pepper, oven-roasted asparagus with seaweed and preserved ramsons, and creamy butterbeans.

"I have wanted to open a vegetarian restaurant for quite a while but I never had the time to really plan it and make it a reality"

"There is no doubt that the Corona lockdown has contributed to the opening of Angelika. Foremost it is fueled by an old dream to make a more accessible, green eatery," he says. "However, many of Geranium's guests come from all around the world and they probably won't be able to visit us for a while. Therefore, the opening of Angelika is also a great way to keep our employees – and at the same time show people how delicious and nurturing plant-based meals can be."

Without the enforced time out, he says, Angelika might not have happened. "I would not have had the time to make all this a reality. It gave me the motivation," Kofoed says. "I have wanted to open a vegetarian restaurant for quite a while but I never had the time to really plan it and make it a reality. The Corona situation gave me the opportunity."

Restaurants in Copenhagen reopened their doors as far back as May and the country endured just one month of lockdown. "Fine-dining has already returned, we reopened and welcomed guests back to Geranium, it felt really great," says Kofoed.

As for how things might look in restaurants in a post-Covid environment, he thinks little will change. "People will be more aware and also take the time to properly wash their hands and use hand sanitizer, but otherwise I think it will be the same. People go out to dinner because they want to have a good time and a memorable experience."



Chefs in Schools was set up to provide food and, importantly, food education in London schools and has been expanding since launching in 2018.

The model sees chefs going into schools and providing healthy, sustainable meals to children while also teaching them about the food they eat.

When Covid-19 hit the UK at first, they continued to feed the children who receive free school meals, but as Pisani explains, this soon became difficult to manage. "We continued to open the school and feeding them that one meal, but as lockdown restrictions got stricter we realized that asking the chefs and the families to come out every day was quite hard because it was against government regulations," she says.

Instead they came up with the idea of putting together a hamper, providing the families with cooked meals for every day as well as staple ingredients including rice, pasta and vegetables.

The food is collected from restaurants and supermarkets who donate surplus food and the meals are cooked by volunteer chefs who have been put out of work during the lockdown.

Pisani says doing this work has been good for the chefs. "What happened was that chefs went from working an 80-hour week to not working at all. Mentally it just isn't good to go from one extreme to another. Seeing other people, cooking food and making a difference



Nicole Pisani

co-founder and executive chef, Chefs in Schools, London, UK

“We have to be more mindful and trying to source more sustainably instead of expecting everything at the snap of the fingers”

was really beneficial for them,” she says.

At the time of writing the charity was providing food hampers to around 1,000 families.

While the hamper initiative grew out of necessity, it has become clear to the team that it will work during the holidays when there is a recognized problem with children getting food. “Holiday hunger has always been something in the background of what we do,” says Pisani. “We now realize with this model we can continue providing meals throughout the summer – and even at Christmas.”

If there is one thing Pisani would like us all to take away from this time it is a different attitude to waste. “It’s sad to see how much food gets thrown away when on the flipside there is so much hunger in the UK. So, I think we all have to be more mindful with purchasing and cooking and trying to source more sustainably instead of expecting to have everything at the snap of the fingers,” she says. “Food for any chef is such an easy commodity and to realize that people don’t have it is quite heartbreaking.”



Iván Morales

chef owner, Arzábal, Madrid, Spain

The co-founder of Arzábal, a small group of restaurants famed for their high-quality expertly sourced Spanish produce, spoke to *Foodservice Consultant* early in the pandemic. With Spain mandating one of the tightest lockdowns in Europe, Arzábal was forced to close.

Iván Morales and co-founder Álvaro Castellanos were among the first chefs to sign up to join the Spanish branch of World Central Kitchen (WCK), the humanitarian organization set up by Spanish-American chef José Andrés to feed people in emergencies.

By the time restaurants reopened and the chefs went back to their day jobs, the Spanish WCK set-up had cooked in excess of 1,000,000 meals for people in need during the lockdown. Morales and Castellanos opened their central kitchen to produce daily meals for vulnerable families and the elderly.

Shortly after Spain entered into

“It’s not that different from how we would normally behave in the kitchen – we usually wear hair nets, aprons and gloves. The only thing is that we don’t usually wear face masks”

lockdown, Morales began thinking about how he could make a difference. “I knew that I had to cook, but I didn’t want to be in charge of deciding who would receive our food – that’s a huge responsibility – and of course I wasn’t able to organize the logistics. They are very complicated,” he says.

At Arzábal the team started discussing plans on 25 March and two days later the kitchen was up and running. “We are used to the physical demands of the kitchen, but this was more mental – you have the constant pressure of knowing there are people who are not eating during this time. It makes you think a lot,” says Morales.

But beyond the unusual circumstances, on a practical level, little is different for the kitchen team in Arzábal. “It’s not that different from how we would normally behave in the kitchen – we usually wear hair nets, aprons and gloves. The only thing is that we don’t usually wear face masks,” explains Morales.

Reflecting on the experience, he says volunteering the time and kitchen was instinctive. “If you see an old person falling over in the street, you’ll help them get back up – well, right now our country is falling over and we have to help it get back up,” he says.

Arzábal reopened its Madrid restaurants in June and has been able to return with the full team as well as a new revenue stream from delivery. >



Nick Kokonas,
co-founder, Alinea Group,
Chicago, US

When Covid-19 hit Chicago, fine-dining establishment Alinea surprised much of the culinary community by launching a carry-out option from the three-Michelin-starred restaurant.

“About a week before the shutdown we considered take-out as an option so long as it was safe for our employees and customers,” says Kokonas. “We were up and running three days after the governor of Illinois mandated shelter in place. We wanted to feed our communities and get our team members back to work.”

Alinea launched the carry-out concept selling a weekly pick-up item, charged at \$34.95 – the first meal was a beef short rib wellington with mashed potatoes and a crème brûlée to follow. All 3,500 meals spread over seven days sold out in the four hours they were for sale on Kokonas’ restaurant booking platform Tock, which also pivoted during the crisis to offer restaurants a

“About a week before the shutdown we considered take-out as an option so long as it was safe for our employees and customers”

“It was terribly sad to furlough employees, but we gave everyone a \$1,000 stipend and benefits. We immediately started figuring out ways to re-hire staff, at least some of them”

way to change their proposition. Similar programs were launched at the groups other restaurants Roister and Next.

Continuing to operate as a restaurant, albeit carry-out rather than dine-in, also meant that the company was able to keep some members of staff employed. As the carry-out service ramped up, 40 out of 300 employees had returned to work.

“It was terribly sad to furlough employees, but we gave everyone a \$1,000 stipend and benefits,” says Kokonas. “We immediately started figuring out ways to re-hire staff or at least some of them. Any profits from our to-go menus will go back to the employees as a whole group – ownership and management is taking no salaries or profits. We will support the team and get through this stronger.”

Alinea Group reopened Roister and Next in June and an outdoor iteration of Alinea, called Alinea in Residence, or AIR, on a Chicago rooftop in July. The team has continued to offer a take-out service.



The restaurant critic of *The New York Times* since 2012, wrote his last review – of Pastrami Masters in Brooklyn – for the paper on 10 March. When the city went into mandated lockdown, restaurants shut along with every other activity in the city.

So, what does a restaurant critic do when there are no restaurants to visit? In the case of Wells, he has become a reporter. “I have been trying to write every week, but it is completely different work,” he says. “Before, I knew what I would be writing every week; I just had to pick the restaurant. Now I have to find stories.”

Since New York City went into quarantine in March, he has covered all areas of the city’s restaurant sector. From restaurant suppliers pivoting to sell direct to consumers as a way of making some money, to chefs selling meal kits and operators across New York City opening dining areas on sidewalks and streets, he has painted a picture of the pandemic’s impact on the city.

It is a different task from his weekly restaurant column. As he says: “The goal with the reporting is to tell a story, not to have an opinion.”

This style of reporting stories is not something he was used to. In fact, the restaurant critic gig was the first time he has been paid to write full time.

“This is the first time I have had a writing job where I have to actually



Pete Wells,
restaurant critic,
The New York Times, US

scramble around for ideas,” he says.

Before Covid he always knew where his article would be placed, but since the pandemic his stories have been published across the paper. “I have had stories in the metro section, in the national section and in the business section. I have not been in the arts section, but it’s only a matter of time,” he laughs.

He admits to feeling ever so slightly disconcerted. “I have one of the great jobs in journalism and what makes it great is that I have a connection with my audience who is really engaged. So, I worry that I have lost touch with my readership a bit,” he says.

At time of writing, four months after that last review, he is yet to start reviewing for his restaurant column again.

While he waits for that, he is enjoying the outdoor-dining scene. “I’d like to do that as long as it is happening. I think the outdoor restaurants are really interesting and I like being outdoors anyway, I am interested in this experiment we are running here putting people in parking spaces in the street,” he says. “I drive and I like my car, but I also think it is kind of crazy how much of the city is given over to cars; parking spaces don’t do much for the urban fabric.”

It’s true there’s little certainty on how this will all shake out when the pandemic is over, but Wells is clear: “We may not know yet, but I am sure every single person in the sector feels there will be major changes to come out of this.”



Prateek Sadhu
chef, **Aditi Dugar**, owner
Masque Restaurant,
Mumbai, India

Started by this enterprising pair in 2016, Masque has been a trailblazer on the Mumbai dining scene, pioneering a modern approach inspired in part by chef Prateek Sadhu’s time learning in kitchens abroad. Earlier this year it was named the One To Watch for Asia in the 2020 edition of Asia’s 50 Best Restaurants.

Restaurant director Aditi Dugar describes how the country and city have been severely affected by the pandemic. “India has been among the worst hit countries worldwide, and Mumbai’s numbers have been among the highest within. We have only just started opening up in pockets, varying from state to state,” she explains.

They made the decision to close the restaurant a week before the nationwide mandated lockdown on 25 March. By mid-April Masque had developed a delivery concept; a first for the restaurant.

“It has been heartbreaking to see the effects of the pandemic on the industry worldwide, and I don’t foresee bouncing back to be a quick and painless process”

“It’s been a big shift, going from a tasting menu-only restaurant to now doing only takeout, but we’ve been fortunate, all things considered,” says Sadhu. “It has been challenging, rewarding, frustrating and nerve-racking – it’s kept us on our toes for sure. It’s been a tough time and quite frankly exhausting, but we’ve pulled through, and I am forever grateful to the diners who enabled that.”

At the time of writing, things are slowly opening up again in India. “Regulations vary between states and cities depending on the severity – but it’s hit the restaurant and hospitality sector hard and there hasn’t been any support in the form of bailouts or aid. Restaurants here in Mumbai aren’t open for dine-in yet,” says Dugar.

Resuming services after Covid-19 will be challenging, says Sadhu. “It has been heartbreaking to see the effects of the pandemic on the industry worldwide, and I don’t foresee bouncing back to be a quick and painless process. I think a fair amount of the damage done is irreparable,” he says, suggesting that technology will play a larger role moving forward. “I do think in time – and with a vaccine, hopefully – we’ll be able to resume providing the sense of comfort that restaurants often do,” he says. “Eating out is, at heart, an act of community and shared experience, and those are things people will always seek out.” ■



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CHANGED FOREVER

Covid-19 has showed us at first hand that the only constant in life is change. All around the world life has been affected massively. The foodservice industry is fighting back with a three-pronged approach involving design, hygiene and technology

Please, note, all details correct at time of going to press. For latest updates visit fcsi.org

ILLUSTRATION: LEONIE WHARTON

POST-COVID DESIGN: ADAPTING TO SURVIVE

As restaurants, cafés and hotels continue to reopen, post Covid-19 restrictions, the impact of the pandemic is clearly visible. Jim Banks looks at the short-term design changes enabling businesses to operate and the long-term impact on the industry

New

projects are on hold and many restaurants are struggling to make enough money to stay open. That is the harsh reality of lockdown for the foodservice sector. Even with restrictions lifting, many fear the long-term outlook is bleak.

Delivery and takeout options have helped many businesses to keep ticking over until customers were free to dine out again. As lockdown eases around the world and the industry crosses its fingers and hopes there is no second wave, there is a need for the foodservice operations to adapt to find the balance between business recovery and customer safety.

“Every business has an ‘adapt or die’ moment in its lifecycle,” says Joseph Schumaker FCSI, president and CEO

of FoodSpace. “Now, that moment is happening simultaneously for everyone. There will be a moment when we are past this, but the next 18 months are going to suck.”

California-based Schumaker, who often works with hospitality in the corporate sector in Silicon Valley, points to record daily death rates in Los Angeles in July.

“If we would just do what we need to do – wear masks, care for each other, be sensible – then we could change outcomes, but there is such a societal split here in the US,” he says.

FCSI Associate Jay Bandy, president of Goliath Consulting Group, who is based in Georgia, US, tells a similar story. The state is encouraging people to wear masks, but compliance is not good.

“It won’t get better any time soon and the resistance is about political persuasion rather than public health,” he explains.

The effect on some sectors of the foodservice industry is already devastating, with the full story still to play out. Bandy reports large restaurants closing their doors for good. Schumaker sees hard times ahead for many mid-market restaurants.

“It is scary that a restaurant that is normally packed on a Saturday night might be less than half full,” he remarks. “We don’t know the exact extent of the damage yet. It could be that 40% of US restaurants will never reopen. For the mid-market, the independents, this could be fatal.”

New-look dining rooms

To maximize their chance of survival, restaurants, hotels and bars need to make significant changes to front-of-house operations. Though challenging to delivery, the key actions are simple in nature – move tables to enable social distancing, take precautions when guests arrive, provide sanitization stations and make cleaning procedures more thorough, more frequent and, crucially, more visible.

“There has been a lot of work on design and operation to adapt units to generate revenue,” says Roz Burgess FCSI of UK-based consultancy Intelligent

Catering. “This means reducing eat-in and increasing delivery and collection. Inside the restaurant, this has meant separating delivery drivers from collection customers, creating segregated areas.”

“It is just about keeping people further apart,” agrees Schumaker. “Every other table is redundant. Restaurants are asking customers to make reservations and ensuring that people do not wait in the lobby. They are also asking them to wear a mask on their way to the table.”

One strong message from consultants in both Europe and the US is that need for clear guidance from governments and local regulators. While it is certainly the responsibility of operators and customers to behave responsibly, the process is much easier if there is a set of rules for everyone to follow.

“The government guidance must be clear, but it is blurry right now,” says Burgess. “The same should apply in the restaurant, with rules for regular cleaning and disposable menus, but that is not happening. There is a degree of apathy, so some teams perform well while others don’t. You need consistency and you need to overdo it to keep the risks down.”

Schumaker is working on reopening plans for cafés and restaurants, many in the corporate sector in Silicon Valley. He believes flexibility is the key.

“We are looking at how to use social distancing and technology to our advantage. Now, people will be more willing to use their device for ordering as well as payment.





“It could be that 40% of US restaurants will never reopen. For the mid-market, the independents, this could be fatal”

There has been a huge struggle with this in our sector, where the adoption rate has been less than 5% – even in Silicon Valley – because food is such a personal thing.”

“Now, we could see an adoption rate of 75%,” he says. “This is the moment when we can push that technology over the goal line. We will put the POS in people’s hands.”

People love to look at the display, see and smell the food, before deciding what to eat. Yet we may see much more ordering on personal devices, as they are easy to clean and there is no risk of cross-contamination.

The apps are relatively easy to develop, so customer acceptance is the only barrier.

In the dining room, one of the most visible changes is the growing use of plexiglass barriers – either between tables or between counters and customers, as well as face shields worn by staff. The US is reporting a shortage of plexiglass due to rising demand from the foodservice sector. Though these may eventually come down and tables may move closer together, cleaning regimes may remain more robust and more visible.

Kitchen-planning wins

In China, which is ahead of the rest of the world in its response to Covid-19, much of the restaurant and hotel business has returned to normal, according to consultant Acker So FCSI. There is little change in front-of-house and the focus has turned to long-term plans for back-of-house areas.

“In Shanghai everything is open and back to normal, says So, consultant at Angles and Curves Design and Consulting Co., based in Shanghai and Hong Kong. “Now, more restaurant customers are concerned with bowl, dish or tableware disinfection, so operators are looking at different brands such as Meiko and Winterhalter with a close eye on specifications and standards.”

“People are looking two or three years ahead and at new projects,” he adds. “So, they are looking to study and invest in new technology such as dishwashers, UV water filters and garbage sorting and recycling.”

In the US and Europe, investment in new equipment is less of a priority, though there is some interest among large chain restaurants in fitting UV lights or HEPA filters to HVAC systems. Generally, back-of-house measures are focused on short-term fixes such as reducing the number of menu items, to make food preparation simpler and minimize movement around the kitchen.

Kitchens with a modular design make it easier to manage potential transmission of Covid-19, as distinct areas can be designated for the preparation of specific dishes, which can be stocked with the required ingredients and equipment at the start of each shift.

“Chefs should already be on station to perform their role, but the team must set up the workspace properly,” says Burgess. “This will require a checklist of equipment so they don’t need to move to get a chopping board or a knife. This makes each workstation more effective in terms of time and safety.”

In some kitchens, however, chefs are still working shoulder-to-shoulder as there is little room to reorganize workflow. “In that situation, all you can do is ensure masks are worn and people frequently wash their hands,” says Bandy. >

Lasting benefits

In many parts of the world, the focus is still on short-term fixes to fuel the industry's recovery. Many restaurants are just trying to stay alive until normal service resumes, though there are potentially damaging long-term problems as industries – and entire economies – are building up debt.

Schumaker predicts one change that could bring lasting benefits to foodservice operations. "Now is an opportunity for foodservice businesses to write operating plans so they are prepared for any eventuality," he says.

However, no one feels confident about what the future will look like. Lockdown saw a switch from dining out to cooking at home, though the delivery and takeaway food market flourished.

"It is about consumer confidence but there is also a wildcard in play," says Schumaker. "People are getting used to working remotely and being at home with their families. So, are we creating a new normal where we don't eat out? Millennials and Generation Z were making foodservice outgrow the grocery market but has this moment in history reset things?"

"We are in a place where convenience trumps experience, but as experience comes back, will convenience dominate more than before?" he asks. "Probably yes, but people will be thirsty for experience. They want to go out and eat in groups again but maybe not until we have a vaccine. For restaurants, for now, it will be survival of the fittest."



WILL TAKEAWAY OVERTAKE EATING OUT?

