



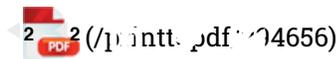
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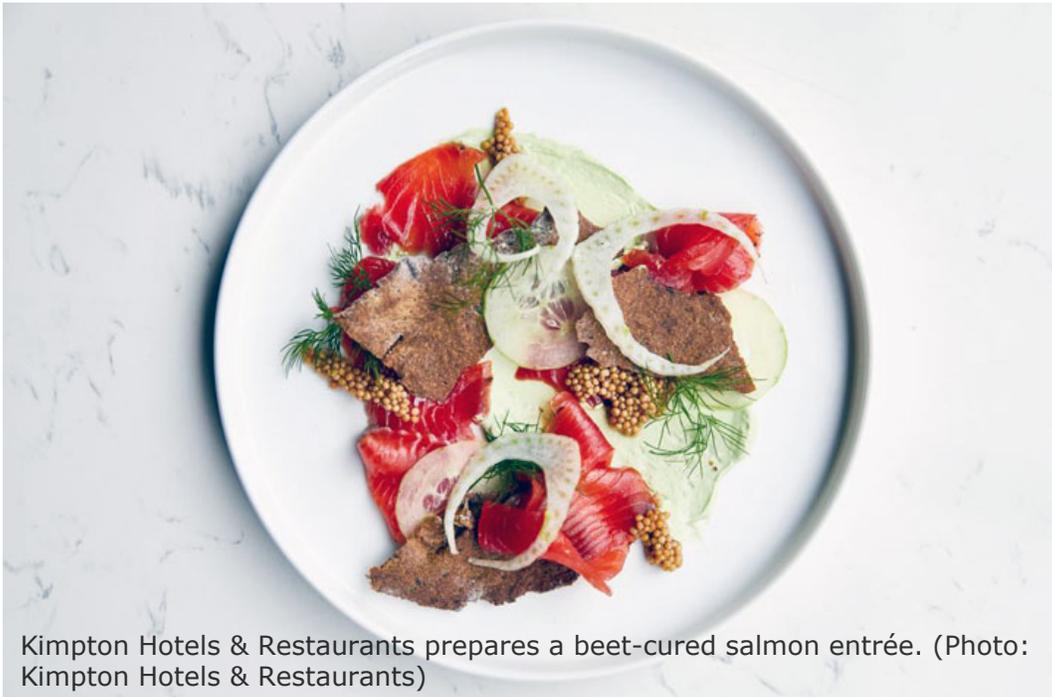


Hotels enhance F&B offerings as guests' diets evolve

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By letting guests know that they care about their special food requests, whether it's keto or cage-free and gluten-free options, hotels are boosting their F&B profits and overall business.





Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants prepares a beet-cured salmon entrée. (Photo: Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants)

By Laura Koss-Feder
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REPORT FROM THE U.S.—Hoteliers know there is simply no substitute for listening to guests and being responsive to what they want, which includes what they want on their plates at the hotel restaurant.

One trend in guest requests is for more menu options that are healthy, including foods from the keto diet and gluten-free and cage-free options. By meeting that need, hotels are boosting their food-and-beverage profits, sources said.

It's not enough to make a menu change; hoteliers also must effectively market and promote the offerings to guests, as well as educate the kitchen staffs.

"What has become most important is the education of chefs and servers about the many types of allergens and diets and how imperative it is to be accommodating of these requests," said Kenneth Taylor, VP of strategic development at MarkeTeam Inc.

With today's dietary restrictions and food allergies, a kitchen that's flexible enough to accommodate is an expectation and draw for many guests, said Andrew Rigie, executive director of the New York City Hospitality Alliance.

"You want a good menu mix to help control food costs, control labor costs that go into food prep and monitor portion size while reducing food waste," Rigie said.

These special menus are being marketed through traditional methods, including during the booking process, at check-in and via in-room advertising. In addition, a strong social media strategy can bring attention to a hotel's F&B program, Rigie said. Gyms and fitness classes also provide an avenue to promote healthy dining options in the hotel, he said.

RAR Hospitality promotes its healthy food items through a monthly newsletter it sends to regular guests, President and CEO Robert Rauch said.

Front-desk personnel also talk to guests about these menu options, he said. Some hotels offer a combination of vegan, keto and gluten-free choices, in addition to traditional foods. For instance, RAR's Lafayette Hotel in San Diego features a cauliflower steak that is both vegan and gluten-free in its Hope 46 restaurant. The Hilton Garden Inn in Delmar, California, serves a popular vegetarian flatbread at its Bistro 39 eatery.



The hotels source these special foods from local organic farms, which are sustainable, and price them the same as other food items, based on market demand and cost, Rauch added.

"We added these kind of sod items because we saw what guests were asking for, and we listened to them," Rauch said. "The keto diet is new and popular, and guests are asking for gluten-free and vegan items as well."

While more than 50% of guests still eat traditional comfort foods, about one out of every five are requesting items on the low-carb keto diet, Rauch noted.

Scott Gingerich, SVP of restaurants and bars at Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, said he's seeing trends toward more plant-based, gluten-free and pescatarian diet options.

"We receive feedback from our guests and service staff as to which items are frequently requested and make sure to have them on hand," he said. "We also make sure our catering sales team and servers let meeting planners and guests know that we're flexible and try to accommodate their dietary needs whenever possible.

"Gluten-free continues to be one of the main requests we receive, whether it's for celiac or personal preference," Gingerich said.

The menu at Kimpton Hotel Palomar's restaurant Curadero, the restaurant at, has been mainly gluten-free since its April 2017 opening in San Diego. Chefs also are offering more vegetarian, vegan or raw dishes, whether it's a savory dish like spaghetti and "beet balls" or a sweet treat like raw cashew date cheesecake, Gingerich said.

While the ingredients to make some of these healthy dishes can be expensive, Kimpton's restaurants follow the same pricing structure and percentage for all menu items, Gingerich said.

Properties with on-site gardens are a bit more cost-effective in the long run, he added. For example, 312 Chicago harvests a garden on the Kimpton Hotel Allegro's roof, growing a variety of herbs and vegetables, including arugula, chives, sage, mint, basil, jalapenos, habanero, rosemary and tomatoes. The vegetarian lasagna, for example, is made with fresh basil pesto, and the crostini di burrata is topped with freshly harvested baby heirlooms tomatoes.

Dean Wendel, VP of food & beverage at Concord Hospitality, said most of the hotels in the company's portfolio offer cage-free eggs and free-range poultry items; grass-fed beef, heirloom pork and sustainable seafood; and farmed greens, fruits and vegetables high in protein, iron and other nutrients.

"Guests will always pay for menu items that are creative and enticing. While you may pay a premium for locally-foraged produce or free-roaming lamb and beef, portion sizes can be brought in line with what we know is enough," he said.



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