

# Making Guests Feel *Welcome*

by James  
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Rethinking  
hospitality  
equipment



Electrolux Libero Point 3.

**T**o make guests or strangers feel welcome, that's how Webster's Dictionary defines hospitality. And that is exactly what hotels, resorts, stadiums and other out-of-home destinations have worked to achieve by not only feeding their visitors' stomachs, but also their need for entertainment and adventure.

But recent changes in travel practices and society have forced those providing hospitality services to take a long look at their operations in order to make necessary changes so they more closely serve the needs of current and potential customers.

"A classic example is the gaming industry," says Adam F. Weissenburg,

managing partner for tourism, hospitality and leisure with Deloitte & Touche USA, New York City. "Not long ago, Las Vegas hotel/casinos practically gave away their food and beverage in order to attract more people to their gaming floors. But in recent years, places like the Wynn Las Vegas Resort Casino have made food and beverage into an attraction unto itself, and thus are attracting customers who might hardly ever touch a poker chip. Foodservice now brings in a third of all revenue in hotel/casinos.

"The same occurred more recently with regular hotels and resorts. In the past, when travel and their occupancies were high, it didn't matter that the on-premises upscale restaurant and room service opera-

tion didn't generate the profits of the coffee shop and catering operation. But since 9/11, travel has been down, and it matters that all hospitality operations be profitable," Weissenburg says.

### Change is good

One way hotels and resorts are making their upscale restaurants more profitable is to bring in celebrity chefs or lease the space to an operation run by a renowned chef. Another way is to offer a popular cuisine (Asian, Mediterranean, traditional steakhouse, etc.) made better and augmented by highly personal service and bits of incidental entertainment, says Michael Carsch, president of the Grand Sierra Resort & Casino, Reno, Nev.

"People enjoy things like watching their Caesar salad prepared tableside," Carsch says. "And flaming desserts like cherries jubilee are coming back, as they offer both entertainment and excitement, even if prepared at someone else's table."

Much of the foodservice in a well-run hospitality operation occurs outside of on-premises restaurants.

More hotels and resorts are using portable breakfast stations to feed both conventioners and guests on the go in the morning, says Robert Simmelink, corporate chef at Alto-Shaam, Menomonee Falls, Wis. In some hotels, such stations are set up near checkout areas so departing guests can get their omelet or other breakfast foods before heading to the airport.

Buffet service is also undergoing change.

"The days of buffet food being prepared elsewhere and stored in steam wells and under heat lamps are fading," says Simmelink. "Buffet lines are being converted into action stations where foods are prepared fresh before the eyes of guests."

Permanent fixtures in resorts and hotel/casinos, buffets function like food courts, with separate stations serving different types of foods and cuisines. Each station has its own dedicated equipment, including combi ovens, rotisseries, grills and griddles; and display cooking dominates, with chefs cooking menu items in full view of customers taking in the sights, sound and aromas.

Another hospitality trend is small plate service, where assorted gourmet menu items are offered in small portions to provide guests with a taste of dishes they might not consider ordering in more expensive, full servings, says Craig Connole, executive chef at the La Casa Del Camino Resort, Laguna Beach, Calif. A typical small plate menu offers up to 40 choices of appetizers, main courses and desserts. Guests are free to order as many as they like. Each is priced separately, except when catered for conventions, business meetings, parties or weddings. And according to Connole, these items require the same equipment used for regular restaurant, buffet or catering operations.

### Better beverages

While places where guests can unwind with a beer or cocktail have long been fixtures in hotels and resorts, more recent additions have been gourmet coffee bars that use specialized coffee brewers and espresso machines.

Even newer is the offering of gourmet tea in on-premises restaurants, hospitality suites and buffets.

In the eternal quest to provide interesting activities for guests, wine-tasting events are gaining popularity. As sort of a wine tour without a bus, these events enable guests to sample up to 10 different wines



Cambro Insulated Carrier.

Alto-Shaam GC-89  
Cooking and  
Carving Station.



with palate-cleansers between sip courses. To maximize servings while minimizing costs, portion-control dispensers are becoming necessities.

### Cool catering

Long a hospitality profit center to hotels and resorts, catering operations—including banquet services—for everything from weddings to political fund-raisers have become easier in recent years, says Alto-Shaam's Simmelink. Whereas all meals once had to be made on the day of the event, new equipment has enabled foodservice operations to spread the work out to a day or two before the event. Food can be cooked the previous day on racks in combi ovens. When finished, the racks are rolled into blast

chillers and cooled to under 40°F. Foods are then plated and rolled into a walk-in cooler until just before the banquet. The plates are then brought back to serving temperature in retherming ovens and stored in holding cabinets so all meals can be served at once.

"Banquets can be made into an event," says Jerry Ignatich, executive chef at the Grand Sierra Resort & Casino. "To provide an extra surprise to guests, the facility recently opened a large banquet room where, in a final triumphant moment to the theme music of the movie '2001: A Space Odyssey,' the meals emerge from the floor via a hydraulic lift in the center of the room."

To put the room service unit of the

hospitality operation on a profitable basis, some lodging businesses have completely rethought the operation.

