



| By Lisa White |

# The Heart and Soul of the Kitchen

**As the last stop before serving, expediting station design relies on efficiency, speed and space.**

The design of an expediting station, considered the central switchboard of the back of the house, can make or break an operation.

“As the heart of the operation, it sets the pace, energy, flow and communication among the various other stations,” says **Arlene Spiegel, president, Arlene Spiegel & Associates, New York.** “A good expo station enables the expeditor, who serves as a traffic cop, to make sure the food is exactly how the restaurant wants it,” says Spiegel.

With speed of service and production timing critical elements of any successful back of the house, an expo station’s design can either be a help or a hindrance.

## The Main Objectives

When designing these stations for one of her clients, Spiegel first creates a checklist that details everything that happens at the station based on the menu. “It’s not the sexiest area, but is the most critical,” she says.

“Expeditors are responsible for working with front-of-house managers to anticipate reservations, specials and any customer requests to be able to make good decisions during service. Expeditors communicate to all the various stations, and when the kitchen is backed up, this person can tell servers to let guests know there is a delay.”

## FOH/BOH Differences

Although expo station equipment is similar whether it’s in the front or back of the house, it’s important to note that external expeditors don’t have access to all areas of the kitchen, Spiegel says.

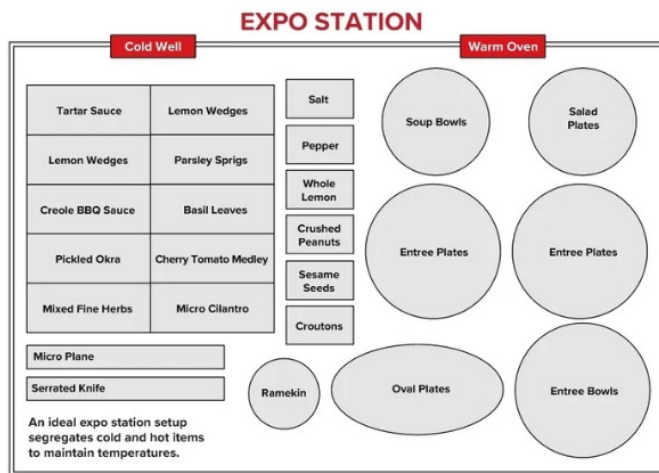
## Station Standards

Whether or not the expo station is visible to customers, the equipment and supplies necessary to support these areas depend on the menu. “What’s really important for meal consistency is creating an expo station planogram,” Spiegel says. “This shows where everything lives and how much is needed for each daypart. When you have

a well-organized planogram, no one has to leave the floor during service.”

“These stations need built-ins or countertop hot and cold wells, depending on complexity of operation,” Spiegel says. “There may be ramekins for salad dressings, but these need to be kept cold. And if the overpass has heat lamps, nothing cold should be stored near that.”

Supplies are a main consideration in this station and with storage. “Operators need to think about bowls, scoops, gloves and ramekins for garnishes,” Spiegel notes. “In addition, there may be cheese graters and clean and wet wipes for plates.”



## Recent Developments

Expo station flexibility has been enhanced partly due to lessons learned from business interruptions during the pandemic. “Knowing what we now know, it’s about building flexible, modular, efficient expo stations,” Spiegel says. “For instance, when all cooking was prepared to go, we switched from plates and silverware to disposables, takeout containers and bags.”

Whether new technologies are incorporated, an expo station design should be based on the menu and center on speed, efficiency and storage needs. “The expo center is the heart and soul of an operation,” Spiegel says. **FE&S**