The foodservice sector will recover from lockdown, but its dynamics may have changed with the rise of takeout and delivery as options for customers confined to their homes.

To keep things ticking over, most restaurants have offered takeaway or delivery services, though not always as a long-term plan. "Takeout won't make up for lost revenue and many large restaurants will have to close," says Bandy. "Some pizza delivery businesses and quick-serve restaurants are doing well – some with drive-through service are making more money."

The question is whether customers will decide to eat out less when the pandemic is over. From China, the first country to deal with Covid-19, there are strong signs that the swing towards takeaway food is here to stay. Consultant Acker So FCSI works with many hotels and sees them investing in adaptations to cater for the takeaway market.

"Here, hotels need to build a separate kitchen to handle outside catering business," he says. "This is to meet the standards set down by law for scale takeaway food. They need a separate hot kitchen for retail customers."

If delivery does remain a higher proportion of business, many restaurants may turn to self-delivery rather than relying on outfits such as Deliveroo or GrubHub, which take a large slice of the profit.

HAS COVID KILLED THE SALAD BAR?

Buffets and salad bars are a familiar sight in all kinds of restaurants, enabling operators to cut labor costs. As the industry tries to play its part in stemming the tide of Covid-19, while remaining open for business, the future of self-service options in a dining room is in question.

Putting a member of staff in charge and making customers queue is one option, but it counteracts the labor-saving element and may put off guests who like to be in charge of their choices and their portion size.

"People adore self-service," says Burgess. "They can have what they want without asking for it. It will come back but not until the hygiene issues have been sorted out. It is great value for money, but it may not be the same if it is staffed."

For Schumaker, the appeal of self-service is too great. "It is not dead, it is taking a nap," he says. "It will be back. It is a social thing. There may be a more flexible design rather than the traditional double-sided cattle troughs. We might see pre-packaged salads, which can still be custom made. Perhaps customers will use their own tongs."

The fact is, however, that the self-service side of dine-in restaurants has been in decline for the last 10 years. "Covid-19 is just another hit it is taking," remarks Bandy. "It won't go away completely. It will stay strong in some markets, particularly outside the large urban centers."



TRUST IS A MUST

Professor Ben Voyer, a visiting fellow in the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at London School of Economics, outlines how restaurants can attract diners back to the dining room by building a relationship of trust

The general public's perception of the safety of dining out has probably been affected by months of intense safety communication campaigns and lockdown measures. One could expect that the desire to dine out is lower than it was pre-pandemic. This is, however, probably moderated by some personal characteristics. For instance, individuals that are more inclined to take risks may be less likely to be affected by the current crisis. Those that are highly risk averse may be even more affected. Similarly, people that are vulnerable may be even more affected and hold even more cautious attitudes towards dining out than the general population.

Attitudes are often inferred from past behaviours. If people take more precaution



when dining out, this is likely to alter their attitude towards the safety of dining out. The change does not have to be gradual, it can be very sudden – as one would expect a sudden change of attitude towards the safety of using public transport, for instance.

Restaurants can allay people's fears to a certain extent. The best way forward is to communicate in a transparent manner. Acknowledging the fact that some diners may feel anxious about being back; and highlighting the steps taken to create a safe dining experience.

Most of the best practices I have seen revolve around clearly stating that the restaurant follows and exceeds the current recommendations from the government, working with and advertising collaboration with a health and safety expert and using social media to show the safe dining experience created to help diners project into the experience.

There is however a fine line between showcasing a safe dining experience and reminding people that there could be a risk associated with dining out.

The key to a clean bill of health

Hygiene is a priority for any foodservice operation, but the pandemic has highlighted the need for cleaning to be more thorough, visible and frequent. Jim Banks looks at how the industry has responded

The steps to limit the transmission of Covid-19 have been spelt out since the start of the pandemic: reduce social contact, maintain distance, wear a face covering and wash your hands. Now that people are starting to socialize more and social distancing requirements are easing, hygiene is more important than ever.

Hygiene is more than staff and customers washing their hands. It means washing surfaces, door handles, cutlery, utensils, tables, touchscreens and everything else on a regular basis. Some operations have made this a priority, while others have taken a more relaxed approach.

“If restaurants aren’t taking customers contact details, or sanitizing they should not be open,” says UK-based consultant Roz Burgess FCSI. “Every touchpoint – front- and back-of-house – needs to be regularly

cleaned, otherwise we are back in lockdown. It is labor-intensive, but more cleaning needs to be done more often.”

In most outlets, the usual cleaning processes may be sufficient, but when the industry’s recovery is fragile, more may be needed to rebuild customers’ confidence.

“This industry has usually concealed its cleaning practices, but now their visibility has changed,” says Joseph Schumaker FCSI of US consultancy FoodSpace. “People are reassured by seeing those practices done, so we are not doing it stealthily now.”

There is also a push to encourage, or at least enable, customers to be involved in the process. Hand sinks or cleaning stations with hand sanitizer are likely to be a more prominent feature in many dining areas.

“Sanitation is the biggest challenge,” says FCSI Associate Jay Bandy, a consultant based in Georgia, US. “It involves the constant cleaning of door handles, tables, chairs and everything else. Some operators are cleaning the whole restaurant multiple times per day. Some have put one person per shift in charge of sanitization, which includes ensuring customers behave properly.”

“A lot more attention is paid to sanitation now and the frequency of cleaning is up,” he adds. “And this is not just in the kitchen but also in the customer areas. Utensils and work surfaces are usually cleaned every four hours, but now it is every two hours.”

Some chains, among them McDonald’s and Chipotle, have had sanitization stations in dining rooms for many years, so the concept is not entirely new. Nevertheless, Bandy notes that there is a careful balance to be struck between customers doing what they choose in terms of handwashing, and what a restaurant compels them to do.

Learning from the grocery sector, which has seen a lot of pushback against the requirement to wear masks in stores, the foodservice sector may have to provide recommendations and cleaning facilities without forcing guests to comply.

“It depends on who your customers are,” Bandy adds. “Some people don’t like being told what to do.”

TECH STEPS UP

Contactless payment, mobile ordering and delivery and click and collect technology were already growing trends before Covid-19 struck. Safety concerns have accelerated adoption and it's unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels, as Elly Earls outlines



recent report from market research firm NPD Group, *Covid-19 British Foodservice Sentiment Survey*, showed that contactless payment was among the top five initiatives that made respondents feel safe eating out, chiming with a recent Datassential study in the US revealing that 38% of people are now concerned about touching shared objects.

"Contactless payment is becoming an everyday occurrence now. As well as being safer, it's more efficient for customers because they don't have to fish around for their change," says Dominic Allport, insights director (foodservice) at NPD Group. "For operators it increases profitability because there are fewer overheads, particularly when it comes to staff time taken up by counting cash. The data around digital

transactions is also increasingly valuable for personalization and marketing reasons."

Hospitality reservation platform SevenRooms recently launched a contactless order and pay feature, which can be accessed by guests in three ways without the need to download an app: scanning a QR code, near-field communication (NFC), or visiting a URL on any mobile device. MGM Resorts in Las Vegas implemented it when they reopened their F&B outlets in June. Diners view menus on their mobile devices and use a credit card or digital wallet to pay.

Meanwhile BoxPark in the UK has teamed up with PassKit, which integrates Apple Wallet and Google Pay. Customers can pre-register and pay digitally while also signing up to the UK government's test and trace scheme.

Closer than we think

Allport says the next question, particularly for QSR operators, is whether there's going to be a voice or facial recognition element built into the ordering and payment process soon. KFC already uses facial recognition technology in China and McDonald's recently acquired a voice recognition start-up. He thinks roll-out of technology like this across the sector could happen more quickly than you might imagine.

According to a recent McKinsey report, businesses leaders are accomplishing in 10 days what used to take them 10 months. "They needed to stop questioning whether they needed to do it and just get on and do it," Allport says. "Post-crisis that pace of innovation may slow down, but many operators are thinking now is a good time to invest and innovate because it means they can capture market share."

SevenRooms has been working in this space since receiving an investment from Amazon's Alexa Fund to build Alexa-specific skills for restaurant operators. "By harnessing voice technology, SevenRooms' users can instantly access key guest preferences," says Bianca McLaren Esmond, senior manager of the platform's brand marketing. "This not only limits

contact in the dining room, but also further streamlines operations and allows staff to deliver more personalized experiences while keeping their eyes on the guest."

Here to stay

Delivery and click and collect technology have also grown hugely in popularity since the pandemic. According to NPD's most recent CREST data, pre-Covid digital orders accounted for 6-7% of all foodservice spend. In Q2 2020 this had risen to 37%. While the total market in Q2 declined in spend by 72% versus last year, digital spend, which mainly comprises pick-up or delivery, rose by 62%.

Like many other foodservice operators London-based Benugo has increased its click and collect business in order to reduce the number of contact points between customers and staff members, a process that has been facilitated by their long-term technology partner, Access Group, as well as pre-payment app Preoday and order-ahead app Ritual.

"Even customers who aren't particularly well versed with contactless, click and collect and wave and pay are managing just fine," says head of IT at Benugo Mark Robertson. "Moving forward, there will certainly be less inclination to return to a standard, table-based service. Businesses will look to learn from what they've had to do during the Covid-19 pandemic and tailor that into their standard operations."

A similar shift is underway back of house. Benugo, which has various arms,





“We’ve taken what was a very traditional process using emails and spreadsheets and moved it online. That’s something that will never change now. We will not go back to that old way of working”

including event and venue catering, corporate F&B for clients like Deloitte and Amazon, and high street locations, has kept the kitchens at many of its locations closed during the pandemic, with sites now placing their orders through a central production unit. “We’ve taken what was a very traditional process using emails and spreadsheets and moved it online,” Robertson says. “That’s something that will never change now. We will not go back to that old way of working.”

For more go to fcsi.org

The scattered market

For Allport one of the challenges of the rapid implementation of new technology is the need to retrain staff. “Hospitality businesses have traditionally recruited people who are good with customers and making people feel welcome. Now, because there’s so much new technology, these staff members have to be tech-savvy so there’s a big onus on operators to upskill and train staff. It’s all very well rolling out new technology but the staff have to be able to use it.”

Sifting through the huge number of new solutions that have hit the market in recent months has been another big challenge for Robertson. “It’s a very scattered market right now – there are some new young businesses that are trying to place themselves at the forefront – I must get 10 or 15 introductions on a weekly basis and it can be an absolute minefield,” he says.

His advice is to choose providers that have enough experience in the sector to know how it works and to try to look beyond the magic of the marketing. With hardware, reliability and robustness are more important than something that looks slick but won’t make it through a busy service.

At SevenRooms, the team have seen three different sorts of customers emerge from the pandemic. There are those that aren’t comfortable dining outside their home, which means a delivery or pick-up solution must be in place. The second guest group is curious about dining out, but wants to make sure the restaurant adheres to social distancing. “For this guest, a virtual waitlist or reservations are essential as they allow guests to know exactly when their table will be ready and where it will be located,” says McLaren Esmond. The third type of guest wants to dine out but also ensure they have as low touch an experience as possible, which is where features like contactless order and pay come in.

Allport says the key for operators is to make sure they put the effort in across all of these channels. “It has to be consistent; otherwise that momentum is going to be lost and people will be concerned,” he says. ■

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SENDING OUT A MESSAGE



Bronx-based collective Ghetto Gastro talk to Samantha Lande about sparking important social conversations through food >

Above: Plant-based dish Green for the Money, Gold for the Hunnies.
Right: Lester Walker and Pierre Serrao wearing T-shirts with a message



on Gray, Lester Walker, and Pierre Serrao grew up together in the Bronx, a New York City borough. As these childhood friends grew older they started to see more inequality between life in and out of the Bronx. It became clear that where they grew up was limited by poverty, food deserts and lack of economic opportunity.

All being creatives, Gray pursuing fashion and the arts (a graduate of New York's Fashion Institute of Technology – FIT), Walker and Serrao, pursuing culinary careers, they thought, “what if we could change the narrative through food and art?”

“We were tired of seeing the only black people in restaurant kitchens be the dishwashers,” says Gray, who serves at the CEO for Ghetto Gastro. “What if we could revolutionize and disrupt how people interact with food and become storytellers using food as a vehicle?”

After years of conceptualizing the idea, in 2012 they launched Ghetto Gastro with a mission to spark larger conversations around inclusion, race, and economic empowerment. “We never had outside investors, we wanted to grow organically,” says Gray. “Like a slow slimmer, slow growth promotes long term growth.”

They started small, with house parties, and traction grew. A few years into the project they found themselves producing large-scale immersive culinary experiences with components of art and food and music that left their guests

“What if we could change the narrative through food and art? We were tired of seeing the only black people in restaurant kitchens be the dishwashers”



thinking about social justice, race, and challenging the norm.

Their unique vantage point started to interest big brands leading to events at the Tate Modern, launching a special shoe with Nike and Air Jordan and partnering with Cartier, Marvel, and Airbnb.

The team put thought into every detail of an elaborate event production, but always remained true to who they were. As Serrao says, “We always looked at it as reversing the stigma – us not being caterers but our clients catering to our needs and our wants and our necessities.”

Gray adds, “it’s all about communities sharing knowledge, sharing experiences, having a good time and doing good work.”

For the trio, this comes in many forms. Challenging discussions around topics like Black Lives Matter – through a dish, featured in *Wired* magazine, of deconstructed apple pie with chalk lines around it. Or in their line of shirts

proclaiming, “Food is a Weapon,” a common phrase of theirs reminding people that the agriculture in the US was primarily built on black labor and that access to food has always been a race issue.



Above: One of Ghetto Gastro's takes on pasta – Spicy Fusilli



Clockwise from left: Lester Walker, Jon Grey, Pierre Serrao. The team behind Ghetto Gastro

More recent dishes focus on more plant base options, which Walker believes is the future of food. “We need to learn how to cultivate and feed each other,” he says, of the black community that doesn’t typically eat a plant-based diet. “As opposed to that heavy meat diet, plant-based is the way to go if you want to live a long healthy prosperous life.”

Dishes like Green for the Money, Gold for the Hunnies: with curry rice, avocado and pistachio or Maroon Shrooms: jerk mushrooms with turmeric aioli, created by Serrao, is where you’ll likely see some of their cuisine moving forward.

Persevering in a pandemic

The team found itself traveling around the world with their creative arsenal of ideas bringing their perspective everywhere from Asia to the Cayman Islands and then Covid-19 happened. No longer were big group events an option

and it was time for the group to pivot how they relayed their message.

“When your back is against the wall you have to get creative and figure it out,” says Gray. So that’s what they did. Their first mission – making sure the people in the Bronx were taken care of.

They partnered with Rethink, a New York city non-profit that gives excess food from grocery stores to restaurants and corporate kitchens to provide meals to those in need. The Bronx was at one point the epicenter of New York City’s coronavirus outbreak with a disproportionate amount of deaths in a borough that has quite a few food deserts, homelessness and poor healthcare.

Through the partnership they were able to reach and serve the population with the help of local restaurants, and in turn, they were also able to financially assist restaurants in the community like La Morada. They have long surpassed

“Only so many people can attend an event but when we create things such as the Food is a Weapon T-shirt, those that have been on the periphery get to participate and amplify some of the messaging we believe in”

what was supposed to be a six-week partnership serving over 30,000 meals to the community where they grew up. They plan to continue to keep this form of giving back in how they regularly operate.

They also turned to developing more products like additional shirts and their Juneteenth seasoning. “Only so many people can attend an event but when we create things such as the Food is a Weapon T-shirt, those that have been on the periphery get to participate and amplify some of the messaging we believe in,” says Gray.

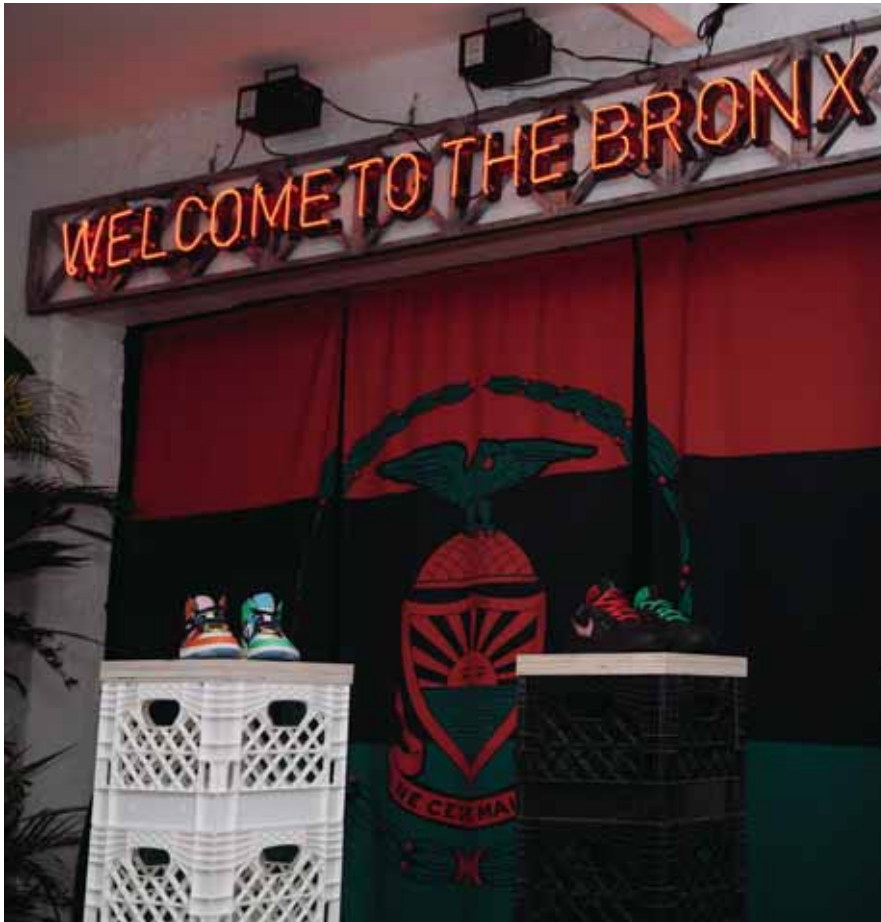
Time to focus

Walker believes this time is, “a blessing in disguise,” and Serrao agrees. “It’s allowed us to focus on parts of the business where we were lacking – things that needed more attention, but given our lifestyle we didn’t have the time to be planted in one spot and apply attention to different disciplines across our business,” he says.

