

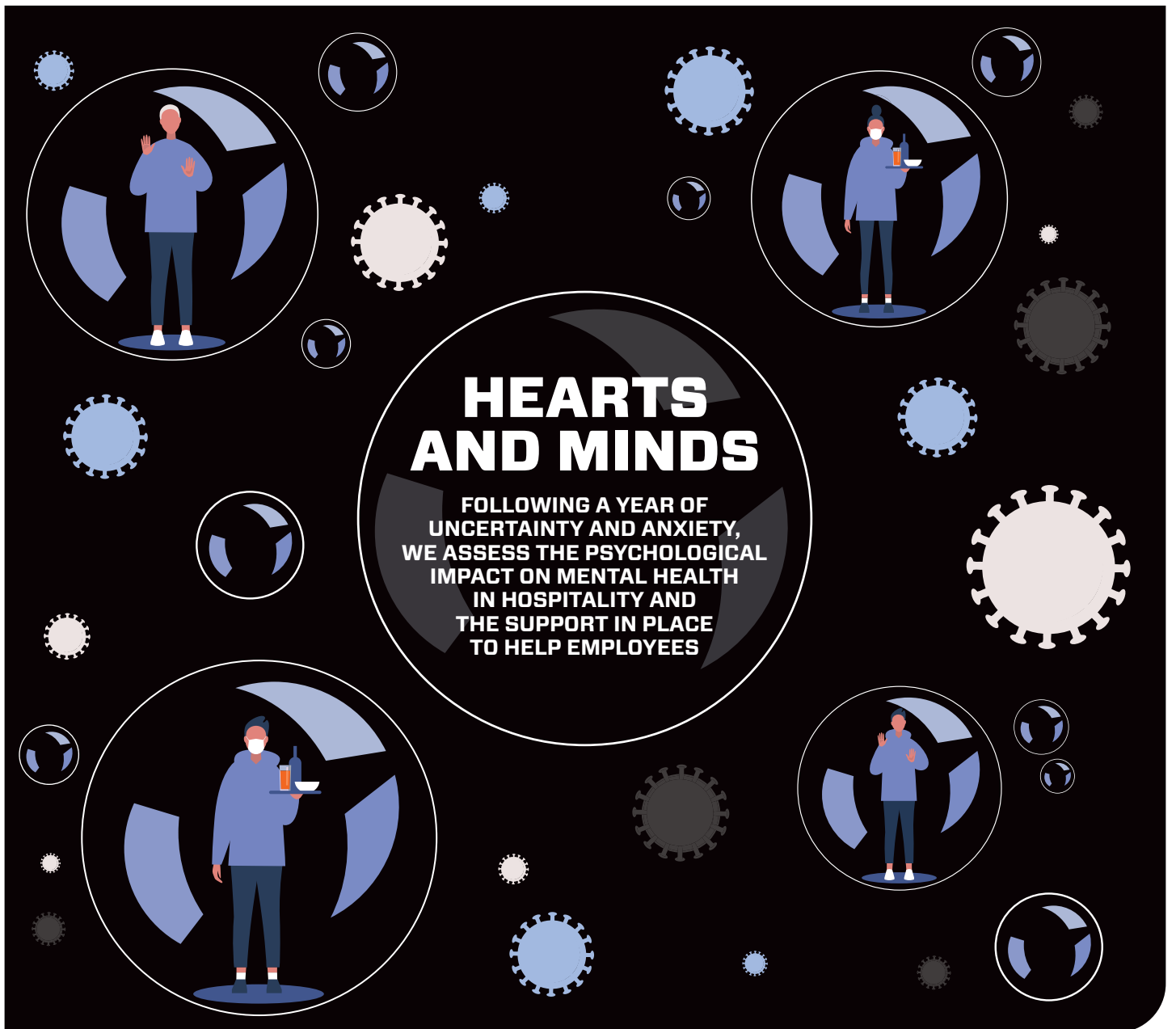
FOODSERVICE CONSULTANT

SPECIAL REPORT: foodservice, innovation and the big tech step forward

How foodservice can be propelled into the future by focusing on cutting-edge technologies that improve connectivity, service, hygiene and delivery

HEARTS AND MINDS

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EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS ON THE HORIZON

As we continue to move forward in combatting the Covid virus throughout the world, one thing remains constant: all of the FCSI Divisions are planning for new opportunities as the world opens up again. FCSI The Americas Division (TAD) is moving ahead with plans for a Symposium at the NAFEM show in August in Orlando, Florida, US. The Europe, Africa and Middle East (EAME) Division is still planning for a major conference in France, now pushed back to October, and the HostMilano show, scheduled for late October, is still in the planning stages related to any FCSI events or activities in conjunction with FCSI Italy. The Asia Pacific Division (APD) continues planning for various conference and show opportunities as soon as that region opens up a bit more.

In concert with all of these exciting upcoming features, the Worldwide board of directors has been working closely with a global committee of FCSI Professional members and industry colleagues to finalize a new FCSI-branded set of BIM/Revit planning and design standards. As you can imagine, this Herculean effort has been going on for a number of years now, spearheaded by a number of our

colleagues in each of the Divisions, along with technical and organizational support from a number of our Allied member professional associations around the globe. It also has been approved and supported by the APD, EAME and TAD boards. More on this very exciting initiative will be announced in the not-too-distant future.

If all of this is not enough, the APD Division, working with EAME and TAD, has recently proposed a program to spotlight our Allied members and their products throughout the world. The emphasis will be on those firms and members who have been – and currently are – creating new, exciting equipment that will most effectively and efficiently serve the post-pandemic food and beverage industry on a global basis.

I believe that all of the above initiatives show that we as a global Society continue to share, support and inspire one another each and every day. The world as we know it is still different than it was a year and a half ago, but we have forged ahead, and we now are moving in the direction of coming out of this thing with all of our engines in high gear. We're not waiting around for things to happen; we are making things happen in a proactive way.

In closing, I wish that I could personally meet all of you in the near future. I know this is not possible, but I am going to do my best to try to shed my moniker as “The Zoom Worldwide FCSI President” in the time still left on my term, that's for sure. I will be in Florida, US, for the NAFEM show and The Americas Division Symposium; in France for the EAME Conference in October



**William Caruso FCSI (PP)
President, FCSI Worldwide**

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we support,
we inspire**

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

(and I fervently hope and pray that we can make this event happen now that some of the Covid rules and regulations in Europe have been relaxed a bit), and I would love to attend an Asia Pacific Division function before my term as President expires on December 31.

I hope that all of these can be realized. The mere fact that we are talking about and planning them means that we have come a long way. Be well, God speed and, whoever can, get to Florida in August and/or France in October and let's have big celebrations at these great events.

**As a global Society
we continue to share,
support and inspire
one another each
and every day**

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Ready to roar back



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

Over the last year, it seems that as we work our way through this challenge, there is always a bit of bad news to go with the good.

The good news regarding the pandemic is that the vaccines are now out in full force and things here in the Americas are beginning to look much better. The NAFEM trade show is set to be held in August in Orlando, Florida.

If you are contemplating attending the show, I would

encourage you to arrange your travel and hotel accommodations now.

The bad news on the pandemic front is that we now face major supply-chain issues on building materials, component parts, and electronics. These logistical issues are also causing prices to soar and are having a direct impact on equipment lead times, production schedules, and costs of design and construction. While I am

hopeful these issues will be rectified in the next few months, it is one more hurdle we must face.

Most economists are predicting that the economy will start roaring back in Q3 and Q4. We must continue to press on as we have over the last year and find ways to adapt and change to meet the needs of our clients.

I am greatly looking forward to seeing many of you at NAFEM in August.

At time of writing, parts of our Asia Pacific region, especially India, are overcome by the pandemic, while those of us in Australia and New Zealand are less impacted. Challenging times give us the opportunity to consider how we, as a global professional society, can “share, support, and inspire” each other.

Within our Asia Pacific Division (APD) we have hosted webinars on the theme of ‘Share’ and ‘Support’ and look

Working together



**Mario Sequeira FCSI
Chair, FCSI Asia Pacific Division**

forward to the session on striving to ‘Inspire’ ourselves and our businesses.

It is great to see the participation in the Allied Members’ monthly webinars and the enthusiasm around the inaugural APD Project Excellence initiative. Special thanks to our Platinum sponsors, so far being Moffat and Unox, and Gold sponsors, Meiko and Welbit. We look forward to sponsorship from our other Allied members.

It is with pleasure that the APD board welcomes Francis Loughran to our board and also congratulates Andrew Brain FCSI for being selected to serve on the FCSI Worldwide board. Andrew has excelled in his role as treasurer and also in facilitating the monthly Allied member webinars.

I urge all FCSI members to work together, embracing sustainable solutions while offering the best product and service to our clients.

Carry on dreaming



**Remko van der Graaff FCSI
Chair, FCSI Europe, Africa, Middle East**

It is May 2021, and one thing is for sure: the world has changed. The impact of the pandemic is visible – felt by everyone in everything. At the same time, I am convinced that the sun will shine again and new doors will open.

The pandemic challenges us in many areas, across our work and private life. Personal questions arise, such as, ‘Am I doing the right job? Will I still have a job? What is my passion? What gives me

energy?’ Maybe it’s time to ask yourself these questions.

This morning I spoke to a young interior designer, stylist and barista. She is a passionate entrepreneur who does not give up but chooses to follow her heart with energy, passion and pleasure. Shortly before the pandemic she started her own company and, despite all the challenges, she is constantly looking for new opportunities and showing courage. She combines her

work at her own company with making beautiful coffee as a barista.

Thinking differently, doing differently – that is the mindset we have to turn to, because if you do what you always did, you will get what you always got. That is what has kept me busy in the middle of my own transition from the company I have worked at for 16 years, onto new challenges.

“Follow your dream, Dad”. That is what she said to me.



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"Connection is a human need and they've removed that for many people"



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Out of the chaos and devastation of the past year come some glimmers of light. Jim Banks examines how the pandemic has set the pace for innovative technology, which has come on in leaps and bounds to provide solutions that foodservice operators can carry forward to the future

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FOODSERVICE CONSULTANT

Editorial director **Michael Jones**
 Editor **Tina Nielsen**
 Contributing editor **Amelia Levin**
 Chief sub-editor **Jacquetta Picton**
editorial@foodserviceconsultant.org

Group art director **Ian Hart**
 Designer **Poppy Seabrook**
 Picture editor **Nana Agyeman**
 Head of production and delivery **Rob Manning**

Publisher **Stuart Charlton**
 Commercial manager **Natasha Merkel**
sales@foodserviceconsultant.org

FCSI WORLDWIDE

Executive administrator **Nick Vaccaro**, nick@fcsi.org
FCSI board of directors: Below are board members for 2020 **Officers:** President **William Caruso** FFCSI, Secretary/treasurer **Mario Sequeira** FCSI
Directors: **Eric Norman** FCSI, **Remko van der Graaff** FCSI

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Foodservice Consultant is published by Progressive Content
progressivecontent.com
 Printed in the UK by Stephens & George
 Subscriptions: subscribe.co.uk/Foodservice-Consultant-Magazine-Subscription.cfm

ISSN 2752-6062

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● Season three of FCSI's Dynamic Design podcast series concludes with an interview with Keith Short FCSI,

design director, West, of Cini-Little International, Inc. Short will address the impact Covid-19 is having on the design of foodservice spaces in the future, his optimism for how things will recover in the sector and the factors that are driving that change. Plus, how Short's personal design philosophy is changing.



● Q3 2021 will also see the launch of FCSI's Sustainability Stars Podcast – a new audio series profiling the individuals whose pioneering sustainability initiatives are changing the sector for the better. The series will feature one-on-one interviews with a diverse range of thought-leaders who are already impacting foodservice with ideas that benefit people, profits and the planet.

● All the latest on FCSI APD's *Project Excellence* campaign, which celebrates outstanding design from members in the region (see page 30). Including FCSI APD's Mario Sequeira on why now is the right time to celebrate design excellence.

AROUND THE WORLD

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

Building A, Mission Rock, San Francisco, US

Architect **MVRDV**
Builder **Swinerton**
Opens **2022 – 2023**

Construction has begun on MVRDV's geology-inspired mixed-used tower in San Francisco. Undulating balconies extend all the way up the western façades of the 23-story tower, and the many setbacks and overhangs on each level create terraces that add to the vibrant atmosphere of the pedestrian space. The project includes apartments, office space and ground floor retail and restaurants. It is one of four buildings in Phase 1 of a multi-phase masterplan developed by the San Francisco Giants and Tishman Speyer. Other architecture firms involved include Studio Gang, Henning Larsen and WORKac.



The Spiral, New York, US

Architect **BIG**
Builder **Turner Construction Company**
Opens **2022**

Located at the intersection of the High Line and the newly developed Hudson Boulevard Park on Manhattan's new western frontier, The Spiral extends the green space of the former train tracks in a spiralling motion towards the sky – from High Line to the skyline. The 1,005 ft (306 metre) high-rise intertwines a continuous green pathway with work spaces on every level and gradually becomes slimmer towards the top. On the dining front, The Spiral will provide a mix of food and beverage offerings from New York-based operators, including premium coffee and breakfast, chef-driven fine dining for lunches and dinners, and intimate venues for small plates and wine after work.





Ashar Tented Resort, Saudi Arabia

Architect **AW²**

Builder **TBC**

Opens **2021**

Ashar Tented Resort will be built as part of a scheme to increase tourism to the AlUla desert area in Saudi Arabia. It will consist of 47 suites that will take their forms from the tents used by the nomadic Bedouin people who used to occupy the area, the idea being that the layout will include all the modern functions of a luxury hotel while maintaining maximum contact with nature. Alongside the tented suites, the resort will house several gourmet restaurants and a spa that will all be made from compressed-earth bricks.

Matild Palace, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Budapest, Hungary

Architects **MKV Design**

Builder **N/A**

Opens **2021**

Matild Palace wants to bring a new era of entertainment and gastronomy to Budapest. Matild Café and Cabaret is a dramatic reimagining of the historic cafe originally opened in 1901 and reopened as the first cafe in Budapest after the second world war. Piac New Hungarian Food Hall will be a modern and animated showcase of New Hungarian cooking and local products. The Duchess is a secret liquor library and rooftop garden inspired by the archduchess Maria Klotild, who commissioned the Palace to include a secret rooftop bar as a rendezvous for the Decadence Movement. Finally, Duna Lounge & Bistro will serve up international dishes in a casual setting.



Pan Pacific Orchard, Singapore

Architect **WOHA**

Builder **Shimizu Corporation**

Opens **2022**

Slated to be a showcase of environmental sustainability, Pan Pacific Orchard is Pan Pacific Hotels Group's first zero-waste hotel with four levels of soaring gardens. Among other elements, Pan Pacific Orchard will feature a rainwater harvesting system, a recyclable water system, and a compactor that turns food waste into compost – which will then be channelled into fertilizer for its sky gardens. It also comes complete with 350 eco-friendly rooms, a gym, swimming pool, bars and restaurants, a club lounge, and a sky terrace.



Refocus and redefine

FCSI Educational Foundation president **Jay Bravinder**, outlines ongoing discussions to take the program further to maintain maximum impact



The word pivot has been so overused in the last year. Everyone talks about how they have had to pivot in their personal lives and in their professional lives. But even though it was arguably one of the most overused words in 2020, the concept has merit.

The pandemic has made everyone re-evaluate their life, in one form or another, and the FCSI Educational Foundation is no different. The Foundation has struggled throughout its history to find its true voice. What is our true focus? How do we best serve with the limited resources that we have available?

The board has spent the first quarter of 2021 discussing and examining a new path forward for the Foundation. We

have had some success with internships and grants for original research. (You can check out some of the impressive young people we have helped along the way on our website at fcsief.org.) But is the Foundation fulfilling its true potential by helping one or two people a year? Maybe we want to think about the bigger picture.

The answer is to think bigger. The board is in the process of refocusing and redefining the Foundation. Ideas on the table include the development of a certificate program for consultants or partnering with a small college or culinary school on the development of a program for consultants. With a program in place, the Foundation could create some excitement around it and generate

funds for the continued operation of the curriculum.

We are considering trying a model that allows the Foundation to focus on fund raising while educational professionals handle the delivery of quality educational programming.

Watch this space for updates as our efforts to refocus progress. Of course, if you have any ideas you would like to pass along, we'd welcome them. You can email our administrator at gregj@fcsief.org. ■





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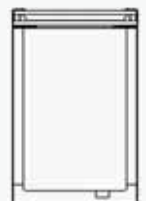
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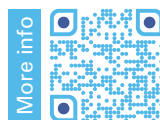
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TALKBACK

Three foodservice professionals give their views on one question



Joxe Mari Aizega

Director general, Basque Culinary Center, Spain

The pandemic has highlighted that restaurants are more than just a space where you go to enjoy a nice meal. They're a place to enjoy an experience, and have a moment of connection with friends and family. I don't think anyone was prepared for losing that, especially not for the amount of time the pandemic has gone on.

This past year has illustrated the impact of gastronomy, both inside and outside the kitchen. We've seen so many chefs who have used their skills to help those in need, and have used this time to make a real difference in their community. The lesson is that there are many ways to contribute to the future of gastronomy – it's not just about becoming a chef at a Michelin star restaurant. There are so many ways of being a successful chef and creating positive change.

Governments need to recognize the importance of gastronomy in society and do more to ensure that the restaurant industry isn't left behind if there is another pandemic. Gastronomy can also be a driving force for tourism, so it is in everyone's best interests to preserve the gastronomic traditions of a certain place.

For the future, it's about ensuring we have the ability to adapt as quickly as possible. Gastronomy has the power to solve some of the problems of our time. The key is recognizing the connection between gastronomy and culture, and using that to spearhead societal change.



Mick Jary

Specification director, Meiko UK

I don't think the sector could have prepared for what came – no government saw it happening so, as an industry, we had no chance. Could we have ensured that emergency slush funds were in a healthier place? This is obviously something all businesses should have in place, but we hadn't seen a global pandemic since 1918 and the Spanish flu. What we have seen is the companies whose assets were not in the healthiest of positions, unfortunately having to close. Financial security is key.

The difficulty for us in the last year has been that 80% of our market, was closed. That left the public sector and for much of that period the education sector wasn't functioning. With healthcare, an even greater emphasis was placed on hygiene. It was already a priority, but with Covid it accelerated. Our marketing teams did a fabulous job in messaging the advantages of our hygiene offering in various product ranges – offering solutions to a rapidly changing market place.

Unfortunately, experts predict this won't be the last pandemic. Having that slush fund behind you will be a massive advantage as it is debatable whether governments could afford the same support again. Ensuring that all the necessary tools are in your marketing box to assure your clients that you are there for them and you have the solution to ensure their operation continues to run smoothly during the most difficult of times.



Sojo Alex

Senior associate, Envision Strategies, US

Hospitality was certainly caught off guard by the pandemic. Nothing like this had happened in living memory, so no one had ever planned for such a thing.

One benefit to the college/university segment is the schools have disaster plans in place, such as warehouses with paper goods for takeout, meals ready to eat (MRE) and pallets of bottled water. Campuses are prepared due to hurricanes, the SARS outbreak, wildfires and similar.

We are aware that this may not be the last crisis of this type that we will weather in the coming years. I think the folks still in business when the dust settles, will be faster to act on staff and operational reductions in the future and be more prepared generally.

Going forward, expect pandemic rent reduction clauses in leases for restaurant and hotel space and even perhaps in the terms of business loans. Expect to see take-out as a trend and a vital aspect to flexible business models. Expect to see hospitality demand higher profitability to maintain reserves of emergency capital.

Now the government understands the importance of the restaurant industry, there will be a faster response and funding. The willingness to provide PPP loans and loan forgiveness will be a key part of the government toolbox. Also, regulatory protection from predatory foreclosures and evictions have been, and will be, important in helping hardworking hospitality owners keep their businesses.

Operators need to have a disaster plan in place. It's a good idea for college and universities to memorialize their pandemic response in a playbook so that future leaders have something to reference if it happens again.

How can foodservice get ready for future pandemics?



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Sometimes foundations need to be shaken and rules re-written in order to make meaningful change, says **The Secret Chef**

MAKING A (MEANINGFUL) DIFFERENCE



Just do the work. We're raised on this phrase in kitchens. Check the fridges, write the mise en place list and start prepping. It's a simple demarcation and an easy binary existence: either you are ready for service or you are not.

The quality of that industry is more subjective, but there is certainly no place for Schrödinger in the kitchen when it comes to readiness. Just do the work. It's a foundation that the profession has been built on since the birth of the restaurant in 18th century revolutionary France (or so goes that commonly accepted trope).

I've been thinking a lot about foundations recently. Pandemics, closures and rapidly changing business models have a tendency to shift thoughts back to first principles and weightier matters than the mere cutting of vegetables into neat brunoise or breaking down a few dozen duck carcasses.

The constant white noise of Covid-19-related matters has also played as a background hum to more explosive issues: resonant, collective action and vocalization of issues that remain endemic in societies across the world and, consequently, within our own profession.

The truth is that hospitality is built on a foundation of fragile egos and unacknowledged privilege. Of standing on shoulders we have no right to stand

on, and using wilful ignorance to ensure the quo remains in status.

Last summer, at the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, I read Ta-Nehisi Coates and sought out interviews with black and minority ethnic chefs, particularly Kwame Onwuachi whose searing memoir *Notes from a Young Black Chef* lays bare the inequalities within hospitality, particularly inside the rarified echelons of high-end dining.

The truth is that hospitality is built on a foundation of fragile egos and unacknowledged privilege. Of standing on shoulders we have no right to stand on

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

Early this year I was made acutely aware that this was only the beginning of an education that I now know needs to last a lifetime. I was invited to take part in an online charity event and agreed without a second thought. When the (unapproved) press shot was released shortly after there was an inevitable – and justified – response to the entirely pale and male nature of those featured. I was suddenly aware that the lack of diversity made it

look like an event from a previous time, a tired relic of an era that I hoped we have moved beyond.

The organizer was presented with an opportunity to alter the line-up to more fairly represent the nature of the industry, but they declined, fearful that doing so would draw more attention to their mistake. From there it was an easy decision: I backed out.

This isn't a story about doing the right thing. It's a tale of making a mistake and resolving to do the right thing next time. I messed up by not asking the question before implicitly agreeing to something. While that lack of awareness might not necessarily be perceived as racist per se, it was insufficiently anti-racist to make any meaningful difference and that is the stance we have to take in order to work towards a fairer world.

This too, is an easy binary existence – either we endeavor to uphold the system that is in place: a system that is broken, exploitative and unrepresentative, one that suppresses people of color, steals their ideas and their culture and accepts systemic racism; or we choose to fight against it, to pose uncomfortable questions, to ask more of ourselves and to speak out when we see something that we know to be unacceptable or unfair.

The system is flawed. However, as always, the answer is a simple one: if you want to be ready for service, just do the damn work. ■

THE INTELLIGENCE

News, insight, opinion and reviews



Life on the other side

Across the world, hospitality has begun the process of reopening for outdoor and indoor dining after a long year of lockdowns

New Zealand proved to be an outstanding leader at containing the pandemic early on while parts of Japan showed progress later. Israel beat the rest of the world to return to relative normality with the introduction of the Green Pass, which proves the presence of coronavirus antibodies from a vaccine or previous infection. The Green Pass is required for most indoor social activities as well as for large-scale events.

All over the world countries are following suit with easing of restrictions. As vaccination programs continue rolling out, the opportunity to return to sharing a meal in a restaurant is returning. Different countries have embraced different approaches. In Denmark, diners need to show proof of a negative test to enter a restaurant or a bar, while

in the UK social distancing rules and mask wearing remain the main conditions for visiting a restaurant or a pub.

In France, the reopening is gradual with outdoor dining since 17 May and, all being well, dining rooms will open to guests again in June. In the US, as of mid-May, 34 states had indoor dining allowed with some restrictions while 16 states had removed all limitations on hospitality. On the other side of the world, Australia has dealt well with occasional flare-ups of infections by imposing temporary lockdowns.

Without doubt regulators, politicians and scientists everywhere will be keeping an eye on the occurrence of new variants and any spikes, but, for now, hospitality can enjoy a return to dining as we used to know, and enjoy, it. ■



Soho, London, UK, where street dining has been popular, although indoor dining was allowed in May

INDUSTRY NEWS



Contactless payment: the options

These insights, from Inmar Intelligence, into consumer shopping behavior could affect foodservice “shopping” preferences.

- 53% of today's shoppers have used a mobile contactless payment option for the first time since the start of the pandemic, indicating a larger trend toward cashless payments.
- 57% of shoppers prefer contactless curbside pickup (buy online and pick up)
- 56% of shoppers prefer contactless, in-store self-checkout
- 28% of shoppers said that if a retailer does not have contactless payment options, they will avoid that retailer and choose an alternative that offers contactless payment options.
- One-third (33%) of shoppers say loyalty to regular, everyday stores has changed since the beginning of the pandemic. Reasons that loyalty has changed is mainly due to inventory availability.
- 87% say that promotions (coupons, digital coupons, in-store discount) are important in their decision to buy one or more products.



