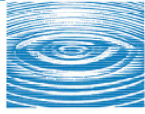




KING-CASEY



King • Casey REPORT

Insights and Trends in Retail Branding, Merchandising and Design



Hot Topics in Kitchen Design

What's Cooking Back-of-House

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What's Cooking Back-of-House

A KING-CASEY REPORT

Finding ways to optimize “back-of-house” operations is a critically important strategy for improving your restaurant business and improving the bottom line. In this issue of the King-Casey Report, we speak with Ted Barber, King-Casey Associate, to discuss some hot topics for superior kitchen design.

KC Report: Ted, what's cookin' in the kitchen these days? What are the topics that everyone in food service is talking about?

It is different for different segments.

In the themed entertainment segment, it is about adding additional show quality cooking and food presentation to the dining experience. There is a lot of emphasis on equipment that is unique, non-traditional, multi-purpose and which translates to creativity and “show” for the guests. Exhibition cooking is very animated because you are combining visible food movement, flames, architectural surrounds such as “Himalayan” salt brick walls and counters and chef interaction. In some cases, exhibition cooking equates to labor duplication during peak hours, greater square footage and larger capital costs for the display equipment. This formula of impacted costs must be tested against several factors; guest frequency, quality, employee discipline and differentiation may prove to off-set a portion or all of the costs over time before deciding on the degree of show kitchen to design.

In (QSR and Fast-Casual), guest interaction, exhibition and food display are essential elements to be integrated into kitchen design and program, it requires a very minimalistic approach, focusing on speed, function, simplicity, food, safety, quality and taste. These segments need to communicate value, speed and quality in the initial guest experience.

KC Report: What's revolutionizing food service?

The noise today is in blast chilling, shock freezing and rethermalization. Although this is not new math, the technology has improved over the past few years giving culinary teams confidence in the final product. Blast chilling is taking cooked products from 194 degrees to 37 degrees in 90 minutes and shock freezing from 194 degrees to 0 degrees 240 minutes. These two processes ensure food

will maintain its freshness, and meet the most stringent guidelines set up by HCCAP for safety.

We are seeing a stronger interest in operator's buying value-added products from produce, meats, cheeses and seafood. Operators are further trying to reduce costs of kitchens and size by contracting with private packers or buying ready to use sauces and soups. This is a continuation of the blast chilling/freezing technology with much of the work being performed off-premise. This approach reduces the kitchen footprint and equipment needs to meet the culinary demands. As an example, this technology allows a restaurant to offer an item like osso buco on their menu finished to order. As you know it is impossible to cook osso buco from scratch during dinner hour and manage the quantity and yield overage. The chefs will simply cook a tray of lamb or veal shanks in advance and individually shock freeze them. Then up to 30–60 days later they can take out each bag and rethermalize it within its original flavors and liquids producing the taste and consistency as if it were cooked fresh that day.

This technique is very widely used in the banqueting, bread and pastry industries. If you look at large banqueting facilities, they bake much of their menu, blast chill or freeze it, put it in the freezer for 30 to 60 to 90 days and pull it out as they need it.

KC Report: How is the customer impacting back-of-house trends?

Special dietary demands are on the rise. You have vegetarian, true vegan, gluten free, fat free, sugar trans-fat free, low sodium, religious and all the rest of the restrictive ingredients and processes to contend with today. All these different genres influencing cuisines that customers are demanding are becoming main stream requests and finding their way on menus. More and more children today are being identified as special dietary needs kids. There is a push to accommodate special dietary needs seamlessly in all

segments of food service. As a result, you have to develop a kitchen that can handle segregated preparation, storage, receiving, ware-washing and defined service. These needs are part of the everyday food service operator's challenges. In prisons and hospitals its food service has had to adapt to special dietary needs for years. Specialty diets are part of prisoners' rights. If a prisoner is a vegetarian or requires a religious non-pork dinner, you have to provide it for him in most states. Over the next ten years you will see an even wider division between cuisines and special dietary needs at guest, institutional and healthcare facilities. There are companies re-emerging that are all vegetarian fast food, (<http://www.bgood.com/>), and an expanding base of restaurants specializing in salads, fruit and yogurt.

KC Report: There is a lot of buzz about “organic”, “sustainability”, “farm-to-table” and so on. Are these things here to stay, or are they passing fads?

They are not passing fads. You will start to see a stronger move towards farm-to-table. There is also a move towards nutraceutical based ingredients. Nutraceutical is basically nutrient enriched foods for good health, healing and also sustainability. This type of menu would feature a lot of lentils and legumes and exotic plants and fruits; such as: small squash, specialty bread products and hydroponic and organic products.

It may take time but at some point nutraceutical will become part of the mainstream menu choices. The first company that really makes a stand and is able to provide a great full menu of nutraceutical products and become endorsed by celebrities and recognized health and nutritionists you will then see a major shift into the farm-to-table organic and other health focused menu items. This integration of new types of foods brings with it new kitchen equipment requirements, new kitchen designs, and new technology as well. Stay tuned!

KC Report: What is “multi-purpose equipment”, and why is it important?