One of those developments is an Instagram series called Gastronomical Cribbs where they chat and virtually cook with chefs and celebrities such as chef Samin Nosrat (from Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat), skateboarder Tony Hawk, and Detroit chef George Azar. They’ve also launched a cocktail segment with Martell spirits, and have more up their sleeves.

The collective has always stayed true to its mission – a large part to dismantle >

Below: Ghetto Gastro's HQ – a lab for ideas and a place to bring the community together



“Things aren’t good for the majority of our people. We will continue... to work towards creating the world we want to live in and leave it for the people who come behind us”

oppression. So, when the world woke up to racial inequality through George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake and so many others, they kept on doing what they have always done – supporting the black community.

“We’ve been doing it when it was not quite the popular thing to discuss,” Gray

says. “Things aren’t good for the majority of our people. We will continue to do what we do –work towards creating the world we want to live in and leave it for the people who come behind us.”

Their work will continue although they will put a special emphasis on supporting and elevating black and brown woman, especially with the upcoming US presidential election.

They also want to make sure their community understands voting at the local level and they have plans to make that happen through digital events and grassroots efforts.

What’s next?

It’s hard to predict when people will feel comfortable gathering in groups again so the team isn’t looking to make any long-term predictions on where they are

WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION

The Ghetto Gastro team’s hard work has been recognized in the form of an international award. The Basque Culinary World Prize is a global award co-founded by the Basque Culinary Center and the Basque Government. The main award this year went to Jose Andrés and his World Central Kitchen, but with so much of the culinary world stepping up to support each other in the midst of a global pandemic, they decided to include 10 special recognitions, Ghetto Gastro being one of them.

“The pandemic has highlighted the contributions of our sector in its entirety, so it was not enough to announce just one winner, but to recognize, with the 10 special recognitions, the performance of exemplary professionals who have used their knowledge, creativity and will to influence in society, making the best use of the transformative capacity of gastronomy,” says Joxe Mari Aizega, director general of the Basque Culinary Center. To be considered for the award, chefs had to be nominated by another professional working in the world of gastronomy.

We are super honored to be included in the special recognition from the Basque award. It’s a big honor to be recognized on a global platform. The work we do is not for recognition – it’s our duty, so that was awesome,” says Gray.

going. “We are trying to project the next five hours, five days,” laughs Gray.

No matter if it’s in-person events, digital storytelling, or products, their intentions are the same. “It’s all about creating a better world for black and brown people,” says Walker, “That will always remain the same.”

In the short term expect to see more of what they’ve already been doing – such as an upcoming product collaboration with Crux sold exclusively at Williams Sonoma, more digital events and more ways to give back directly to their community.

“We hope our mission is cemented and that other people follow in our footsteps and that we continue to be thought of as thought leaders in food, art cultural space and upward momentum,” says Serrao. ■

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SPIRIT OF THE LAWS

From traveling the world and working in an array of sectors, to being honored by the Queen for his services, Dr **Vic Laws** MBE FCSI has had quite the career. “I love the work I do,” he tells Michael Jones

Spending time in the company of Vic Laws as the veteran consultant discusses his career is an industry education in itself. Firstly, there is barely an area of hospitality he has not had experience of at some level or another – from high-end hotels and restaurants, to overseeing the catering operations for stadia, schools, hospitals, care-homes, prisons, airports and airlines. It also ticks off a plethora of iconic UK institutions he has stories about (Wembley Stadium; Heathrow Airport; Windsor Castle; even the rock band The Who). All the while, the conversation saunters through a whistle-stop global tour of countries Laws has worked or trained in: Switzerland, Mexico, Canada, Ireland, Cyprus, Sudan...

So, after such a fêted career, which includes being made a Member of the British Empire (MBE) by the Queen, at 78 Laws must surely be considering retirement? Not at all, it transpires. “I’m a workaholic. I love the work I do,” he says.

“There are always challenges out there and there are always people you can help and guide. I have gained a lot from this profession and now I want to give back and help others to be successful.”

For Laws, that means being involved with the Réunion des Gastronomes and the young chef’s competition for Chaîne des Rôtisseurs. It means continuing his role as restaurant ambassador for The Clink, the charity he has worked with for over 10 years, more recently fundraising and creating awareness both within and outside the hospitality industry.

A past president and fellow of the Institute of Hospitality (IoH) and an active member of FCSI, Lead Association for Caterers in Education (LACA) and Association of Catering Excellence (ACE), Laws is also on the board of the Royal Over-Seas League, an 80-bed club in Mayfair, London, where we photograph him for this story. The shoot involves him performing the sabrage ritual (opening Champagne with a sabre) of the Sabre

d’Or in full traditional costume.

“When people ask me what I do, I say I eat and drink for a living, which is true,” he laughs.

Learning to fly

Despite this storied life in hospitality, Laws pretty much stumbled into the business. “As a youngster, my ambition was either to be a policeman or a lawyer. Unfortunately, I wasn’t academic enough to do either. I loved cooking, so becoming a chef was my next choice,” he says.

“I lived in Harrow, Greater London, with my parents and my sister, who was extremely clever. I was always in her shadow, except when it came to cooking. My mother was a good cook and I learned the basics from her. I used to enter cookery competitions for the local horticultural society and I did quite well.”

Laws attended a co-educational grammar school. “At the age of 14, you had to stream. The choices were woodwork, metalwork, technical drawing, needlework or cookery. I chose cookery because I wasn’t any good at the others, but one of the incentives was there were 30 girls in the group – that informed my decision-making a bit. I did cookery for a couple of years at school and said to my parents, ‘I want to be a chef.’ Neither of my parents were in hospitality, so it was something completely new to them.”

In 1958 Laws had an interview for a chefs’ course at Acton Hotel School (now University of West London). The principal persuaded him to take a hotel operations course. At the end of the second year he got a job as a commis de débarrasseur at Restaurant Schutzenhaus in Switzerland.

“Victor Ceserani taught me how to cook, but also to have time for other people”



Dressed in the traditional costume to perform the sabrage ritual – opening a bottle of Champagne with a sabre

“It was a five-star restaurant and I learned a lot, including the fact that I didn’t know as much as I thought I did, so I returned to college for another year,” says Laws. “Acton, in those days, was one of the best colleges in the country and I had a great instructor in Victor Ceserani MBE, who was one of the first television chefs in the UK. He not only taught me how to cook but also, more importantly, to have time for other people.”

Leaving college in 1961, Laws went to work as a trainee manager in the 750-bed Mount Royal Hotel in Oxford Street, London. “I was there for nine months. I learned that I didn’t particularly like hotels,” he says.

Laws left and began working as assistant catering officer for the City of St Albans. This started a seven-year stint in local government that would later take him to Coventry, where he was promoted to deputy catering superintendent, managing 19 restaurants and outside catering, before he ended up running the Cliffs Pavilion, a multi-purpose entertainment center seating nearly 1,200 people in Southend, on the Thames estuary. “At the time, offshore radio, such as Radio Caroline, was just starting out, so we used to run pop concerts for bands such as The Who on a Saturday night.”

Believing he needed more sales



“I am a shy person. However, there is a difference when you wear a ‘badge’ and organize things. I’m a team player – as long as I lead the team”

experience on his CV, Laws left in 1964, working for Associated Fisheries selling delicatessen products to hospitals, prisons and institutional establishments.

“I learned selling wasn’t for me but it was an introduction to hospitals and prisons, which was useful in later life with The Clink,” he says. “I knew I wanted to stay in catering. I loved hospitality and working with people.”

Taking flight

In 1968 Laws joined Forte as catering manager at Luton Airport when it was “a couple of tin shacks and a terminal building”. Forte won the inflight catering contract for Britannia Airways (now Thompson) kickstarting 10 years of inflight catering experience with Laws ending up director for Western Europe, based at Heathrow. “We ran catering at airports in the UK, Paris, Amsterdam and Berlin. I used to fly all over the place to see people from Alitalia and Turkish Airlines. I also went to Sudan to have a look at catering out there.”

In 1979 Laws was headhunted to join Grandmet (now Compass), where he ran their airport company with operations in the UK and Mexico. Ultimately Grandmet decided airports were “not for them” and at the same time, in 1981, Laws was headhunted to join ARA (now Aramark) to run its catering and leisure divisions, the latter of which at that time held just one contract, with Chelsea Football Club.

The first tender Laws and his team won was for Wembley Stadium, which >

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had been with the previous caterer, Letheby and Christopher, for 57 years.

In 1983 Laws left ARA and joined Spinneys, which was owned by the financial organization British and Commonwealth Shipping. “At that time [UK prime minister] Margaret Thatcher was trying to break the stranglehold the unions had on the domestic services in the NHS. We started a company using the expertise Spinneys had in the Middle East to set up a hotel services company specializing in cleaning catering and laundry services. We were ahead of our time, but Spinneys were impatient for profit and decided they would pull out of the NHS. How wrong they were as now nearly 50% of services are run by the private sector.”

Going solo

In 1986, Laws was approached by David Hutchins, who had been his managing director at Grandmet and Spinneys, to do some consulting for Kalamazoo, who were looking at computer costing systems and wanted to sell into hospitals. “David once told me, ‘If you don’t enjoy doing a job then don’t do it’. So, I started doing that and the consultancy just grew.”

Laws was instrumental in setting up what is now ISS catering services before establishing catering in hospitals for Taylorplan, subsequently taken over by Gardner Merchant (now Sodexo). “Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) was being introduced to local government and my experience of contracting came into play. I started consulting for Surrey County Council, my first local authority (LA).”

From there, Laws worked with over 60 LAs across the UK. “I was also to become catering consultant to Mars in Western Europe and worked for many care homes. One of my most interesting jobs was to be consultant with Lansdowne Road Rugby Stadium [now Aviva] in Dublin, with another FCSI consultant from Canada,” he says.

“When I set up AVL Consultancy I did

not want to build a large organization, as I had worked within so many companies where I was involved with re-structuring and redundancies, so I chose to work with a few selected individuals and helped to start up quite a few of our present FCSI Professional members. I still have clients who I have worked with for over 30 years and, luckily, they’re still going strong.”

Laws also moved into association management, running FCSI UK & Ireland for many years as well as LACA and ACE, where he is still the business manager. “I am basically a shy person,” he says. “However, there is a difference when you wear a ‘badge’ when you go to events or organize things. I am a team player – as long as I lead the team,” he laughs.

Leading the way for so many years led to Laws receiving the honor of an MBE in 2012 for his services to British hospitality. “I was asked if I wanted to go to Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle to be invested. I chose Windsor as I had been to the Palace twice before. I was lucky enough to have Her Majesty to do the presentation.

That was a great weekend as on the previous Friday I had been given an honorary doctorate from the University of West London, my old college.”

While showing no sign of slowing down professionally, Laws does like to relax via a new-found love of horseracing. “Recently I have taken up shared ownership in race horses through Highclere Racing. I have been part-owner in three, so far. It’s great fun. You don’t do it to make money, although that would be nice, but the company and the atmosphere is enjoyable and so different.”

Doing something for the love of it – and trying different things – is a clear theme in Laws’ life and career. It has afforded him the chance to experience more aspects of the hospitality sector than most could imagine. Laws’ law therefore is a simple one: variety is the spice of life, so long as people are at the heart of what you do. “Nothing beats being with people,” he says. ■

GIVING BACK

There is some competition for Laws’ proudest professional achievement, but he opts for becoming president of the HCIMA (now IoH) in 1998.

“I represented them across the world. I did tours to Cyprus, where I met the Cypriot president, and to Canada, where I lectured university students. I still strongly believe in supporting our professional bodies and I am currently honorary president of the IoH in London and on the Friends Committee of the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts,” he says.

“There are always challenges out there and there are always people you can help and guide. I have gained a lot from this profession and now I want to give back and help others to be successful.”

Laws believes the most important business lesson he has learned is, “be honest with clients and customers and don’t be afraid to speak your mind. In consultancy if you don’t get on with the client then you won’t do a good job – so hand it to somebody else. Integrity and honesty are both very important to me.”



Her Majesty the Queen presenting Laws with an MBE for his services to British hospitality in 2012

Keeping it clean

With many years of experience in the warewashing business Insinger is still innovating. Amelia Levin reports on how the company is adapting its offering in the current pandemic



Insinger's new headquarters will showcase the manufacturer's commitment to innovation

This industry has seen countless mergers and acquisitions over the past several years, causing manufacturers, dealers and even consulting firms to grow larger and expand by the day. Insinger Machine Co., however, has a different story to tell.

"We are one of the last-standing, family owned businesses in the foodservice equipment manufacturing industry, if not the last one," says Ari Cantor, president of the Philadelphia-based company and the fifth-generation owner-operator.

Steeped in rich history, Insinger is highly-regarded for its warewashing and custom sheet metal fabrication capabilities, dating back to the late 1800s when Cantor's great, great grandfather, Emil Levene, acquired the company from the Insinger family. However, for military veterans lucky enough to have enjoyed a "tour of duty" in scullery operations, they will likely know Insinger for its biggest and longest standing customer for the past ninety years: the US Department of Defense.

This year, Insinger celebrates its 127th year of continuous operation. A one-stop-shop for warewashing needs, Insinger offers a complete range of warewashing and related products: from

undercounter to flight-type dishwashers, pulping systems, tray conveyors and accumulators, automated handwashing systems, pot and pan washers, powered sinks and more.

Looking back

Although Insinger has received previous offers to go public or merge with other companies, "there are many benefits to staying independent," Cantor says. For one, it has allowed the multi-million-dollar company to operate like a small business, with the ability to stay nimble and constantly innovate, including a pivot during the novel Covid-19 pandemic to produce two new products for stepped-up sanitization (more on that in a bit).

But first, a history lesson.

"Our goal as a company has always been to work with the US Navy and grow alongside it, but over the years a number of restaurant chains came to Insinger in search of products and we have grown and evolved our product line with them as well," says Cantor.

In 1893, Insinger invented one of the first commercial dishwashers, which was essentially a giant cast iron bathtub with one side for washing and the other for rinsing. It featured a mechanical wooden basket for lowering and raising ware out of the tanks and maintained heat with the

help of two open burner rings below. This semi-automated solution was deemed revolutionary in its day.

On Christmas Eve in 1935, Insinger patented the first modular stainless steel warewasher. The machine could be disassembled in sections for installation or removal. "This product was developed because the military was looking to reduce the removal of hatches and passageways on US Navy ships just to get foodservice equipment on board," says Cantor.

The company was also called upon during outbreaks of yellow fever and polio because of its sanitizing capabilities. Foodservice operations at hospitals, schools, and hotels would sanitize dirty dishes in a large tank with boiling hot water. "We're literally coming full-circle now with the raging Covid-19 pandemic. Warewashing is a necessary evil in foodservice, and especially now, so fortunately we haven't missed a beat lately," says Cantor. "Given our military background, we believe in duty, honor, country, customer and nothing is more important at this moment in time."

At just 37 years of age, Cantor could be considered quite young, not only for this industry but also for holding such a high-level leadership position. However, he is no spring chicken in business or

even in warewashing and foodservice. After earning his Bachelor of Science in business administration, management and operations from Cornell University, Cantor worked on Wall Street in investment banking and trading for Goldman Sachs and other banks before heading back home during the recession of 2008 and 2009.

He joined Insinger in 2009 and has been with the company for 11 years, starting off as a bills of material specialist and working as technical services manager, vice president of sales and chief operating officer before being promoted to president in 2014. He has been a shareholder of the company since 2012 and now is the sole shareholder, having acquired the company over time from his father, Robert Cantor, the fourth generation of owner-operator who now serves as company chairman. Cantor's performance is overseen by Insinger's executive advisory committee, which includes industry and non-industry professionals.

The same year Cantor joined his family business, a fire broke out at a neighboring warehouse after a night security officer accidentally left a lit cigarette unattended. "That turned into a fire that you could see from Interstate 95;



Father and son Robert and Ari Cantor; Insinger's chairman and president respectively

the whole block went up in flames and we lost half our facility," says Cantor.

It took a year and a half to rebuild, but the company maintained momentum and employees continued to work in rented trailers in the parking lot and running fabrication with the help of industrial diesel generators. "The show must go on, so that's what we did," Cantor adds.

Insinger repaired the existing facility following the fire and Cantor says there are plans for a major renovation and a new campus, hopefully in the near future, in order to expand engineering and manufacturing capabilities.

The team

Going beyond Insinger's long-time emphasis on service and relationships, Cantor hopes to build on the company's ability to innovate. "Innovation is at the heart of everything we do, from our first product in 1893, through today," he says. "We were the first American warewashing manufacturer to offer a ventless door type dishwasher and later offer a ventless rack conveyor dishwasher, and we produced some of the first undercounter dishwashers in America. We patented the first stainless steel dishwasher in 1935. Now, especially in the wake of Covid-19, we are all about innovation to enhance our

manufacturing operations. We recently invested in new punch and laser cutting machines, new press brakes, new welding technologies, new finishing systems and other fabrication systems that are more automated and can talk to each other."

Cantor points to his newly developed team of veteran warewashing engineers as his ticket to faster and better innovation in the short-term and long-term future. That includes Mark Ferguson and James Calhoun, two long-time warewashing engineers and designers who spent years at Jackson Warewashing Systems in Kentucky.

A little over two years ago, Ferguson moved his family from Kentucky to Philadelphia to take the job of his dreams as director of engineering at Insinger with the freedom and flexibility to lead and execute new design projects. Ferguson, who alone holds about 10 patents for his work, has worked in commercial dishwashing for 31 years, having worked at Jackson WWS as a drafter out of college, becoming a project engineer and serving eight years as the company's research and development director. Prior to joining Insinger, he spent the last twelve years with Meiko and some time with Ecolab. Throughout his career, he has designed all types of dishwashers, from undercounter units to large-scale, flight-type pieces.

Calhoun joined Insinger as chief engineer a little over two years ago after John Stern, a former president of Insinger, recommended him to Cantor. He would have taken Ferguson's job as director of engineering, but wanted less of a management role.

At the time he was contacted, he had retired and was working on his farm (that he still maintains) in Covine, Kentucky, where he'd lived his entire life, but found himself wanting to go back to designing. He and Ferguson work closely with Cantor as a true team, meeting often, even outside of work over dinner, to discuss ideas. This "flat hierarchy" as Cantor refers to it, helps them focus >



Insinger's CX20: the industry's first 60-second ventless door type dishwasher

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on constantly innovating without the impediments of bureaucracy.