Digital only

Pizza Hut announced plans to add The Hut Lane, a new, digital-order-only pickup window, to more than 1,500 locations across the country. Customers can order by phone or through the chain's app or website, and drive-thru to pick up their order. Parent company Flynn Restaurant Group announced the completion of the acquisition of more than 900 Pizza Hut locations, with plans to implement the new lane in remodeled units.

Purpose and meaning

During the pandemic, support of local communities became front and center for many, and consumers are remembering those who supported their communities. In a recent study by Culinary Visions 73% agree chefs have become heroes serving their communities in these difficult times. That appreciation points to post-pandemic loyalty with 53% of consumers saying they have changed the restaurants they patronize based on how employees are being taken care of during these difficult times.

Life in balance

Early in the pandemic interest in healthfulness was set aside for comfort and indulgence, says Culinary Visions's study. Sales of packaged snack foods that offered flavor memories from childhood and simpler times skyrocketed. Of the consumers surveyed last summer, 65% said indulgent comfort food has been their salvation. Yet, 83% of consumers said they were looking forward to more healthful eating. The interest in healthfulness has returned with 58% saying they have used this time to make healthier lifestyle modifications.

What consumers want today

According to Culinary Visions's study, consumers are craving connection. Less than half (47%) of those responding in the latest wave of the study say they prefer online delivery services over going somewhere in person. This is down from 56% in the summer wave of the survey. Only 35% of consumers agree that they enjoy sharing virtual meals with friends as much as dining out. More than three quarters (78%) of consumers in the latest study say they are looking forward to the experience of dining in a restaurant, and 66% miss being around other people when dining in a foodservice establishment.

PLACES AND OPENINGS



Restaurateur Sam Fox and partners opened a new, multi-level hospitality experience in Nashville. The Twelve Thirty Club space features three distinct concepts, including The First Level, a bar and restaurant with live music; The Honorary Member, a 50-person cocktail lounge; and The Supper Club and Rooftop Terrace, scheduled to open this summer.

PEOPLE



Lisa Paige-Pretorius joined Cini-Little as the new market leader in Charlotte, North Carolina. A 25-year veteran of the industry, Paige-Pretorius most recently worked at VisionBuilders & Design in Charlotte.

Sandra Trimble joined New York-based manufacturing firm Winholt as East Coast regional sales manager. She most recently served as vice president of sales for Marco Company.

Chris Karssiens was appointed interim president of Hoshizaki America, replacing James McDowell.



Athens, Georgia-based Chicken chain Zaxby's named **Mike Nettles** (above) as the first chief digital and technology officer in its 31-year history. Nettles joins Zaxby's from Papa John's, where he served as chief operating and growth officer. In his new role, Nettles will oversee IT for both corporate and restaurant systems, focusing on store technology, data democratization and centralization, architecture and change management.



KAORI Miami, which opened this spring, is a Mediterranean Asian fusion cuisine experience located on the ground level of the SLS Lux complex in the heart of Miami's Brickell neighborhood. Spazio/Bressan and Interior Image Group partnered on the interior design of the 4,500 sq ft space, which includes a first-floor bar and lounge, second-floor dining area, private dining room and expo kitchen featuring modern design elements with clean and contemporary lines, natural and organic materials and light-toned wall finishes contrasting with darker elements. Lush greenery enlivens the space and adds another layer to the natural aesthetic.

Cameron Mitchell Restaurants opened Budd Dairy Food Hall, the first incubator food space in Columbus, Ohio, this spring, and features nine, chef-driven restaurant concepts as well as an ever-changing pop-up space called Hatch, currently home to local cult favorite the Cheesecake Girl. Housed in a former milk bottling plant, the historic building dates back to the early 1900s. Much of the original architecture was retained, from the original tiles to wood, brick and terra cotta detail. In addition to the restaurant spaces, BDFH features three bars, a beer garden and rooftop gathering space and bar.



CHAIN NEWS

Another Broken Egg Café, a full-service brunch and lunch franchise with a Southern-inspired menu, has signed development agreements to open 14 new locations this year, in addition to recently opened locations in Orlando, Florida Cincinnati, Ohio and Louisiana.

Fast-casual Mediterranean chain **Cava Group** announced plans to convert 12 former Zoe's Kitchen locations in the first half of this year, following an acquisition that expanded its unit numbers from 66 to 327.



Boca Raton, Florida-based Miami Grill, a fast-casual chain known for cheesesteaks, burgers and more, announced the expansion into Houston this summer, with an initial two locations owned and operated by Houston-based ASM Food Management.

Fast-casual health-oriented chain **Muscle Maker Grill** has continued its expansion into the prepared-meal market with the acquisition by its parent company, Muscle Maker Inc., of Superfit Foods LLC, a subscription-based meal service based outside of Jacksonville, Florida.

New York burger chain **Shake Shack** announced plans to grow aggressively in South China and Macao, with locations in Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Macao's casino resort The Londoner.

Johnny Rockets continued its expansion across South America, with the opening of two new locations in Brazil and Chile.



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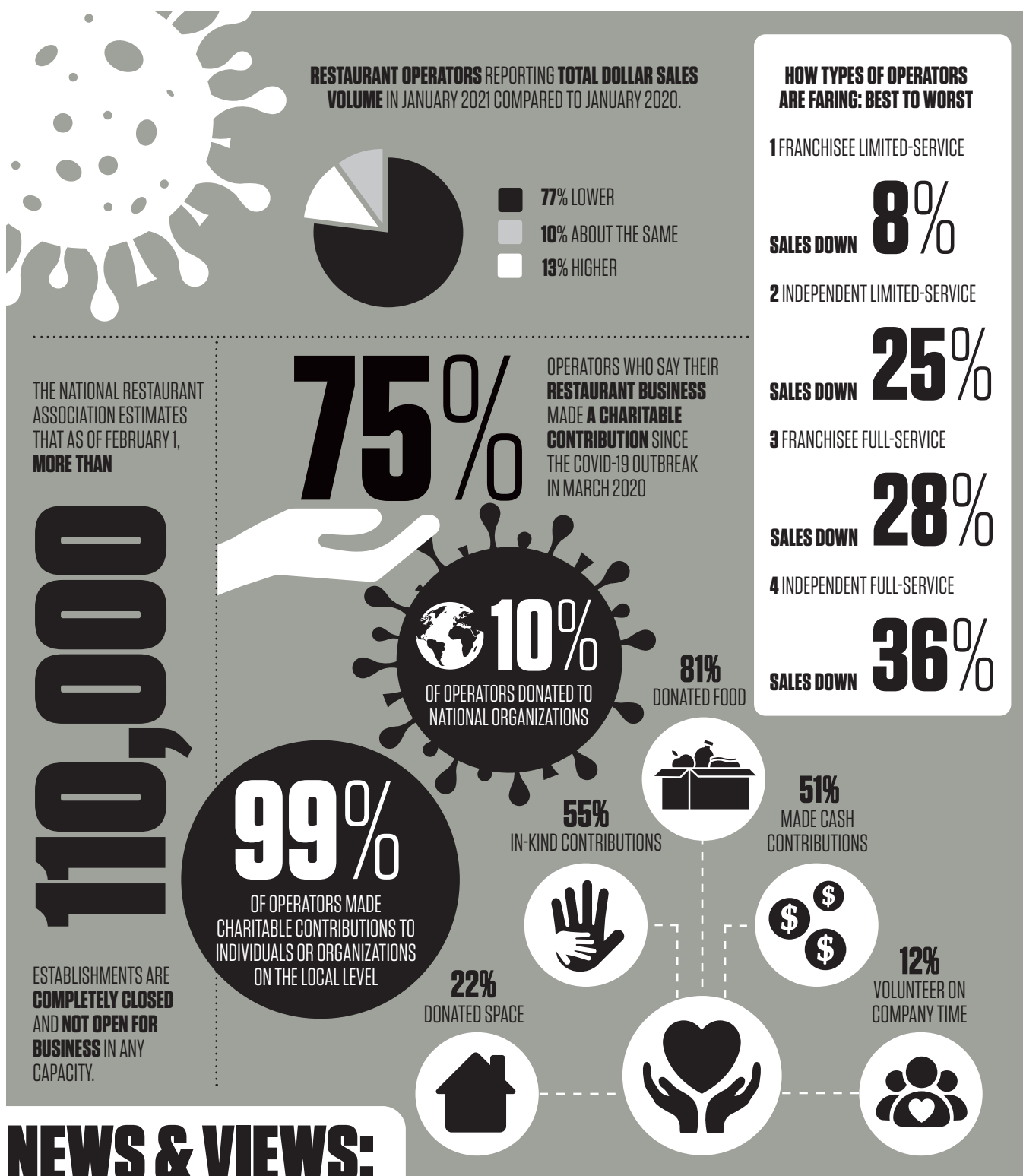
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SOURCE: NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION RESEARCH GROUP'S SURVEY OF 3,000 RESTAURANT OPERATORS IN THE US IN FEBRUARY 2021

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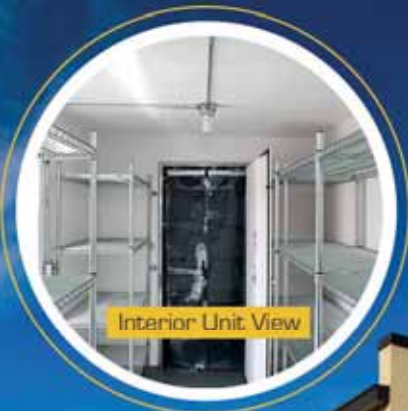


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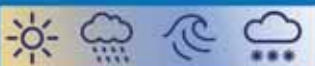
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Mauro Colagreco takes Mirazur to Singapore

The Argentinean chef behind Mirazur in the South of France, the current holder of the title of the World's Best Restaurant, will host a three-month pop-up of Mirazur at Mandala Club in Singapore.

The return to Singapore will be emotional for Colagreco as it was in Singapore that his restaurant was declared No.1 at The World's 50 Best Restaurant awards in 2019.

Diners can look forward to experiencing the lunar menus served at Mirazur's home in Menton, France. A holistic, ecological approach to farming, gardening and eating, biodynamic agriculture pays attention to the interdependent relationships between flora and the energies that influence its growth cycle. A sensitive gardener who grows a variety of fruits, flowers, vegetables, and herbs in Mirazur's hillside garden, Colagreco has been a keen observer of these elements. He believes that the moon at different phases influences different elements in nature, and in turn, the different parts of the plant: earth for roots, water for leaves, air for flowers, and fire for fruits.

"In today's urban societies, we are increasingly distanced from a regular relationship with nature," says Colagreco. "Bridging the gap between our current lifestyles and our need to reconnect with life cycles is what inspires us the most in our daily work. My team will offer a unique experience to guests with Mandala Club."

Mirazur at Mandala Club will be open until 11 August, 2021.

The Vegetarian Butcher gathers momentum in China

After initially launching its plant-based meat alternative products for foodservice in China in December 2020, the Dutch company has added six new products to its range. The products, including plant-based meatballs, chicken nuggets and beef steak, are available to chefs looking to incorporate more alternatives to meat in their menus. Although China continues to account for 28% of meat consumption in the world, plant-based substitutes are increasingly popular. According to a report by the Good Food Institute, China's plant-based meat market was projected to grow between 20% and 25% annually from 2018.

FCSI Asia Pacific: Project Excellence

There is still plenty of time – until 1 August 2021 – for FCSI APD Professional members to enter the Division's inaugural *Project Excellence* publication, which will celebrate outstanding design projects recently completed by the region's members. The publication, which will mail with the Q4 2021 edition of FCSI's *Foodservice Consultant* magazine, will showcase in print the three member projects deemed to be worthy winners by an independent panel of judges from the region.

Submitted projects from FCSI APD Professional members, which must have been actively worked on by members since January 2019, will be scored by judges based on the following criteria and weighting: Innovation/technical excellence (20%); Design excellence (20%); Originality and 'thinking outside the box' (20%); Overcoming specific challenges/restraints (20%); and Sustainability credentials (20%).

The judging process will take place in Q3 2021 and the winners revealed in print in October 2021. The three winning projects will also be showcased across all FCSI digital platforms (the fcsi.org website; weekly newsletter; all social media channels). Think your project has got what it takes to be selected by our judges, or you'd like to enter a fellow FCSI APD Professional member's project? Then please submit the entry before 1 August 2021 at surveymonkey.co.uk/r/D6WWT6Z. Terms and conditions apply. Best of luck!



Hospitality in Australia asks for more help

In March the Australian government announced in its \$1.2bn tourism and aviation package that major airlines will continue to be paid \$500 direct support payments for international employees. Now the Australian Hotels Association has asked for equal treatment. Chief executive Stephen Ferguson has written to the Prime Minister calling for either an extended cash flow boost or staff retention payments. The sector points to the impact of sporadic three-day lockdowns to combat localised Covid outbreaks and says these result in a hit of around \$100m for the cities each time they occur.



Alcohol singled out in latest Japan restrictions

In the most recent state of emergency declaration announced in Japan, the government has required restaurants, bars and karaoke parlors serving alcohol to close. Experts believe that alcohol causes people to talk louder and in turn increase the risk of transmission.

Loud voices, along with less attention paid to hygiene and a

tendency to linger at the bar, were all said to contribute to an increased risk of aerosol contagion.

The restrictions were implemented in several prefectures including Japan and Osaka.

The measures were introduced as the Olympic Games, due to take place in Tokyo from 23 July, loom large on the horizon.

ASIA PAC



Yum China reports first quarter growth

The pandemic introduced uncertainty in foodservice in the last year, partly due to a drop in tourism. According to government statistics, travel was down 40% on 2020 and 70% on 2019 when compared to previous Chinese New Year holiday period. First quarter sales of Yum China, which holds franchises for brands including KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell, continued to be impacted by regional resurgences of Covid-19 and tighter public health measures. The company, reported a 46% increase in total revenues while same-store sales were up 10%. In the same period, Yum China opened 315 new stores and reported \$342m profit. Pizza Hut saw the biggest same-store sales increase (38%) while KFC reported a 5% increase. Investment in digital and automation is a priority for Yum China – during Q1 digital orders at Pizza Hut and KFC accounted for 84% of sales.

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Spain first EU country to give gig economy workers employee rights

Spain has announced it will recognize riders working for food delivery apps as salaried staff. This legislation will reflect a Spanish Supreme Court ruling last September that said people working for food delivery app Glovo should be classed as employees.

Spain will be the first country in Europe with legislation that explicitly regulates the status of delivery workers who travel on bikes and motorcycles. The provisions could also enable these workers to access information about the algorithms affecting their work.

"It will make it possible to avoid, as is currently the case, algorithmic punishments for workers who work in certain time slots, penalties for performance that can be biased, or even the simple fact of promoting or going on strike," said labor minister Yolanda Diaz.

Meanwhile, Uber UK has confirmed it will reclassify more than 70,000 drivers in Britain as workers after a recent Supreme Court judgment. The drivers are not employees so aren't entitled to full benefits. But they will receive a minimum guaranteed wage of £8.72, holiday pay equivalent to 12.07% of their earnings and gain access to a pension plan.

Drivers will also have access to free insurance to cover sickness, injury, and maternity and paternity payments. Debate is anticipated over what should be considered "working time", as the current offer only covers drivers when they have accepted ride requests, not waiting time.

Bank of America estimates that Uber's UK employment rights setback could cost the firm a total of more than \$500m. Uber said its action over workers' rights "means drivers will earn with greater security, helping them to plan for their futures while maintaining the flexibility that is integral to the private-hire industry."



931 million tonnes
of food goes to
waste each year

Food waste worse than thought

About 17% of global food production may go to waste, according to the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Food Waste Index Report 2021, with 61% of this waste coming from households, 26% from food service and 13% from retail.

The Food Waste Index estimates that around 931 million tonnes of food goes to waste each year. This figure is more than twice the size of earlier estimates.

The report also found that household food waste per capita is similar across high-income, upper middle-income and lower middle-income

countries. Previous studies had indicated that consumer food waste was exclusively a problem in developed countries, with production, storage and transportation losses thought to be particular issues in the developing world.

The Food Waste Index encourages governments to use its methodology for measuring food waste – at household, foodservice and retail level – in order to guide national strategies for food waste prevention and track progress towards UN Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to halve food waste by 2030.



After 'peak meat' point in 2025, animal-based diets are on their way out

A new report from the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and Blue Horizon indicates that Europe and the US will reach 'peak meat' by 2025, after which point meat consumption will fall. This is largely due to the exponential rise of vegan meat alternatives, which are expected to reach price parity with meat by 2023.

The study also forecasts that nine out of 10 of the world's favorite dishes – from pepperoni pizza to sushi – will have realistic alternatives by 2035 and that 11% of all the meat, seafood, eggs and dairy eaten around the globe is very likely to be alternative by the same point. With a push from regulators and step changes in technology, the report says, that number could reach 22%.

If alternative proteins grow to 11% of sales over the next 15 years, BCG estimates that one billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions will have been avoided, farmland equivalent to the area of the UK will have been freed from supporting livestock and 50 billion fewer chickens will have been raised. The annual market for alternative meat, eggs, dairy and seafood products is currently on course to reach at least \$290bn (£210bn) by 2035.

UK food and drink exports collapse post-Brexit

HMRC figures have revealed huge year-on-year falls in food and drink exports, with whisky, cheese and chocolate the worst hit.

Analysis of the figures by the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) shows that cheese exports in January fell from £45m to £7m year on year, while whisky exports dropped from £105m to £40m. Chocolate exports went from £41.4m to £13m, a decline of 68%.

The FDF says the collapse in trade is due to a combination of Brexit and lower demand in Europe, where many hospitality outlets remain closed. Exports of other goods such as salmon and beef almost completely halted, with declines of 98% and 92% respectively. Meanwhile, trade in fish dropped by 79%, partly due to a ban on exports of certain live shellfish.

Discussing the analysis, Dominic Goudie, head of international trade at FDF, said: "It is extremely

worrying that our exports to the EU have fallen by more than 75% in January. Businesses face significant challenges when trading with the EU and small businesses in particular have been shut out because groupage distribution is not working. In the absence of solutions, EU exporters will face much the same difficulties when the UK's full border operating model comes into force in 2022.

"The terms of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) will not change and businesses face unavoidable changes to the terms of trade. However, there are opportunities to address the implementation of the deal. The EU-UK Partnership Council and its Trade Specialised Committees should be convened as a matter of urgency to put in place solutions that deliver the TCA's aim of enhancing the ability of small businesses to benefit from trade."



Sodexo goes above and beyond new European plastic regulations

Sodexo is removing key single-use plastic items at all its sites in Europe, making paper, cardboard, wood or fibre-based straws, takeaway bags, plates, cutlery and stirrers the only options available. It has become the largest catering company to implement a commitment like this in Europe, going beyond the upcoming European Union Single-Use Plastic Directive, which will take effect on 1 July 2021.

"Sodexo serves 100 million consumers every day, and the reduction and elimination of non-essential plastic from our sites can have a real impact through the size and scope of our business," said François Blanckaert, Sodexo's chief procurement officer. "Our European plastic commitment is an important step of our journey, and our Supply Management team will continue to collaborate with vendor partners to identify innovative appropriate alternatives to plastic and source more sustainable solutions."



OPENINGS

Time Out Market Dubai

In April, Time Out Market Dubai opened its doors at Souk Al Bahar. Showcasing their dishes in the space are 17 well-loved local restaurants, including Masti, BB Social Dining, Folly Workshop and Al Fanar Restaurant. There are also four brand-new concepts, three bars serving mixed drinks from Time Out Markets around the world and a special grape bar.

Spread over 43,000 sq ft, the market features a bright airy indoor dining space with views of the Burj Khalifa through a high glass ceiling. There's also a 3,000 sq ft al fresco terrace, which wraps around the building and offers superb views of the Burj Khalifa and The Dubai Fountain.

In addition to a wide variety of dining options, visitors can expect culture and entertainment. Once lockdown restrictions are eased, a special indoor stage will showcase live music, open mic nights, poetry readings, comedy shows and more.



Popeyes to launch in the UK

US fried chicken restaurant brand Popeyes recently announced its plan to enter the UK in 2021, with the goal of opening 350 new restaurants over the next 10 years as part of an ambitious European expansion plan.

Founded in New Orleans in Louisiana in 1972, Popeyes currently operates 3,400 restaurants across 29 countries. The announcement builds on the brand's expansion in the European market and follows successful roll-outs in Spain in 2019 and Switzerland last year.

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Architect **3XN**

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Opens **2023**

Sydney Fish Market will be relocated from its existing location in Pyrmont to an adjacent wharf in Blackwattle Bay in Sydney Harbour within The Bays Precinct. Centered around the new market, this harborfront location will include a variety of restaurants, cafes, bars, and food stalls showcasing Australian produce to the world.

The brief was to rejuvenate Sydney Fish Market and create a world-class food and dining destination that would be dynamic, sustainable and sympathetic to the local area. The design team was also asked to preserve the authentic market feel and integrate the public realm and the contemporary market space.

As Kim Herforth Nielsen, founder and creative director at 3XN Architects, explained, “3XN’s response places people at the center, with an emphasis on place-making to foster a strong sense of community. The design excels in its ability to create value for all stakeholders; the fisherman, the restaurateurs as well as neighbors and tourists.” ■







Core values in the community

When the world shut down around her, Tracy Chang threw herself into supporting her community. She tells Tina Nielsen about helping to launch two non-profit projects and how the pandemic has informed the way she works

Tracy Chang knows she is swimming against the tide. As the hospitality world slowly begins to reopen after a year of Covid-enforced closures, the chef owner of Boston restaurant Pagu is keeping her dining room shut.

She has focused her efforts on patio dining, takeout services and non-profit work. She was recognized for the latter as a finalist in the 2020 Basque Culinary World Prize, awarded to chefs who make an impact beyond the kitchen.

The first time we spoke, in the fall of 2020, she explained how her own personal situation had helped to make her mind up. “If you are not living with someone that you can compromise or you

don’t know anyone who has gotten sick or died from this, then you are probably more willing to take risks,” she said. “I live with a 9-month-old as well as a 72-year-old and I do know people who have passed away, either from Covid or because they couldn’t get the care they needed during Covid. That definitely influences my decision-making.”

Seven months later, in April 2021, we speak again, six weeks after the arrival of Chang’s second child. A successful vaccine rollout means restrictions in Boston have eased – restaurants can now seat up to 100 diners indoors and up to 150 outdoors – but at Pagu outdoor dining remains the only option for on-premise customers.

“I have talked to fellow colleagues and friends who have had employees hospitalized and even employee deaths – that is not where I want to be,” she says. “Is it worth the extra revenue putting someone’s life at risk? I don’t think it is.”

She describes seeing restaurants fundraising when an employee has passed due to Covid-19. “They’ll say, ‘let’s help fundraise for this deceased employee’s family’. It is better than doing nothing, but *you* put people at risk and there is no accountability,” she says. “I can’t do that.”

For Chang her employees’ safety has been front and center throughout the pandemic. “These essential workers are not really getting a choice or a voice and they can’t work from home. The jobs they do carry all sorts of exposure,” she says.

From the first wave, her solution was to introduce a car-pooling system. As one of the people in the business with a license, Chang took on a fair bit of the driving responsibilities, picking up team members on the way to the restaurant. It’s been an eye-opening experience. “It gave me time to spend with them and talk about their day-to-day outside the restaurant, to understand their lives better,” she says.

Before she opened Pagu in 2017 she had imagined she’d be ideally placed as

a boss, with experience of living in other countries and the ability to speak several languages. “Yes, I thought I had a huge advantage going into this and to a certain extent I did, but I really did not know as much as I do now about these people I work with,” she says. “Now, I have heard their stories about their lives and how they got here; what it was like to first arrive here from El Salvador or Colombia, in a T-shirt riding across the border.”

The daughter of immigrants from Taiwan herself, Chang has an insight into the complexities of immigration, but is far from comparing her own family’s experience with those of her employees.

“I am sure my dad was bullied and I am sure he had a difficult time, but it is very different from running across the border, taking three buses from Mexico all the way up to Massachusetts,” she says. “He definitely had fewer moments of risking his life while my employees have risked theirs multiple times.”

The American dream

Her grandmother originally came to Texas from Taiwan before moving to Massachusetts. She was joined by Chang’s father when he was 12 and came with two of his brothers. “They didn’t come from wealth, but they understood the importance of education and the three sons she raised here all went on to get scholarships to Ivy League schools,” she says. “My dad went to Harvard and became a pediatrician. So, that’s like the American dream, right?”

Her mother, on the other hand came to the US, also from Taiwan and also through Texas, in her twenties to go to graduate school. “She had studied nutrition and went on to study computer science in graduate school.”

Chang grew up surrounded by family. Her grandmother made the move to the US in her sixties. She had been a midwife her entire life, but decided to try something new and opened a Japanese restaurant. “She loved cooking but she had never run a restaurant before. So, she >



decided she was going to ask everyone to pitch in their savings and time to help her open the restaurant. She opened a small restaurant followed by a larger one, which was the Japanese restaurant here in Cambridge, Massachusetts.”

