



## Q&A with consultant Arlene Spiegel, FCSI

**FE&S: How does furniture used in commercial foodservice operations differ from other furniture?**

**AS:** The furniture selection in a restaurant setting is as important to the overall brand as the menu, music and service. The fabric, frame material, size of seat, upholstery, weight and color all need to be considered as part of the brand as this sets the stage for the dining experience.

**FE&S: What are the staple pieces needed for restaurants?**

**AS:** Chairs and tables for the reception area, lounge, bar, dining and private party spaces are the basics. If outdoor seating is possible, the style should reflect and be compatible with the indoor dining experience.

**FE&S: What is the rule of thumb in terms of determining the number of tables and seats that will be needed?**

**AS:** Operators want the maximum number

of seats in all of the zones of the restaurant because drinking and eating spaces are the profit centers. Designers carve out circulation space for service and compliance with fire codes and then artfully place tables to fill the space. Depending on the level of service, tables are placed to allow for a sense of intimacy while maximizing seats. Corner spaces are perfect for larger tables and booths.

**FE&S: What should operators consider when choosing furniture for their operations?**

**AS:** The furniture selection needs to address relevance, comfort, style and culinary point of view. In fine dining, the furniture is more comfortable, often has upholstered armchairs and is heavier in weight, allowing for longer dining times and bigger check averages. These same chairs would be out of character in a more casual setting where dining is more relaxed and turnover times are more frequent. A concept that has a healthy and fresh menu, regardless of level of service, will often promote the use of reclaimed wood in its furniture selections. ●