“Mark and I have equal roles within the company and we strive to be innovative and lead the industry.” says Calhoun, a United States Navy veteran and former submariner who completed the Navy’s rigorous Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program and spent most of his career with Jackson WWS. “We want to get to the point where everyone is copying our designs, rather than the other way around.” Both Calhoun and Ferguson admit their experience with publicly traded companies did not allow this freedom to act quickly and nimbly for cost and other reasons. “It’s also nice to work for a company where everyone is treated like part of the family.” Calhoun adds.

Cantor reiterates this “open-door policy” at the company. “Our management is structured as a flat hierarchy, he says. “We all share ideas and work together, and personally, it’s important that all our employees feel like we have an inclusive culture. They are stakeholders in our success.”

The CX20 in 60 seconds

Most recently, prior to the pandemic, Ferguson and Calhoun were hard at work developing the industry’s first sixty-second ventless door type dishwasher, the CX20. The product was unveiled at the NAFEM exhibition in February 2019 and is in full production today.

The main challenge in designing the piece, Ferguson says, was to combine the popularity of ventless technology with the power of a traditional unit. “Normally, ventless machines take a long time to operate – the typical non-ventless door type machine takes about 60 seconds, or even as little as 45-50 seconds to achieve a capacity of 70 racks per hour, but ventless units take much longer than that.” says Ferguson. “We focused on making a ventless machine capable of maintaining that 60-second cycle.”

When dishwashers take longer to



Inventing one of the world’s first commercial dishwashers, Insinger retains enduring ties with the US military (top)

TIMELINE: INSINGER MACHINE CO.

1893: The Insinger family founds the business and invents one of the first commercial dishwashers. Emil Levene acquires the company shortly after.

1935: Insinger patents the first modular stainless steel warewasher, which could be disassembled in sections for installation or removal. It proves the perfect fit for US Navy ships.

2009: Ari Cantor joins the family business, becoming president in 2014.

2019: Insinger’s CX20, the industry’s first sixty-second ventless door type dishwasher, is unveiled at NAFEM in Orlando, Florida.

2020: During the Covid-19 pandemic, Insinger pivots its business by fabricating stainless steel and aluminum chambers for sanitizing N-95 masks and producing the Outpost sanitizer dispenser system.

operate (usually energy-saving models) they cut throughput by 45%, thereby requiring staff to work longer hours, thereby causing an increase in labor costs. Ferguson is also keen to point out that the CX20, which meets and exceeds EnergyStar 2.0, also lowers energy cost due to its speed and differentiated design.

Another efficiency aspect of the CX20 is its built-in booster tank, which saves energy and time overall. “Typically, energy is measured by testing the booster separate from and in addition to the dish machine, but our system is tested on its own and it still uses less energy than other dish machines without a booster heater.” Ferguson says. The natural insulation provided by incorporating the booster inside the hot water tank means the operator doesn’t have to buy a separate dedicated booster heater to maintain the hot water temperature.

“We didn’t stop at that, we went way overboard,” says Ferguson of the design, which is aesthetically pleasing, thanks to its clean, smooth joints and panels and full stainless-steel construction.

“We also used actuator gas springs instead of mechanical springs, which are notorious for breaking and can

cause injury and be extremely difficult to replace.” he says.

The team also designed a completely enclosed, waterproof, swing-out electronic control board. “In my experience most control boards can go bad, especially in humidity and heat, but you can literally dunk this new control board in water and it still works.”

Other standard features include a quad-arm wash system, eco drain overflow system, a foot-operated drain pedal, an ergo-grip door handle which provides multiple hand grip positions and allows clearance for corner installations, a vertically-mounted pump motor, a hinged dishrack support, the RackAware dishrack sensing system, a single point electrical connection, a door safety switch, multiple cycle options, low-water protection, a de-lime program, a linear motion easy-glide door and detergent connection provisions – all standard features on the CX20 product.

As Calhoun noted, Ferguson expects, even wants, competitors to try to copy their CX20 project. “We always hold back something to continue to take the market a step further and knowing you can do better if other people try to copy >



The Outpost dispenser system, produced by Insinger during the pandemic, holds any one-gallon container of hand sanitizer

you.” says Ferguson. “If they do, we know we’re successful,” he adds, “but it’s best to always have other ideas in your back pocket.”

Quick pivots

Insinger’s long history with sanitation – even during previous pandemics – has not changed in the wake of Covid-19. Even the USNS Comfort and Mercy – US Navy hospital ships that traveled to the east coast to help New York, New Jersey and other hard-hit areas to provide additional medical resources – are customers.

It is no surprise that Cantor and his team were quick to not only want to build products for the industry, but could, given its fabrication capabilities. This is not at all unlike many companies that pivoted to provide supply chain equipment during the second World War.

Insinger began their Covid-19 support efforts by fabricating a stainless steel and aluminum sanitizing chamber for another company looking to offer a product that could sanitize N-95 masks used by hospital workers so they could safely be reused. The company bought the empty chamber from Insinger and added UV-C lights inside the chamber

to kill off the virus without destroying the masks.

The second product Insinger has produced during the pandemic is called Outpost. It’s a completely enclosed, commercial grade, stainless steel hand sanitizer dispenser system that holds any one-gallon container of hand sanitizer. The product is dispensed using a foot pedal, making it completely touchless for maximum hygiene.

“It took us five weeks to design and bring that product to market.” says Ferguson. The Insinger Outpost includes a keyed lock to prevent theft or tampering, and sanitizer can be bought through Insinger or through another provider. After just a few weeks on the market, Insinger had sold about 30 of the Outposts with an order for 44 from a restaurant chain. It has pending orders for nearly 275.

Insinger most recently partnered with Meritech to produce CleanTech, an automated hand hygiene system. CleanTech operates by sensing a person’s hands when placed inside two wells and circulating and spraying sanitized water to kill nearly 99% of pathogens and germs in just 12 seconds. The unit also features a closed-loop drainage system with zero contact points. It is even available with an optional footwear sanitizing system – the operator simply steps onto the platform in front of the hand washing basins. Insinger claims the product uses 75% less water than traditional hand washing in a sink.

The future

Cantor says any plans for expansion (including the renovation) are carefully thought out. “I drive a modest car and wear a cheap watch; my mentor at Goldman Sachs once told me that problems arise when you take unnecessary risks in business, forget who you are and place profit over customer interest,” he says. “I try to stay humble and grounded.”

In the short term, Cantor says the

company plans to continue developing and marketing its new line of hand hygiene and handwashing systems in partnership with FDA-approved companies. In the long term Insinger will continue to focus its efforts on its new line of ventless dishwashing systems to help customers conserve energy and labor. Cantor also plans to grow the company’s distribution and partnerships with customers overseas.

“We try to remain servant leaders and ask our customers what they’re looking for; we listen rather than speak.” he says. “Insinger has never bitten off more than it can chew, but demand for products remains strong and that’s also driven by consultants and the FCSI community, and for that we remain profusely thankful for all they have done to support us. Sanitation will be with us forever, and I imagine it will only continue to be a bigger focus in a post-pandemic world.”

Cantor points to four key factors that attribute to Insinger’s competitive edge:

1. a focus on American manufacturing and supporting American labor through vertical integration rather than off-shoring jobs.
2. the continuous modernization of foodservice operations.
3. Insinger’s military heritage – who Insinger is at its core.
4. cleanliness – Insinger’s goal. “Those are the things we strive for each and every day,” he says.

For Insinger, Covid-19 has been both a blessing and a curse. Like most, the company witnessed the tremendous negative impact it has had on the foodservice industry and associated industries, its personnel and its customers. Conversely, as Cantor notes: “Covid-19 shone a spotlight on the importance of proper hygiene. The global pandemic has transformed warewashing from an after-thought to front and center in the minds of every single operator – because dishwashers provide the most vital foodservice function: guest safety.”

After all, Cantor says, “Happiness is a clean dish.” In a time of pandemic, that has a resounding ring of truth. ■

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The talent pool gets deeper



Before Covid-19, negative media coverage and unrealistic expectations among young people had made it harder than ever for foodservice operators to find staff. Now there's a surplus of people wanting to work in hospitality, operators have a whole new set of staffing challenges, reports Elly Earls

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, foodservice businesses across the globe were facing a skills shortage. In the US, it was estimated that an additional 200,000 line cooks and chefs would be required by 2025. In Canada, 23,500 additional chefs would be needed between 2015 and 2035 and 9,000 of these jobs were predicted to go unfilled.

According to Deloitte, 69% of Australian hospitality businesses were suffering skills shortages, with a predicted 123,000 worker shortfall to hit the industry this year, while 70% of German restaurant owners saw the shortage of skilled staff as their biggest obstacle to staying in business. Figures released in 2019 by recruitment website Caterer.com revealed that 97% of pupils and recent school leavers in the UK had written off a career in the hospitality industry.

The picture could not look more different today. In July, D&D London received almost 1,000 applications for a position at its Manchester restaurant 20 Stories in just 24 hours. Carol Cairnes, the company's director of people, said: "The sheer number of applicants is staggering, we've never seen such a large number come through in such a short amount of time. While it means we will have the pick of an incredibly large number of highly qualified candidates, it's very sad to see how many people need employment. I would love to be able to offer them all the position, but of course that's just not possible at this time."

D&D London is not the first to experience increased demand for positions, following June's report that the number of people out of work in the UK alone had increased by 600,000. In the US, unemployment rose higher in three

months of Covid-19 than it did in two years of the Great Recession. Previously, negative coverage about working in the foodservice sector had put many people off applying for jobs in pubs and restaurants but now priorities have changed.

Clay Walker is president of San Francisco-based restaurant group Gott's Roadside and he has been in the industry 25 years. Before the pandemic, he said it had been harder to find staff than he could ever remember. Today, it's quite the opposite.

"Before the pandemic, unemployment was at an all-time low, creating a shortage of restaurant workers looking for employment because they were gainfully employed elsewhere. The pandemic has forced the closure of many restaurants, flooding the





FCSI Associate Naomi Duncan, owner of Phoenix Consultancy Services


market with a surplus of people looking for work for the first time in a long time,” he says. “The problem now is employee reliability. Employees with Covid-like symptoms must quarantine, rendering them unavailable to work for weeks at a time. Employees with children are unable to work because public schools have been closed since spring, and they need to stay home to take care of their children.”

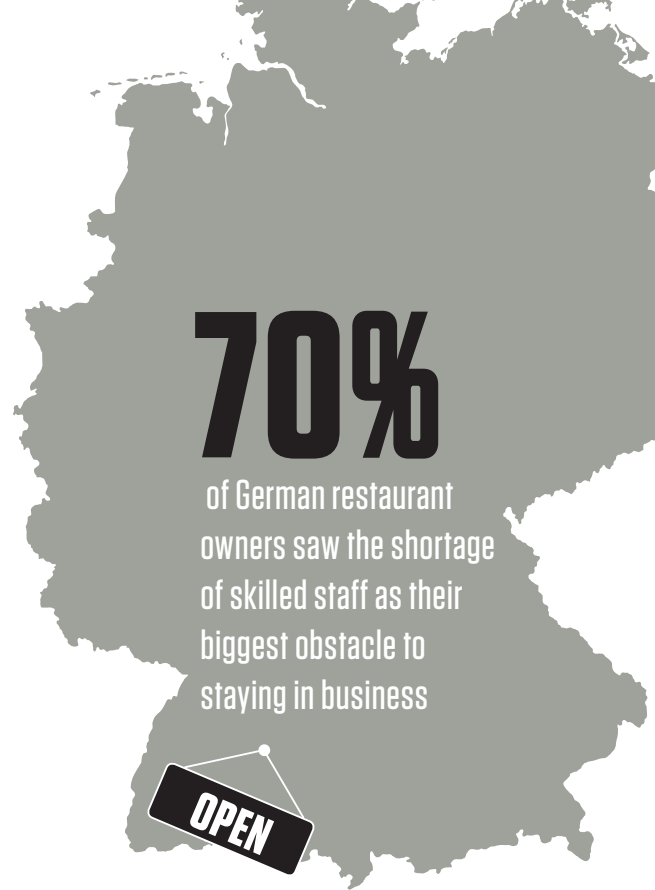
Safety and wellbeing

Over the last couple of years, there have been more and more examples of operators in the foodservice sector improving working conditions for staff, challenging the industry norm of few perks and poor working conditions. René Redzepi of two-Michelin-starred Noma in Copenhagen, for example, announced last year he was looking at ways to grant staff members three months of paid leave after they’ve completed a certain number of years’ service, while UK-based Michelin-starred chef Paul Kitching planned to introduce a four-day week for his staff without decreasing their salaries.

Other operators, like Gott’s, showed their appreciation for staff in less extreme ways such as free meals for staff and tickets for sporting events. “Our restaurants are also well-designed and comfortable,” says Walker. “For example, we pay more for our kitchen floors to be softer on the body and we’ve invested in noise control on the ceiling, which has made a dramatic difference not only to

“Good businesses fail and contracts are lost and it’s not necessarily lack of vision or lack of creativity or financial management, it’s because the people on the ground don’t feel valued”

97% 
of pupils and recent school leavers in the UK have **written off a career in the hospitality industry**



the quality of dining experience, but also the quality of work experience.”

For Naomi Duncan, an FCSI Associate, who owns Phoenix Consultancy Services in the UK and is the CEO of charity Chefs in Schools, the simple fact is that if you don’t look after your people, you won’t have a business. “I’ve worked in food my whole career and 60% of what I’ve done is people and 40% is food. Good businesses fail and contracts are lost and it’s not necessarily lack of vision or lack of creativity or financial management, it’s because the people on the ground don’t feel valued,” she says.

Of course, this has come much more sharply into focus since the foodservice industry started reopening post-lockdown, with operators now responsible not only for staff members’ job satisfaction, but also their physical safety. As UK-based hospitality expert Abbie Miller of Lucky Penny Consultants stresses, the biggest issue for operators now is the safety and wellbeing of staff.

“By all accounts this disease is not going to be eradicated anytime soon and as such precautions and protective measures will need to be implemented for the foreseeable future. Working in masks, gloves and face guards is awkward, but entirely necessary to protect

staff and customers so new habits need to be formed.”

In order to protect both customers and staff, many businesses have also introduced remote ordering, QR coded menus and table service only to help minimize the amount of movement and interaction between servers and guests. While this makes sense from a practical standpoint, it also brings up new issues for operators.

“So much of eating out is that it is an occasion; atmosphere and interaction are essential and right now the industry is still trying to find its feet in terms of still offering that experiential element of going out for a meal or for a few drinks after work,” Miller says.

She also predicts that it won't be too long before chains start going cashless, which will see cash tips for waiting staff all but disappear. “The upside of this is that it could force an improvement on the basic hourly rate. The bad is that it could massively impact the take-home pay for some of the hardest working and lowest paid in the industry,” she says.

Keep in contact

While a lot has changed on the staffing front in the last few months, Duncan's point still stands that hospitality is all about people; treating your staff fairly is the only way to thrive in this industry. For Walker, the operators who continue to provide good working conditions and treat staff fairly and ethically, will be the ones to survive this crisis.

“Hospitality breeds loyalty. Operators are

In the US, it was estimated that an additional

200,000
line cooks and chefs
will be needed by **2025**

In Canada

23,500

additional chefs
would have been
needed between

2015

and

2035

only as strong as their people. At Gott's we do our best to treat our people well, who in turn treat our guests well and create memorable dining experiences,” he says.

For him, a huge part of this has always been communication, both in person and via technology. For example, the brand recently invested in a new platform by Paycom, which brings together payroll, recruitment, training and scheduling and allows employees to check their work schedule for the next week on their phone. “It makes our employees' lives easier. And we can send that communication to different groups of people. A lot of companies are not good communicators and when you don't communicate well, people get the sense that you don't care,” Walker says. “We're trying to provide the human touch as much as possible. Even if technology is involved, that's the world we live in and that's the way to reach people at any hour, whether they're online or not.”

Miller thinks communication and being empathetic to the differing needs of the team is only going to become more important in the coming months. “The impact of being quarantined, being isolated, potentially even grieving for a lost loved one, will have affected individuals differently and employers need to



9,000

of these jobs were
predicted to go
unfilled



“Might some staff feel forced to return to conditions that they feel are unsafe?”

companies filing bankruptcy, a significant number of businesses, especially independents, will not reopen,” he says.

“In the short-term, we are seeing a surplus of talent looking for more stable employment within the restaurant sector. Depending how long the pandemic lasts and how many restaurants close for good, some restaurant veterans may need to consider different careers, moving to a more affordable city, or both.”

Meanwhile, Miller has seen a whole variety of reactions to the coronavirus crisis from industry veterans. “For some, lockdown has been a wonderful time for them to reconnect with their passions or to find new ones. I’ve spoken to numerous chefs who have said they have fallen back in love with food and started learning new skills, which they would not have otherwise been able to do while working full time – whether this be setting up fresh pasta delivery, making sourdough bagels or doing online cook-alongs with family. There have been some really interesting innovations come out of this,” she says.

She has seen others completely re-evaluate their outlook on life. One chef she spoke to said until lockdown, he had not spent more than a week with his family in over seven years and felt intensely guilty about neglecting his children and wife for so long. “He now wants to leave kitchens and has started a plumbing course to establish a more normalized work life balance,” she says. “I’m pretty sure he will not be the only one.

“I think it is still too early to say how the market and economy will bounce back, but we are anticipating a flood of redundancies and as such any businesses taking on staff or new openings might have the most fertile skills pool to select from. But this remains to be seen.” ■

be mindful of this. Some staff will be anxious about coming back so what can they do to ease the return to work?” she asks.

At Distinctive Inns, a privately owned chain of gastro pubs with four sites in the East Midlands, UK, communication has been key to assuaging employees’ fears about returning to work. Throughout every stage of the process of readying their operation for business post Covid-19 – from the new screens between tables and in front of tills to the sanitizer stations, disposable menus and new test and trace system – staff have been kept informed. “When they all came back and saw it in practice they felt good and they were reassured,” says co-owner James Bull.

Miller wonders whether all owners will be so transparent. “Might some staff feel forced to return to conditions that they feel are unsafe and what or who can they call on to voice any concerns?” she says. “I would not be surprised to see a jump in employment mediation and calls to ACAS to jump up as a result of poor people management during this whole period.”

What does the future hold?