Chang remembers scooping ice cream and playing hide and seek in her grandmother’s restaurant; she was too young to work there, but in her fifth-grade autobiography declared that one day she was going to take over the business.

Changing the rules

Getting to her first job in the kitchen would take a bit longer. Conscious that the opportunities open to her had not been available to her parents, she followed the seemingly more sensible educational path. “I was coached by my parents, my uncle and everyone around me to get an education. These were all privileges that my parents barely had and they wanted us to have that. So, yes, I went to college,” she explains.

Thinking she wanted to follow in her father’s footsteps and become a surgeon, she was pre-med to start, but was quickly jaded by the environment. She recalls a specific event when she worked as a receptionist in a doctor’s office.

When a teenager turned up at the doctor’s office in need of help, Chang let her in without a second thought, but she was quickly reprimanded for letting in a patient who didn’t have health insurance. “I was the first line when people came in for help and because she seemed like she really needed it I let her through, but I got yelled at because she didn’t have health insurance,” she recalls. “I remember thinking, ‘are you really turning her away? She might just need professional advice’.”

It was a moment that crystallized her thoughts on the future. “I realized I didn’t want to be in an industry where I can’t change the rules,” she says.

She dropped out and moved to finance instead. “I was good at maths and I liked case studies and spreadsheets,” she says. But it was 2009, the recession hit



Opposite page: A selection of pre-pandemic Pagu offerings; seafood paella, Biang Biang Noodles, Guchi's Midnight Ramen and craft cocktails

Left: Chang has now pivoted her restaurant to takeout

"I told them I like to cook, I think I am pretty good at it, that my grandmother had a restaurant, but I had no idea what it really takes. I just told them I'd like to give it a shot"

and finance turned out to be a less viable career. The time had come to turn her attention to restaurants.

"I was spending more time cooking than studying or trying to get a job in banking anyway," she says. She applied for a job as a host in a Boston restaurant O Ya, but explained that she was really interested in working in the kitchen and put together a portfolio of dishes. "I told them I like to cook, I think I am pretty good at it, that my grandmother had a restaurant, but I had no idea what it really takes," she recalls. "I just told them I'd like to give it a shot."

The restaurant asked her to come in and do some prep work. "From that point, I never asked myself what I wanted to do with my life," she says. "My friends who did go into banking asked themselves at every point what they wanted to do next or if they were doing what they really wanted. Of course, I had to make decisions too but I never asked myself, 'do I want to give banking a try?'"

Ultimately, she made decisions that took her beyond just being "a slave over the stove" as her mum had worried. She

traveled to Paris to study pastry, won a scholarship that took her to Spain to cook in the restaurant of renowned chef Martin Berasetegui. These experiences opened her eyes to a world she never knew even existed. "I didn't know that you could just show up on doorsteps in France and Spain and they would give you a room and work," she says.

Doing something about it

Her move to cooking gave her a sense of mandate that she did not feel in that doctor's office. "What I found to be different about the culinary world is if someone comes to me today to ask for help I feel more empowered to do something about it rather than saying 'these are the rules'. I find myself more often saying 'these are the rules so how can we do something about it?'"

Her desire to make a difference and make it count came into focus last year when the pandemic hit. She launched Off Their Plate, a project that saw restaurants delivering food to healthcare workers, in March 2020 with a group of similar minded friends and colleagues,

among them Irene Li from women-owned restaurant Mei Mei.

Today, Off Their Plate has pivoted away from the large healthcare organizations and works with community organizations; specifically, with women of color businesses.

"What was happening was that all the surplus was not really being audited, there were meals that were going uneaten and these healthcare workers were telling us, 'Thank you, it is really wonderful but I have a job and I have a salary, you should give food to people who need it,'" she says.

They concluded that the most vulnerable people were not actually healthcare workers, but the restaurant employees. "These are the immigrant employees who had no option but to work and be at risk of getting Covid. Of course, healthcare workers are at risk, but they're not the most vulnerable."

This process got the next project off the ground. Project Restore Us was started in May 2020 as a program to supply restaurant employees with the groceries to feed themselves and their families. "We decided that groceries were >

Right: Tracy Chang delivering boxes of groceries for the Project Restore Us program; helping restaurant employees feed themselves and their families

“We should not forget about the people who we depend on to operate our business and the communities they live in; those communities are our communities”



a better way to provide greater value than prepared meals. Ultimately we can stretch the dollar further with groceries.”

Chang and the team source nutritious goods and bulk dried goods that have a shelf life beyond the three or four days of a prepared meal and, working with community organizations, deliver boxes of groceries to those most in need.

“We are not going into a community saying ‘we think we know the problem, we’ll be the consultant, we’ll give you the solution’. That would be really tone-deaf and so these organizations have been around for decades, we get in touch with them and ask what their recipients need,” says Chang.

The staple box content includes a 25 pound bag of rice and a 25 pound bag of beans, depending on the demographics. “The box is tailored; a Vietnamese family might get noodles while a Latinx family get beans and they might get masa where Vietnamese get cabbage,” she explains.

A year on from launch, Project Restore Us has served hundreds of thousands of families, powered by an expanding network of volunteers and funded by donations and grants. “We are kind of surprised that something like this

didn’t exist beforehand, but I think it is a logistical challenge,” says Chang.

Serving the community

As a relatively new restaurant owner, this time of pandemic restrictions has been a major challenge, financially and practically. It will most likely also serve to inform how Chang runs things in the future after the pandemic passes.

Opening a restaurant is never easy; in hindsight she says she wishes she’d been brave enough to go more with her gut feelings. “You have to keep selling to keep the restaurant busy or you have to keep managing to make sure your expenses and your labor and everything is in line. And you’re balancing it all to make sure you’re not losing too much money.”

Covid, she says, in a weird way has been a blessing in disguise. “It has forced us to reinvent ourselves. I still have similar problems to manage. I guess I have to keep the restaurant busy to a certain extent in terms of sales and manage the expenses, but that part feels a little easier,” she says.

“It all feels much more authentic because the work we are doing is much more meaningful and I don’t need a

PR firm to sell that,” she concludes.

“Before, we served people who had the disposable income to come dine with us and now we serve people who need to eat. Everybody needs to eat, so it is a silly thing to say, but I think just because Covid is more under control or we know more about it, doesn’t mean that food insecurity ever goes away. It has really changed us – we have re-evaluated what our core values are in this community,” she says. “We should not forget about the people who we depend on to operate our business and the communities they live in; those communities are our communities”

Her hope is that she can set an example and show others how they too can make a difference. “If we behave this way other restaurants will see that it is possible to do those things for their employees and for the communities their employees live in,” she says. “It is not difficult, you just have to take the time to do it and if we don’t do it we are not going to have a restaurant industry, who is going to work in the restaurant industry? If you don’t take care of your community then there won’t be an industry workforce in the future.” ■

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REAL-WORLD VIEW

Arlene Spiegel FCSI's lived experience in hospitality has given her a tremendous insight into how to put customers first throughout her career, reports Amelia Levin

For Arlene Spiegel FCSI, it's all about the people. And the processes, but more about that in a bit.

Growing up in a restaurant family helped instill this sense of hospitality in its purest form. "My brother and I were routinely put to task peeling carrots and making deliveries," says Spiegel, whose father and uncles owned and operated restaurants in New York. "We were indoctrinated at a young age with the understanding that the customer comes first, even before holidays and weekends and special events."

Years later, Spiegel would put this understanding to practice as a restaurant owner herself. As a highly sought-after consultant, putting her clients first has always been the name of the game. But, there are other important people too; the 'Associates' in Arlene Spiegel & Associates refers to the many subject matter experts, including architects, developers, investors, attorneys, chefs, branding and marketing professionals, and even other consultants, who Spiegel regularly brings into each project.

Together, the best people produce the best results. "You can't be a genius all by yourself," she says. Even her company tagline states: "We have the tools, the people and the network to help clients every step of the journey – from the concept to the opening of a memorable and successful business."

Having a strong, "boots on the ground" operations background is just one of Spiegel's strengths that has given her an edge in the consulting world, and that has helped her build a 100% referral-based, extremely prolific business. "You need that real-world knowledge of what to do when your ice machine breaks down and the manager doesn't show up, or they put construction in front of your restaurant and guests can't get into the front door," she says.

Forging new dreams

Spiegel's foray into restaurant ownership began when her original dreams changed. "I always liked business and had dreams of being an attorney, but I got married and had children and life plans changed," she says. "I found myself needing to make money to put food on the table, and what I knew how to do quickly was run a restaurant and feed people."

She opened Garden of Eating in Queens, New York, with a menu that catered to the then burgeoning healthy eating movement. This time in the restaurant world, though, she would do things a little different than previous generations. Instead of literally counting cash in the register to see if there was enough left over for food and necessities, she took a more business-minded approach and developed systems, processes and procedures to better track sales, train and manage employees, and run a more structured operation.

"I realized that I enjoyed the consulting more than I did being in operations"

The approach worked; Spiegel was able to expand her concept with additional locations, and she even earned the Small Business Woman of the Year and The Pacesetters Award from the US Small Business Administration.

"The next thing you know, I was writing 'how to' columns for *Restaurant Business* magazine, and as a result of that exposure, started to get requests from other restaurant operators asking me to help them with their businesses," says Spiegel, who adds that this work allowed her to apply the protocols she had already tested by running her own operation to other restaurant operations. This was the beginning of her path in consulting.

"At some point, I realized that I enjoyed the consulting more than I did being in operations," she says. Today, as a highly sought-after industry consultant, Spiegel's client list spans the gamut. She works with all types of restaurant and hospitality businesses, including independent restaurants, corporate chains, major hotels, academic >

and cultural institutions, real estate developers, and casinos and other gaming and entertainment businesses – both nationally and internationally. In addition, she has developed cafes and restaurants for boutique and national groceries and specialty food stores.

Though she regularly receives many referrals, Spiegel focuses on answering what she calls the “5 C” questions to make sure the client is the right fit. The first ‘C’ is the Client – is this someone Spiegel wants to work with? The second is the Concept – does the idea have legs? The third is Commitment – is the client committed and has done the required homework? The fourth is Culture – what kind of business does the client want to grow? The fifth is Capital – does the client have the money to take on this project?

If all of those things fall into place, “I’ll take on the project regardless if it’s working on a hot dog stand or a master plan for a developer; every single project deserves the full spectrum of attention,” says Spiegel.

Developing concepts

Spiegel has worked with well-known respected businesses, including SeaWorld, Cherokee Nation Casinos, Ford Foundation, Anheuser-Busch, Hill Country Barbecue, Saratoga Raceway, R House in Miami, The Pennsy Food Hall, Brookfield Place, Havana Central, University of California-Davis, and Myron’s Delicatessen for The Isle of Capri Casino.

In collaboration with the New York Racing Association and its foodservice operations team, Spiegel developed the food and beverage concepts at the historic 1863 Clubhouse at Saratoga Raceway. The \$30m, three-story, 36,000 sq ft structure with a gleaming copper roof was built on the space next to the 91-year-old clubhouse that has also long been the home of the At the Rail Pavilion dining tent.

She also collaborated on the development and launch of The Pennsy,



a New York-centric food hall in a former Borders Book Store space in Penn Station, where no on-site cooking was allowed. Spiegel worked with star chefs, developed the operating standards for the management team and helped the landlord with lease agreements with the various vendors.

For the media giant Hearst Corporation, Spiegel designed a high-end food program in the new global headquarters. This included Cafe 57, executive dining and conference rooms, and the incorporation of menus from the various Hearst publications including *O*, *The Oprah Magazine* and *Good Housekeeping*.

For Brookfield Place, Spiegel worked with a team of consultants to develop the retail and restaurant master plan for Brookfield Properties. Working alongside

Arlene Spiegel considers it a privilege to help make her clients' dreams come true or solve their problems

architects, kitchen designers, engineers and marketing professionals, Spiegel developed an array of exciting restaurant and market concepts for tenants and neighborhood visitors. She also worked with internal retail specialists to maximize rent revenues.

For the newly built Cornell Tech, an academic tech center on Roosevelt Island, New York, Spiegel collaborated with engineers, architects, project consultants and sustainability consultants to develop a proprietary, net-zero carbon footprint food program. “For every piece of equipment I specified I was reminded how many trees would need to be planted to offset the energy drain,” she says. “Menu engineering

became the driving force on this project.”

Working with a major convenience store chain has also helped shape the way Spiegel consults her restaurant and hospitality clients. “The way [convenience stores] evaluate space gave me such an eye-opener,” she says. “Every square inch needs to perform. You must look at your space and see if it sells something or says something about your brand. If you’re not looking at vertical merchandising and traffic flow and wayfinding and site lines and making sure the customer sees all the opportunities to engage with your brand, then you’re missing out. Most consultants don’t look at space in that way, but at the end of the day, you must make a sale or create a memory.”

Fostering culture

At one point, Spiegel served as director of the global food and beverage practice at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), which helped her add a more global perspective to her consulting toolbox. “I learned how to work with banks, investors, M&A specialists and provide more guidance to my clients to help them scale their businesses,” she says.

One of Spiegel’s favorite sectors in which to work is product development. Some of the products Spiegel has developed include Chloe’s Fruit, Something Good to Eat signature soups, Alfredo’s Original Pasta Sauce and Hu Kitchen chocolates.

“I try to identify a signature sauce, dip, salad dressing, spice rub or marinade that a restaurant is known for and bring it to market,” she says.

“With every project I take on, I try to see what I can learn from it,” she says. “I am in a constant state of curiosity and want to share things I have learned with my clients.”

While it’s not listed on any scope of work, Spiegel says she is committed to improving the working environment and to foster a wholesome culture in every organization with which she works. “One

of the greatest joys I get out of working on projects, and which is very much a throwback to when I operated my own restaurant, is seeing employees grow in an organization,” she says. “I have seen one employee start out as a dishwasher and now he owns 10 restaurants in New Jersey. When I go back to visit a client and see a server who is now regional developer for the chain, I feel like I have made a positive difference because I have helped make someone’s life better.”

Last year, when the pandemic hit, Spiegel – like her clients – had to pivot,

“The clients didn’t have to figure it out by themselves, I would be their tour guide and trusted friend to get them through this time”

and develop new ways to adapt to sudden change. She developed a program called ‘Come Back Strong’ for her restaurant, entertainment, catering, and hospitality clients who were deeply impacted by canceled events and closed-down dining rooms. The program focused on tackling key initiatives: including menu engineering, takeout and delivery programs, safety and sanitation protocols, marketing, social media strategies, exploring new businesses opportunities, and optimizing cash-flow and labor productivity.

“Above all, the clients realized they didn’t have to figure it out all by themselves and I would be their tour guide and trusted friend to get them through this time,” she says. “[The

program] was very successful, and I still receive thanks from clients who survived this past year.”

Spiegel also helped her restaurant and catering clients connect with local hospitals, schools, police and fire stations and other intuitions to feed the public while keeping employees engaged. “[The hospitality industry] demonstrated that it’s possible to have something bad happen and turn it into something good. It was very inspiring to see,” she says.

Value in education

Personally, for Spiegel, the pandemic afforded her more time to take advantage of continuing education, including educational opportunities offered by FCSI that helped her earn her Continuing Education Units (CEU) credits. “It’s been so great to hear about what’s going on in different segments of the industry through webinars and podcasts and virtual visits to showrooms and food suppliers,” she says. In the 20 plus years as a member of FCSI, they were never more valuable than 2020.

Spiegel remains proud of her work mentoring women. “When a group of women pioneers got together many years ago, we founded the first chapter of The Women in Foodservice,” she says. “We had no roadmap academically or professionally on how to create our own businesses or launch products. We knew we would be successful as a group when our goal was to not have to have a separate women’s association anymore because that would mean equal opportunity had been achieved.”

Spiegel admits that she could “go on for hours” in talking about the restaurant industry and its future. “I’m very high on the hospitality industry; I relish and am excited by it,” she says. “The fact that people have given me the privilege and honor of allowing me to help make their dreams come true or solve their problems, is the most meaningful work you can ask for, and I am so grateful to be a part of it.” ■



Winning ways

To become an industry leader, “every Champion employee must know their product and how it functions to best serve our customers,” **Will Means**, president of Champion Industries, tells Michael Jones

When christening a company “Champion” you’d better have the products and an unbeaten reputation with your customers to back up such a winning moniker. Thankfully, with more than 130 years of hard-fought experience in commercial dishwashing, Champion Industries has more than earned its place on the podium.

The dishwashing machine specialist has been headquartered in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, US, since 1962, but began life in Hoboken, New Jersey, when it was founded in 1890 under its

original name, Thompson & Low. It became nationally famous due to its game-changing invention of the vortex downwash dish machine – the first machine able to wash, rinse and dry 6,000 pieces per hour, noiselessly. In 1916, new part-owner Pat Davis, Sr. changed its name to Hamilton-Low.

The company continued to leave its mark on history during the last century. Hamilton-Low installed the first Champion-branded dishwasher on an ocean liner sailing between Europe and North America – earning the brand’s durable equipment its “Built Like a Battleship” tagline.

Champion’s first factory site in New

York City later became occupied by the stately Art Deco skyscraper, the Chrysler Building, while a few blocks away the company had equipment installed in the Waldorf Astoria, one of the world’s most prestigious and best-known hotels.

But more recent history had a seismic impact on the company, changing its trajectory from a manufacturer of quality commercial warewashers for hospitals, restaurants and hotels into an internationally regarded player. Champion became part of the Ali Group in 1980 when its founder Luciano Berti bought the company from American Sterilizer (AMSCO). The acquisition – Ali Group’s first internationally – saw heavy investment in Champion’s infrastructure and a marked expansion of its product line (see box, page 53).

Today, Champion has a strong presence in the US, Canada, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia through its wide portfolio of undercounters, doors, racks, flights, conveyor systems, accumulators, disposal, and tray-drying warewashing equipment. Its ENERGY STAR®-qualified dish

machines continue to boast pioneering innovation for built-in hot water boosters, water and energy-saving technology, completely integrated conveying, washing and waste-handling systems, and powered sink systems.

Growing gains

Growth continues to be on a sharp uptick for Champion. “What got us growing to the point where we were literally doubling the business every four years was that we decided we must differentiate ourselves from the rest of the industry,” says Will Means, president of Champion Industries. “We noticed, 8 to 10 years ago, a lot of manufacturers believed they could force customers into their product offerings. The industry was focused on product simplification; companies were eliminating products from their offering to drive profits. We said, ‘No, that’s exactly the opposite of what we want to do’ and we rebranded ourselves as the dishroom solution specialists,” he says.

“Our desire was to offer products that allowed our consultants the opportunity to showcase their design ability with many options at their disposal. We ensured our plant was equipped to manufacture these customizations quickly and meet customer demand. This has resulted in Champion achieving the unique place in the market that we desired. We embraced our new business model and with it came instant ideas for new product development. Often through a conversation with an operator or consultant we would hear: ‘Hey, can we have this feature? It would really help our business.’ We almost always say yes. Some of the ideas were fantastic and we internally discuss if this is something we should offer to the broader market. Because of this, we are bringing

more innovation to the industry at an unprecedented pace,” says Means.

Champion continues to launch new products based on its willingness to provide solutions born out of “listening to the problem” and then coming up with a solution, says Means. “That’s been our DNA for the last 10 years. We’re blessed to have had this wonderful success.” That success is attributable, says Means, to the philosophy that Luciano Berti, and in turn his son, Ali Group chairman and chief executive officer Filippo Berti, have imparted to not just Champion, but to all the companies in the Group. “We are allowed as a brand to make decisions that are best for our customers. We don’t have a lengthy corporate approval process; we’re not handcuffed to a five-year plan. I can’t tell you how many times in the last number of years we’ve laid out the new product development list for the year, but then by constantly listening to the customer, we get a great new idea mid-stream and pivot to introduce another product/feature instead. While this can be stressful, we are able to accomplish this by our investment in technology and having a very talented team.”

That decentralized, entrepreneurial/intrapreneurial mindset is pivotal for all Ali Group businesses, says Means. The Ali Group’s management style is

to remove the traditional layers of red tape, meaning innovation can be driven even quicker. “We don’t have multiple layers. Access to myself or other leaders at the company is there. We’re very transparent, open and reachable.”

Means makes it his business to spend considerable time talking



Left: Champion's 44-PRO VHR high temperature dishwasher. Above right: Will Means, president, Champion Industries



“The industry was doing a lot of commoditization; companies were eliminating products. We said, ‘No, that’s exactly the opposite of what we want to do’. We rebranded ourselves as the solution specialists”

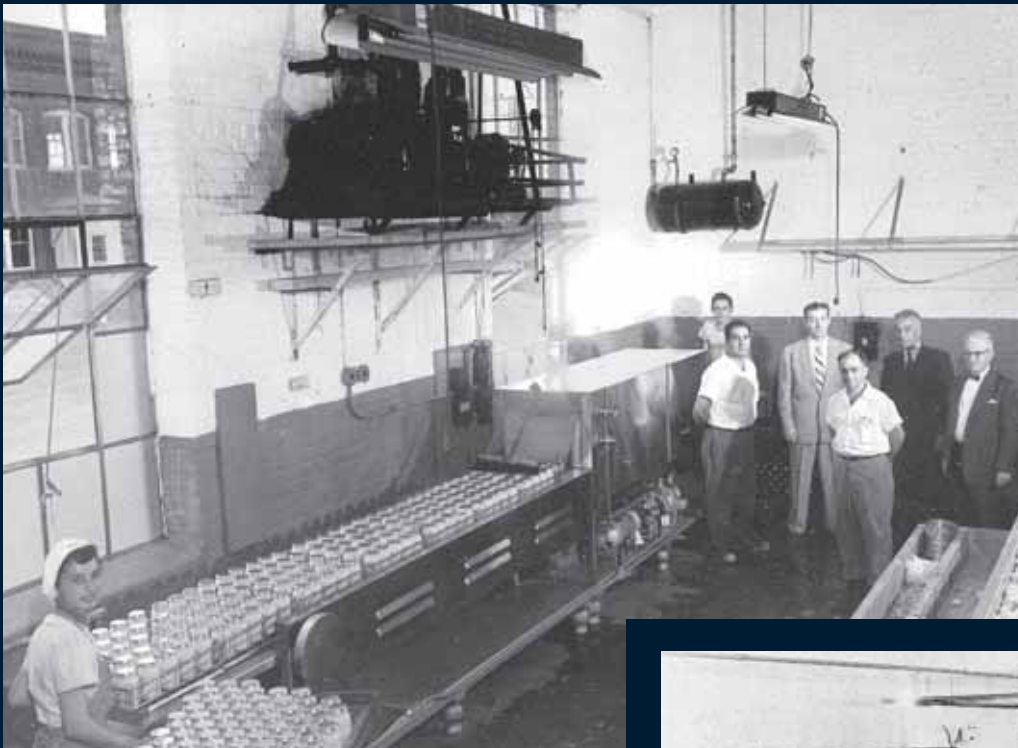
to customers daily. “Information gets to us very quickly and we’re allowed to make very quick decisions. It comes down to the fact that people at Champion are great. They really understand our business. Everybody, whether it’s the guys on the floor, operation managers or customer service, really knows our product and how it functions in the field.”

That approach was evident to Means as soon as he joined the company in 2007 and met the then executive vice president of Champion, Rob August (now at Ali Group North America). “He told me: ‘You have to become a warewash expert’. I took that to heart and so that’s what I tell everyone else who comes to Champion – if you want to work here, you have to be an expert on the product,” says Means.

Eyes on the prize

The Covid-19 pandemic has, as with every business, brought on “all kinds of challenges” for Champion, according to Means. “No one really anticipated anything like this happening, but we quickly made an assessment of where the industry was going,” he says.

Means was also able to draw on



With a rich history stretching back to 1890, Champion Industries has experienced significant change – and a number of different HQs – over the years. It has been part of the Ali Group since 1980

his experience from first joining the company at the outset of the global financial crisis in 2007. “I was the newest guy they’d taken on – the lowest on the totem pole. I remember the message from Mr. [Luciano] Berti, because he was still very involved in Champion at the time: ‘We will take care of the people.’ If they made reductions, I would have been the easiest one to let go, and thankfully, I am here today. Mr. Berti’s steady guidance kept our business looking toward the future for opportunities. Due to this, Champion recovered quickly from the financial crisis and gained market share.”

Means is proud to say Champion has maintained its focus during the pandemic. “Everyone here rose to meet the challenges we faced,” he says. Once employee safety was secured and the longer-term effects from the pandemic were clearer, the Champion team spent time on what they could control, which was improvement of its product line and operations. The enforced lockdown was an ideal time to reevaluate its portfolio. “We thought, if there’s ever been a time for uninterrupted new product development, it’s now. Let’s do it. So, we’re pleased to say we’re launching five new products in the course of an eight-month window. We’ve never been able to get that many significant product improvements done in that timeframe. Not just small features, but significant changes to the industry.” Those significant changes center around providing “a better, safer experience for everyone,” says Means. “We doubled down in the pandemic and invested in new product development. We believe it’s going to get Champion recovering much faster than the market as a whole.”