One example of multipurpose equipment is a combi-oven (combination oven with programmed steam and controlled environment). These ovens can operate as a standard or convection oven which provides great product diversity. These specialized ovens also allow you to make fried products, broil or smoke products. It also can provide the addition of steam which is very effective in baking breads and roasting. Steam is used to keep food flavorful and moist by injecting steam periodically through the cooking process. This process will also reduce shrinkage. The equipment is expensive but let's say within a minimal four foot square in your kitchen, you could actually do everything I just mentioned including rethermalization of food. As you can see this type of equipment is “multi-purpose” and very effective. Combi-ovens are a tremendous space saver that saves money in the long term.

The blast freezer we talked about earlier is also a piece of multi-purpose equipment. Blast chillers can serve to slow respiration in vegetables, which prolongs shelf life. Vegetables are basically breathing and that's how they survive. If you slow the respiration down, you can prolong the vegetables life and freshness. As the plant breathes in an environment that's higher than 42 degrees it will deteriorate during this process quicker. So the blast chillers slow down this process, thereby slowing product deterioration and bacteria growth by rapidly chilling the product to 40 degrees and below. Some companies modify atmospheres with nitrogen to reduce the oxygen allowing the vegetables and meats to sustain a longer and safe life. This also reduces waste and labor.

Multi-purpose equipment helps the operator perform better both on a function and profit basis. They reduce waste.

KC Report: Seems like technology is playing an important role in impacting kitchen trends. What's an example of how technology has resulted in improved business performance?

We designed a restaurant where there were eight cash registers selling hamburgers. It is a very large facility that was designed to handle 72 transactions per hour, per register, per line. There are two lines per register, total of 16 lines of guests. You can see the demand is very high – that is over 1000 burgers per hour in addition to ancillary products.

The customer didn't want to have these hamburgers cooked and wrapped in advance. The focus was on quality, safety and speed. We selected a broiler/toaster that was developed to produce 1200-1400 burgers per hour exceeding the theoretical peak demand and thereby ensuring the guest service was within the prescribed service standards of the client.

KC Report: What 's the biggest chronic mistake that you see operators making time and time again?

Operators don't allow the kitchen design to over perform the theoretical demand as required. This design strategy will avoid long waits, avoid prep delays, and avoid issues getting the product to the customer. It's critically important to plan the right square footage, develop an optimized layout and choose the best equipment to meet operational needs and demands. Operators need to find a balance between staffing, equipment capabilities and demand. The cost: performance ratio (productivity) should be a key focus.

KC Report: What are several things that could be done back-of-house to improve a restaurant's business model?

The first goal is to be able to produce everything that's on the menu with the greatest efficiency and speed

(productivity). Many operators fail to recognize that you must put the money in square footage and/or equipment to optimize the productivity of the restaurant, meeting the demand per hour or meal period. There should not be long service waits related to prep and delays in getting the product out of the kitchen. That seems to always be the biggest problem we see – the failure to provide enough square footage and the right equipment to meet the operations needs and demands.

KC Report: Despite a restaurant's best efforts, what are the deadly sins you see over and over?

If you take a look at any kitchen today, they become almost like a vessel with water in it. The water finds its own level and the kitchens adapt to making it work. They adjust to their inefficiencies. We like to say “if you push the food through” that’s a problem, but “if you are pulling the food through” you’re in control and that’s what we want to see.

What it comes down to is; if the kitchen can’t deliver the food fast enough, then that’s a deadly sin. On the other hand, if the chef is over-producing and the servers can’t get the food out fast enough or there are not enough plates or space to hold the food while it is being staged, it’s also a problem. We look at it as an axial approach to solving a holistic problem. If it doesn’t go in a straight line, clearly it is not going smoothly outside in the dining room. If the menu isn’t adapted to the equipment or the equipment isn’t adapted to the menu, that’s a deadly sin.

If you have too many seats in the dining room and you can’t produce quality food to meet that demand, that’s a problem. If you have the wrong equipment, and you are not producing the food appropriately, then you have an issue as well. There is really not a single sin that’s a problem; it is usually a deadly combination of several things. You need to plan extensively to prevent the perfect culinary storm.



About Ted Barber (King-Casey Associate) *Food & Beverage Strategy, Planning and Design*

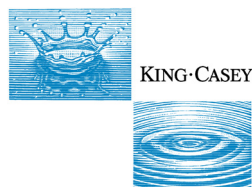
Ted has broad based experience in the food service industries, including QSR, Fast Casual, Casual and Fine Dining. He has held a wide range of senior positions allowing him to understand the

many facets that make up a well-rounded food service professional and world-class operation.

In his early days at The Walt Disney World Company, Ted worked with many notable domestic and international chefs while helping with the kitchen procurement and project management for the EPCOT Center Project and later with the Euro-Disney Theme Park in France. Ted’s responsibility included design management after hand-off for the 30+ kitchens, procurement of the food service equipment, table ware, food and beverage and all related requirements to operate the resorts and food operation, while simultaneously providing the same over-sight for the rest of the Florida, California, and European Theme Parks and Resort operations.

King-Casey is a pioneer in retail consulting and design. For more than half a century, we have been building competitive brands for a broad array of retail companies by dramatically improving the customer experience at every point of contact. King-Casey provides a complete range of services including assessment, research, branding, visual merchandising, retail store design, and rollout. We develop innovative solutions that result in increased customer loyalty, higher sales and greater Return on Investment.

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