

# LODGING

## 4 Questions for Arlene Spiegel, Hospitality Matchmaker

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Arlene Spiegel, founder and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates and Hospitality Matchmaker, is a restaurant, retail, and foodservice consultant, team builder, and a multiple award winner for excellence in hospitality, restaurant, retail operations, and branding. She is the former director of the global food and beverage practice at PricewaterhouseCoopers. As a third generation restaurateur, Spiegel has dedicated her entire professional life to studying the eating and purchasing habits of consumers in every possible food and beverage environment. Having owned and operated successful restaurants in the New York area, she knows the challenges, responsibilities, and rewards of ownership. Her restaurant, The Garden of Eating, capitalized on the growing demand for “good for you” style eating and resulted in Spiegel receiving the coveted Pacesetter Award and The Small Business Woman of the Year Award. Spiegel has created more than 100 restaurant concepts for independent and chain operators, entertainment, and hotel venues. Recently, she discussed the importance of food and beverage to hotel operations and the challenges of matching restaurant concepts with hotels with *Lodging* editor Len Vermillion.

**1. Len Vermillion: How important are good restaurants, and other food and beverage options, to hotels these days? What can they bring to the table, no pun intended?**

**Arlene Spiegel:** A good restaurant can make or break the total guest experience and even help the guest decide whether or not to choose the property for their stay. Great restaurants, bars/lounges, room service, special spa menus, coffee kiosks, well-stocked convenience shops, and in-room minibars are no longer nice options but mandatory offerings in a very competitive environment. Business, leisure, and local markets are looking for special experiences that anticipate and address their needs.

**2. LV: What would you say is the most important thing to look for when matching an F&B concept to a hotel, and why?**

**AS:** The key to success in matching restaurant concepts with a hotel is developing the criteria and narrowing the search to only those brands that are compatible. Much like a dating service, determining the characteristics that each party is attracted to requires honest profiling. We ask over 30 relevant questions of the hotel to determine the property’s brand positioning, target markets, competitors in the local area, and key points of differentiation. Without having this intimate knowledge, even a great restaurant can be a poor fit for a particular hotel.



**3. LV: What have you seen as the major trends in hotel restaurants these days? Do you think any of these trends will have a long lasting impact on the industry?**

**AS:** Hotel restaurants are smartly and aggressively marketing to the local area as well as to the hotel guests. Therefore, they are competing as if they are standalone while they take care of guests’ food and beverage needs. The greatest driving forces today are developing menus that provide guests with choices from diet to decadence; celebrating local/indigenous ingredients; and doing it all in a style that’s clever, innovative, and enhances the hotel’s brand positioning. We also notice that the concept of three meals is diffusing into all-day menus where guests can get practically anything they want whenever they want.

**4. LV: Your firm helps match restaurants with hotels and other hospitality-oriented businesses. What complexities are involved with that process that hoteliers may not understand, or tend to overlook?**

**AS:** The relationship between restaurants and hotels cannot be approached by a one-size-fits all strategy. The personalities and culture of ownership need to be in sync as well as the food and hospitality services. A willingness to seamlessly provide a memorable and outstanding guest experience that elevates each entity is critical to success. In addition, a commitment to flexibility, sharing of resources, ideas and business development will achieve optimum rewards for all involved.