Flexible and adaptable for potential

One such investment was to increase connectivity in Champion’s machines, says Means. “We’ve launched ‘Direct Link,’ our new connectivity platform, which will remotely monitor the dishwashers’ performance and

temperatures. This was in an effort to increase food safety and reduce downtime. We’re capturing temperatures when it matters: when they’re washing dishes and when the final rinse is on – not when the machine is idling, eliminating a lot of erroneous data. Foodservice operators can access this information at any time through our cloud. We can even remotely monitor the machines’ functionality, diagnosing potential service from our headquarters. The service potential from this innovation is huge. We expect to save our customers thousands in service expense over the life of these machines.”

Otherwise, the Champion way is to simply continue providing exceptional products, bolstered by outstanding after sales, says Means. “We’re a specified, engineered product. That remains our core. Our growth has come from making sure we spend a great deal of time doing a good job educating our customers. We’ve spent countless hours doing training, presenting on the innovations we have come up with, but then showing the common sense behind them.”

Beyond groundbreaking innovation leaps – such as the launch of its ventless 44-inch machine in 2017 – Champion has also reached out into additional markets to maintain growth. “We look deep into what those segments really need and define the product accordingly,” says Means, citing a recent example of a large, quick-service chain that approached Champion to provide a machine that “guaranteed sanitization.” The R&D team quickly developed “revolutionary software that would only allow the machine to run if the temperatures were met and the proper concentration of detergent was dosed. We then set up an assembly line and adjusted the operation to meet customer demands. When an opportunity comes around, we’re able to really capitalize on it. That’s what I love about this business – there’s so much runway, and so much potential for us to continue to do great things.” ■

LUCIANO BERTI'S INFLUENCE ON CHAMPION

Luciano Berti (1931-2021) was more than the founder of the Ali Group; he was its heart and soul. After making an investment in a small warewashing company in Milan, Italy, in the early 1960s, he founded ALI Comenda – the first step toward making the Ali Group the international foodservice force it is today, with approximately 10,000 employees in 30 countries, encompassing 80 of the most recognizable brands in the world.

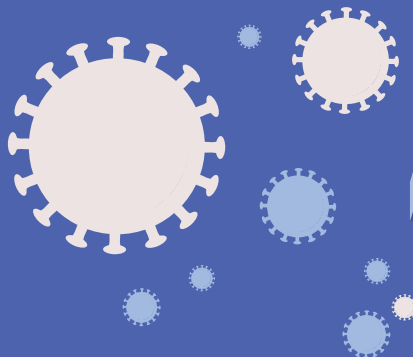
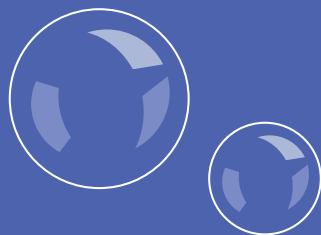
Berti had a particularly close relationship with Champion Industries. In 1980, it was the first North American acquisition made by the Ali Group. “He had a deep understanding and a passion for warewashing,” says Champion’s president Will Means. “I will always fondly remember Mr. Berti at the trade shows bringing customers to our booth, taking them through our products. It was so impactful that the CEO of a multibillion dollar foodservice equipment company would show a client how an undercounter dishwasher would be perfect for their restaurant. But that was Mr. Berti. His charisma and charm was infectious and drove us to be our best. Champion would not be where it is today without Mr. Berti and he will be missed.”



HOSPITALITY IN MIND

After a year of uncertainty and anxiety, the Covid-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on more than just our physical health. Amy Snelling considers how it has impacted mental health in hospitality, and what support is needed as the industry rebuilds





A

s countries around the world entered what would become the first of multiple lockdowns in early 2020, co-owner of high-end New York restaurant King, Annie Shi, knew as they closed for an indefinite amount of time in March that the next few months would be challenging. What she couldn't know was how long it would last and how much foodservice would change.

Set against the backdrop of alarming headlines dominated by Covid-19, as restrictions eased, Shi and her partners reopened with a takeout window in June before opening for outdoor dining in July. "We had to really think through what dining at King looked like in the middle of a pandemic," she explains. "We were all working so much, wearing masks and face shields, trying to be eloquent about food and drink. It's a tough act... We spoke often about whether our staff felt safe enough and made adjustments wherever we could, we were doing risk calculations every day." On top of this, the team was dealing with pushback from guests who resented new dining rules. "That's when my mental health felt the most battered. I had this pit of dread going into work," she says.

Collective Covid-19 trauma

Shi's story mirrors that of many operators in hospitality: navigating financial stresses, the stop-start uncertainty of lockdowns, additional costs associated with meeting Covid-19 regulations and concerns over staff safety and wellbeing.

Restaurant closures have left much of the workforce out of work entirely. By the end of 2020, the World Economic Forum reported hospitality and leisure industries had been "by far the worst affected", totalling 3.4 million job losses in the US. Similarly, the UK's Office for National Statistics reported hospitality made up one-third of national job losses.

According to UK-based community and education platform Code Hospitality's "Happiness in Hospitality" survey, 72% of respondents said their mental health had suffered through the pandemic. This statistic can be linked to many factors including job insecurity, redundancy and loneliness. In another mental health survey from UK charity Hospitality Action, 76% of respondents said new Covid-19 restrictions – social distancing, sanitation measures, fear of infection, job loss and pressures of policing guests – were a primary cause of stress.

The situation is what Tim Etherington-Judge, founder of global industry wellness platform Healthy Hospo, calls a "toxic soup" in an industry already dealing with "sky-

"Connection is a human need and they've removed that for many people"

high mental health problems" triggered by everything from substance, verbal and sexual abuse to unhealthy work-life balance.

Hospitality workers were already "extremely vulnerable", he explains, working in "an industry built on the back of a poorly paid workforce, with owners and operators earning tiny margins... There's no rainy-day fund." These issues have been compounded by "lockdowns pushing people to the edge of mental health breakdowns or beyond." Alongside huge financial strains that lockdowns put on businesses, he adds: "Connection is a fundamental human need and they've removed that for many people." While, for people in work, there's huge pressure "to know and enforce safety protocols."



Community and support

In response to additional Covid-19 challenges, Healthy Hospo accelerated the launch of its training app, enabling them to support people wherever they are in the world, 24/7. The platform offers self-care resources specifically targeting issues the hospitality industry faces.

Healthy Hospo isn't alone in ramping up its support services. Alongside an uptake in employee assistance programs and chains such as Starbucks upgrading mental health benefits to offer US employees free therapy sessions, there have been concentrated efforts in building routine and regular check-ins to help out-of-work or overburdened hospitality workers feel connected and valued.

In the UK, restaurants remained closed from December to May except for

shut down," she says. Even as they found an alternative route to market, selling directly to consumers, there were stresses adapting to Covid-19 regulations as "the situation was constantly changing."

Offering a constant in an ever-shifting landscape, the wholesale team's HR manager Maddy Ruzzene started sending weekly email updates and resources. Linton continues: "The news was [too much] for some people, but they still needed information, so Maddy would send out staff updates including a summary of what was going on and [self-care] tips. No matter what was happening, you knew Maddy was going to say something on Friday."

Similarly, in the tapas group, regular check-ins were prioritized. However, as food operations director Kelly Richardson emphasizes, long-term support is essential. "Our teams are motivated to put this behind us [but] the true impact on them mentally and financially may not show for months. It's up to us to ensure their wellbeing." >

"The true impact on our teams, mentally and financially, may not show for months. It's up to us to ensure their wellbeing"

delivery, takeaway, and from April outdoor dining. As well as prioritizing regular catch ups with his team, London-based chef and restaurateur Ben Tish has seen the wider community rally around its struggling members. Alongside mental health platforms like Hospitality Action coming out in full force with resources, grants and more, Tish applauds great initiatives launched by Code Hospitality. "They've been very supportive and created free things for people in hospitality to do, trying to keep them interested and included."

Owner of London-based Spanish food wholesaler and tapas restaurant Brindisa Monika Linton and her teams have navigated the pandemic from both foodservice and wholesaler sides. "Anyone who touched the hospitality trade was

Mental health platforms have created things for hospitality workers to do to keep them interested and included



TIM ETHERINGTON-JUDGE
Founder, Healthy Hospo



MONIKA LINTON
Owner, Brindisa



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Safety and respect

As well as the breakthrough moment in spring when restaurant workers became eligible for vaccines in New York, a positive Shi has seen is a “long-overdue reevaluation of the relationship between guest and server.” New York City had built up a culture around a “stifling and incorrect belief that the guest is always right, sometimes resulting in bullying behavior... People were

“There was a lot of fear among restaurateurs that if you ask guests to put on masks, they wouldn’t dine with you”

already fed up with it and then the stakes became so high during Covid.”

In the early days, “there was a lot of fear among restaurateurs that if you ask guests to put on masks, they wouldn’t dine with you.” However, says Shi, “the rules of the game had changed” and safety emphasized the need for behavioral change. Although it was tough at times to find their voice, she adds, “there should be dignity in the job of serving and dignity really comes from mutual respect.”

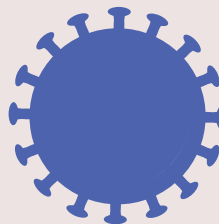
Confidence to take opportunities

“From a business perspective, the industry is coming out of the pandemic, with confidence building every week. Operators are looking at the opportunities to open up, and foodservice equipment sales are growing again,” says Keith Warren, chief executive of Foodservice Equipment Association (FEA). “However, it’s still a very tough market. Manufacturers are working back up from a drop of 90% in sales last May. Most are trading at between 50%-65% of pre Covid 19 levels. There are also major supply chain problems, caused by a combination of delays at borders, raw material and components shortages, and price increases.”

As the industry emerges from the pandemic and a period of genuine challenge, what is the appetite for investment in new equipment? >



ANNIE SHI
Co-owner, King, New York



FOODSERVICE 2021: REBUILDING CONFIDENCE



BUSINESS CONFIDENCE IN THE COMMERCIAL KITCHEN EQUIPMENT SECTOR

Katia da Ros, vice president, Irinox

The psychological toll of Covid-19 on hospitality has rippled through the wider ecosystem. In the commercial kitchen equipment sector, vice president of Italian blast chiller and shock freezer manufacturer Irinox, Katia da Ros, says: "Covid-19 has taken us to a point we've never been before." Yet, despite the shake-up, looking at business confidence, da Ros is hopeful.

While shutdowns mean operators are less inclined or unable to invest in equipment in the short-term, ultimately, she believes, emerging trends will increase need for technology in kitchens. One example is the rise in takeout. "When you prepare food for takeout, you must treat it in a special way using refrigeration, especially blast chilling, to keep it properly. This gives us an opportunity to show our technology can help businesses become flexible," she says. "We've seen a big impact in companies producing food to be eaten out – supermarkets, delis, etc. Generally speaking, they've increased business and are looking at [equipment] to speed up operations."

Da Ros' belief is reflected in global predictions from Allied Market Research, reported in *Catering Insights*, that suggest while Covid-19 has disrupted commercial kitchen equipment market growth, demand for innovative equipment will grow as the foodservice industry develops and operators increasingly seek "multi-functional, space- and time-saving equipment."

"The market is a mixed bag at the moment: some operators are spending on new equipment, some are repurposing from closed sites, and some are using second-hand. We are seeing signs of significant spending in the channels that have done well, and which are anticipated to do well," says Warren.

"All of which means suppliers are developing new strategies. For example, many are selling different products into the market and are looking for new channels, such as the public sector. Quite a few are also investigating markets outside of foodservice.

Because different dealers and consultants work in different sectors of the market, manufacturers who are

"We are on the way back – every recession causes casualties, but the foodservice industry will emerge strongly"

looking at new revenue streams are developing new relationships. Hopefully these new partnerships will lead to more business growth."

On the way ahead, Warren says new markets and opportunities will arise; they always do after a period of crisis. "We need to stay positive. We are on the way back – every recession causes casualties, but the foodservice industry will emerge strongly, with new offerings for consumers and new revenue streams. In the 1980s it was QSR, in the 1990s it was pubs, more recently it was casual dining that emerged as the new sector champions. There will be new innovations and concepts – we need to be aware of the opportunities when they arise."



BETTINA VON MASSENBACH FCSI
Oyster Hospitality Management



Rebuilding and rebalancing

As the industry picks up the pieces, Bettina von Massenbach FCSI of Germany-based foodservice consultancy Oyster Hospitality Management says operators who have supported staff will be in a stronger position moving forward. “Coronavirus has shown us our blind spots and one of them, for quite a few operators in the market, has been our treatment of our people,” says von Massenbach, who also stresses that building a supportive corporate culture is a huge factor in keeping people in the industry and ensuring they feel comfortable and willing to work. “If you’re not in contact with your people, you don’t know where they stand, their issues. If you don’t have that bond, why should they stay with you? Without that connection, we don’t have teams, without which we can’t do our jobs.”

As an industry that prides itself on creating “moments of happiness,” which many operators and staff haven’t been able to do for months, von Massenbach says we must rebuild self-esteem and “make our people aware of their skills.” In a recent McKinsey report on five soft skills essential for business up to 2030, from problem solving to collaboration she explains: “They’re all built up in hospitality on a daily basis, which is just amazing.”

Another blind spot? Money. To combat systemic financial stresses,

“Operators need to have the confidence to put up prices so they can pay fair wages. They need to overcome the fear people won’t pay,” she concludes.



KEN SCHWARTZ FCSI
President, SSA

“Operators need to put up prices so they can pay fair wages. They need to overcome the fear people won’t pay”

SSA president Ken Schwartz FCSI based in Florida, advocates readdressing pricing and profit to tackle long-running financial issues exacerbated by Covid-19. “A lot of restaurants operate on very low or no profit margins,” he explains. Considering everything from “the capitalization required to buy new inventory” to additional costs of sanitation supplies, “It’s a big uphill climb for restaurateurs to figure out financially what it’s going to take to reopen. And you can’t do it on a shoestring.

“At some point, profit in the foodservice industry became a bad word... But you’ve got to run at a profit so you can reinvest and reinvent yourself,” says Schwartz. Even small things make a difference. “Pare down your menu, you’re going to be short-staffed, you’re not going to have as many guests. Consider cutting the protein on your plate by 15-20% and increase the

price 5-10%. Nobody is really going to notice, but those incremental percentages can be the difference between profit and losing money.”

If there’s one thing the pandemic has proved, it’s the importance of hospitality. “Everybody is desperate to get back to the social situations hospitality provides,” says Healthy Hospo’s Etherington-Judge. There’s an opportunity to rebuild a more sustainable and fairer industry for everyone, but “it’s going to take a lot of compassion from all sides; from diners, from operators and from staff. We all need to show what makes us great as humans and work towards a collective good.” ■



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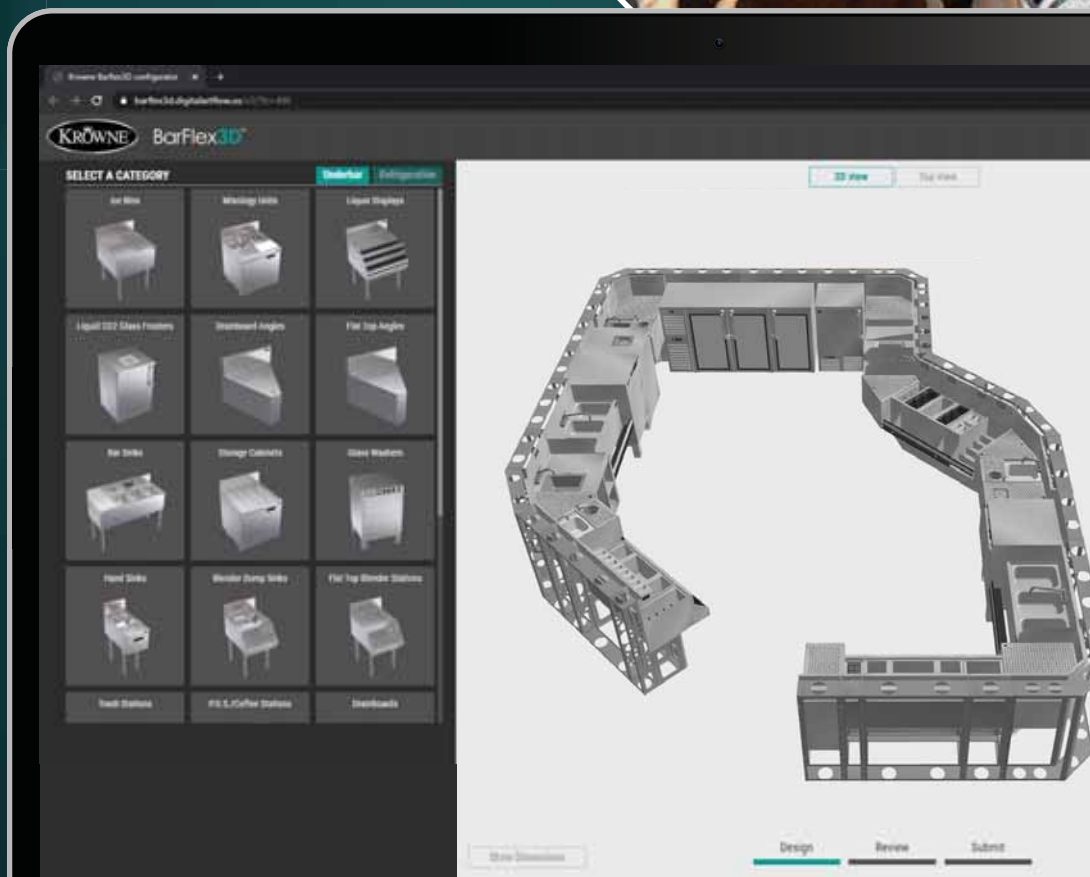
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Ask any Filipino and they would surely recognize the wide-eyed cheery bee dressed in an orange tuxedo, a black bow tie, a chef's toque, with yellow shoes. It is Jollibee. This lovable bee has become a friend and an icon of Filipino culture. So embedded in the culture in fact that having a party in Jollibee is a mandatory part of Filipino childhood. Embracing the powerful TV ad campaign in the 1990s, "I love you, Sabado," the jingle has brainwashed Filipinos to make a visit to this fast-food outlet a staple in the Filipino family's weekend activities.

While Jollibee may seem like such an integral part of Filipino culture today, it only began in 1975. The Tan family moved from Southeast China and relocated to the Philippines. Their son Tony Tan Caktiong graduated with a degree in chemical engineering in Manila. A visit to an ice cream factory inspired the 22-year-old Tan to use the family's savings of P350,000 (just

Busy bees

Since its launch in Manila in the 1970s, Jollibee has multiplied internationally. Maida Pineda tracks the origins and growth of a fast-food success story

over \$7,200 today) to open two Magnolia Ice Cream franchise stores in Metro Manila. To augment their income from selling ice cream, the enterprising Tan Caktiong added hot savory dishes to the menu. As the savory items became more popular, he ended his ice cream franchise in 1978 and focused on selling them. This brought about the genesis of the Yum Burger, its flagship product. The restaurant was originally called Jolibe, until it was later tweaked to Jollibee.

Making a mascot

Building on the flagship product Yum Burger, a year later the Jolly Spaghetti was introduced, a sweet spaghetti with meat sauce and hotdog, just the way Filipino children like their pasta. It was in the 1980s that the Jollibee story took off, thanks to the introduction of two central elements to the business: Chicken Joy and the Jollibee mascot. Chicken Joy is crispy fried chicken served with gravy and steamed rice and it has become Jollibee's best product, now more popular than the Yum Burger >

and surpassing fried chicken joints in the Philippines with the quantity they sell.

The reason for using a bee mascot to sell burgers, fried chicken, and spaghetti to Filipinos is not an obvious one. Ernesto Tanmantiong, Jollibee's CEO and president, and younger brother of Tony Tan Caktiong revealed why. "We built the organization with the belief that people are the best asset," he says. "That's where the Jollibee name came from. When we were starting the business, we said the organization should represent a group of people who work together, are hardworking, and can produce something productive. At that time, we thought of the bee to symbolize what we wanted in the organization."

Tanmantiong says it was his big brother Tony who came up with the mascot. "At that time, he loved going to Disneyland. He saw Mickey Mouse and he said he's going to create a jolly bee, as lovable as the Disney characters. The reason we came up with Jollibee is that when people are hardworking, but not happy it's not worth it. He combined the word jolly and bee and that's where the Jollibee mascot came about. And we also ensure, that the entire organization lives up to that name. We make sure our people, our leaders' personal values are aligned with our corporate values, aligned with our shared values, aligned with our vision and mission."

Thanks to the founder's clear vision, the



Above: the Jollibee tropical burger. Left: The famous mascot. Below left: a bucket of fried chicken

Jollibee mascot is more recognizable than any Disney mascot for most Filipinos. The mere sight of the tuxedo-clad bee triggers a Pavlovian response among Filipinos to crave Chicken Joy, Jolly Spaghetti, Yumburger, Jolly Hotdog, Pancit Palabok, and the Peach Mango pie.

Going for growth

The hardworking bee logo could not be more apt. The company has grown immensely from its humble beginnings. In 1986, it opened its first international outlet in Taiwan. In 1987, it was ranked in the top 100 corporations in the Philippines. In 1991, it opened its 100th store. In 2017, it opened its 1,000th store.

In a 2016 interview with *Foodservice Consultant*, Jollibee revealed its goal to be one of the top five world's largest restaurant companies by 2020. While the conditions have not been favorable in the past year, they have not lost sight of this big goal.

"Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our vision has not changed," Tanmantiong says. "We remain true to our vision of becoming among the top five foodservice companies in the world; and to our mission of serving great-tasting food and bringing the joy of eating to everyone. We are confident in the future of the business

"We remain true to our vision of becoming among the top five foodservice companies in the world; and to our mission of serving great-tasting food"



and we are investing P12.2bn in capital expenditures (CapEx) for expansion in 2021 – the highest amount in our history. And the Jollibee Group remains one of the fastest-growing restaurant companies worldwide. With the business transformation program we’ve implemented, the Jollibee Group will emerge as a stronger organization.”

Program for a pandemic

Like most restaurants around the world, Jollibee was hit hard by the pandemic. Tanmantiong reports: “In 2020, the Jollibee Group closed 8% of its store network globally. This was a difficult decision, but ultimately, this was the right thing to do for the business and the organization’s sustained long-term growth.”

Jollibee wasted no time in pivoting. “We quickly made adjustments in response to the pandemic, with the biggest being improving off-premise channels of delivery, investing in digital technology, accelerating the growth of our international business, and embarking on a business transformation program,” Tanmantiong says. “This program involved the rationalization of non-performing stores, supply chain facilities, and management and support group structure reducing our costs and accelerating our profit recovery. Using

“In 2020, the Jollibee Group closed 8% of its store network globally. This was a difficult decision, but ultimately, this was the right thing to do”

the P7bn helped us make a profit of P2bn by Q4 of 2020. Moreover, a total of P2.6bn in annual savings is now being realized with full impact in 2021 and the years ahead.”

Like tireless worker bees, Jollibee continued to create milestones even during the pandemic. Tanmantiong proudly states: “Amid the pandemic, we opened 338 stores. And more new stores were opened abroad than in the Philippines – a first in Jollibee Group history.”

This was a change from the previous years. Tanmantiong points out: “In 2017-2019, we were opening 450-500 stores worldwide, 250-300 of which were in the Philippines. We will resume aggressive store expansion in the Philippines around 2023.”

Out in the world

The growth of Jollibee abroad in 2020 is in line with the company’s clear vision to achieve 50% Philippines and 50% international split in terms of revenue.

Tanmantiong explains: “The international business will drive the Jollibee Group’s sales and profit growth – led by expansion in North America with Smashburger and Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf (CBTL); China; and Vietnam. This will lead us closer to our 50/50 share of business target ratio between Philippines and international markets. In 2020, the international business comprised 42% of our total sales. We expect to achieve the

>



Left: a designated hygiene ambassador. Top: Jollibee arrives in Rome, Italy

OPERATOR PROFILE

50/50 split in the next three to four years.”

2021 is shaping up to be a brighter year for Jollibee, with a continued expansion outside the Philippines. “This year we plan to open about 450 stores, 80 of which will be in the Philippines and the rest abroad,” Tanmantiong says. “We are continuing our expansion activities in other markets. We are opening new stores in the US, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Europe.”

While Jollibee is a Filipino fast-food chain, it is no longer just for Filipinos. As its Filipino CEO happily reports: “The reception, especially for our flagship brand, Jollibee, has been very positive. In the UK, for instance, 70% of Jollibee customers in our newest stores are locals and we see the same trend in Singapore and Hong Kong.”

A main ingredient in Jollibee Foods Corporation’s (JFC) plans for growth and expansion involves acquiring big brands such as Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf (CBTL) and Smashburger.

“Acquisitions have always been part of our growth strategy,” Tanmantiong says. “We remain open to opportunities, but very selective and stringent with acquisitions. We aim to be the leading market developer of international brands for the Philippines. But acquisitions are not limited to the Philippines. We intend to replicate the success in the Philippines in international markets, especially in China and North America – wherein the aim is to grow local



Left: Jollibee Foundation's FoodAID program helps people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic

“We remain open to opportunities, but very selective and stringent with acquisitions”

brands and make them successful at a local and international level.”