Walker says it’s difficult to predict what will happen once the dust has settled. “Evidenced by the number of retail and restaurant



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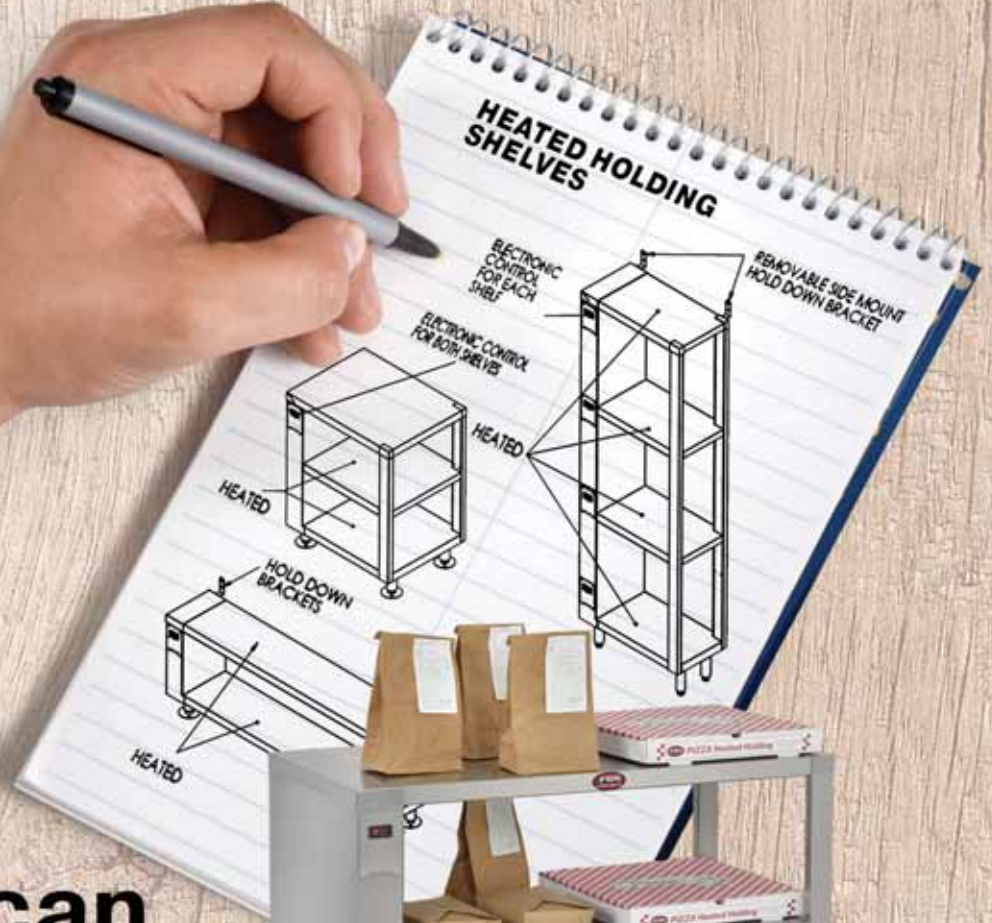
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Growing and giving back

Flynn Dekker, CEO of Korean fried chicken chain Bonchon, tells Samantha Lande about his plans for future growth and what it takes to adapt to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic

When Jinduk Seo started making sauces in his kitchen, he never meant to create a global brand. But as he moved from experimenting at home to selling his sauces on baked chicken at a college campus in South Korea, he realized he might be on to something. So, he began to manufacture the sauces in 2002.

In 2006, he was approached by someone doing Korean fried chicken in the US who wanted to use the sauces. That was an ‘aha’ moment. He partnered with them and from there the idea took off.

He named the business Bonchon, which >

The restaurant centers around Korean fried chicken; double fried chicken (wings, drumsticks or strips) brushed with one of its signature sauces – spicy, soy or sweet crunch

means “my hometown” in Korean. Fourteen years later, Bonchon has 347 locations, with 103 in the US and the rest across the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia, Kuwait, Myanmar and Vietnam.

The restaurant centers around Korean fried chicken; double fried chicken (wings, drumsticks or strips) brushed with one of its signature sauces – spicy, soy or sweet crunch. The menus are complimented by other Asian-inspired specialties – such as bibimbap, Korean tacos and pork buns, although that varies by location.

All the sauces are still made in its global kitchen in South Korea, but there are no Bonchon restaurants in South Korea. This is by design. South Korea is saturated with fried chicken spots, so it made more sense to

introduce the craze in places familiar with this style of fried chicken, but not inundated with locations on every corner.

CEO Flynn Dekker joined the company about two years ago, when the business was sold to a private equity firm. He had been with a competitor, Wingstop, and was looking for a new challenge. He had always admired the food at Bonchon and called it his “best kept secret” when he took friends to the New York City location. The brand has slowly been gaining traction in popularity as the team adds more locations.

Seo is still involved as both a shareholder and board member. He serves as the chief quality officer as well. “He still has lots to say about the product and stays true to cooking method and sauces,” says Dekker.



Patchwork plan

“The original growth strategy was really patchwork,” says Dekker. “We had lots of open locations, but no real density.” Some of these locations fell in areas with Asian populations already familiar with its cuisine. Others were just because franchisees wanted to open in that particular location.

The first US location of Bonchon opened in 2006 in Fort Lee, New Jersey, which has a large South Korean ex-pat community.

There was also little consistency across the board when it came to menus. The signature Korean fried chicken was always





Left: "Best kept secret", the New York City Bonchon location



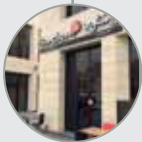
2015
Listed under: "Best Chicken Wings in NYC"
International Business News, 29 January, 2015



2018
First location in Myanmar opened in August 2018



2019
Flynn Dekker appointed CEO: April 2019



2017
First location in Kuwait opened in April 2017



2019
Named gold standard of fried chicken by *Business Insider*, September 2019



2019
100th US location, 18 December, 2019

the marquee dish, but many locations added regional dishes to appease its customers.

The biggest inconsistencies were in design and operations. “Restaurants in the Philippines have opted for the fast-casual model, while Thailand has chosen a more upscale route,” says Dekker. The US landed somewhere in between, with most locations as quick-serve, sit-down establishments.

A more consistent approach

The next phase of growth is focused on consistency and more of a hub and spoke model versus the former, more random approach. Currently there are only two corporate owned locations in the US, with the vast majority being franchise locations. For all other countries there is a master franchise agreement with one single franchisor in each of those countries.

Dekker would like to see a few more corporate-owned locations with a smaller footprint, so the brand can start testing out different concepts over the next few years. The thought was to build a more fast-casual model across locations and, prior to Covid-19, the company was also exploring the possibility of adding ghost kitchens.

Having studied the markets, the Bonchon team has found that its food resonates across all ages and ethnicities, not just in Asian-dense populations. This information opens up many more locations for them to be successful.

Globally, the focus is currently on marketing, branding framework and signage. Back in the US, Bonchon will start to introduce new design elements and try to work on consistency across menu items.

The goal, says Dekker: “is to make sure we are presenting a consistent picture and menu and offering to all customers, so they know exactly what they can expect.”

Dealing with the pandemic

Part of the plan was always to develop carry-out and delivery, and the team had been actively looking for ways to lower



costs and innovate in that space. So, when the Covid-19 pandemic forced restaurants around the world to shutter their dining rooms, Bonchon was already positioned to pivot quickly.

Deliveries are currently made through Postmates, Grubhub, DoorDash and UberEats, but the team is working on an app so that customers can order from any location through the Bonchon website, with white label delivering so it can save money across locations.

Some locations had previously embraced take-out, while others had not. But the virus changed that. “We gave a clear

“The goal is to make sure we are presenting a consistent picture and menu offering to all customers, so they know exactly what they can expect”

In the US Bonchon is working on consistency in menu and decor

message – you must do this to survive,” says Dekker, after which everyone jumped on the delivery and carryout bandwagon quickly.

Although many of the dining rooms remain closed or at limited capacity, the company has been able to regain pre-pandemic level sales through delivery and carryout alone.

“We focused our marketing efforts on free delivery promotions through third-party delivery platforms and doubled our digital advertising,” says Dekker. It was an effort that proved to be successful.

The virus also caused the company to pause and take a look at its safety measures. Some restaurants implemented plexiglass for their carryout windows. All restaurants increased sanitation, switching to disposable menus and adding safety strips to carryout and delivery orders, so guests know their food hasn’t been tampered with.

Because it hasn’t experienced a great negative financial impact from the pandemic, giving back to those in the restaurant industry became a top priority



“What we’ve tried to instill in this organization is a sense of empathy and the thought that we are all in this together”

Delivery and carryout has kept the company’s revenue flowing

for Bonchon. It launched a “Heart & Soles” campaign with clothing company Threadless, creating fried chicken themed shoes, socks and masks, with 100% of the proceeds going to support the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) Restaurant Employee Relief Fund, to help others in need.

“What we’ve tried to instill in this organization is a sense of empathy and the thought that we are all in this together,” says Dekker. “We started by making sure that everyone in corporate kept their job, we gave bonuses to corporate restaurant workers that still wanted to work and provided royalty deferrals to our franchisees.”

Future plans

The company feels fortunate to carry no debt at this time and, even in the middle of a pandemic, Bonchon is still planning to grow. Last year it grew 20% and its original goal was to do the same this year. Some of the locations were already under construction pre-Covid-19 and, if possible, will open this year – although some cities are struggling to get the proper permits.

“The situation is impacting different countries at different times,” says Dekker. “We are still pretty optimistic – it will really depend on the back half of the year.”

Bonchon is still able to import from South Korea, but is keeping a close eye on borders and potential supply chain issues.

For now, there’s a focus on redefining the brand. “We are thinking about what makes us special and what remains unique to Bonchon, says Dekker. “We’ve had lots of success and high growth, but now is the time to shape that.” That includes new technology that can be implemented across stores for carryout and delivery, new menus and new design that will help make the business be more congruent.

The growth goals remain aggressive as Bonchon plans an additional 500 locations in the US over the next seven years, but the company knows this may change. “We are realistic that this virus will determine what Bonchon will look like in the next two to three years,” says Dekker. ■



PROJECTS



Designing for achievement

Learning for life

When Harper Woods Schools set out to develop an ambitious culinary arts facility they called **Jim Petersen FCSI**. He tells Howard Riell how he helped design an environment resembling a professional kitchen

Officials of the Harper Woods School District in Michigan wanted to create an environment in which students could pursue a variety of career paths. They envisioned a career institute where they could provide career and technical education to instill in their students both professional and people skills, as well as the ability to collaborate as a team in order to compete in today's global society.

"Harper Woods Schools wanted to display the Culinary Arts program, and specifically the activity going on in the kitchen and food prep area," explains Scott Hahn, AIA, the Dearborn, Michigan-based project director for Ghafari Associates LLC, a global engineering, architecture, process design, consulting, and construction services firm.

According to James H. Petersen Jr. FCSI, the principal of C.i.i. Food Service Design in Lapeer, Michigan, the district was looking to him and his firm for suggestions and options as to how best accommodate the instructional needs of the culinary program while being responsive to configuration and space demands of other programs being established in the facility.

That facility operates inside a 28,000 sq ft freestanding building originally occupied by a big-box electronics retailer. The culinary



arts area is centrally located, with a 1,300 sq ft kitchen and an adjacent shared classroom.

Early resizing from a more extensive initial schematic to accommodate budget and space requirements for the overall facility and other focused instructional areas proved a challenge. Although the construction process went smoothly, according to Petersen, "late, unexpected input from local authorities having jurisdiction required modifications involving several trades in the field." >



Left: The client wanted the kitchen area to be central and visible.
Above: Jim Petersen FCSI



The set up is based on an actual foodservice space so students learn in a 'real world' environment



Working together

Harper Woods began by retaining Ghafari. In fact, it was the architects who asked Petersen to prepare a proposal in May 2018. The foodservice equipment contract was awarded the following September. The completed culinary arts facility was released to the school district for the fall 2019 semester.

“Two to four students comprise a group that works together on assignments,” Petersen explains. Each team has a work area that includes two work sinks, a reach-in refrigerator/freezer, workspace (mobile for free-standing stations), ingredient bins, storage drawers, over-shelf space, and access to a hand sink.

The cooking equipment is representative of basic cooking methods, he says, with space under the hood for additional pieces as needed. There are seven workstations for student teams. An overhead retractable cord helps maximize mobile equipment to provide flexibility for various uses. Technology includes several ceiling-hung screens to allow those manning each workstation to observe live instruction without having to leave their station and crowd around the instructor. The

screens can also be used for menu and other information. Storage and the warewashing area are screened from public view.

“A main feature is the large unobstructed opening allowing observation from, and occasional service to, a central gathering space,” says Petersen. The main workspace is open and unobstructed. “The kitchen is a focal point at the center of the multifaceted learning facility visible to all who enter it.”

All equipment not requiring plumbing rests on casters to allow ease of cleaning and rearrangement to accommodate the various tasks the facility may be assigned other than instruction and service preparation, such as catering for special events in the facility.

According to Hahn, an architect with 30 years’ experience, the school wanted the culinary arts area highly visible. “Design was to accommodate students and set up as a ‘real world’ environment. The students would be learning in an environment similar to what they would experience after graduation, working in an actual foodservice establishment.”

For the project, he notes, “Our foodservice consultant worked closely with the design team to understand the overarching concept of the design. With this understanding he was able to reinforce the design concept through his layout and design solution.”

The biggest challenge was converting an existing Circuit City retail store into a career center that included a culinary arts program, Hahn explains. As the facility was not purpose-built as a career center and culinary arts lab, “infrastructure serving the area did not exist, particularly water and sanitary sewer,” he says. “Related to sanitary, a fair



“Our foodservice consultant worked closely with the design team to understand the overarching concept of the design”



Left: Students watch live instruction on screens at their stations. Below: Storage is hidden away

amount of existing concrete slab had to be removed to accommodate the design.”

Given the district’s aim to foster interaction amongst students and faculty, as Ghafari notes on its web site: “Openness and flexibility were key factors in our design of the space. In today’s business environment, open collaborative spaces are the norm; what you work on affects those working with and around you. The district wanted to reinforce this culture in their new space.”

The project team achieved that openness and flexibility in design through the use of moveable partitions in conjunction with a fixed hard wall that separates each of the program spaces. This allows instructors to shape their teaching spaces to meet the specific needs of their students.

Close the achievement gap

“The new Career Institute supports the district’s efforts to close the achievement gap and continue to grow quality programs, good teachers, and a safe and clean environment,” the company makes clear. “In the new center, students have the opportunity to get direct, one-on-one advice from those who have succeeded in business, providing them with knowledge to pursue a number of career pathways.”

Reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. “We have no direct feedback in regard to instructional use,” Petersen notes. “However, district administration is enthusiastic, and the overall facility is used for district special functions. The kitchen is an important visual and functional confirmation that the Institute has made



a wise investment in the overall image and success of the entire district.”

The lessons that came out of this project are demonstrable. There is, Petersen emphasizes, “no fixed formula for the design of any project. This being one of four completely separate culinary arts facilities for different districts under design at essentially the same time brought this point home as each operates under its own set of parameters, curriculum, budget, goals, service styles, and construction considerations.”

Petersen feels the project could also open an interesting conversation regarding various ways that culinary arts facilities might be designed to achieve varying user-defined goals. “One of our other facilities is designed with multiple specific-purpose work areas, including an eclectic assortment of cooking equipment,” he says. “Students will rotate through the stations and, once the basics are learned, provide a regular à la carte meal service (including management and wait staff) to an adjacent dining area. Another includes six identical 48-inch multi-style range/oven combinations for more intensive instruction in hot food preparation.” ■

“Openness and flexibility were key factors in our design of the space. In today’s business environment, open collaborative spaces are the norm; what you work on affects those working with and around you”



AMERICA'S NEXT TOP REMODEL

An extensive redesign brought a Tulsa institution up to date – and ready for a post-pandemic environment, as FCSI Associate **Eli Huff** tells Howard Riell

The half-century-old Summit Club operates on the 31st, 32nd and 33rd floors of the prestigious Bank of America Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Sleek and fashionable, it had long been a cherished Tulsa institution.

Yet it needed to change.

Jared Jordan, Summit's general manager and chief operating officer, wanted to accomplish a few things. First, a cosmetic makeover and update to the club. Second, introduce a

more relaxed concept in a space that had previously not been used much. Third, Jordan says: "We have spent a great amount of effort making our workspace more efficient, which in turn makes for a better experience for our members."

A previous cosmetic enhancement in stages across all three floors in 2008, 2010, and 2012. The current project gives Summit three distinctive spaces: a formal dining space and lounge, a more relaxed concept with a casual bar space, and an

event space that lends itself to customization for any event.

In fact, the project was even more extensive, according to FCSI Associate Eli Huff, the principal of S|F|G Consulting in Tulsa, who worked with Jordan.

Among its multiple goals:

- Updating all three floor interiors and furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E).
- Updating audio/visual technology.
- Creating and increasing the banquet facility space on the 30th floor to accommodate weddings



and large-scale events. Says Huff: “It was designed to compete with the large event spaces around downtown Tulsa.”

- Creating a more business-casual atmosphere on the 31st floor, with semi-private rooms, patio dining, a full-service restaurant and bar, library room with a pool table, and cigar lounge with a patio.
- Creating a fine-dining atmosphere on the 32nd floor
- Designing three new kitchens to help with foodservice output and operational capability.
- Designing three new bars to upgrade the beverage service and revenue streams. This part of the project included a new draft-beer system designed to increase profitability and reduce waste in both bottle and can usage.
- Designing several new concepts on the 32nd floor to help provide a one-of-a-kind, high-end experience for members, including a caviar

and Champagne bar, chef’s table and flambé station in the formal dining room.

The Summit Club is open Monday through Saturday for lunch and dinner, with special monthly brunch events on Saturdays and Sundays. The total project was initially budgeted at \$6.5m.

Someone to navigate

Huff’s first contact with the project was in 2015 when he was asked to develop a budgetary estimate to remodel just the 30th floor. That plan was eventually scratched, but the club reached out again in early 2019 to begin work on the comprehensive three-floor remodel plan. Each floor differs slightly in size, ranging from 10,000 to 12,000 sq ft. The total number of seats is about 800.

In addition to Jordan, Huff worked closely with executive chef Bill Lyle; PHX Architecture in Scottsdale, Arizona; construction firm Flintco in Tulsa; and equipment dealer Shepherd Food Equipment and custom fabricator Crazy Stainless, both in Dallas, Texas.