"We've discovered that room service customers like lighter fare as they finish their work or prepare for the next day," says Ignatich. "So we developed a Light and Healthy menu that includes a lot of salads and light items like halibut in citrus sauce; but also comfort foods like burgers and pizza; and items like steak Diane and Kobe beef filets."


Foodservice has been part of the hospitality experience at sports stadiums since 1880, when the St. Louis Browns baseball team began offering beer and sausages to attendees. But tastes among spectators are becoming more sophisticated, prompting stadium management to reexamine the types of foods and beverages served, and how they are presented.

"Today's paying customer at sporting events ranks the culinary experience offered at stadiums as very important," says Joe Bailey, CEO of Dolphin Enterprises, which manages Dolphin Stadium in Miami. "And rather than assume that we know what the guest wants, we ask them."

New food venues added as a result of their research include an Italian restaurant specializing in paninis and grilled sausage-and-pepper hoagies, the Manhattan Deli offering barbe-

Leggett & Platt's Plas-  
steel Shelving Unit.



cued brisket and knockwurst, and a Grab & Go section offering fresh salads, fruit and smoked turkey wraps. New for 2006 is an Asian stir-fry stand. These additions have resulted in new equipment purchases. 

Source guide: Alto-Shaam, (800) 558-8744, [www.alto-shaam.com](http://www.alto-shaam.com); Bunn-O-Matic Corp., (800)637-8606, [www.bunnomatic.com](http://www.bunnomatic.com); Cambro Manufacturing Co., (800) 833-3003, [www.cambro.com](http://www.cambro.com); Carter-Hoffmann, (800) 323-9793, [www.carter-hoffmann.com](http://www.carter-hoffmann.com); Electrolux Professional Inc., (866) 449-4200, [www.electroluxusa.com/professional](http://www.electroluxusa.com/professional); Leggett & Platt Storage Products Group, (847) 410-8299, [www.leggettsfg.com](http://www.leggettsfg.com); Manitowoc Ice Inc., (800) 545-5720, [www.manitowocice.com](http://www.manitowocice.com).

## Hospitality Equipment Shopping List

In selecting equipment for hospitality operations, managers and executive chefs are always looking for new and interesting products that make the job easier. Of those interviewed for this article, the following products are receiving attention:

The SM50 compact ice machine from Manitowoc Ice Systems, which produces octagon-shaped cubes at rates of up to 53 lb. daily, eliminates the need to cart ice from larger machines into areas where it is needed. Measuring only 15" wide, it easily installs in stadium sky boxes, conference rooms and, in several upscale resorts, in guests' rooms.

Liquid coffee dispensers from Bunn-O-Matic produce coffee in high volume from concentrated coffee syrup packets. Offered in six models of assorted sizes and production capacities, these dispensers enable water content to be adjusted to produce coffee in any strength required. The units can produce both hot and iced coffee drinks. Bunn-O-Matic also offers a broad selection of hot water dispensers for tea and other hot drinks, and iced tea dispensers that brew tea from loose leaves instead of bags.

GC-89 mobile cooking and carving stations from Alto-Shaam can be rolled out to wherever breakfast, lunch or dinner needs

to be served. The unit includes an induction cooktop, hot and cold wells, brass heat lamps, a heated carving surface and an etched glass sneeze guard. Under-the-counter equipment includes a cook-and-hold oven, two warming drawers and storage shelves. Installations include buffet lines, food courts, and brunches served on patios or poolside.

Libero Point 3 from Electrolux Professional's Dito unit is comprised of flexible plug-in appliances for various cooking and holding applications that enable hospitality operations to provide varied menus quickly. These appliances include woks, griddles, and infrared and induction cooktops, which can be swapped out as needed. The unit sits on casters for rolling out when needed and returned to storage later. It can be used as part of breakfast stations, temporary buffets, events catering, and in resort and stadium food courts.

HFM Series hot food modules from Alto-Shaam perfectly display hors d'oeuvres, pizza and side dishes while keeping them hot and fresh throughout serving times on breakfast stations and buffet lines. A thermostatically-controlled Halo Heat surface provides gentle warmth to keep foods at serving temperature. The modules are available in 30-, 42- and 72" lengths.

The UPCS-400 full-size insulated carrier to be introduced in January by Cambro includes an improved gasket that holds foods at serving temperatures for up to four hours and can be cleaned without removal as in the earlier UPC-400 carrier. Ideal for catering operations both in and out of resort facilities, the carrier can be switched to either a heated keep-warm cycle or a refrigerated keep-cool cycle. A menu clip on the outside door enables carriers to be labeled as to their contents.

ISS New Era shelving systems from the Leggett & Platt Storage Products Group provide an easy-to-clean, sanitary storage rack anywhere within a hospitality system. Steel-reinforced shelves have grey polypropylene covers that remove for cleaning in a dishwasher. The shelves also have an antimicrobial epoxy coating that retards bacterial growth as it also prevents corrosion.

Flameless Room Service Carts from Cater-Hoffmann employ a system of heated bases, plates and covers to keep meals warm on the long trip from the kitchen to the guest room. Simply place a warm dish on the heated base and cover immediately and the meal is inundated with gentle heat until opened. Carts are offered in cabinet, utility cart and oval tray models.