Transformation success

The acquisition is merely the beginning. Tanmantiong explains how these companies are transformed. “The Jollibee Group has a track record of successfully turning around acquisitions into stronger, more profitable, and faster-growing businesses,” he says. “For CBTL, the stores have always been profitable, the main issue is its significant overhead expenses. To address this, we have reduced the size of the organization in the US and moved some support functions to our North America Shared Services unit and Manila, and migrated part of the supply chain to Vietnam. Meanwhile, Smashburger is an excellent brand with very good products that continue to perform well.

“The Jollibee Group’s strategy of opening prime locations (its latest London restaurant is in prime Leicester Square), enhancing product taste, providing better value for money, improving quality management, and building the leadership team has resulted in Smashburger’s



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company-owned stores delivering double-digit same store sales growth for most of 2020. We expect both CBTL and Smashburger to be profitable in 2021.”

JFC has also been successful in bringing foreign franchised brands such as Burger King, Panda Express, Pho24 and Yoshinoya to the Philippines. Recognizing the expansion of the upper middle class in the country, JFC sees the potential for broader acceptance of these brands. Tanmantiong elaborates on this strategy: “The goal of these foreign franchised brands is to contribute to the sustainable growth of the domestic business by successfully building the brands and growing each brand to be the leader in its market segment.”

Silver linings

Jollibee thrives in difficulty. In 1981, it was unfazed by the arrival of McDonald’s in the Philippines. It continued to dominate the Philippine QSR market despite its American competitor. As the world struggles with the challenges of this pandemic,

“The pandemic reminded us that the unthinkable can happen”



Above: Jollibee was unfazed by McDonald’s arrival in the Philippines in 1981. Top: Coffee Bean

& Tea Leaf is one of the Jollibee Foods Corporation brands leading expansion in North America

Tanmantiong sees the silver lining, “The pandemic reminded us that sometimes, the unthinkable can happen. We ensure we are in a strong financial position to take advantage of opportunities when they come, and that includes acquisitions and capital expenditures. We have a stronger balance sheet now than pre-pandemic— with more cash, more equity.”

The Jollibee Group is now in 33 countries with over 5,800 stores around the world. But perhaps the biggest feather in Jollibee’s cap is the approval of its employees. JFC is the first Philippine-based company to be recognized with the Gallup Exceptional Workplace award, given only to 38 organizations worldwide whose cultures drive high engagement among its employees. Jollibee also made it to Forbes list of World’s Best Employers, one of only three Filipino companies. Taking their commitment to their worker bees to heart, Jollibee pledged to provide free vaccinations to all its employees, their dependents, extended family, and household members. ■

The importance of the human touch

In hindsight, **Elielson Santana** and **Daiana Boudoux** didn't choose the best moment to overhaul their 15-year-old business. Despite complications presented by the pandemic, Brazilian consultancy firm Guersola Consultoria gave them the confidence to see it through. Elly Earls reports on the process



Milho & Brasa is located in eastern Brazil on a highway that connects the city of Ilhéus to the surrounding cities. For 15 years, it had been a small roadside cafeteria specializing in corn-derived products, until its owners Elielson Santana and Daiana Boudoux decided it was time to up their game.

They wanted to retain the original operation's family feel, focus on corn and its relationship with barbecue cooking, but with improvements. Today, Milho & Brasa is a 120-seat restaurant with an à la carte menu, breakfast and lunch buffets, a bar, boutique, children's area and a new barbecue. "A restaurant is not just an establishment where people eat," says Santana. "It is a place that must also enchant the customer with its style, its proposal and its service, guaranteeing quality and good practices."

When FCSI associates Adalberto Santos and Flavio Guersola of Guersola Consultoria first received the call from the Milho & Brasa team in 2019, they were pleasantly surprised that entrepreneurs in the region were willing to invest in something so innovative and transformative for the locality.

"Milho & Brasa was born with the purpose of raising the level of service and food proposal in the Banco da Vitória region," explains Santos. "And we were honored to be involved in a process of personal and professional evolution for the owners."

As the project went on, they continued to impress him with their resilience and survival



The restaurant wanted to retain its focus on dishes made with corn



instinct. The restaurant was originally scheduled to open on 1 May 2020, but when the Covid-19 pandemic started to take hold, it became clear that this wouldn't be feasible. "We were forced to stop the project in March 2020 and we needed to make sure we had the ability to survive, while also not letting the work stop and maintaining the organization of the restaurant as if it were going to open the next day," Santos recalls.

Milho & Brasa spent its first eight months of existence in limbo – with everything and everyone ready and raring to go but no sit-down guests – until it was finally cleared to open its doors in December. And while it wasn't part of the original brief, an important part of Santos's role ended up being bringing "security and tranquillity" to the owners who had never been in a situation like this before, let alone during a global pandemic.

"They brought us, above all, confidence and courage, because I believe that in this scenario, in the middle of a pandemic, you weaken due to fear, no matter how much experience you have," Boudoux admits.

Minimizing errors, risks and failures

Santos and Guersola fulfilled their agreed obligations too – to offer a more qualified and objective look at the market than Santana and Boudoux could have achieved, as well as expertise in management, marketing, finance, purchasing, logistics, strategic

"We were forced to stop the project in March 2020 and we needed to make sure we had the ability to survive, while also not letting the work stop and maintaining the organization of the restaurant as if it were going to open the next day"

PROJECTS



Milho & Brasa is now a 120-seat restaurant with an à la carte menu, breakfast and lunch buffets, a bar, boutique (see opposite page), children's area and a new barbecue





“Working with quality consultants wouldn’t make us immune to errors, risks and failures, but we did hope it would help us be more precise and confident in our choices”

planning and team structure and training.

“We know the challenges that exist in the entrepreneurial world, where the risks are constant and courage must be stronger than fear,” Santana says. “Working with quality consultants wouldn’t make us immune to errors, risks and failures, but we did hope it would help us be more precise and confident in our choices.”

Initially Santos and his team focused on mapping out the project’s strengths and meeting various industry players about potential collaborations. This resulted in deals with Ajinomoto Foodservice, Cepera Alimentos and Devassa breweries, all of whom sponsored spaces and improvements in exchange for visibility in the boutique.

They also put together digital marketing campaigns, implemented new administrative systems and revamped the staff training program. “In order to reach international standards with the client, it was fundamental to change the mindset where we had a small operation exploring a single product,” Santos says. “Corporate education was essential; they needed to understand the key performance indicators for an operation of this size.”

Guersola Consultoria also helped the Milho & Brasa team grasp the opportunities afforded by their location near a busy highway during a time when their potential new customers had to stay at home. “Seeing time go by with the restaurant ready and keeping it closed was incredibly difficult for everyone,” Santos remembers. “But we overcame this by exploring the possibility of drive thru and takeaway and creating promotions on commemorative dates to sell our products. This guaranteed some revenue to pay expenses and keep the project ticking over.”

At time of writing, Milho & Brasa had been fully open for around three months



and was achieving results that surpassed the scenario outlined in Guersola Consultoria’s original business plan, which was designed in 2019 and updated in 2020.

Team spirit and a brighter future

Santos believes this success is largely down to the transparency with which he and his team handled moments of crisis along the way. “The owners became friends during these moments of crisis and uncertainty and the reason we achieved what we did was due to that team spirit as well as presenting commercial and operational opportunities in a clear and objective way,” he says. “The biggest lessons we learned from this project were to persevere, be resilient, never give up and find solutions to impossible problems.”

Meanwhile, Santana’s and Boudoux’s primary takeaway from the collaboration was the importance of the human touch in the design of a successful business. “Sensitivity is fundamental in the management of a business,” Boudoux says. “Technology is important too, but it will never eliminate the human need to be present in places and to experience the difficulties and joys of each other’s company. This was one of Guersola’s differentials.”

The owners are hopeful for a brighter future post-Covid. “If it wasn’t for this global pandemic, we could have explored much more with this consultancy. There have been so many uncertainties and limitations,” Santana says. “Even though the result has been great, our emotions have been shaken. We’re looking forward to achieving even better results and satisfaction in the future.” ■



BORN IN INDONESIA

After a successful career in Indonesia, FCSI associate **Gil D'Harcour** found himself stuck in France at the start of the pandemic. Undeterred, he launched his new project **Warung Javané** from a distance, as he tells Tina Nielsen

With life and business as usual put on hold, the Covid pandemic forced everybody to think differently. French foodservice consultant Gil D'Harcour embraced this challenge more than most.

After 25 years as a resident of Indonesia, the country where he built his life and a successful career after completing hotel management training in France, he found himself back in his home country, prevented by Covid from returning to his adopted home.

In February 2020 he was in the process of re-establishing his base in France, having moved back for family reasons. The idea was to live in France and travel regularly to Indonesia for business. "So, it was a big return to France, which was a foreign country for me in all aspects," he says. "I was going to have two bases, then Covid came."

From his retreat in the south of France last summer he started to think about his employees who were abruptly left without job. "Thanks to the power of technology, I started to dream about creating my own version of a warung, with only my smartphone on hand," he says.

A warung is the neighborhood street café you will find in all corners of the Indonesian archipelago. "Mostly family owned, down-to-earth and featuring Indonesian comfort food, warungs represent the most accessible, because it's the cheapest, way to eat in Indonesia," he explains. They are often located in front of residential houses, as an extension and guests

will sit on benches along polluted and noisy streets. Warungs traditionally cater to construction workers, office workers and the neighbors.

"It is best not to look into the form and the process of cooking as a warung is providing food for people's basic needs, using melamine serving dishes that end up in large water buckets until the next order. A warung is closer to a street food stall than a café," he says. "Who cares about personal grooming or storage temperature control, warungs have been around for ages and they are bound to stay because they are part of everyone's heritage."

He sketched out the layout, coordinated the 3D build up with his drafter based in Jakarta and asked his chef Pak Wanono to hire his brother contractor with four other workers, each with a specialty, electrician and carpenter.

"Pak Wanono, a chef who has followed me for the last 15 years and is currently head of our school catering division, also picked a location for us, 30 minutes from his home. It had to be an active site with residential developments and about 40 minutes train journey from the centre of Jakarta," he says.

While warungs are casual, D'Harcour was determined to provide something of high quality while also challenging the diners to expand their culinary horizons. "Our strategy is to introduce western-style cooking to guests while respecting their purchasing power. Pizzas in Warung Javané are sold for half the price of those served in international pizza franchises. Of course, complementing western items with Indonesian and Asian meals in our menu was also important, to ensure the locals find their comfort," he says.

"On the menu is pizza with fresh tomato sauce >



"Mostly family owned, down-to-earth and featuring Indonesian comfort food, warungs represent the most accessible, because it's the cheapest, way to eat"

WARUNG JAVANÉ AT A GLANCE

Freestanding outlet.

25/30 seats.

Fully open kitchen using
used equipment.

International food similar
to an Asian coffee shop,
also offering pizza, pasta
and steak.

No air conditioning

AVERAGE CHECK: 50,000

Indonesian rupiah or
3 Euro (\$3.60)

LOCATION: Jakarta,
suburban area

EMPLOYEES: 4

OPENING: Lunch to dinner

TARGET CUSTOMERS:

Families, mid-low
segment to middle

INVESTMENT BUDGET:

20,000 Euro (\$24,180)



Opposite page top: the
kitchen at Warung Javané.
Below: Chef Pak Wanono

Left: The warung's simple,
yet stylish, interior. Above: A
serving of donburi

and meat with pepper and mushroom sauce. They are not adventurous, it takes time. That is why I call it warung – I invite customers into their own world, I give them fried rice and a soup and then I introduce them to what they will never be able to afford in a plush shopping center.”

While Wanono and the team got things underway on the ground in Jakarta, D’Harcour and his wife Leli worked hard from France on procurement and logistics. “I provided mechanical and electrical layouts in their most simplistic style to ensure my chef and his workers will be able to read and understand them and I kept in contact with them constantly through WhatsApp video chat as they were installing pipes etc.”

The digital platforms, still a relatively recent addition in our lives, were fundamental to him pulling this off. Absolutely all purchasing – from construction materials and furniture to food – was completed on the Indonesian ecommerce site Tokopedia and Jakarta delivery company GoJek was engaged to deliver whatever was bought online.

Looking back at the project D’Harcour concedes that he would never have attempted to launch a fine dining project from afar, but he was comfortable working on something more casual.

“What hit the world was incomparable, unseen, beyond our own imagination. We need to get rid of the superficial and come back to what is essential life,” he says. “I had to put to one side my idealism as a foodservice consultant, forget the pre-set standards. I had to take short cuts, but without sacrificing on the value we will bring to the guests through this new venture.”

Six months after first thinking of this concept, in



“I wanted to express something that was born entirely on Indonesian soil and led by an Indonesian team. I am in the background”

December 2020 D’Harcour opened the first branch of Warung Javané, meaning born in Java. The name carries significance for the founder. “I wanted to express something that was born entirely on Indonesian soil and led by an Indonesian team. I am in the background.”

He says it is the survival instinct of the food and beverage sector that kicked in. “F&B has always been a resilient industry throughout the world and I have seen businesses resurrecting even after almost civil war in Indonesia,” he says. “I can cite many different events over the years – terrorist bombs, changes of power – Indonesia has been unstable, but F&B has kept on growing.”

Having achieved the target of covering operation costs in January 2021, the next target is to generate a profit within six months and a genuine return on investment in the first three years. As for the potential of the concept, he has plans to develop a franchise, working with young entrepreneurs in search of financial independence. As he concludes: “If it works it means it can be replicated.” ■

Polishing an Alpine gem

The historic Hotel Triangel on Slovenia's Alpine slopes is about to open its doors to tourists once again. Renowned for decades for its fine food, the new restaurant is of paramount importance. Consultant **Primož Cernigoj** FCSI talks to Jim Banks about reinventing the kitchen to enable a modern approach to a simple, distinctive menu

This summer, the slopes of the Alps will witness the rebirth not only of the tourist industry, as Europe works its way out of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also of a historic hotel near Kranjska Gora in Slovenia. Since the 1950s the Hotel Triangel was known for its superb views and the high quality of its restaurant. Now, 15 years after it closed its doors to guests, it is hoping to rekindle that reputation.

For consultant Primož Cernigoj FCSI, who has overseen the refit of the kitchen, the revitalization of the hotel brings back poignant memories.

"As a kid of six or seven, my family would go to the mountains on holiday and my parents would take me to that restaurant," he says. "There is a lot of history there."

Located on the main road to Kranjska Gora, a thriving ski resort that frequently hosts World Cup ski races, the Triangel is a familiar sight for holidaymakers, all of whom pass it on the main road on their way to the town.

Having seen time and the weather take their toll on the building over the last decade and a half, they will soon be able to see a

rejuvenated hotel – the result of three years of planning, hard work and investment.

"When designing the Triangel Boutique Hotel, the brief was to create a small boutique hotel that will fit in with the beautiful Alpine landscape and where guests will feel at home and comfortable, while offering everything a four-star hotel has to offer," says Matjaž Tičar, commercial director at DOM TRADE d.o.o., which operates the Triangel.

Key to the hotel's success will be its restaurant, which will be a focal point for guests. The challenge faced by Cernigoj was to capture the atmosphere of the hotel while creating a modern and efficient kitchen in a limited space.

A two-tier kitchen

Cernigoj has worked as a kitchen planner for more than 20 years and has completed more than 500 projects, but the Triangel was a highlight for him, given his childhood memories of the place. When contacted by his business partner, Primož Hočevar, who was responsible for the overall architecture and design of the hotel, he realized just how vital the kitchen would be to the final project. He



Above: Primož Cernigoj FCSI. Right top: The hotel is on the road into town. Right below: A warm, inviting lounge in the hotel



“The waiter will not offer a guest a hundred different choices. It is more likely that the guests will arrive and ask the chef what he has cooked for them that day. The food is modern, simple and freshly made on a daily basis”

Clockwise from top: The hotel is a local landmark; the open kitchen is a major feature of the dining room; the hotel is in a popular ski area

also understood the limitations that would come with designing an efficient kitchen for a small hotel.

“We had to work with the existing space,” he explains. “The main dimensions of the building had to stay the same. The ground floor was too small to house the whole kitchen, so we had to look around to find a different solution.”

What guests will see when they enter the restaurant is an open kitchen on the ground floor, where they can watch the chef prepare the day’s dishes. It will be an integral part of the intimate atmosphere that Triangel creates for holidaymakers. What they will not see, however, is the main preparation area in the basement.

“On the lower level is a 45 sq m kitchen that is connected to the ground floor by an elevator,” says Cernigoj. “This complicates the workflow, but we have dealt with that partly by keeping to a simple menu that gives the impression that the chef is cooking especially for each guest,” he says.

“A small menu that changes every day creates a home-made feel to the food,” he adds. “The waiter will not offer a guest a hundred different choices. It is more likely that the guests will arrive and ask the chef what he has cooked for them that day. The food is modern, simple and freshly made on a daily basis.”

The focus is on quality rather than quantity. The menu emphasizes delicious food from local producers, based on home-made, local dishes, with a touch of the modern culinary world.

A modern approach to traditional style

Even with a limited menu, it is still a challenge to create a small basement kitchen that works efficiently. The grill, combi oven, induction range and beverage preparation areas are all situated upstairs in the show kitchen, where guests can see the chef at work, but the basement houses all of the storage, preparation and dishwashing areas.

“For us, BIM has been a major help in the kitchen design,” says Cernigoj. “We are among the first in Slovenia to use BIM, and this was the first time we had used it in a



project in Slovenia. It enabled the client and the chef to better visualize the kitchen, as well as improving the accuracy for important elements such as the connection points for electricity and water.”

“It helped us to make better use of a small space and to bring that space to life so the chef could see the workflow,” he adds. “We used a virtual-reality model in our offices, so that he could see every detail at 1:1 scale. It made a huge difference compared to just looking at the plans.”

The ideas that Cernigoj developed for the kitchen, then rendered in a 3D model for the client to experience, have solved the problem of limited space and successfully combined efficiency, intimacy and high quality to create a restaurant fit for the Triangel.

“We were lucky that our main designer, the project manager responsible for the renovation, invited a renowned and experienced kitchen designer who really knew how to listen to our wishes,” says Tičar. “We are happy with the project, actually excited. Practically everything we wanted was included in the project.”

As the Hotel Triangel waits to open its doors, there is a sense of anticipation. The hospitality industry is preparing to welcome back both domestic and international tourists after an enforced break. As summer warms the mountain slopes, guests will find an old treasure has been polished ready for their arrival, and that a warm welcome and a hearty meal awaits them inside. ■



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CITY FOCUS TOKYO

Melinda Joe explores the culinary traditions that make Tokyo the gastronomic epicenter it is today, while whether or not the Japanese capital city will be hosting the Olympic games this summer is debated



Home to 13 million people, the teeming megalopolis of Tokyo started out as a humble fishing village called Edo.

The town's fortunes changed when the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu made it the capital of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603, drawing legions of migrant workers to the city and creating a new class of merchants. The ensuing construction boom led to the establishment of a thriving food scene.

"The waves of workers who came to build the city were men who couldn't cook. This gave rise to a street-food culture to serve this new population," explains Takeshi Watanabe, PhD, who teaches a course examining Japanese culture through food at Wesleyan University.

The most popular versions of some of Japan's most iconic dishes – sushi, tempura, and buckwheat soba noodles – evolved from quick meals consumed at Edo food stalls that began popping up in the 17th century. Typically, each vendor specialized in a particular dish – a custom that remains strong today, thanks in part to the artisan spirit that continues to motivate so many Japanese chefs.

Unlike restaurants commonly found in European or North American cities, where teriyaki chicken and dim sum may jostle with pork satay and Pad Thai on menus, many of Tokyo's eateries strive to make one style of cuisine –



Above: Counter seating is popular in all types of Tokyo restaurants. Right: Tokyo started out as a small fishing village

Opposite page: chef Susumu Shimizu of restaurant Anis; Small businesses make up most of Tokyo's eateries





"Once the world started paying attention to us around 10 years ago, we realized we could be more creative and express our own identity"



or even one item – extremely well, be it painstakingly refined kaiseki (Japanese haute-cuisine) or humble bowls of ramen.

Counter culture

Another legacy of the days of Edo's growth is the prevalence of counter seating, where chefs can be seen preparing food behind the bar. "Even during the Edo period, we saw a shift from food stalls to established restaurants, which eventually carried over to the counter setup we have today," Watanabe says. "Both at higher- and lower-end places, this style of dining facilitates

interaction between the chef and customers."

Counters and open-kitchen layouts feature prominently at both Japanese and non-Japanese restaurants and are not limited to small spaces. Dining bars can even be found at restaurants with tables. A U-shaped stone counter with 16 seats anchors the main dining area of two-Michelin-starred French fine-dining restaurant Florilège, while a large, irregularly shaped wooden counter encircles the impressive open kitchen of 43-seat Sowado, an upscale izakaya (Japanese bar serving excellent food) in the Ebisu

district. Often, the design is as much for theatrical effect as ease of communication.

According to government statistics, the Tokyo Metropolitan area boasts approximately 160,000 eateries, ranging in scale from tiny mom-and-pop venues to massive banquet halls. But throughout most of the city's history, the restaurant industry has been dominated by small operators.

"When I was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, there were hardly any big restaurant chains," recalls chef Junichi Onuki of Isana Sushi Bar, noting that Japan's first McDonald's didn't open until 1971, in the capital's Ginza district. "Most shops were family-owned, and in terms of variety, it was nothing close to what we see today."

Restaurant culture changed dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s, as Japan's rapid growth saw Tokyo confirmed as a center of finance and culture. Globalization brought foreign franchises to the country and domestic chains proliferated, chipping away at the market share of independent eateries.

As sociology professor James Farrar of Tokyo's Sophia University writes in *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, the decline of independent establishments has been exacerbated by "the aging of owners who created small restaurants in the post-war, high-growth decades."

Despite this, a government census report from 2016 estimates that roughly half of Tokyo's restaurants are

independently owned. Many of these businesses are tightly-staffed operations with limited seating – a formula that Steve Plotnicki, founder of the restaurant guide *Opinionated About Dining*, sees as an asset that has helped boost the standing of the city's venues in awards schemes such as Asia's 50 Best Restaurants.

"Japan has a fundamental advantage that stems from the way the restaurants are set up. A place with eight seats will always be able to have better control over the quality of the food than a place with 60 or more seats," he says.

Globalization and creativity

By 2000, diversity had become one of the hallmarks of the city's culinary landscape. Offerings ran the gamut from traditional fare such as hand-cut soba noodles at Kanda Matsuya – founded in 1884 – to modern kaiseki prepared with cutting-edge techniques at Ryugin, where chef Seiji Yamamoto made waves for using a CT scan to study the bone structure of conger eels.

"Around that time, we started seeing organic food and regional Japanese cuisine widely represented for the first time, as well as non-Japanese food," Onuki says.

Indeed, Tokyo has gained a reputation for world-class international cuisine. Ever since the early 1990s, legions of Japanese chefs have traveled abroad to train in prestigious kitchens with the goal of opening their own restaurants in the Japanese capital. In 2003, Yoshihiro >

Narisawa, who had worked extensively in Europe, rose to fame after launching his namesake Japanese-inflected French restaurant in Tokyo's Aoyama district. An early advocate of sustainability in Japan, Narisawa championed Japanese ingredients in avant-garde preparations such as deep-fried baby sweetfish, which appear to swim across a glass plate dotted with sour plum sauce, and "Bread of the Forest" made with chestnut tree powder that is proofed and baked at the table.

A few years later in 2006, Shuzo Kishida returned to Tokyo from Paris – where he'd served as Pascal Barbot's sous chef at L'Astrance – to open contemporary restaurant Quintessence. Within a year, the restaurant was awarded three stars in the first *Michelin Guide* dedicated to Tokyo.

With the release of the 2008 *Tokyo Michelin Guide*, the city became the darling of the food world, stealing the spotlight from Paris with a staggering 150 starred establishments (today, there are 212). Chefs such as Joel Robuchon and Ferran Adrià sang the praises of Japanese food culture – sentiments that were later echoed by René Redzepi and David Chang. Soon, hordes of hungry "gastronauts" began flocking to Tokyo to slurp noodles at places like Ivan Ramen, compare Neapolitan-style pizzas at Seirinakan and Savoy, or snag one of the 10 coveted seats at Sukiyabashi Jiro.

Emboldened by the cachet of international recognition, younger Japanese chefs began

"The food world has become so global... I've gone overseas to do a lot of events. Through my contact with other cultures, I've learned to incorporate non-Japanese ingredients, flavors and techniques into my dishes"



innovating, experimenting with new ideas and blurring the boundaries between different styles of cuisine.

"For many of us who trained abroad, veering from tradition was unthinkable. As a result, Japanese chefs were replicating French cuisine from the 1970s, without changing a thing. But once the world started paying attention to us around 10 years ago, we realized we could be more creative and express our own identity," says chef Susumu Shimizu, who specializes in succulent meat dishes that defy neat categorization at his restaurant, Anis.