“In our experience, having someone to navigate



coordinating with the architect and aid in purchasing is key,” says Jordan. He and his colleagues chose S|F|G Consulting Group “because we knew that they have completed a number of local projects that were both impressive and done on budget.”

The age of the building and equipment presented several challenges. The previous remodels “had left a ton of unused electrical wiring and plumbing lines above and below the finished floors and ceilings,” Huff says. “As most remodels go, once you open up a wall you typically find two or three more issues to address.”

As Huff recalls: “We were dealing with a 50-year-old operation and I made the



“We have spent a great amount of effort making our workspace more efficient, which in turn makes for a better experience for our members”



Clockwise from main image far left: The 32nd floor; Eli Huff, principal of S|F|G Consulting; The 30th floor

PROJECTS



The remodel across the three floors of The Summit Club provides three distinctive spaces and cost \$6.5m



decision early on to design the new à la carte chef pass and garde manger station on 30 using our custom fabrication team at Crazy Stainless. As a consultant, it is always great to have a pre-fabricated option for a kitchen or bar project.”

Building inside a 32-story property “was particularly difficult,” Huff says, “and required a lot of relocation of our new floor sinks and drains in order to work around the structural beams and HVAC duct work.” What he terms the single greatest challenge on this project was, indeed, the edifice itself, which is also home to several major energy, law and accounting firms. “The fact that it was in a high-rise 30, 31 and 32 floors above the ground presented quite a few challenges.”

The coordination between the general contractor (GC) and equipment vendors had to be constant and precise. “The kitchens and bars had to be designed with that in mind; every piece had to fit inside the freight elevator, and we even had to rent a helicopter to fly the new make-up air units onto the roof top.”

Huff solved this problem by involving his equipment manufacturer’s reps early on in the project. As a consultant, he feels, “it is vital that you build relationships with the



manufacturer reps and involve them early in the design process so they can help coordinate with the GC and architects. Using FCSI and our network, we are fortunate to be able to find the contacts we need to help make these types of projects work.”

Huff continues: “Often we cannot wait for the equipment vendor to be selected in a bid process. However, when that vendor is chosen it is vital that they are included in the construction meetings to help ensure delivery and installation protocols are coordinated.”

Post-Covid protocols

Jordan says he found it important to be involved with his consultant during the design process, and to communicate freely with other contractors. “We’ve been lucky on this project because all parties have communicated greatly, and have worked well together to get through various challenges, which always will occur.”

Covid-19 had to be factored in once the decision was made to continue working through the lockdown. Protocols were put in place. Temperatures were taken on the first floor, contact tracing documents filled out where required for each trade entering the job site daily, and proper PPE gear was mandatory. “On the positive side, the lockdown allowed the GC to pull in extra sub-contractors, and helped speed up our timeline,” says Huff.

Despite the mandated shutdown, the club saw strong business upon reopening.

“We have put in place more than the required necessary precautions as they pertained to our state’s re-opening plan, and



many of our members look at the club as a safe place to dine,” says Jordan. “There are, and will continue to be, challenges until we are past this, but it has been a good exercise in improving our overall safety protocols.”

The most important thing that he and his staff have done, he notes, is “listen to our members and stay informed as to best practices.”

Aside from the pandemic, Jordan adds, his biggest challenge has been supply-chain issues and state-by-state shutdowns that have impacted lead times. Huff’s advice to consultant colleagues is to start every project “by truly listening and learning what your client’s needs are. Then put time in building those relationships with the FCSI manufacturing partners reps to learn about what products are available and which products can best fit into your client’s operational needs.”

He also urges them to make sure they have “plenty of owner/architect design meetings throughout each phase, as this will always help coordination with the GC’s later on; the devil really is in the details. Most of all, remember to have fun and do not forget that what we do for a living is pretty damn cool.” ■

Above and below left: Part of the brief was making the space more efficient

“We’ve been lucky on this project because all parties have communicated greatly, and have worked well together to get through various challenges”

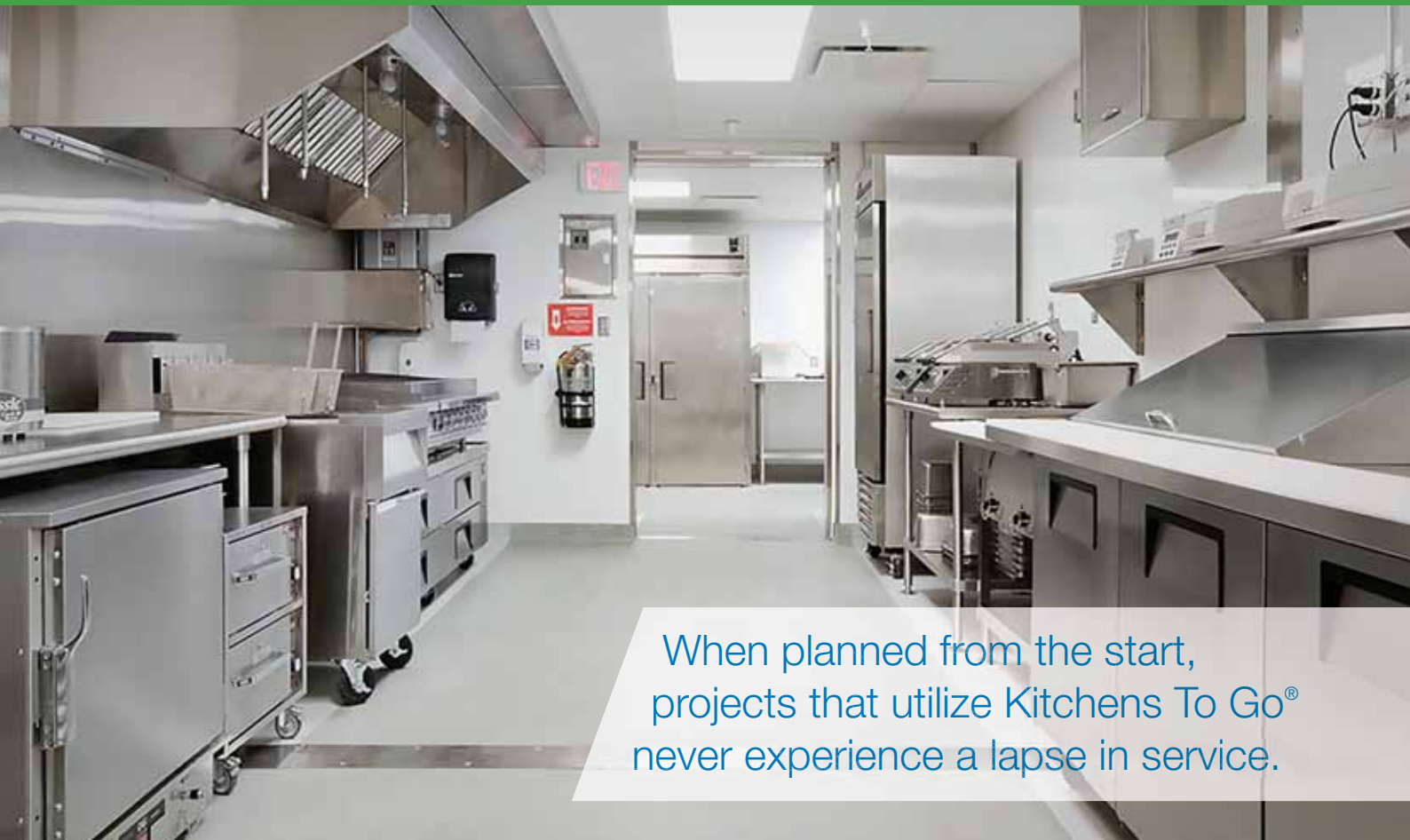
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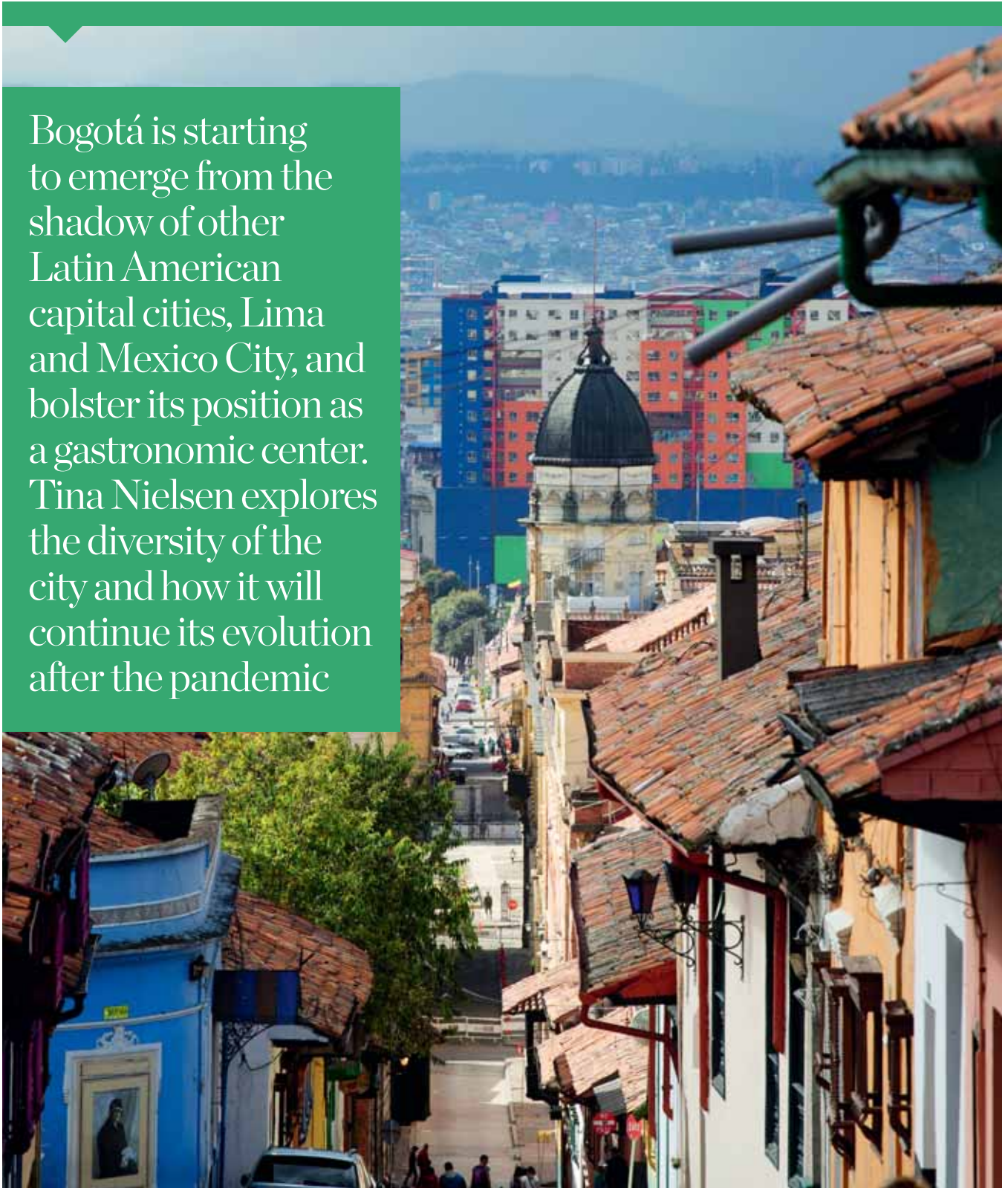
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CITY FOCUS BOGOTÁ

Bogotá is starting to emerge from the shadow of other Latin American capital cities, Lima and Mexico City, and bolster its position as a gastronomic center. Tina Nielsen explores the diversity of the city and how it will continue its evolution after the pandemic



The Perseverancia market square in Bogotá is one of the Colombian capital's iconic food destinations. Dating back to 1932, it has undergone renovations in recent years and today it's the home of traders selling all kinds of foods from individual cooking stalls. The choice is vast – from fresh fish with coconut rice and deep-fried plantains to arepas, the ubiquitous cornmeal cakes, and tamales; it's all there.

The market is the central focus of the Bogotá episode of the Netflix series *Street Food, Latin America*, and with good reason as it neatly demonstrates the diversity of cuisine found in Bogotá today.

The city is a melting pot of regional cuisines. “Like every other capital city in the world, Bogotá concentrates people from every single region all over the country,” says Leonor Espinosa, the chef owner of Restaurante Leo and one of the best-known culinary ambassadors of Colombian cuisine. “This is a city where



“Like every other capital city in the world, Bogotá concentrates people from every single region all over the country... you see the cuisines from all over Colombia”

you see the cuisines from all over Colombia.”

Espinosa, who hails from the Caribbean, has spent the last 30 years in Bogotá. Her restaurant is the first in the country to make it on to the World's 50 Best Restaurant list and Espinosa was named Latin America's Best Female Chef in 2017.



Above: Leonor Espinosa. Top: The markets of Bogotá have produce from all over the country

As a country, Colombia has every kind of terrain and climate: from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean; mountains and valleys and the Amazonian forest to name a few. It is second only to Brazil in its biodiversity. Visitors to Bogotá will experience an incredible range of produce.

Anthropologist and culinary writer Julián Salas says the key to the city's culinary diversity is migration. “We have lived through many years of war and conflict and people from the countryside had to leave their towns and migrate to the capital,” he explains. “When people travel, their cuisine travels with



them. The farmers brought with them their own dishes and their cooking heritage; in the market squares of the big city they are able to find the ingredients to recreate the food they know.

Today, there are 48,000 restaurants in the city reflecting every region and local cuisine – Estrada calls Bogotá “Colombia’s kaleidoscope.”

After years in the shadow of Latin America’s gastronomic heavyweights Lima and Mexico City, Bogotá has made great strides in bolstering its position, but it is still early days in a global picture. “Bogotá has not



Top: A herbalist in the Paloquemao Market
Above: Local ingredients are starting to be used

“The impact of Covid is that the economy of the restaurant sector is left vulnerable and these iconic sites, that add identity to a city, start to close and that is serious”

enjoyed the same promotion as Peruvian and Mexican cuisines and it is only in the last five years that chefs in Bogotá have started to make their mark internationally,” says Estrada. “Before we lived in awe of the foreign and didn’t recognize our own strengths.”

Gastronomy in the time of Covid

Of course, assessing the status of any city at this time as the world is dealing with a major pandemic, is challenging. Benjamin Lana, the president of the gastronomy division of media company Vocento Group, which organizes Spanish gastronomy congress Madrid Fusion, describes the situation in Colombia as “more than difficult”.

“These months have been terrible for the sector, but six months ago it was a scene of interesting restaurants and an interesting gastronomy, young people doing different things,” he says. “

The city’s restaurants closed their doors in March when the city went into lockdown and slowly started the reopening process in early September. Espinosa says that the impact of Covid-19 will linger as restaurants fail to reopen. She points to two iconic restaurants in the city

that have been threatened with permanent closures due to the pandemic. Andrés Carne de Res on the outskirts of Bogotá, a legendary destination for diners seeking an experience in a hard to describe restaurant that offers classic Colombian cuisine alongside performance art, music, dance and comedy in a huge space. “Andrés Carne de Res showcased not only Colombian cuisine – because it was a traditional restaurant – but it was also a movement demonstrating that we Colombians are party lovers, we love to dance and have fun,” says Espinosa.

Another historical gem in the capital city’s Candelaria neighbourhood, La Puerta Falsa, would have been lost without financial support from Rosario University.

Dating back to 1816, it is the country’s oldest restaurant and remains as popular as ever with customers queuing out the door of the tiny shop to sample typical dishes such as ajiaco soup and tamales that La Puerta Falsa is famous for.

“These restaurants are almost identical to the city,” says Espinosa. “So, the impact of Covid is that the economy of the restaurant sector is left vulnerable and these iconic sites, that add identity to a city, start to close and that is serious,” she says.

The world watching

Though there is a difficult time ahead for hospitality in Bogotá, the last five years before the Covid-19 pandemic stopped life as we knew it, >

has seen momentum building for Bogotá to be seen as a gastronomic destination.

The chamber of commerce and local government understand that a strong gastronomy sector brings tourism and has invested in promoting the culinary focus to put Bogotá front and centre of the Latin American gastronomic destinations.

The celebrations of Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants were held in Bogotá in 2017 and 2018 and last year saw the inaugural Bogotá Madrid Fusion, an international edition of the Spanish congress, bringing some of the world's best chefs to the city.

Bogotá Madrid Fusion is set to take place over a total of five years, though the 2020 edition will be different for painfully obvious reasons.

When Benjamin Lana and his team decided to start an international edition of the congress, Colombia was a straightforward choice. "Everybody said, 'why not Peru or Mexico?' but we think, culinarily speaking, Colombia is interesting right now. There is a huge biodiversity and many different regional gastronomies and cultures," he explains.

Another aspect that appealed was that Colombia is far from fully formed in culinary terms. "It is not a country with a long-term project to promote the culture and cuisines overseas," he says. "A decade ago most restaurants in Bogotá were French, Italian, Japanese or Peruvian, it was not a culture that focused on local products and recipes."

Now, a concerted effort to attract more tourists means a greater attention on developing and promoting local cuisine. "We think this is a very rich place and we can help show that the by bringing the best cooks in the world to mix with the local cooks," Lana adds.

A new generation of chefs

Contributing to the elevation of Bogotá's restaurants is the return of several young chefs who have traveled and learned in kitchens around the world. "This is important," says Lana. "There's this new generation of cooks who are cooking Colombian for the first time."

These include Álvaro Clavijo who learned to cook in Spain and France before moving to the US where he worked under Matt Orlando in Thomas Keller's Per Se restaurant. He opened his restaurant El Chato in the trendy Chapinero neighborhood of Bogotá and has become a poster boy for the recent dining revolution in the city.

Clavijo and his colleagues follow in the footsteps of chefs such as Espinosa, Harry Sasson and the brothers Jorge and Mark Rausch who have all operated restaurants in Bogotá for many years and are well established.

Daniel Alvarado, a Bogotá native – or Rolo as those born and bred in the capital are known – has watched in wonder from afar as his home city has changed. He has lived in the UK for many years and is currently working as the food and beverage director of



Clockwise from above: Álvaro Clavijo; street food cart in La Candelaria; Mario Rosero and Meghan Flanigan opened their restaurant Prudencia in the La Candelaria neighborhood

"Everybody said, 'why not Peru or Mexico?' but we think, culinarily speaking, Colombia is interesting right now"

Dinings restaurant in London.

