



## Out Of Bounds

**While value still prevails, F&B promotions can go to extremes to capture additional business.**

*By Rebecca Oliva, Associate Editor -- HOTELS Magazine, 1/1/2004*

Fierce competition has changed how restaurants promote themselves. Casual or fine-dining, novice or veteran, hotel restaurants and their managers are taking a creative license to fill seats. Whether by introducing an outrageously high-priced salad or re-creating some of the world's most famous pieces of art through food, the options for promotions are unlimited. Yet, in every case, the basic principle of offering guests added value reigns high as hotels promote their restaurants with such enticements as complimentary meals, free hotel stays or enriching cultural experiences.

"F&B is strongly tied into overall value proposition," says Arlene Spiegel, president, Arlene Spiegel & Associates, Inc., a restaurant and food industry consultancy based in New York. For example, Spiegel says many hotels are offering free meals with weekend stays to entice locals.

With a dose of freshness and added value, promotions also can help properties increase creativity in the kitchen and open doors to new markets. Here, HOTELS presents some recent creative and successful F&B promotions.

### Value: First And Foremost

According to Spiegel, the most important aspect of a promotion is the perceived value to the guest. Does the price of the promotion equate to savings for the guest? Is it worth the guests' time and money? Questions like these must be addressed in the planning stage of every promotion.

Some hotels have gone to extremes offering guests more than the average promotion. For instance, the Dusit Laguna Resort in Phuket, Thailand, currently is running a three-month promotion entitled "Come for Dinner and stay for the Night." Guests have the option of dining in any hotel restaurant and receiving a complimentary room night.

"After renovating three of our top F&B outlets, the decision to develop a holiday package, including a dinner option, was an easy one," says Dusit General Manager Sam-Erik Ruttmann. The hotel took advantage of its low occupancy period to attract guests to the new F&B outlets. As a result, Ruttmann says guests had a high perception of value, and the hotel's restaurants got exposure.

The added value promotional concept is popular in Asia as properties are trying to lure guests back to the region after SARS and other world events halted tourism. Royal Plaza on Scotts, Singapore, offered a "pay for two, eat for four" meal deal at Café Vienna. The promotion ran during October to fill seats during a low revenue period when most of the locals were fasting for the Ramadan holiday.

The perceived value of a promotion, however, depends on a hotel's clientele. JAAN at the prestigious 123-room Raffles L'Ermitage Beverly Hills, California, created an extravagant salad with a hefty US\$45 price tag and 30% food costs. Bruno Lopez, executive chef at JAAN, says he stole the idea from New York's famed Daniel restaurant, which introduced a US\$45 burger. The novelty was so successful that Lopez wanted to make the West Coast version at JAAN. "We knew if we put the large price tag on it, we had to give our guests something for the value," Lopez says. Simply called the \$45 salad, the decadent dish includes sushi-grade tuna, poached lobster, Beluga caviar, truffles and foie gras. The dish is one of the most popular menu items as the hotel sells about 10 per day.



*Fairmont's Lounging With Fairmont promotion puts certain legendary properties in the spotlight while creating brand awareness. The offer highlights signature cocktails at more than 10 Fairmont properties.*