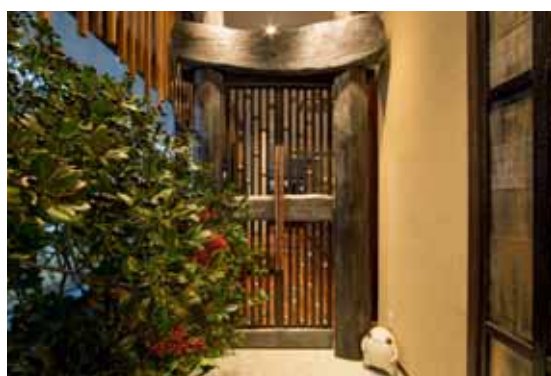


Above right: Chef Zaiyu Hasegawa, chef/owner at two-Michelin-starred restaurant Den.
Above: one of Den's signature dishes.





“The past year has been a hard reset. What we’d assumed was correct is not necessarily so. Consumer habits have changed, and for restaurants, it’s going to be like starting from scratch”



Top right: Hiroyasu Kawate, chef at Florilège and collaborator with Hasegawa at Den Kushi Flori; pictures of Den’s interior style

Known for his playful takes on Japanese kaiseki, Zaiyu Hasegawa, of two-Michelin-starred Den, says the cultural exchange facilitated by the boom in travel between 2010 and 2020 has helped accelerate the trend.

“The food world has become so global. So many visitors have come to Tokyo, and I’ve gone overseas to do a lot of events. Through my contact with other cultures, I’ve learned to incorporate non-Japanese ingredients, flavors and techniques into my dishes,” he says. “I feel like I’m breaking the mold of traditional Japanese cuisine in a good way.”

Last September, Hasegawa teamed up with long-time friend and Florilège chef Hiroyasu Kawate to open Den Kushi Flori, a casual fine-dining restaurant serving inventive, cross-cultural mashups such as miso-marinated pigeon seared on a skewer with amaebi spot prawn, served with a dab of pigeon-liver mousse and scallion sauce.

After Covid: starting from scratch

While the effect of the pandemic has been less severe in Japan than in other parts of the world, last year the country’s restaurant industry saw the highest number of bankruptcies on record, according to Tokyo Shoko Research. However, chef Hiroyasu Kawate believes there are important lessons to be learned from the experience.

“This past year has been a hard reset. What we’d assumed was correct is not

WHAT TO EAT IN TOKYO

Here are some of the most iconic dishes visitors to Tokyo can enjoy.

Ramen

Though ramen noodles originated in China, it’s a wildly popular dish in Tokyo where the first ramen shop opened in 1910 – today there are over 5,000 ramen shops in the city.

Edomae sushi

Created by the Edo – the old name for Tokyo – fast-food businesses during the 1820s. Essentially a combination of fresh raw fish, including tuna, bonito, halibut, eel, and shellfish, and cooked rice, which is seasoned with vinegar. Arguably Japan’s greatest gastronomic export.

Monjayaki

Tokyo’s answer to Osaka’s okonomiyaki, this is a type of savory pancake and can include every ingredient from meat and fish to vegetable and cheese.

necessarily so. Consumer habits have changed, and for restaurants, it’s going to be like starting from scratch,” he says. “I’m grateful for all the guests in Japan that have supported us, and I think a lot of restaurants will value those relationships more.”

Despite the challenges, Junichi Onuki of Isana Sushi Bar remains optimistic, saying: “Eating out will continue to be important. The number of customers will be fewer than in the past, but consumers will keep coming back to places they trust and people they like. That’s what makes the restaurant industry special.” ■

The great outdoors

Samantha Lande speaks with operators across the Americas to see if outdoor dining is here to stay

The pandemic shook the restaurant industry in many ways, forcing operators to rethink just about every way they conducted business. With dining rooms in the US around the country functioning at less than 50% capacity (and sometimes much less) for a good majority of the year, restaurants were forced to serve diners in a new capacity.

For many, outdoor seating capacities exceeded indoors for a good majority of the year. So, instead of thinking of outdoor dining as a nice-to-have feature in the warmer months, it became a part of any restaurant's dining strategy. Many major cities amended their al-fresco dining regulations – closing off streets so restaurants can expand outdoor dining into the streets. Some cities also allowed for restaurants to expand in front of vacant storefronts, into parking lots and other unused public spaces. Flexibility was a key element this year and will continue to be.

“Everything we do moving forward in the business has to be engineered to be flexible,” says Arlene Spiegel FCSI, founder and president of Arlene Spiegel and Associates. “That pop-up mentality – where things can be easily taken up, put down, expanded or changed.”

This year certainly tested that theory and restaurants that were able to adapt, survived. We spoke with operators and consultants about this new wave of outdoor dining and what they think it might look like moving forward.

Outdoor dining room

This year became less about having a patio and more about getting creative to serve patrons while their dining room was closed entirely or at limited capacity. It also meant creating an environment where guests felt comfortable dining outside, even in cold temperatures or on rainy evenings. Matching the aesthetic that people associated with that restaurant was important too.

“It was important to the team to ensure that all aspects of the patios and greenhouses matched the brand aesthetic for each restaurant, everything from the wood tones chosen to the table settings,” explains Jerrod Melman, executive partner of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, a restaurant group with more than 120 locations across nine states, primarily in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. “For example, RPM >



Above: Jerrod Melman of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises





THE AMERICAS



“Guests will give you some grace outside, but they still expect great service, great food and great ambience”

Seafood is known for its view, so we used a clear plexiglass for the private greenhouses to give our guests a view of the river, while at Sushi-San, the greenhouses are set on a busier street, so we used a less transparent material,” he says. “At Bub City in River North, we wanted to emulate the social vibe of the restaurant and carry that outside, which we did by using high tables, bringing TVs outside and incorporating the barrels as décor.”

But a venture like this is expensive, as Ellen Yin, founder and co-owner of High Street Hospitality Group with locations in Philadelphia and New York, discovered.

“It was necessary – we couldn’t survive without making the investment,” she says. One of her restaurants, Fork, was upscale, and therefore they needed to make sure the outdoor dining matched that aesthetic.

Investments don’t have to come all at once – outdoor seating with heaters, followed by tents, and then more of a structure. Many created experiences that could be flexible – being able to open windows or remove doors if necessary.

Melman took that approach with Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises, first renting tents and then having their internal construction team build individual greenhouses and structures as they saw more people were engaging in outdoor dining and often preferred having more of a private structure.

Some others got really creative. Paul Bartlett FCSI, a consultant with Kitchen

Solutions in Baltimore, Maryland, helped a local restaurant, Café Hon, relocate its oyster bar into an adjacent alley. Although they weren’t sure how it would go, it ended up being a huge success.

Reservation system Resy partnered with American Express and 13 restaurants across the US to create yurt villages, tents that were professionally interior decorated to make it feel like a true experience.

“Guests will give you some grace outside,” says Spiegel, “but they still expect great service, great food and great ambience.”

Necessary changes

Outdoor dining doesn’t come without some unforeseen challenges like the distance servers need to walk (especially now with a full dining room and some outdoor spaces being in parking lots or in front of neighboring vacant storefronts). That also has an impact on menus as it’s more difficult to maintain temperatures of certain dishes and often times diners eating outside want different options.

“If something is overly fussy it will be cold on the plate before it gets through the dining room,” says Yin. “When the temperatures outside are cold, people lean towards really hot, comforting foods.”

Bartlett expects to see different techniques appear on those menus, “more pickling, curing – things that work outside no matter what time of year.”

Many restaurants also had to reorganize



Above: Ellen Yin, founder and co-owner of High Street Hospitality Group



"I think people like the novelty of it all... The pandemic has certainly stretched our creativity"



Above: Paul Bartlett FCSI of Kitchen Solutions in Baltimore, Maryland, US

Clockwise from top left: Many city authorities have amended regulations to allow restaurants to expand into the streets and parking lots; operators are investing in semi-permanent structures to provide a safe, comfortable environment for customers; outdoor service areas make it easier for servers

their flow of traffic, add QR codes for diners to view menus and add outdoor service stations to make it easier on servers.

Spiegel compares it to a "football coach who has to have many plays at the ready."

Here to stay?

Many cities have committed to an investment in outdoor dining at least for the duration of 2021, but what happens after that? Bartlett thinks it could be here to stay. He points to ski towns that have outdoor winter dining even in snowy conditions.

Many cite Europe as an example with Parisian cafes dotting the streets. "I think people like the novelty of it all," says Melman.

Although he doesn't know what year-round outdoor dining may look like for Lettuce Entertain You in the future, he thinks there will be some capacity for pop-up experiences at certain locations. "The pandemic has certainly stretched our creativity," he says.

Spiegel has seen an added benefit – smaller restaurants that usually go unnoticed by pedestrians now have a street presence. "It's like free marketing for them," she says.

Year-round outdoor dining also helps with a larger urban planning initiative. "We as a society are reviewing the role of cars in cities, more bike lanes, less cars," says Bartlett. "The pandemic is causing change to happen faster than otherwise would have happened. New street spaces are better for communities." ■



All around Asia: the future of fine dining

The pandemic has drastically shifted our priorities and focus. Maida Pineda considers whether the limitations of lockdowns, social distancing, and travel restrictions mean fine dining is now an irrelevant luxury in Asia

Every year coveted Michelin Stars are bestowed and awards given for the World's Best Restaurants. But if you are unable to travel to these restaurants would you still care as much for these lists?

This year Asia's 50 Best Restaurants introduced Essence of Asia, an unranked collection of restaurants representing the spirit of Asian gastronomy spanning 49 cities across 20 countries and territories. During this difficult time for the restaurant industry, the guide aims to support them by highlighting Asia's authentic and diverse dining experiences. This was unveiled to complement the ninth edition of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list. It encompasses street vendors, dining institutions, philanthropic business, and even newcomers.

However, beyond lists, the best indicator of the relevance of fine-dining restaurants during these trying times would be their performance. At time of writing (April 2021) the number of Covid-19 cases reached record highs, hospitals once again hit full capacity, and lockdown has again been enforced in Metro Manila. Talking with Chele Gonzalez, the Spanish chef behind Gallery by Chele, ranked 90 in Asia's Best Restaurants 2021, he recounts: "We were doing so well. At Christmas we were fully booked at the restaurant."

Gonzalez disagrees that fine dining is dead. "Fine dining is quite trendy these days, even with other restaurants in Asia. The landscape has changed so much," he says. "People go out less often, and it is their only time to relax. People are choosing only places with social distancing and safety protocols implemented. They want to spend more and go out much less, but have an experience. That's what we offer."



Gallery by Chele became the chosen location for intimate wedding receptions – as necessitated by Covid restrictions – in Manila. Couples, families and friends also choose his restaurant's nine-course tasting menu for to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. Gonzalez implements strict protocols for his restaurant staff such as administering antigen tests and strict sanitation rules. Restaurant guests have temperature checks upon entering the restaurant, hand sanitizer is available, plates are sanitized before serving, and there are air purifiers inside the restaurant.

The restaurant offers outdoor seating and private dining rooms, limiting interaction and promoting social distancing among diners. But the pandemic has pushed Gonzales to think outside the box and diversify beyond the confines of his restaurant. He created feasts at home for >

Above: A feast from Chele to celebrate Mother's Day

"People go out less often, and it is their only time to relax... They want to spend more and go out much less, but have an experience. That's what we offer"

All dishes from Bangkok restaurant Le Du, ranked fourth in this year's Asia's 50 Best Restaurant list

five to six people, for pick up or delivery. Menus included The Truffle Beef Wellington Feast, a nine-course meal for people to enjoy in the safety of their own homes. He is offering Spanish signature dishes such as tapas, paella, and lengua for consumption at home. His latest innovation is Deli by Chele, creating products using sustainable local ingredients including charcuterie, cheeses, kombucha – with unique Filipino flavors such as red dragonfruit, jackfruit, and cacao – sauces, jams, vinegars, and bread. Restaurant opening hours have also been tweaked from Tuesday to Saturday to include Sunday, when people come to dine out or order their feast offerings.

Gonzalez describes his food as modern cuisine using local Filipino ingredients. At this time of the pandemic when sourcing foreign ingredients can be a huge challenge, he remains unfazed. He has been committed to sourcing the best local ingredients since the restaurant opened in 2013.

In Bangkok, chef Ton Thitid Tassanakajohn's restaurant Le Du ranked fourth in this year's Asia's 50 Best Restaurant list. Thailand's hospitality industry has been heavily reliant on foreign tourists. In January, at least a million hospitality workers have been laid off. I spoke to chef Ton during Songkran, what should have been Thailand's busiest holiday. "We are doing good. We are on the third wave, but still fighting," he said. When asked whether fine dining is dead, this Thai chef is

quick to answer: "I think fine dining is still relevant, but it must now also serve and satisfy locals." He adds: "Those [restaurants] serving only tourists have closed down. We have seen that through this pandemic."

Thankfully, Le Du's concept is all about regional Thai dishes using seasonal local ingredients, with a modern French interpretation. The restaurant has always appealed to local diners, while also attracting foreign travelers.

"I always have 50% local diners even before the pandemic, that's why we survived this difficult year," says Ton. It also helps that he uses 100% local ingredients, hence, sparing him the problems of procuring imported specialty ingredients.

Like many other restaurants in



"I think fine dining is still relevant, but it must now also serve and satisfy locals... Those [restaurants] serving only tourists have closed down"



As restaurants now cater primarily to local diners, there is an emphasis on creating a memorable dining experience

Bangkok, Le Du started offering delivery services allowing their diners to enjoy the signature dish Khao Khluk Kapi (river prawn with shrimp paste in brown rice risotto) in their own homes. Chef Ton has also been vocal in petitioning the government to consider prioritizing distributing vaccines to restaurant entrepreneurs and their staff to encourage more people to dine out safely and to save the restaurant industry in Bangkok.

In Hong Kong, chef Vicky Cheng just opened Wing, a fine-dining Chinese restaurant right at the heart of Central. With the success of his French Chinese restaurant VEA gaining one Michelin Star and ranking 16 in Asia's 50 Best, he seems unfazed by the current pandemic.

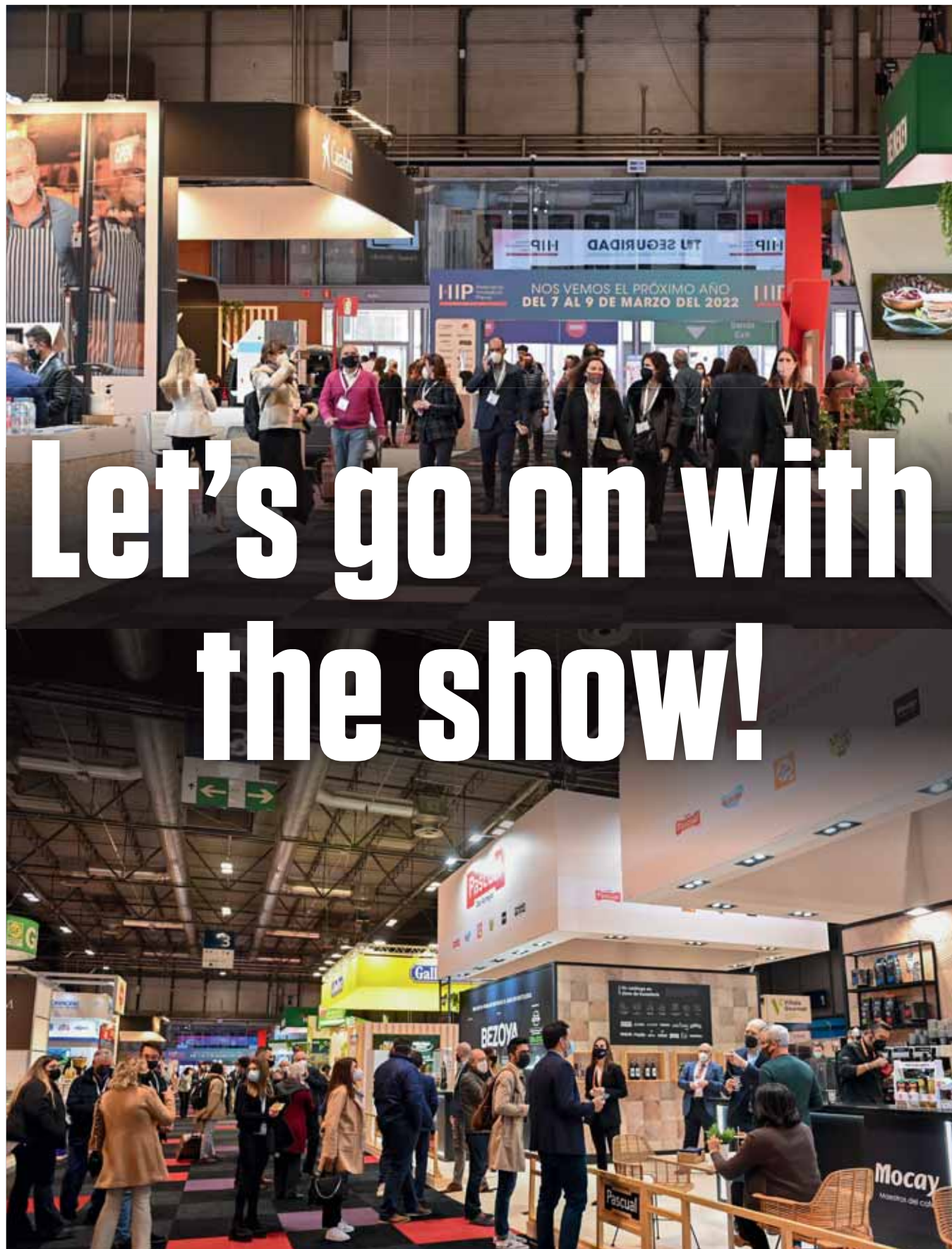
Top Peruvian chef Virgilio Martinez remains determined to open Maz, a fine-dining restaurant in Tokyo this year, despite

the pandemic delaying the original plan to open in time for the July 2020 Olympics in Japan. While the restaurant industry may be struggling during this pandemic, fine dining is not dead. But as Chele Gonzalez points out: "We are not fine dining. We are a restaurant that provides a new experience."

As restaurants now cater primarily to local diners, there is an emphasis on creating a memorable dining experience suited to their palate and relying on the best local ingredients. The challenge for fine-dining restaurants now is to create dining experiences worth going out for or even creating a luxury dining experience to keep their local customers safely in their own homes. There is a bold invitation to adapt and innovate what fine dining means. This is the only way restaurateurs can stay relevant and keep their businesses afloat during this pandemic. ■



Le Du's chef Ton Thitid Tassanakajohn is petitioning for restaurant workers to be prioritized for vaccination



After the pandemic some hospitality events have embraced a return to in-person experiences, while others have chosen a virtual route. Most are likely to adapt some sort of hybrid model, as Tina Nielsen reports

Last year Covid-19 put an abrupt stop to the foodservice and hospitality events calendar. The pandemic forced the cancellation and postponement of hospitality events; now as vaccine roll-outs are underway, they are starting to re-emerge.

In March, Germany's Internorga was the first major show to take place in this end-stage of the global pandemic. With national lockdowns and travel bans still in place across the world, it was an all-digital affair, titled IDX_FS International Digital Food Services Expo 2021.

"The entire trade fair industry was severely restricted by the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, however, it has also led to new food for thought and significantly accelerated digitalization," says Bernd Aufderheide, chairman of the management board of Hamburg Messe und Congress. "The IDX_FS Expo was not only an absolute must for all those involved in the foodservice and hospitality market, but also set new benchmarks to digital approaches to trade fairs."

Restarting hospitality

Other organizers have decided to stick with the in-person approach, with added safety measures. The 2020 edition of Hospitality Innovation Planet (HIP), a Spanish event bringing together a conference element with trade show, was among the last to take place before the world shut down. Event director Manel Bueno says the plan was always to

return with a physical event this year.

"The Horeca sector has been one of the most affected by the pandemic and, for that reason, HIP2021 was designed especially to help restart the hospitality business," he said. "The hospitality industry has struggled every day to continue operating, keeping jobs and even contributing with its taxes, without some of them being opened."

The appetite to attend an in-person event evidently remained. More than 300 companies exhibited their solutions on the show floor and over 9,000 delegates registered to attend. "Trade shows are crucial to the Spanish economy and business events, exhibitions and congresses play a strategic role for economic recovery," he explains. "The activity of trade shows in Spain generates more than €10.8m (\$13m) added to the national GDP and more than 83,000 jobs."

The show went ahead on 22-24 March and organizers followed safety recommendations from health authorities including The Spanish Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization. These included temperature measurement on entering, mandatory mask wearing during the visit, capacity control in auditoriums and supervision of social distancing as well as the use of contactless technology.

Covid-secure protocols

One of the key dates in the calendar for foodservice professionals is the biannual appointment with Italy's gigantic trade show HostMilano, which will open its doors >



Manel Bueno, HIP event director, says trade shows play a crucial role in the Spanish economy

"The entire trade fair industry was severely restricted by the coronavirus pandemic"



Patricia Mateo, director of Vocento Gastronomía and CEO and founder of Mateo & Co welcomes the broader scope of hybrid events

“There are many chefs in Latin America who would like to attend but can’t afford the plane ticket and accommodation; this is a way for them to be a part of the conference”

to delegates again in October. To guarantee the safety of delegates and exhibitors a containment protocol will be implemented. Advance online booking will be compulsory and visitors will need to choose a time slot for their visit.

Added Covid-secure protocols will be implemented, but, as Simona Greco, Fiera Milano exhibitions director says, ultimately exhibitors are responsible for the space they have leased. “In particular, they have to comply with all the spread containment rules, and they have to ensure cleanliness inside their spaces,” she adds.

Fiera Milano has been working on digital transformation for a while now. “Fiera Milano Platform – an ecosystem of technologically advanced, scalable solutions – allows our stakeholders to live a new hybrid experience,” says Greco. “The portal enhances their capability to build a meeting agenda and populate the Expo Plaza section, a next-generation smart catalogue that helps professionals get to know the exhibitors and the product showcased and arrange meetings remotely.”

A hybrid approach

Madrid Fusión, the renowned gastronomy conference, held in the Spanish capital every year, will for the first time in its 18-year history, launch with an ambitious hybrid event – a comprehensive virtual program running concurrently with the physical event in Madrid.

This is possible because event organizer Vocento Group, was quick off the mark

during the first wave of the pandemic and, with an eye on the Gastronomika conference scheduled for October 2020, set about building a digital platform that allowed events to reach a much wider audience.

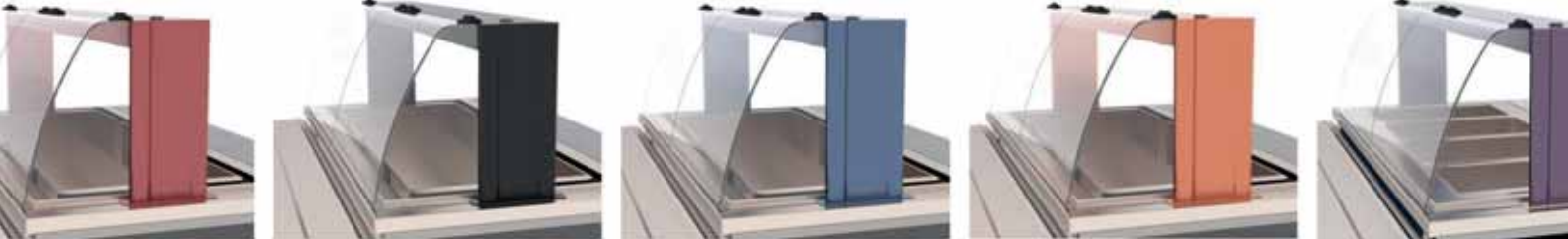
Continued Covid restrictions mean that the in-person audience is reduced by half, from 1,000 people in the auditorium to 500 people. However, the virtual element makes it possible to reach many more people all over the world.

With the digital platform in place, a return to the purely physical analogue event is out of the question for Patricia Mateo, director of Vocento Gastronomía and CEO and founder of Mateo & Co. “For some of the Gastronomika sessions we saw 5,000 people tune in – a number of people you couldn’t fit into a physical space – and audience members joined from 105 different countries,” she says.

“There are many chefs in Latin America who would like to attend but can’t afford the plane ticket and accommodation; this is a way for them to be a part of the conference.”

For Madrid Fusión there are two price levels; €300 for the in-person experience, which also gives digital access, and €100 for digital-only access.