"The Restaurant scene in Bogotá has changed dramatically in the last 10 years and chefs such as Álvaro Clavijo and Leo Espinosa represent the country in the global rankings, putting the city on the map in the culinary world," he says. "On the back of this people are feeling proud of their culture, which has encouraged people to consider a hospitality career and join the food industry."



It is this generational shift in food that Bogotá can add to the incredible diversity in cuisines. Many new openings are more daring and avant garde; restaurants opened by chefs who want to set out their own stall.

“Today, chefs in Colombia, just like in the rest of the world, are committed to telling the story of their national cuisine in their cooking and doing so they combine innovation with many traditions,” says Espinosa. “In terms of innovation these are restaurants that can compete with the best restaurants of the capital cities in the US, Europe and Asia.”

A city of neighborhoods

The fact that all of Colombia has converged on the capital means that even the dishes that are identical with other regions are found in Bogotá. Suckling pig is just one example, says Espinosa. “It’s a typical dish of the central region of Colombia, but the dish traveled and today there are many restaurants that specialize in suckling pig in Bogotá,” she says.

Acknowledging that most visitors in the city head for the well-known fine-dining restaurant, she says it is worth sticking around to discover the lesser known gems, that cook local cuisine. “They are less obvious, and it

is necessary to explore a bit deeper, but worth the trip. It’s a wholly different city from that of luxury restaurants,” she says.

As a city Bogotá can feel vast and difficult to navigate, but most visitors will pass through the historic neighborhood La Candelaria in central Bogotá. Here, a concentration of restaurants sit alongside government buildings and some of the country’s most important museums and monuments.

This is the area where restaurateurs Mario Rosero and Meghan Flanigan chose to open their restaurant Prudencia, which focuses on cooking over fire and an ever-changing menu.

The pair opened Prudencia in 2016. “We have always loved this neighborhood and we felt it was culinarily underserved,” says Flanigan. “We were inspired by the people who lived here and the mix of intellectuals and cultural organizations here.”

In the years since they returned to Bogotá after a stint in the US they have witnessed a dramatic change in the dining scene – and the dining public. “We have seen a big shift in the clientele, they are much more openminded today,” says Flanigan. “Before they would come in and say, ‘I don’t want this, I want a portion of rice instead’ but now they’ll say, ‘I’ll try this, where has it come from, what’s this flavor’. For me that is a sign of progress.”

Alvarado points to a fairly recent culture of eating out in

REOPENING AFTER COVID-19

The restaurants of Bogotá reopened in early September after months of lockdown

Under the Open Skies program restaurants can register for free to serve with the following rules in place:

- Reservation only
- Maximum six people to a group
- Maximum 30% occupancy in open space and just 25% in closed space
- Contactless payments only

Bogotá. “This was not always a habitual occurrence for locals in the city but it has changed too. “A couple of years ago eating out was considered a luxury and people would only go out for a celebration, but this has changed a lot and you will find everything from top-level restaurants to neighborhood restaurants full every day,” he says.

Though, he is positive about the progress Bogotá has made in recent years Alvarado believes there is still some way to go. “I think the city is still far away from other Latin American cities like Lima or Buenos Aires where gastronomic influences have been present for a long time and definitely been strongly marked by European immigrants bringing a blend of rich cultures to the mix,” he says. “Bogotá has awakened with a group of new chefs wanting to showcase the Colombian cuisine and create different fusions of flavors and techniques. I am sure it will continue to surprise many people in the near future as a gastronomy and tourism destination.” ■

BRIEFING

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foodservice in the Americas region

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My kitchen: Oier Biritxinaga, corporate chef with Fagor, creates a new kitchen at every trade show



Oier Biritxinaga usually attends 15 trade shows a year – Covid-19 has curtailed that this year





Changing times

Recent events have precipitated unprecedented change. As we adapt to the new normal it is time to consider what aspects of the old normal need to be addressed

First it was the pandemic. Then came the biggest case of civil unrest this country has seen in more than 50 years.

Indeed, the pandemic exposed many viruses in our society, such as racism, bigotry, housing discrimination, and of course, workplace discrimination – viruses that needed some long-overdue attention. Now, many individuals and groups alike are saying enough is enough.

Hospitality workers make up one of those major groups. After being subjected to years of sexual and racial harassment and “microaggressions,” along with, more recently, layoffs and furloughs, many have decided they don’t want to go back to the same old status quo.

“Employees today are putting their faith in protections afforded to them under the National Labor Relations Act, various state off-duty conduct laws and anti-retaliation provisions,” says Carolyn Richmond, chair of the national hospitality practice group, Fox Rothschild LLP, New York City. They also don’t have to be unionized to voice grievances safely, Richmond noted. These two things combined have led to a recent increase of demand or complaint letters being sent

from employees to their employers – more than one attorney has seen in her thirty years of practice.

“These ‘complaints’ demand that employers very quickly make changes to their employment practices, including hiring practices, by increasing the number of BIPOC [black, indigenous and people of color], not just at the entry level, but also at the management level,” says Richmond, whose practice largely consists of representing and counseling employers in the hospitality industry and who also counsels clients on hiring processes, diversity awareness, employee handbooks and other policy initiatives. “These letters are typically well written, and in many cases come from admittedly white employees on behalf of their BIPOC colleagues. In addition, some seem to have been ghost-written by social justice or similar groups.” Short of defaming companies or individuals, the letters have been particularly strong in nature.”

When Richmond refers to these demand letters, she’s not referring to the typical type of letters many attorneys submit on a client’s behalf seeking a financial award for damages. Rather, these letters often appear to come with >

the backing and support of advocacy organizations asking for real change.

“They don’t just want window dressing, or a one-hour training session on avoiding harassment and discrimination; they are asking for more integrated programs that will get to the crux of important equality issues,” she says.

Not to use too much pandemic speak, but this is essentially what amounts to a second wave of demand for change following the #MeToo movement that swept the nation three years ago, Richmond points out. Women around the country spoke up to voice their experiences of sexual harassment or worse in their workplaces. They didn’t want just a one-hour training video then, just like others facing discrimination don’t just want a quick-fix now.

“I worked with a number of groups and agencies that were just starting to mandate sexual harassment training, and in my view, it shouldn’t have been just about sex discrimination back then, it was also

about race, religion and national origin discrimination in many workplaces,” says Richmond. “At the time, the pressure on states and municipalities was to focus on the gender issue and subsequent regulations did not thoroughly address the wider issues of discrimination. Now those other largely ignored issues are coming into clear view, she adds.

If the employee hasn’t defamed the employer or hasn’t committed any crimes against the employer, such as stealing corporate documents, he or she is typically legally protected from adverse action or retaliation by the employer. As a result, Richmond urges her employer clients to respond to these letters with a calculated, less knee-jerk, reaction. Because, she notes, what can be far worse than potential litigation is the social media fallout that happens when corporate culture or leadership is not aligned with the views and values of the majority of its employees or customers. Just look at what happened with the boycott of the Goya Foods brand

“While other generations may not speak up as much, Millennials and younger employees have been very loud and vocal when it comes to issues of equality, inclusion, diversity and Black Lives Matter”

and its CEO’s fall-from-grace after he praised US president Donald Trump.

“Employers have no obligation to respond to a letter, but ignore it at your peril,” Richmond says. “While other generations may not speak up as much, Millennials and younger employees have been very loud and vocal when it comes to issues of equality, inclusion, diversity and Black Lives Matter. Decades ago employees relied on unions to represent them, but today employees have significantly more power – based on additional statutory protections and social media. One Instagram post calling out a >



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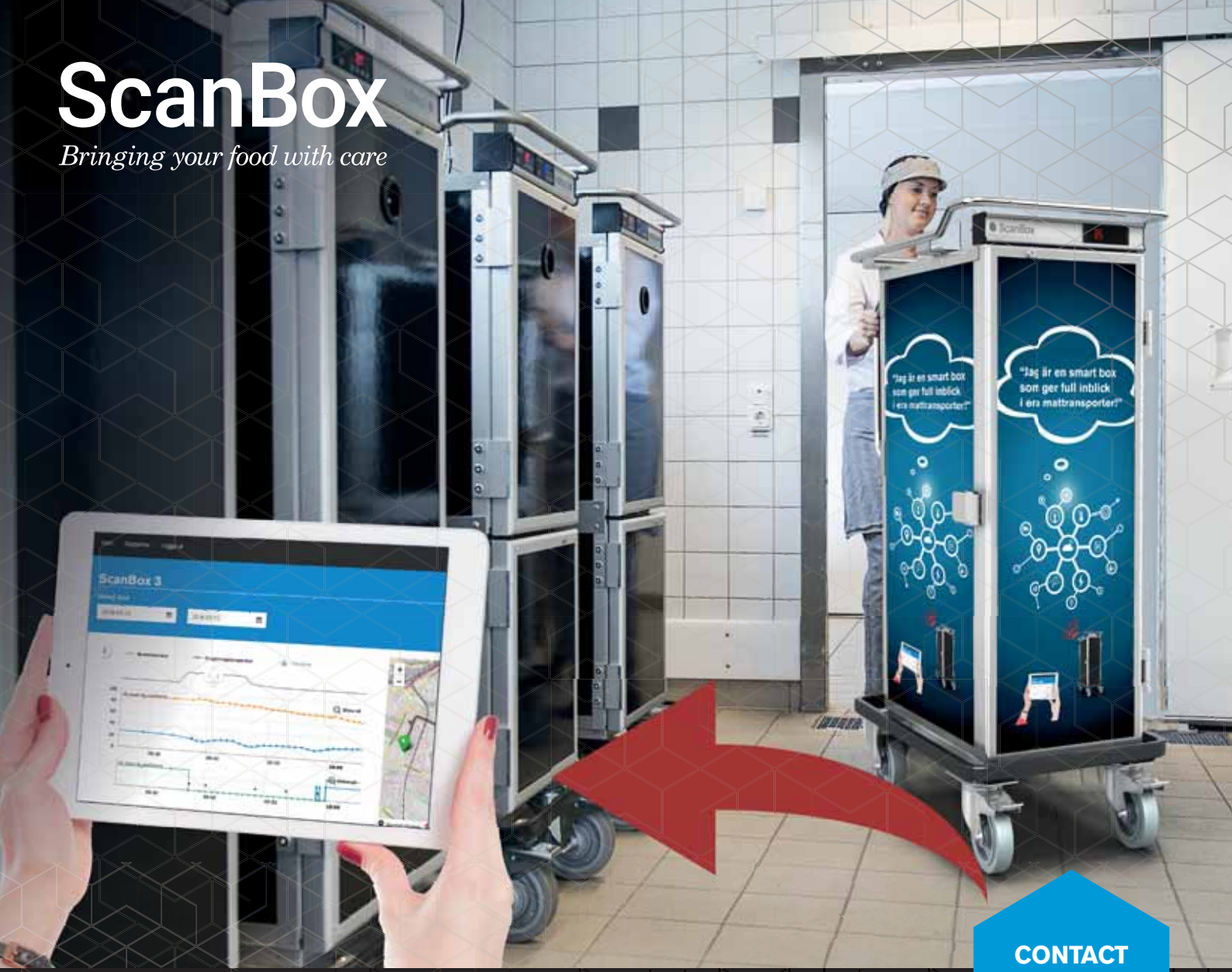
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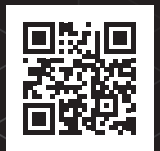
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company can create a firestorm, no matter the size of the company. It goes viral so fast.”

Opponents of these reactionary events call this “cancel culture,” the idea that people can point some fingers and cause someone to get fired, but it goes beyond that. After all, free speech doesn’t just mean voicing grievances, it also means deciding not to buy products or work at a certain place. If you don’t feel comfortable with the leadership or corporate culture.

“Certainly, company leaders are scared to death of making the wrong decision, and there certainly are extremes, but they have to think about what’s going to be left of their business if no one wants to buy their products or eat at their restaurant and no one wants to work for them,” Richmond says.

That said, she encourages employers to take a more proactive approach to truly engage their employees and set up safe places where they can voice their opinions and grievances without fear of retaliation. What business consultants can do is to not just recruit but truly retain employees by

“Many companies are looking at creating diversity committees made up of management, ownership and employees who have an open and protected environment in which to raise issues and propose changes”

keeping an open dialogue and creating safe places as well as a culture of inclusion and equality. Consulting firms with multiple employers can and should do the same.

“Many companies are looking at creating diversity committees made up of management, ownership and employees who have an open and protected environment in which to raise issues and propose changes,” Richmond says, noting that employers or third-party representatives could also host more town-hall meetings and open forums to create a dialogue. Anonymous hotlines – when run



by a third-party – is a very effective way to create a safe space for employees to record complaints.

“One group told us in a letter that they needed a new vocabulary for ways to deal with guests who might be biased or outright racist or demeaning,” she says. “They needed to feel empowered to be able to tell people to wear their mask. Their concern has been how does a 20-year-old, bisexual, black employee tell a 70-year-old, white man that he can’t come in without a mask? Employees need more clear instruction, role-playing and internal support.”

Richmond also suggests that employers review their employee handbooks to make revisions that not only deal with Covid-19 issues, but also with issues of racism and inequality. “You can’t just trust your management and hope they’re doing things the right way,” she says. “It’s too late if you had a racist GM already spewing hatred and making the wrong choices. You

have to pay attention and not just rely on those you hire.”

Employers should also be careful not to discriminate against furloughed employees filing these complain letters. “It’s easy to not want to bring back ‘troublemakers,’ but that’s likely retaliation and illegal,” she says. “You don’t want the six names on the demand letter to be the only six people who aren’t brought back.”

Richmond says she wouldn’t be surprised to see an uptick in discrimination lawsuits between now and next summer if, or when, more restaurants reopen. “Right now, everyone is still a little numb, especially because restaurant openings have been dialed back.”

But that doesn’t mean businesses are immune to these complaints and lawsuits forever, just like no one is immune to the novel coronavirus. Now is the time for employers – and those who consult employers – to step up and attack the issues before they attack you. ■



THRIVING REPUTATION

Amelia Levin talks to the key people of Atlanta-based Camacho Associates, including owner **James Camacho** FCSI, about keeping busy in challenging times

If you've ever found an old lip balm in your suitcase or – better yet – regularly carry one around in your pocket that reads “Camacho,” well, that’s the point.

“We want our name on our clients’ lips,” says the only half-joking **James Camacho** FCSI, the second-generation owner of Camacho Associates. But seriously, he adds, “We want our architectural clients walking around with our name in their pocket or purse.”

Though the firm does pay attention to marketing, Camacho’s success has more to do with his firm’s strong



reputation, word-of-mouth referrals and repeat business. The professional foodservice and laundry facilities consulting firm was founded in 1962 by his father, Joseph Camacho FCSI. The firm is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, with additional offices in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Birmingham, Alabama. For over six decades the firm has been designing foodservice and laundry facilities with a strong emphasis on budget, food choices, staff support, and making attractive facilities that draw attention to the food service program. It also helps that

Camacho’s boisterous, bubbly personality has helped him brighten a room and befriend just about anyone and everyone in the industry and beyond.

But at the crux of the firm’s success, Camacho notes, is the hard work his team puts in, day in and day out. “I always say we never close, we only doze,” he says. Camacho and his wife, Cathey, who does the accounting work and helps coordinate project scheduling, continued to come into the office during the Covid-19 pandemic to work every day while the rest of the team remained safely at home.

Camacho has another motto for

himself as a mentor and teacher; “One of my primary jobs is to teach everyone in our office at least one thing a day. If I can teach someone one thing every day, over the course of five years or more they can have a wonderful career in foodservice design and consulting.”

That’s easy to do at a firm where projects range from independent restaurants and high-end hotels to sports and entertainment venues, B&I, healthcare, colleges/universities, correctional institutes, country clubs and more. This diversity – similar to a diverse financial portfolio – is intentional.

“The day after 9/11 happened, we lost 40% of our business because we were heavily into B&I and corporate work, then everything went on hold and stopped,” Camacho says. “Right there we decided we wouldn’t let that happen again.” The only type of project Camacho Associates hasn’t taken on are cruise ships and residential work.

This strategy of diversification has worked; the firm was able to successfully navigate the recession of 2008 and 2009, and most recently, Covid-19 and its adverse impact on hospitality. It’s still too early to tell what’s to come of the industry, Camacho says, but he remains hopeful as his projects continue to press on with schedules. “We only had a few projects canceled or put on hold,” he says.

Early years

Camacho worked for his father on and off during high school, marking up shop drawings and putting cut sheets together.

“This was way back when, when the rep would mail us the sheets and we had to put the books together to send to architects and engineers,” he says.

Just after his 21st birthday he joined the family business. “I was attending a local technical college in Atlanta at night while working at a grocery store. A national chain bought several local stores and closed some, including the one where I worked, so I was laid off on my 21st birthday,” he recalls. “My

father had a draftsman quit, and since I had studied drafting I told him I would fill in until he could find someone else. Apparently, my dad never found someone to work as cheap as me, so 41 years later here we are.

“Everyone knows that once you get in the foodservice industry, you never get out. This past April Fools’ Day was my 41st anniversary working as a foodservice consultant.”

Camacho became president in 1995 and purchased the company the following year. He recalls one of the first projects he worked on was the Georgia Power Headquarters building, followed by Trident Naval Submarine Base.

“We are still doing projects, 41 years later, with the same architectural firms that I worked with on these two jobs,” he says. “We have been fortunate to enjoy growth every year since 1995. Not only in

“We have been fortunate to enjoy growth every year since 1995. Not only in projects or revenue but in developing a tremendous staff”

projects or revenue but in developing a tremendous staff.”

Today’s team

Camacho currently employs 14 people. While most work out of the Atlanta office, Louise Howard recently moved to Oregon and Richard Powell represents the Birmingham office.

Jennifer Murphy FCSI, heads up the Charlotte office.



Murphy, who holds a degree in interior design and is also a LEED AP, says she always wanted to design kitchens and worked at a couple of other foodservice design and building companies before coming on board with Camacho in January 2017.

“I work on a variety of projects ranging from a wine bar to elementary schools, country clubs, retirement facilities and more,” she says, noting that one of the best things about working at the firm is not just the diversity of the projects, but also the trust and freedom that Camacho has afforded her to be able to source new projects and work remotely.

“Working at Camacho is like having a second family,” says Murphy, whom



The consultancy works on a wide variety of projects, including the F&B offerings at the Atlanta Hawks Arena (above)

Camacho earlier compared to a “blood relative.”