For Mateo there is no going back now. “We have broadened the scope to include many more people – people who knew of us but who were not able to attend in person,” she says. “This is something I see as a positive impact of the pandemic and it would be very difficult to go back to how we did things before.” ■



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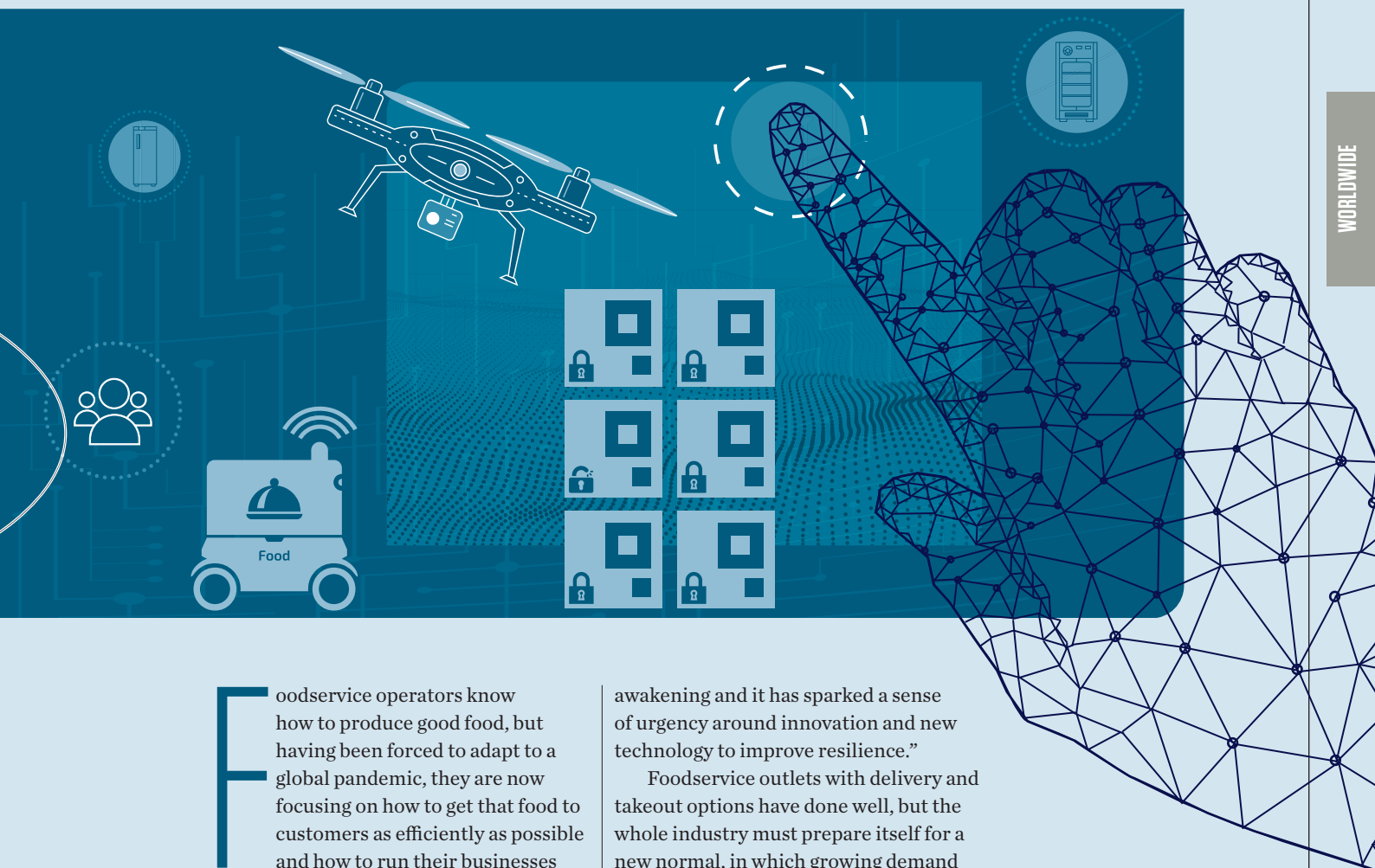


Technological innovation to propel foodservice into the future has pivoted over the last year to focus on cutting-edge technologies improving connectivity, service, hygiene and delivery.

Jim Banks looks at how AI, robotics and other innovations are shaping the industry and aiding its survival

**TECH TAKING
FOODSERVICE
FORWARD >>**





Foodservice operators know how to produce good food, but having been forced to adapt to a global pandemic, they are now focusing on how to get that food to customers as efficiently as possible and how to run their businesses more cost-effectively in unprecedented and volatile market conditions. As always, technology is here to help.

The industry is now investing in technologies that improve safety and hygiene, enable customers to order and pay remotely, meet the growing demand for deliveries, and cut costs. Those investments will not only help them survive the pandemic, but also fundamentally reshape the industry as it emerges from lockdown.

“The whole industry is in the shadow of the pandemic,” says Rick Caron, chief innovation officer at equipment manufacturer Welbilt. “In the US, food sales have fallen by 30%, so it is clear that the industry is not immune to an infectious disease. This has been a major

awakening and it has sparked a sense of urgency around innovation and new technology to improve resilience.”

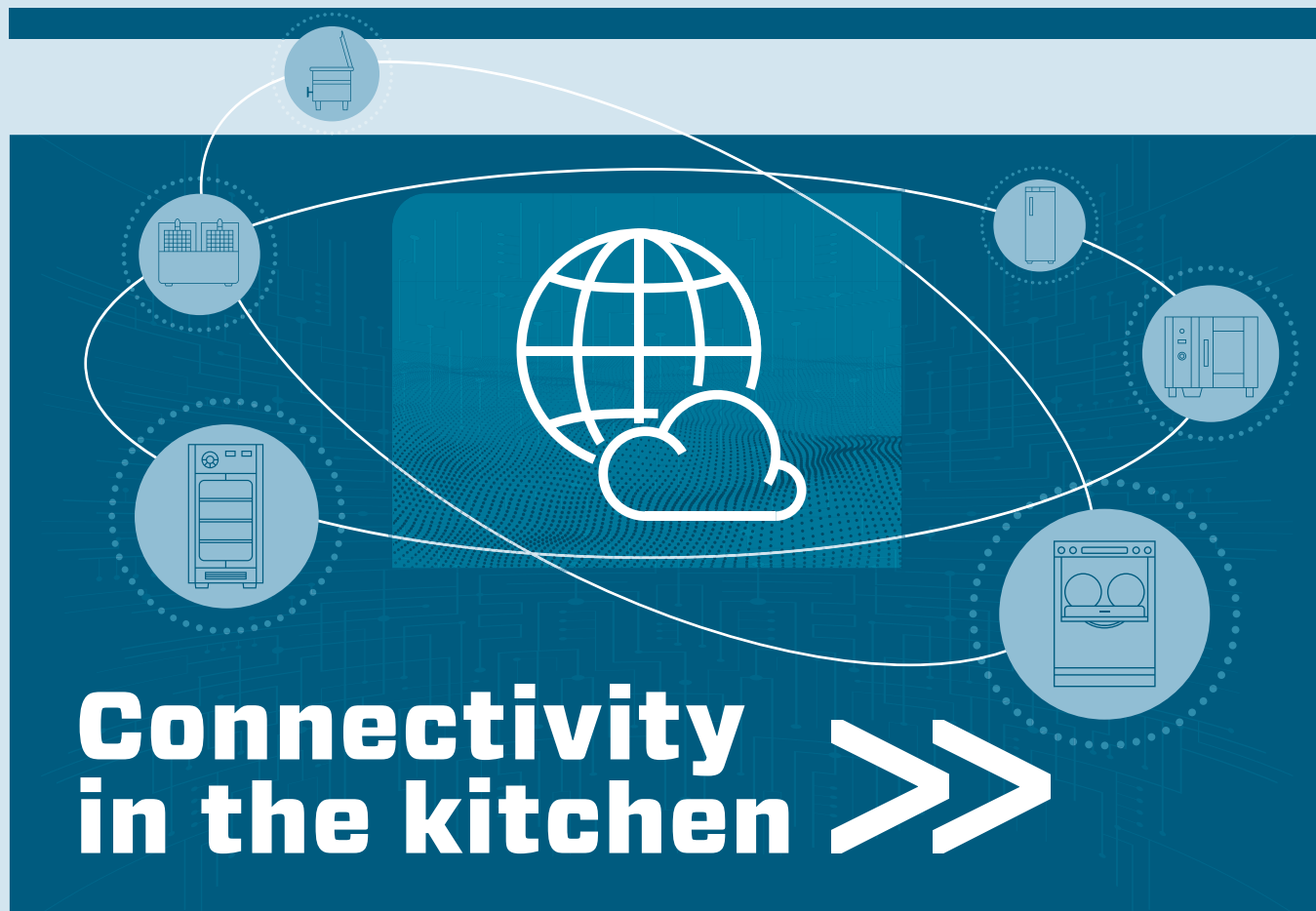
Foodservice outlets with delivery and takeout options have done well, but the whole industry must prepare itself for a new normal, in which growing demand will put pressure on capacity, costs and customer service.

Tech solutions to labor shortage

“Drive-thrus have done well, as have takeout and delivery services,” says FCSI associate Jay Bandy of Goliath Consulting in Georgia, US. “Pizza clients are also doing really well. There is pent-up demand that is starting to pour into the market. Some clients, especially in QSR, are already beating 2019 numbers.

“But the labor pool has shrunk and it is harder to find employees than it was in 2019,” he adds. “All of our clients are trying to hire, especially in QSR, but with the difficulties they face they are trying to reduce their need for labor. That drives investment in new technology.”

“IN THE US, FOOD SALES HAVE FALLEN BY 30%, SO IT IS CLEAR THAT THE INDUSTRY IS NOT IMMUNE TO AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE”



Connectivity in the kitchen >>

Most innovation in foodservice technology happens in the kitchen, often to improve resource efficiency. Now, connectivity is the keyword in the kitchen.

"Clients want more machines that are connected to Wi-Fi and the restaurant network," notes Jay Bandy. "Operators can connect to the network from anywhere and operate equipment remotely. They want pieces of equipment that can talk to each other. That will grow very strongly."

Connectivity is control

Connectivity improves process efficiency and enables the remote monitoring of equipment across many locations. Electrolux Professional, for example, has brought out a range of Skyline Combi Ovens and Blast Chillers that share the same control panel and communicate seamlessly, allowing

the blast chiller to start automatically when sensors in the combi oven send it a signal. One manual step in the food preparation process disappears.

A virtual society

"Smart equipment is on the rise because it is easier for staff to operate," says Bandy. "It is driven by concerns about the labor force. The stickiest part is developing a platform that can connect equipment from different manufacturers and get them to talk to each other successfully, but we are seeing the beta stage of that development, which will address what is the biggest challenge," he says.

"We were already a mobile society and during lockdown we became a virtual society," adds Caron. "So, the ability to operate and monitor a business remotely through a phone will just be a given in the next few years." >

"SMART EQUIPMENT IS ON THE RISE BECAUSE IT IS EASIER FOR STAFF TO OPERATE. IT IS DRIVEN BY CONCERNS ABOUT THE LABOR FORCE"

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Touchless takes off >>



Smart equipment for the kitchen was already a strong trend but has been accelerated by the Covid pandemic. So, too, have touchless technologies making reading a menu, ordering and paying simpler and safer in a time of increased hygiene and social distancing.

“Covid has changed the way restaurateurs perceive the industry and how they’re working,” says Patrick Hooykaas, managing director at restaurant booking app developer TheFork.co.uk. “They had to reinvent themselves to survive and digitization is one of the most effective ways to do so, with new ways of communicating with customers, managing their activity, changing their menu and services.”

“Restaurant owners had to adapt quickly to cope with periods of decline or cessation of their activities and thanks to digital they have been able to do it,” he adds. “Online booking, online payment,

online menus or even digital floor plans allow restaurants to streamline organization and processes to more easily manage distancing, inform consumers and reassure them about compliance with protocols, and to keep in touch.”

Contactless ordering, often through a mobile app or the scanning of a QR code to access the menu, has become commonplace and is a natural step on from the now ubiquitous contactless payment process. Now, the same principles are being used for more out-of-the-box applications.

Convenience and low cost

One example is Coca-Cola Freestyle’s latest innovation – contactless pouring from a smartphone. For a touchless experience with the soda fountain, people can now use a phone camera to scan a QR code, connect to the Freestyle, select from its menu and then pour the drink. >

“RESTAURANT OWNERS HAD TO ADAPT QUICKLY TO COPE WITH PERIODS OF DECLINE OR CESSATION OF THEIR ACTIVITIES AND THANKS TO DIGITAL THEY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO IT”

Delivery without the driver

Food delivery by drone or by self-driving car might sound far-fetched, but it could be closer than you think. Chipotle recently announced its investment in technology company Nuro, which designs robotics and autonomous delivery vehicles. Domino's is already testing Nuro vehicles in Ann Arbor and Miami.

The investment is recognition of the fact that delivery models are changing, due to both the Covid pandemic and the eat-at-home culture that is changing the economics of the foodservice industry. Nuro operates a fleet of driverless delivery vehicles that could eliminate the need for third-party delivery drivers.

Further ahead, the fleet of robotaxis under development by Tesla, which aims to provide a service similar to Uber, but with self-driving cars, could ultimately be put to use in food delivery. The relatively low cost per mile will certainly have strong appeal, though there is no confirmed date for the fleet to start operation.

If not self-driving cars, then autonomous delivery robots from Nuro, the Amazon Scout, the Rev-1 from Refraction AI or the many other models under development, could be the future, so long as they are able to keep the food warm.

"There is a controlled environment in the kitchen, so the temperature of the food can be maintained, but outside there are many things that can go wrong," says Goliath's Jay Bandy.

For customers, the appeal of contactless technology lies in speed and convenience. For operators, it is cost.

"Remote ordering, delivery, virtual menus, flexible equipment - all of these have quick payback, so even if operators turned to them because of the pandemic, they will continue to use them in the future. Covid gave them a sense of urgency in adopting these technologies. After all, you only fix a leaky roof when it is raining. However, it creates a virtuous circle around technology investment, about which operators will be more open-minded in the future," says Caron.

"The restaurant industry is going through a monumental period of digitization, as more and more consumers expect to compare places to eat online and seamlessly book a table from their mobile device," adds Hooykaas. "The restaurant industry is being digitized at each step of the value chain." >

"THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY IS BEING DIGITIZED AT EACH STEP OF THE VALUE CHAIN"



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Is this the end of in-person ordering?

Remote booking and ordering apps have become commonplace during the pandemic, and their sophistication – and their value to restaurants – is ramping up significantly.

The Sunday app, for example, leverages the simplicity of the QR code to allow guests to not only view the menu, but also pay in as little 10 seconds. The company reports that, on average, the app save 15 minutes per table, yields 40% more tips and increases the order value by 10%, while reducing the costs of the payment process by 30%

TheFork, which is part of the TripAdvisor group and provides online reservation opportunities for 80,000 partner restaurants in Europe, has a more comprehensive proposition. Its unified reservation management system allows restaurateurs to manage and maximize reservations over different time slots to simplify table rotation, and provides a seating plan function to help manage social distancing while maximizing table availability.

“We have always supported restaurants in the digitalization of their activity,” says MD Patrick Hooykaas. “We recently accelerated our work on the topic of digital payment with TheFork Pay, which allows users to pay the bill directly from the app. Safety, speed, simplicity and absence of human contact are TheFork Pay benefits, which have become essential in this period of pandemic.”



Rise of the robots

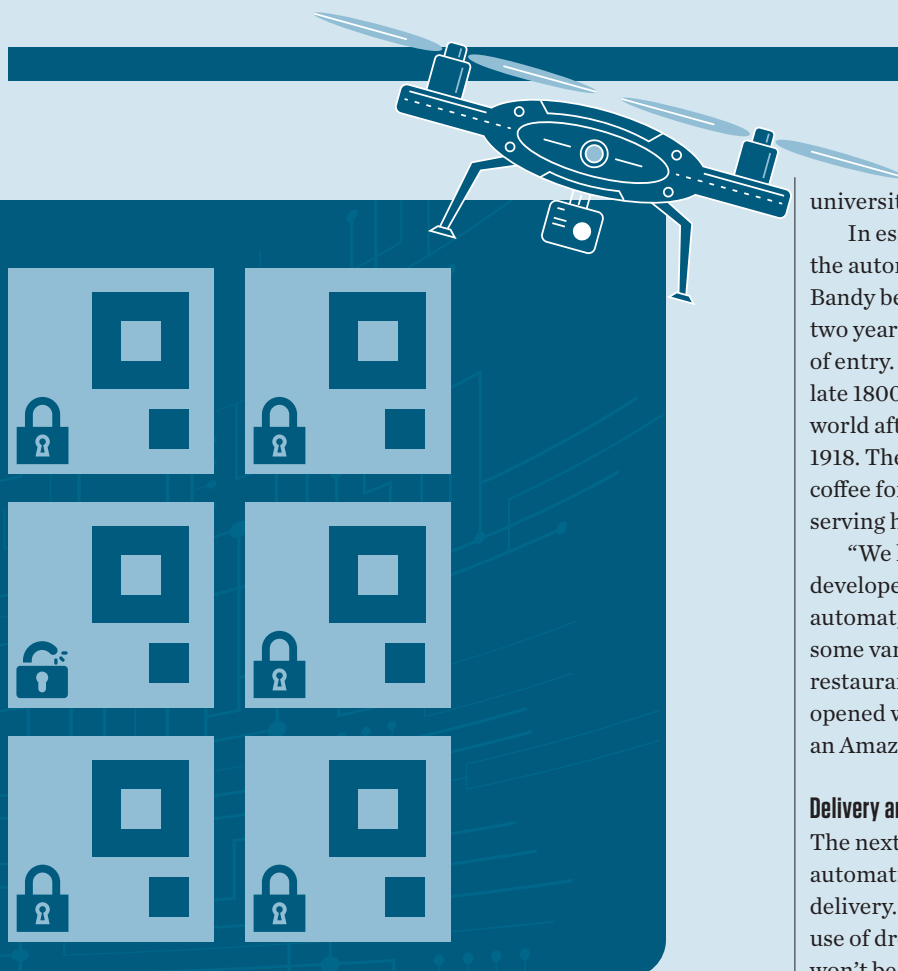


The rise of ghost kitchens, designed solely to prepare food for delivery and requiring no customer interaction at these sites, means it is no surprise that operators are already looking at the next step in automation. They could soon be staffed by smart equipment and robots.

“We already make a digital twin of a kitchen to see how the equipment will fit together as an operating system,” says Caron. “The idea of a kitchen as a shared asset working with a delivery service will become more common.”

The move of Uber’s former CEO to CloudKitchens suggests the link between ghost kitchens and delivery services is only growing stronger.

“We are seeing robotic kitchens that combine smart equipment with a robotic arm, combining automated frying and grilling with robotic delivery,” adds Bandy. “There is a consistent cooking process and the equipment is easy to



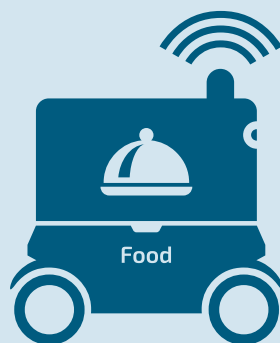
program, so there is a synergy between smart cooking equipment and robotics.”

Robots, however, are not only for ghost kitchens. Spyce in Boston has a fully automated cooking line. Staff put fresh ingredients into robotic induction woks that handle the cooking process. The founders – MIT students and self-confessed robotics-obsessed engineers – wanted to bring precision and consistency to tasty and affordable fast-casual food.

Bandy is working with a robotic pizza company opening in the US. The pizzas are assembled off site and loaded into a kiosk. Once a customer has ordered using an app, the order is robotically delivered three minutes later through a slot.

“In this project, the automated robotic kiosks can be supplied once a day with products and customers can order either on-site or by phone,” he says. “The kiosks can operate 24/7 and there are many potential applications in hospitals,

“WITH AUTONOMOUS CARS COMING INTO THE MARKET, WE COULD SEE THEM PICKING UP FOOD AT DRIVE-THRUS IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE”



universities, train stations and more.”

In essence, it is the reinvention of the automat food-vending system, which Bandy believes will proliferate in the next two years, partly because of the low cost of entry. Originally seen in Berlin in the late 1800s, automats spread around the world after the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. Then, people prepared food and coffee for customers to collect through serving hatches. Now, robots do the prep.

“We have one client that has developed a robotic solution supplying an automat,” says Bandy. “We are also seeing some variations that have popped up in restaurants, such as lockers that can be opened with a code on a phone, just like an Amazon locker.”

Delivery and pick-up flips

The next step on the journey of automation is, no doubt, autonomous delivery. Amazon is already trialing the use of drones to deliver packages, so it won’t be long before takeaway orders are being brought to your door by a machine.

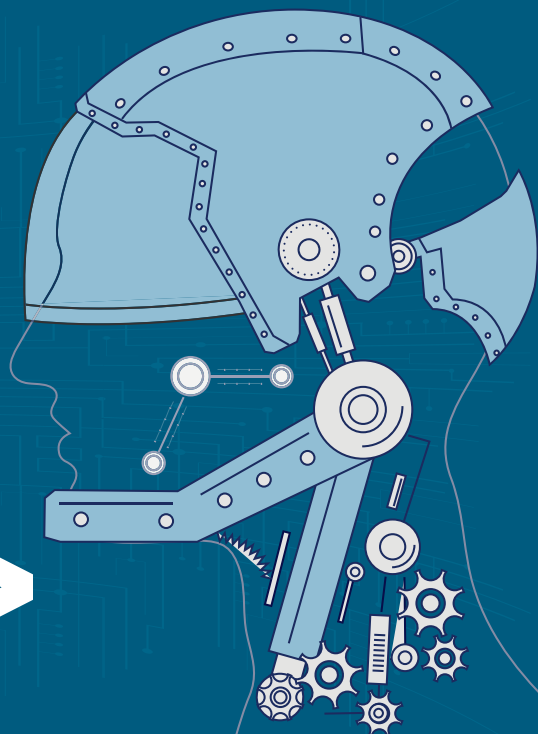
“Delivery robotics are more widespread in other countries, but will start to happen more in the US,” says Bandy. “There are, however, a lot of barriers. The machines are out in public and there are lots of unknowns in every delivery. It will take a lot of time to make it work effectively.”

The flipside of autonomous delivery is autonomous pick-ups. Fast-food giants, including McDonald’s and Burger King, have greatly increased the number of drive-thru lanes during the pandemic, including express lanes for advance orders made through an app. Couple that capacity with self-driving cars, and a new delivery model could be born.

“At its birth in 1986 in the UK, we saw the drive-thru account for 15% of business, but now it is around 60-70%,” notes Caron. “With autonomous cars coming into the market, we could see them picking up food at drive-thrus in the not too distant future.”



Look me in the AI >>



Autonomous cars, automated servers at drive-thrus or the order assistants used by the likes of Chipotle and Domino's Pizza are all dependent on one technology – artificial intelligence (AI). Seemingly intelligent systems – in fact complex algorithms coupled with the ability to recognize inputs, often voice commands – are now commonplace.

“AI is already in more restaurants than people realize,” says Bandy. “AI is taking phone orders and now there are AI order-takers in drive-thrus, which has a big impact on a part of the industry that is hardest to staff. In 2021, we will see many more US restaurants incorporating AI into their operations.”

AI is already ubiquitous in taking restaurant call-in orders in pizza and fast casual chains. Drive-thru technology developer Hi Auto is currently testing an AI attendant at Lee's Famous Recipe in Dayton, Ohio, and voice technology

company RedShift has developed an AI ordering app that links directly to the restaurant POS.

Burger King is also getting in on the act, with its Deep Flame AI system for its drive-thrus, which leverages AI's ever-improving understanding of natural language, including accents and linguistic nuances. It not only takes orders, but also upsells by making suggestions, such as an iced coffee on a hot day.

Key to guest relationships

“AI will make it possible to offer consumers an increasingly personalized experience, and maximize their satisfaction and loyalty,” says TheFork's Hooykaas. “AI will help to develop stronger guest relationships and deliver the types of exceptional on-premise experiences that turn first-time guests into repeat visitors.”

The applications of AI go well beyond >

“AI IS TAKING PHONE ORDERS AND NOW THERE ARE AI ORDER-TAKERS IN DRIVE-THRUS, WHICH HAS A BIG IMPACT ON A PART OF THE INDUSTRY THAT IS HARDEST TO STAFF”

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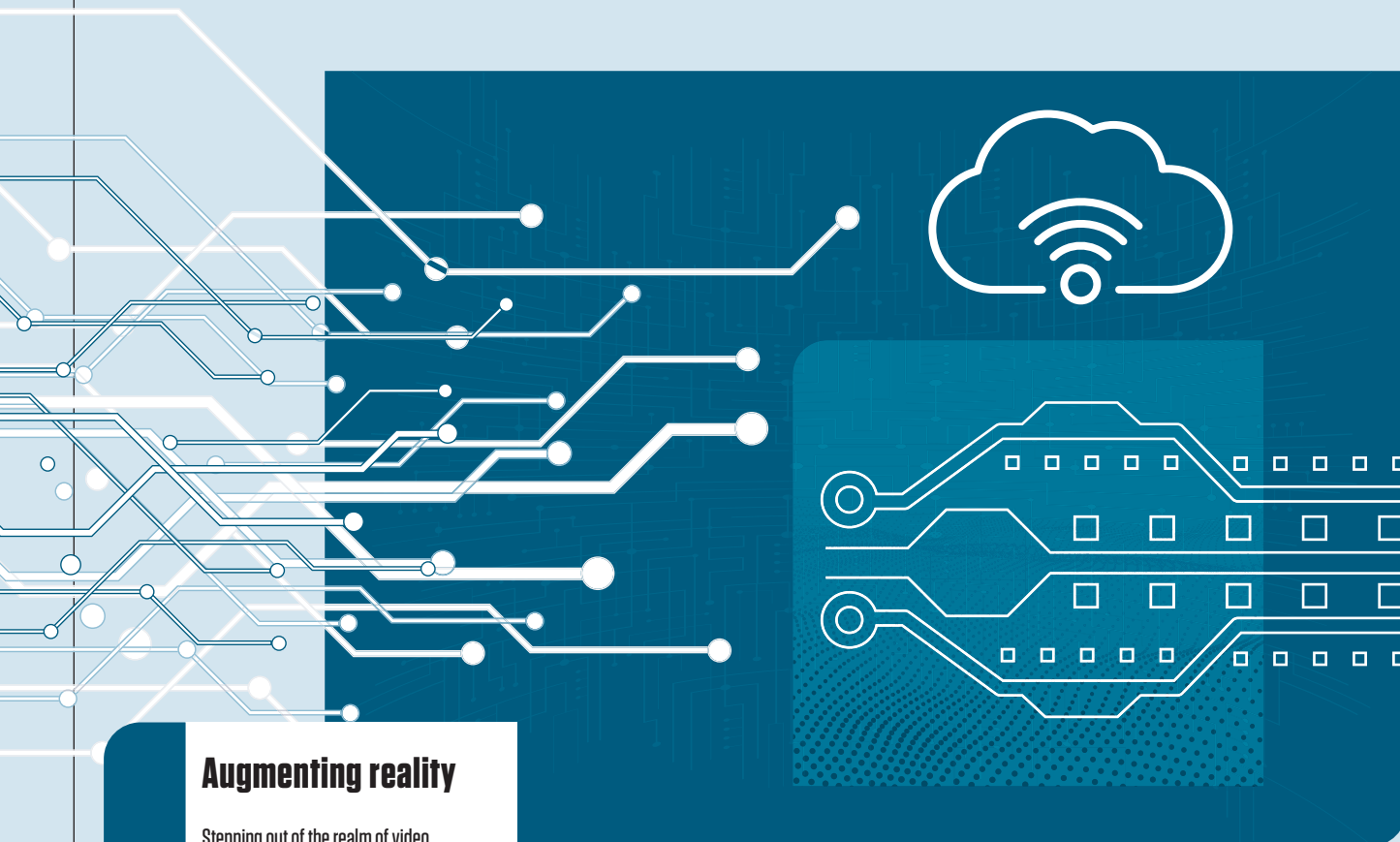
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Augmenting reality

Stepping out of the realm of video games, virtual reality (VR) and especially augmented reality (AR) could be a game-changer for the foodservice industry. AR projects a digital layer of information onto your physical surroundings. It is ideal for signposting, instructional material for training, or even entertainment. What's more, it is easy to access through a mobile phone.

"AR is the next big thing," says Rick Caron of Welbilt. "3D touchscreens will be used to improve visualization, and AR can be used to help technicians service equipment more efficiently by showing them the process. It will be ubiquitous by 2025."

Whether it is an overlay of instructions for a maintenance engineer, additional menu information from a scanned QR code, or games that come to life from scanning food packaging, AR has come a long way from Pokémon Go.

ordering. For instance, Spyce's robotic cooking line is monitored by an AI system that ensures that the food is prepared correctly and meets quality standards.

"AI is the next game-changer," says Caron. "So far, we have only scratched the surface of what it can do. It enables advanced sensors and predictive maintenance algorithms, and we even have areas in the kitchen with cameras that can see the food arriving and start the oven with the relevant settings."

Shaping up smarter

Restaurants are getting smarter, more efficient and delivering consistent quality, while reducing their need for labor. Whether driven by Covid or not, the influence of technology is reshaping the industry for the post-pandemic world. Innovation, it seems, is the secret ingredient that will help the foodservice sector to prosper. ■

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BRIEFING

Trends and events shaping foodservice around the globe

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LEGISLATION FOR REVITALIZATION

As the hospitality sector continues to emerge from the pandemic, Amelia Levin outlines the financial help available to operators

The Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) became law on March 11 as part of the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress. The \$28.6bn grant program, operated by the US Small Business Administration, has been taking applications for priority groups since late April, with the expansion to a wider group of small restaurant businesses in late May, and a potential 14-month expansion until March 2023.

Operators with 20 or fewer locations can apply for tax-free grants of up to \$5m per location, or up to \$10m for multi-location operations. The grant amount is determined by subtracting 2020 sales from 2019 revenues. In addition to restaurants, eligible establishments include food stands, trucks and carts; caterers; saloons, inns and taverns; bars, lounges, brewpubs, tasting rooms, taprooms or any other licensed facility serving food and drinks, and only if onsite sales to the public comprise at least 33% of gross receipts (presumably in 2019). Publicly traded companies are ineligible. Permanently closed entities as well as bankrupt entities without approved plans for reorganization might be ineligible.

Funds from the grants can be spent on

a wider range of expenses – accumulated during the period of February 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021—than previous relief programs, including mortgages or rent, utilities, supplies, food and beverage inventory, payroll, and operational expenses, including expenses related to outdoor dining expansion.

Help for specific groups

Five billion dollars of the fund will be set aside for restaurants with gross receipts under \$500,000 and, for the first three weeks of the application period, the Small Business Administration will prioritize awarding grants for women-, veteran-, or socially and economically disadvantaged-owned businesses, opening up the first 21 days of the program to that group specifically.

The RRF sets aside \$15bn for Economic Injury Disaster Loans typically given to victims of natural disasters, but now includes “severely impacted small businesses”

Expanded PPP funding

For gross receipt totals in 2020, applicants might not need to include PPP loans, SBA debt relief, COVID-19-related economic injury disaster loans (EIDL), EIDL advances, targeted EIDL advances, or any other state and local small business grants (via CARES Act or otherwise). The Fund does, however, provide the PPP with an additional \$7.25bn in available funding.

Payroll tax break extension

The Employee Retention Tax Credit, created in December 2020 to reward restaurants that retained their staff during the pandemic, allows employers to write off up to 70% of their payroll expenses. Credit of up to \$7,000 per quarter per employee can be taken. This plan has been expanded until August.

Expanded emergency loan support

The RRF sets aside \$15bn for economic injury disaster loans (EIDL), typically given to victims of natural disasters, but now includes “severely impacted small businesses,” that have lost at least half of all revenues and have less than 10 employees.

Enhanced funding for SNAP and community feeding

As part of the Plan, businesses that participate in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will see a 15% increase in funding through September 30. This was an effort to help stave off hunger among American families. Restaurants and other businesses currently contracted to feed children will also earn continued support, earning reimbursements through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The RRF is based on the Senate version of the RESTAURANTS Act and the original plan posed by the Association in March 2020. Since then, foodservice sales have fallen \$255bn and 110,000 restaurants have closed. ■

THE WHOLE KIT AND CABOODLE

Restaurant meal kits have rocketed to prominence during the pandemic. Howard Riell outlines how melding them into an existing operation, though potentially profitable, can prove tricky

As the Covid-19 pandemic changed the way we eat? “At the beginning of the pandemic people who never thought of cooking decided to try their hand,” says **Arlene Spiegel** FCSI, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York.

“Not comfortable with searching for recipes or feeling overwhelmed at the supermarket, they opted for meal kits. It was fun and provided a meal solution.”

To create a successful meal kit program, menu options need to be flexible, customizable and fit a range of lifestyles. The most successful ones offer daily, weekly and monthly scheduling and an option to pause or opt out on any day. Popular programs offer a choice of a full day of meals, including, breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and shakes, Spiegel explains. “They provide simple, easy to understand and execute recipes that will provide a feeling of accomplishment by the home cook.”

Examples abound. Whiskey Cake,





a “neighborhood joint for craft cocktails and farm-fresh comfort food”, with locations in The Woodlands, Stafford, Las Colinas, San Antonio, Katy, Plano and Baybrook, Texas, as well as Oklahoma City, and Tampa, Florida, offers a variety of so-called Quarantine Kits. They include a BBQ Pork Sliders Kit that serves six for \$70, a Box-O-Burgers Kit for six priced at \$45, and Grilled Salmon Kits that serve two for \$42 and four to six for \$82. At Ollie’s, a family restaurant in Edwardsville, Pennsylvania, owners David and Edna Tevet are doing Charbroiled Chicken Breast (plain, BBQ, blackened, or lemon-pepper for four to six, \$39.99) and Yankee Pot Roast (\$41.99).

A successful program has to be affordable, easy to follow, fun for the family, and something kids will love and request, suggests John Mayes, vice president of operations and Pastor for El Toro Mexican Restaurants in Texas, which owns and operates six full-service

“Stick to what you know and love. Use your meat and potatoes that sell best at your location. Do not make it too complicated. You want something your guests feel comfortable about ordering and presenting to their families”

Tex-Mex restaurants, and a catering arm, across south east Texas in Baytown, Garth, Clute, La Porte and Palestine.

“Personally, I say stick to what you know and love,” Mayes continues. “Use your meat and potatoes that sell best at your location. Do not make it too complicated. You want something that your staff will buy into and support, and something that your guests feel comfortable about ordering and presenting to their families.”

Management also has to understand the initiative and be able to present it in a positive fashion. “Are you going to buy >

a car from a salesman who is unsure of what he is selling? No way,” says Mayes. “They have to be able to sell it and sell it well. Help the guest see value in it.”

Operational considerations

Restaurateurs planning their meal kit program need to consider several factors:

Costs: “The bulk of the expense will be packaging,” says Robert Simmelink, a corporate chef who served as chef de cuisine at Restaurant Bikini in Santa Monica, California, and executive chef at Noa Noa Restaurant in Beverly Hills. A box that will hold all of the ingredients should have segmented compartments for each component or smaller boxes inside, with recyclable small containers for sauces or other liquids, he notes. “A vacuum sealer is very handy, otherwise various sizes of Ziploc bags for seasoning and spice blends.” Depending on how they will get to the consumer, “you may need small gel packs to freeze, which will keep the protein cold from your restaurant to the consumer.”

Marketing: Social media and third-party delivery platforms are “a natural way to reach the population to introduce the offering,” Spiegel says. “Operators

“If it is already in your wheelhouse then it will have low labor impact and be easily inserted into production and execution. If it is something that you already do and do well then no new equipment is needed”

can expect to lose money until they hit critical mass to cover labor, food cost, and delivery fees.”

Equipment: Kitchen production may require the addition of equipment – blast chillers, shrink-wrap machines and segregated cooler space – to extend the shelf life of the product. The kitchen should also be HACCP-compliant to



A successful meal kit program has to be affordable, easy to follow, fun for the family, and something kids will love and request

ensure safety procedures are in effect.

Mayes advises restaurants to keep it simple. “If it is already in your wheelhouse then it will have low labor impact and be easily inserted into production and execution.” The same applies to equipment. “Again, if it is something that you already do and do well then no new equipment is needed.”

The good news, according to Spiegel, is that meal kits/delivery programs can be prepared during off-hours. “Since the recipes and packaging may be different than a restaurant’s regular offering, it is best to prepare the kits when the kitchen is not used for regular service.”

Potential pitfalls

Incomplete planning may, unsurprisingly, result in problems. Some of the mistakes



Customers want to have options that require minimal home assembly

that restaurants make in preparing meal kits, Spiegel says, include:

- Making the recipes too complex.
- Using too many ingredients.
- Including recipes that require special equipment.
- Not including a picture of the finished plate to guide the cook.
- Failing to include portion guides, leaving the cook confused about how many people the recipe will feed.

Too many restaurants make the process difficult, in Mayes' view. "Too difficult to package, too confusing to order with too many choices. They make it about turning a profit rather than feeding the community."

Another potential pitfall is going off-brand and selling items that are too scratch-made. "Do not do that," warns

"You're not a grocery; you are a restaurant, and your guests will expect the foods to be made in advance. Think in terms of home-meal-replacement items that are easy and require very little home assembly"

Mark K. Laux, managing partner of The Laux Agency, a marketing consultancy in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, that he runs with his wife Kelly. "Don't sell raw. Sell take-and-bake or take-and-serve items. You're not a grocery; you are a restaurant, and your guests will expect the foods to be made in advance. Think instead in terms of home-meal-replacement items that are easy and require very little home assembly."

Looking ahead

How will meal kits fare once the pandemic is a memory? Opinions vary.

"I think that this was a temporary solution," suggests Kirsten Tripodi, Ph.D., director, hospitality management program: associate professor at Sacred Heart University in Bloomfield, New Jersey. "Before the pandemic, sales of commercial meal kits had peaked and seemed to be waning."

Spiegel suggests that in the months and years to come, cooking engagement will decline as people "feel more comfortable ordering in fully prepared meals from their favorite restaurants."

Others feel meal kits have proven too much of a convenience to be dispensed with. "I think the moms and dads out there appreciate it and expect it," says Mayes. "We were doing them before Covid as back-to-school family packs. 'Go by the restaurant and get a kit – easy.'"

Operators who decide to keep them as part of their normal menu offerings even after Covid-19 restrictions are lifted can do so "by making them part of their already executed wheelhouse," says Mayes, "part of what they already know and what they already do well." ■

Going after the BIG BUCKS

Local chains challenge Starbucks for a bigger slice of the coffee and tea market in China.
Tina Nielsen reports on the state of play

Starbucks' interest in the Chinese market has been clear for a long time. Second to the US in terms of market size, China has been the site of major growth for the American coffee shop chain in recent years.

Since opening its first store in the World Trade Center in Beijing in 1999, it has grown to 5,000 stores in mainland China, including a reserve roastery in Shanghai, which opened in 2017. According to Euromonitor data from 2020, Starbucks retains the lead in China's specialist coffee and tea shop market with 36.4% of the market.

It is so integrated in the Chinese market that it has been named among Aon Hewitt's China's Best Employers for five consecutive years.

The ambition to continue growing remains. Last year Starbucks announced plans to invest £130m in a new production facility in China, called the Coffee Innovation Park, due to open next year in the city of Kunshan, northwest of Shanghai.

Local challenger brands

As the hospitality world continues to emerge from the Covid pandemic, Starbucks has remained on a steady growth curve in China, but its most recent quarterly report conceded that its same-store sales growth of 91% had fallen short of expectations.

International travel restrictions have affected figures for the coffee brand and now as things start to open up again the American company finds a growing competition from local challenger brands that are enjoying a market boost.

According to the business data company Qimingpian, in the first four months of 2021 there were 14 fundraising deals for operators in the Chinese tea and coffee market. This is the same number of deals the country saw for the whole of 2019.

So far, the most famous challenger brand to Starbucks is Luckin Coffee, founded in 2017 and at the start of 2020 counted more than 4,500 stores in China, but other >







operators coming to the fore include Hey Tea and Nayuki, both companies with a focus on new-style tea and both carry valuations estimated around \$2bn.

The so-called new style tea drink refers to a beverage that contains top-quality tea leaves or a concentrated liquid extracted from raw materials, mixed with fresh milk, imported butter, natural animal butter or seasonal fruits. Currently, cheese-topped bubble tea and fresh milk tea are the representatives on the market. These drinks also stand out for more elaborate and appealing packaging than other products.

Hey Tea has gone from being a small start-up with a focus on fruit teas, milk teas, and cheese teas in 2012 to a company setting new trends for tea culture.

Five years later, in 2017, when it opened its first store in trend-generating super city Shanghai, young customers lined up for five hours plus to get their hands on (and picture taken with) a tea. Social

media has played a big part in its growth and popularity among an engaged demographic. By the end of 2019 Hey Tea had 390 stores in mainland China, 139% up on 2019.

Hey Tea is second to Starbucks in China's specialist coffee- and tea-shop market, with an 8.8% share, according to Euromonitor.

Established in 2015, Nayuki is another tea-drink brand, with its fruit-based cheese teas and baked goods. It has grown rapidly and has more than 400 stores in China, Singapore and Japan.

Looking ahead, new-style tea drinks are one of the solid rising trends in Asia Pacific and coffee and tea shop chains are the best performers among all cafés and bars chains. Euromonitor predicts a 9% compound annual growth rate between 2019-2024.

Starbucks may have the heft and resources to continue on its aggressive expansion drive in China, but local challengers have seen the opportunity to take their share. ■

Sustainable innovations for Starbucks China

In line with the global trend for a more sustainable way of consuming food and beverage products, Starbucks has unveiled a range of new sustainable packaging in its stores across the Chinese mainland, including coffee-ground straws – the first major food and beverage retail chain in the market to do so at scale. Together with the launch of reusable for-here cold beverage cups and to-go wooden flatware, it marks the latest move in Starbucks continuous efforts to reduce environmental impact at every stage of the coffee journey 'from bean to cup'.

"Starbucks new sustainable packaging solutions make it easier for our partners (employees) and customers to make small contributions towards a better planet in their daily lives. Sustainable packaging is an extension of the Starbucks 'GOOD GOOD' movement, as we seek to invite everyone to eat good, feel good and do good. We firmly believe that the cumulative impact of our every action, however small, can add up to effect real change and make a positive difference to the environment," said Leo Tsoi, senior vice president, chief operating officer and president, Starbucks China Retail.



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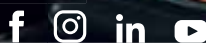
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BREXIT DISRUPTION: Fresh challenges for the food and drink sector

With UK-EU exports of food and live animals down more than 60%, foodservice businesses – already struck by the effects of Covid – must adapt to post-Brexit supply delays and disruption. Juliet Martin reports

Britain's departure from the European union (EU) in January has had a prompt and evident impact on the food and drinks industry. Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures show that overall UK-EU exports fell by 40.7%, £5.6bn, in January compared to December, with exports of food and live animals down by 63.6%. Food and drink imports from the EU have fallen nearly 25%.

Exports most affected include cheese, falling from £45m to £7m in January, and chocolate, falling from £41m to £13m, according to Food and Drink Federation (FDF) statistics. Salmon exports have fallen by 98%, beef by 92% and pork by 87%.

Fresh challenges

Now outside the EU single market, UK businesses have been hit by stricter certification requirements, customs hold-ups and supply shortages, leading to up to 35% increases in import and export prices and supply chain delays of six to 12 weeks, according to the Foodservice Equipment Association (FEA).

"Suppliers are struggling to deliver items to the UK on a consistent basis," says Daniel Alvarado, global food and beverage director of restaurant and sushi bar Dinings SW3. "The range of products coming from overseas has suffered."

Foodservice consultant and managing partner of Merritt-Harrison Catering Consultancy



Matthew Merritt-Harrison FCSI observes that “the cost of exports has gone up because of additional paperwork and processes” imposed by new rules. For example, export health certificates (EHCs) are required for moving food and drinks containing animal products from Britain to the EU or Northern Ireland. EU rules completely prohibit the export of products including chilled minced red meat, chilled meat preparations and ungraded eggs. The Scottish Seafood Association has reported delays between Scotland and France, with consignments taking six times longer to sign off, and freight and duty costs of over 20% mean it’s costing five times more to ship to the continent.

Delays have an indirect impact

on users of foodservice equipment. While equipment itself generally only needs replacing once every seven years, Merritt-Harrison explains: “A bigger issue with equipment is the availability of spares. They’re produced abroad and getting them does create a vulnerability.” Delays in sourcing spare equipment threaten revenue and customer satisfaction. The equipment supply chain has also been affected by shortages of raw materials, especially laminates, steel and castings.

November and December 2020 saw increased imports and exports, implying that EU and UK companies were stockpiling supplies from



overseas before the deadline, particularly machinery, transport and chemical supplies. It is likely that this had a knock-on effect, leading to lower demand in January and the following months.

Small businesses have faced particular challenges. Groupage distribution systems are being inhibited by new export rules. Merritt-Harrison warns that “smaller less sustainable businesses” risk losing out during this period of adjustment in the catering industry.

Adapt and thrive

At the same time, small businesses have an advantage when it comes to adapting to external conditions.



“Smaller companies tend to be much more flexible and find it easier to respond,” says Merritt-Harrison, especially in terms of adjusting costs, locations or workforces.

For Dinings SW3, adaptation was crucial to managing the impact of Brexit. “We adapted our menu to reflect local produce,” says Alvarado. “Since we knew that Brexit was on our doorstep, we started to work with Cornish local fishermen.

“Fresh items coming over from Europe, such as vegetables and fruits, are becoming a problem. The price of produce is increasing dramatically. We are trying to buy British produce as much as we can and have developed some other products ourselves in order to have

the quality and produce we want.”

In terms of staffing, “we have seen a shortage of staff as highly skilled European people are no longer coming to London,” Alvarado says. “We need to respond by finding people who want to learn new skills and appeal to colleagues, undergraduates and older people.”

Impact of Covid-19

The impact of Brexit can’t be described without addressing the interference of the Covid-19 pandemic, an event that could not have been predicted at the time of the vote and has come to overshadow it in importance.

The pandemic’s repressive effect on hospitality has reduced demand for food products and services, distorting the impact of Brexit’s major changes. “The impact of Brexit hasn’t yet been as significant as we thought it would initially be,” Matthew Merritt-Harrison suggests. “[Covid-19 has] delayed it and it may actually smooth it out slightly, but it won’t mitigate it completely.”

Delayed reaction

Our perspective on Brexit’s impact should therefore be long term. According to the report *Rebuilding of hospitality 2021 to 2025*, the foodservice sector will lose £30bn of revenue in 2021, due to the combined impact of Covid-19 and Brexit. Steve Hobbs, chair of the FEA, states that “it is vital that the government acts to support the work these companies do and ensure that the movement of goods is as seamless as possible to avoid damaging economic recovery”. The UK government has recently pushed back the implementation of Brexit import border control processes in order to allow businesses to focus on Covid-19 recovery. “We’ll get back to pre-Covid levels in Q3 2022,” predicts

“A bigger issue with equipment is the availability of spares. They’re produced abroad and getting them does create a vulnerability”

Merritt-Harrison, “and at that point the full impact of Brexit will be felt.”

As the first stages of the UK government’s road map out of lockdown are implemented, the foodservice sector has already seen an uptick. “There’s huge demand as restaurants and pubs start opening,” observes Merritt-Harrison. This will pose its own challenges. Suppliers, especially equipment suppliers, won’t immediately be able to respond to increased demand, so businesses should be prepared for delays. Furthermore, with EU countries lagging behind the UK in terms of recovery, export demand may remain repressed for longer.

There is reason for optimism. February numbers for food and live animal exports were already up from January, according to Mark Lynch, partner at corporate finance house, Oghma Partners. This suggests that the food industry is on its way to learning to cope with the post-Brexit market.

“We believe restaurants will become more resourceful to find their ingredients and work more closely with farmers and suppliers,” predicts Alvarado.

Merritt-Harrison encourages businesses to take the changes related to both Brexit and Covid-19 in their stride.

“Change happens all the time, but we would hope that those changes will be able to be managed,” he says, pointing out that we will first learn to live with Covid-19 and then learn to live with Brexit. ■

MY KITCHEN

Atching Lillian Borromeo

Known as the guardian of Kapampangan recipes, Atching Lillian Borromeo tells Maida Pineda about her traditional outdoor kitchen

The province of Pampanga is known as the culinary capital of the Philippines. Recipes, skills and techniques have been passed from generation to generation from the Spanish friars of the colonial period.

I worked in a five-star hotel, after completing my degree in home economics. But I was disappointed that we only made foreign dishes, so, I decided to head back home to Mexico, Pampanga and cook there.

I prefer to be called Atching Lillian as Atching means older sister. It seems more appropriate than calling me a chef. Now, at age 80, some call me the guardian of Kapampangan recipes and others call me a food historian. Before the pandemic, I would sometimes have a hundred guests in

my ancestral home. It is known as the Cusinang Mutua ni Atching Lillian or the Old Kitchen of Atching Lillian.

Filipino homes have an outdoor kitchen and an inside kitchen. The Kapampangans have big houses and big kitchens inside their homes, but they also need to have big kitchens outside their homes. This is where they kill the pig, clean the intestines, or scale the fish.

I use my 100-year-old wood-fired stove in the outdoor kitchen. We had three of these stoves, but only two are still working. We also had a wood-fired oven. The earthquake and volcanic eruption in the 1990s ruined it. It was fueled by wood or rice grain husks.

I treasure the dulang, a low wooden working table, and a heavy wooden rolling pin with the initials AH, both used by my great grandmother. But my most treasured pieces of kitchen equipment are the antique molds I use to make dulce prenda.

This is a biscuit, first made in the 1800s. It marries the Spanish tradition of the St Nicolas cookie, with a filling of sweet winter melon from Chinese traders. These wooden molds have intricate Filipino artistry in their design. I also greatly appreciate my great grandmother's talyasi, a claypot wok, now 100 years old.

You may cook the same ingredients and use the same recipe, but cooking in a traditional talyasi changes the taste. ■

The Filipino house has a kitchen inside and one outside for messier food preparations

Traditional wood-fired stone ovens and stoves are located in the outside kitchen

Her great grandmother's 100-year-old clay cooking vessels and copper woks make a difference to the taste of the food she cooks



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