“I’m a bit of a perfectionist and always look at every new project to find a way to improve on the last one to make the next project better,” Murphy says. She’s particularly proud of her recent work on Community Matters Café, a local café in Charlotte that supports those recovering from addictions.

Colleague **Brett Daniel** FCSI is an award-winning designer who has been with Camacho for 13 years, following in the footsteps of his late father Reggie Daniel, a well-loved, 40-year veteran of the foodservice industry, who was the former director of design for the firm. “James is an amazing employer; he is always teaching. He taught me to listen, truly listen, to our clients. Even though we are the professionals, we can offer suggestions, but our job is to offer solutions to our customers problem. And you can’t do that when you’re talking.”

Anja Kuechenmeister FCSI, has been with Camacho for 12 years working in several different capacities, beginning as a project coordinator, quality control manager and now, marketing director. She also holds a degree in interior design and came from a residential background, designing residential kitchens and baths.

“What I enjoy most about working with Camacho, is our team; we are like a family,” she says. “I have learned so much from some of our family who have been in the industry for years. Alan Clay, for example, one of our associates, always says ‘I have towels older than you!’ referring to his experience in the industry.”

“Camacho has provided me opportunities to tour factories, meet the people who make the products we specify and learn about the latest and greatest technology in the foodservice industry from chefs and industry leaders.” With a last name that means “Master of the Kitchen,”



Customer service and listening closely to customer feedback on projects is a key component of how Camacho Associates operates

Kuechenmeister says her work was a personal match.

And then there’s the core veteran group, which includes Cathey Camacho, who joined the firm in 1996 to take over specs and now performs multiple jobs with the family business; Glenn Harshman, senior project manager who joined in 1994 and is a mentor to the younger group; Bhagita Rowe specification writer who joined in 1998, Alan Clay, a QA who joined in 2008. Recently, Emalee Austerman, Nancy Felton, Jenna Choi and Stephanie Oden joined the firm.

Today’s focus

Reiterating the aforementioned importance of active listening, Camacho says, along those lines, one of the things they’re working hard on this year is customer service. “We sent out a survey to our clients last year and had a number of replies,” he says. “One of the questions we asked was: ‘Do you perceive Camacho to be an asset to the design team or to the architect?’ Fortunately, 99% said yes.” But that’s not good enough for



Camacho. “What about that 1%? What happened there? We’re thankful that we’ve been busy and our clients call us back repeatedly, but I try to remind our team to never take that for granted, and to make sure we are always looked on as an asset or valuable member of the whole design team,” he says.

FCSI and charity involvement

The number of Camacho associates with the letters FCSI after their names demonstrates the firm’s commitment and dedication to the Society. Camacho has long been a regular at FCSI conferences and served 12 years on the board of trustees in various positions, including chair of FCSI The Americas and president and treasurer of FCSI Worldwide. He’s recently taken a step back to let other team members get more involved. Daniel served as the conference planning co-chair for the past two years, although, sadly, this

“I enjoy meeting and learning from others at FCSI events. I have reached out to fellow FCSI consultants with questions or to team up on large projects”

year’s conference was canceled due to the pandemic. Murphy serves on several FCSI committees, while Kuechenmeister has served on an FCSI committee and a conference planning committee.

“I have always enjoyed meeting and learning from others at FCSI events,” says Camacho. “I have reached out to fellow FCSI consultants across the globe with questions or to team up on large projects. Case in point: he teamed up with S2O Consultants out of Chicago to design and oversee the construction of a major foodservice renovation at State Farm Arena (see right). Camacho is currently teaming up with William Taunton FCSI, Worldwide past president, in Santiago, Chile, on a large project in Latin America.

Another extra-curricular activity Camacho enjoys is the planning of the annual Camacho Charity Golf Outing, which sees hundreds of friends and colleagues gather, all paying into the pot for a good cause. Last year’s charity was to support Brett Daniel, who tragically lost his wife to breast cancer, leaving four young children. “When I told everyone it was for Brett, I had people coming out of the woodwork writing checks,” says Camacho. This year’s tournament was rescheduled to September, but no final plans had been made as of press time as a result of the pandemic.

Looking to the future, Camacho says he is focused on the “great group of young folks” he has cultivated and is working on succession planning, even if he doesn’t plan on retiring yet. “Maybe I will focus more on the marketing and overseeing customer success versus running the company all the time. Someone has to manage all the emails we get.” And, given the brisk business the firm enjoys – even during a pandemic – there are many. ■

HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS

State Farm Arena, Atlanta, Georgia

Camacho partnered with S2O Consultants of Chicago, to complete this \$8m project in 2019. The renovation of the Atlanta Hawks’ arena transformed the 20-year-old venue to maximize revenue, improve the fan experience and embody Atlanta’s unique culture. Together, the two foodservice consultant firms designed Zac Brown’s Social Club, Antico pizza, Caffè Antico, Chick-fil-A, Gio’s Chicken Italiano & Maccheroni, J.R. Crickets, Old Lady Gang, Rita’s Italian Ice, Hawk Walk Grill, The Hudson Grille, Fan Zone Bar, B’s Cracklin’ Barbeque, Atlanta Social, Modelo Beer & Cocktail Bar, Scofflaw Beer Barn, Crown Royal, Svedka Vodka Bar, Jack Daniel’s Bar, and Harrah’s Cherokee Casino Club Bar.

NCR Worldwide Headquarters, Atlanta, Georgia

This \$1.650m project completed in 2018 included building a 6,445 sq ft main kitchen foodservice concept for the global headquarters. Two office towers are united by the Food Hall/Marketplace, offering options for breakfast and lunch as well as an outdoor playground for families who work in the area. Guests can choose a cooked-to-order breakfast or quick grab ‘n’ go breakfast sandwiches. At lunch, there are stations offering sandwiches, salads, hot dogs, burgers and fries, pizzas, Southern fare and International items. For those that work after foodservice hours, there are pre-packaged meals from a vending machine with a microwave to heat up those meals. Mr. Merchant, another food area, is a market that is open 24-7 for employees. All payments are made via digital payment through NCR’s systems.



Delta Sky Club, Austin, Texas

This \$260k, year-long project, completed in May 2019, included the design and construction of a club at one of the airport’s new terminals. The 10,200 sq ft space features a 1,000 sq ft kitchen, 190 sq ft bar and seating for 200. Camacho designed the foodservice areas, which include the warming kitchen, bar, bar storage, food buffet, and one beverage station. The kitchen contains Delta’s typical equipment set up with combi oven, prep areas, dishwashing, food holding and storage. The beverage counter has options for soda, coffee, tea, and espresso drinks. The round bar has cocktail stations, beer and wine options – including a Wineemotion wine dispenser to display Delta’s wine offerings.

Royal Troon Grill, Atlanta Athletic Club, John’s Creek, Georgia

Design for this \$180k kitchen addition and renovation project took place between June and September 2019. This casual space seats 165 and offers contemporary American cuisine with a southern twist. Previously, the kitchen was closed off and the only food visible was the soup and salad bar. The Club wanted an open kitchen to showcase their Chef and featured menu. In designing the new space, Camacho advised the client on what equipment would make the most impact by suggesting the wall in between the kitchen and dining area be removed to show off the gas-fired pizza oven, induction ranges, and the revamped soup/salad bar. Camacho did this by reusing and relocating most of their existing equipment, keeping to budget and making an impact.



Above left: State Farm Arena. Above right: Royal Troon Grill at the Atlanta Athletic Club

INFECTION FIGHTERS

Before Covid-19 caused such disruption across the hospitality industry there were other infection traps for the unwary or careless. **John Cornyn** FCSI (EM) reminds us of the eternal need for vigilance and education



The Covid-19 virus has been the top news story of the year, if not the decade. While there is a multitude of expert opinions as to the precise source of the virus, one fact appears consistent in most of the theories, food in some form might have been or was the Wuhan Province-based infection agent.

This is a friendly reminder to all FCSI design and MAS consultant members of their implied, if not now very real, obligation to educate their clients on the risk management aspects of operating a fully compliant foodservice operation. As much as we would like it, the challenges associated with the process in which food is handled from the point of origin to the plate has been and will continue to be a moving target. Hopefully, all such movements will have a positive outcome.

Among other serious consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is general agreement that there will be sustained, special attention paid to the way food is grown/raised, processed, stored, transported, prepared and served. If nothing else, this pandemic has reinforced our worst fears on how quickly and devastating lethal viruses can take hold and spread.

The cruise ship industry, much to its distress, is still dealing with norovirus infections along with countless passenger and crew Covid-19 incidents. While they were newsworthy, there are way too many situations where food was in fact, or suspected to be, a virtual petri dish of exposures.

Here is a case study to illustrate the kinds of food preparation and service problems that could negatively impact your design or MAS clients.

It concerns a correctional facility with 1,200 inmates. The foodservice at this facility was contracted to a third-party company with prior correctional facility experience. All meals were served on insulated trays, placed on carts and delivered to the housing modules holding from 40-80 inmates each.

As required by the contract, sample



trays from all meals were to be held under refrigeration for 72 hours.

Inmate workers were permitted to assist with, but not have any direct involvement with the food preparation process. Once prepared, the hot-food portion of the meal was placed in standard size six-inch-deep hotel pans and placed in a warmer until service.

Mechanically separated chicken was widely used as the primary protein source. This product arrived, and was held, frozen in 40-pound blocks. The contractor's standard operating procedures called for this product to be placed in a walk-in refrigerator three days prior to service to defrost.

Dependent on the daily inmate count, the recipe would call for four or five 40-pound blocks to be placed in a steam-jacketed kettle for cooking and adding the additional ingredients.

One day, within three hours of service, approximately 300 inmates were struck with severe abdominal pain and all sorts of ugly results for several hours.

An in-depth incident investigation immediately followed, which included government and expert consultant assistance, here is what they figured out what happened:

- The food samples were immediately sent to a local food testing laboratory.
- There, it was determined that the chicken in the meals showed evidence of clostridium perfringens.
- A detailed assessment of where the sick inmates were housed, was found to be

random. That is, some housing units had no incidents while the impacted housing units had scattered results. There was never a situation where over half the inmates in a housing module were sickened.

As part of the investigation, the contractor's food handling procedures were closely monitored over the period of two weeks. Here is a summary of those findings from the investigation:

- The 40-pound blocks of mechanically separated chicken were, at best, partially defrosted. There were several instances where the entire block was still frozen rock-hard when it was placed in a large steam-jacketed kettle.
- The cook used a commercial kitchen size whisk for hand stirring and to break up the clumps of chicken meat.
- Before the meat had been completely cooked the other ingredients were added, making it difficult to visually assess whether the chicken meat had been completely cooked. Despite assurances that temperature readings were taken, there were no written records produced for verification.
- Once the food was panned several samples were pulled and checked for proper preparation and suitability. At this point in the process it became obvious as to the source of the clostridium perfringens. There were clumps of chicken meat up to two inches in diameter that were still raw in the center.
- In addition to the demand for increased cook training and supervision, the contractor was forbidden to purchase mechanically separated chicken in any size block exceeding 10 pounds.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report also noted >

This pandemic has reinforced our worst fears on how quickly and devastating lethal viruses can take hold and spread

produce as a major source of food poisoning, citing recent E. coli outbreaks tied to romaine lettuce. It said outbreaks tied to produce also contributed to a big jump in infections from a parasite called *Cyclospora caytanensis*.

The Food and Drug Administration, which oversees fruits and vegetables, said in a statement that a recently developed test is helping it detect the parasite in produce. The agency is also implementing new regulations for produce, though food safety experts note the inherent risk with fruits and vegetables that are grown in open fields and eaten raw. Another, less gracious, way to say this is: do not grow produce where livestock drink and poop.

Unfortunately, the foodservice industry has been a major source of food poisoning or contamination incidents resulting in severe illness or death.

There is ample documentation to support the dire impacts of deliberate or accidental contamination. The CDC estimates one in six Americans will experience some form of food poisoning each year.

To place that into numerical context, there are 128,000 hospital experiences and 3,000 deaths each year. It is impossible to estimate the number of incidents that go unreported due to the symptoms not being that severe or simple reluctance to submit a formal report with local health authorities.

With food in whole or part (ie, ingredients) being sourced from all over the world, there are obvious time and physical limitations on what government inspectors can accomplish. The whole farm-to-fork and local sourcing movement has added additional due diligence obligations for the simple reason that many of these growers do not have access to the same diagnostic tools the large corporate entities have.

From a consultant client perspective, the ultimate determination must rest with knowledgeable and experienced operators. The consultant's responsibility is ensuring the client makes informed

One in six Americans will experience some form of food poisoning each year... There are 128,000 hospital experiences and 3,000 deaths each year

decisions regarding how the facility is designed, the right (not necessarily the cheapest) equipment is specified and the requisite operating policies and procedures have been developed and implemented. Food poisoning incidents have been, and will continue to be, a reason for business failure.

Food poisoning incidents are not just a small business risk. Here is a sampling of companies that have found themselves in court and, then perhaps, facing bankruptcy due to a fundamental failure to follow legal and ethical mandates.

Peanut Corporation of America Salmonella as a result of gross sanitation and processing

violations. This company is now bankrupt and its principal officers are in prison.

Cargill Had to recall 36 million pounds of ground turkey as a result of bacteria-resistant salmonella.

Taco Bell Suspected contaminated lettuce. **Jimmy John's** E. coli from raw sprouts.

Odwalla E. coli from unpasteurized juices **Sizzler** Cut cantaloupe on the salad bar infected with E. coli. The suspected cause? The same cutting board that had been used to cut fresh beef was used to cut the cantaloupe.

As of April 24, 2020, Blue Bell Creameries agreed to \$20m in fines in addition to other major settlements as a result of a 2015 listeria outbreak that resulted in a major recall effort.

And, last, but not least, there is the 1993 Jack in the Box hamburgers case. Four people in Washington and California died from eating contaminated meat from Jack in the Box. Hundreds of >



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other customers also fell ill. This caused a national panic, nearly resulting in the end for the fast-food chain. The outbreak led to stronger government regulations on food handling.

It is at this point we introduce Bill Marler, the managing partner of the Seattle-based law firm specializing in food contamination incident lawsuits, Marler Clark.

The firm was established in 1998 by the top food attorneys for the plaintiffs and defendants in the landmark litigation arising from the 1993 Jack in the Box E. coli outbreak.

It has six full-time attorneys, eight paralegals and one epidemiologist as well as several support staff. The firm has

It is important to remember that, regardless of how due diligence and HACCP compliant the client might be, bad things can still happen

since represented thousands of victims of foodborne illness outbreaks across the country. Marler Clark is now the nation's leading law firm representing victims of foodborne illness outbreaks.

If you have not been exposed to what this firm does in terms of proactively addressing serious procedural and legislative flaws in the food production and service industries, you owe it to yourself and clients to do so.

Marler Clark is like so many law firms that represent the plaintiffs or defendants in cases that either get settled or go to trial. Typically, the law firm retains a portion of settlement or jury award in return for its representation, but there's more.

It is important to know this firm goes out of its way to educate all food industry segments on relevant law, regulations and best practices.

Essentially, there are two ways to learn about the Seattle, Washington-based law firm; either you or your client



could be on the defendant end of a lawsuit or you could take advantage of the numerous educational opportunities offered at no charge.

Bill Marler and his associates have dedicated significant amounts of time and money to educate and advocate all who will listen on what needs to be done to prevent future lawsuits. Simply, it is a law firm that could end up working itself out of business. There are no other law firms that do this.

Here are some key pro-consumer actions taken by Bill and his team:

- Helped to pass the 2010-11 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act.
- Has been, and continues to be, a strong advocate for Hepatitis A inoculations for all foodservice personnel.
- Is working diligently to require the USDA to have Salmonella (especially antibiotic-resistant) be declared an adulterant and, if found, have the product

(raw chicken for example) recalled.

- A pro bono advocate for a safer food supply via numerous articles and numerous invitations to speak at industry group functions.
- Sponsors *Food Safety News*, a free online subscription publication published seven-days a week.

It is important to remember that, regardless of how due diligence and HACCP compliant the client might be, bad things can still happen.

In one case of a major campus foodservice program, an employee with undisclosed Hepatitis A caused 270 persons to become violently ill. The only good news is that none of them died.

So, when you see a headline such as: *Chipotle agrees to pay \$25m federal fine for role in some outbreaks*, know that it can happen in highly regimented organizations, especially those known for fresh preparation and sustainably raised/grown ingredients. ■

MY KITCHEN

Oier Biritxinaga

The corporate chef of Spanish manufacturer Fagor tells Tina Nielsen why cooking at trade shows around the world continues to excite him

I have been a corporate chef with Fagor Industrial for nearly 13 years and have traveled all over the world to trade shows. As a company we attend between 65 and 70 shows every year; I work 15 shows a year.

This year I have not traveled much due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We all had to respect the health and safety measures so we can get through this in the best way.

Beyond putting out great food and excellent service I have two requirements: I don't want anybody to get injured or hurt themselves in the kitchen and I don't want us to make anyone ill with our output.

During a trade show the booth is our home and we want to show people our equipment and what it can do. Food is

central; it doesn't matter where you are from, we all enjoy good food and company and that is what we aim to provide.

At HostMilano with the full restaurant the kitchen is divided into sections: starter, meat, fish and pastry. Delegates are able to view the kitchen where we work and food is served to the tables where our representatives meet with clients.

For a big show like that I'll have four or five cooks with me in the kitchen, there's one bartender and a team serving.

When planning the kitchen service for a show I try to think of a cuisine that is quite global, but we also want to cook food that appeals to the region. We try to cook something that shows all the different bits

of equipment. On average we serve around 400 meals per day on top of snacks.

Setting up a kitchen at a trade show is a huge logistical operation. If a show starts on a Monday I usually arrive Friday or Saturday, but it is impossible to cook before Sunday – carpenters and painters will be building the booth until then.

I have to plan around how many visitors we expect, how long the show lasts, the space for cold storage, dry storage, and so on. For shows outside Europe I work with local partners to secure quality produce, but in Europe I send ingredients in a truck from Spain 24 hours before.

This lifestyle suits me. Traveling and meeting people makes life interesting. ■

Our concepts range from the gastro bar, offering small bites and drinks, as in the Basque Country, our home region, to a full restaurant set-up.

There are elements that are hard to plan, but we can't improvise everything. There is such a lot of detail involved.

I enjoy cooking, but I couldn't spend every day in the kitchen cooking the same things.





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