



Hotel and Casino Food Hall for the Future

Cherokee Hotel & Casino in West Siloam Springs, Oklahoma, is out to transform its buffet service into a food hall concept. Two firms are working together to conceptualize the reworking of the space and advise the owners about the project: **Arlene Spiegel & Associates**, a New York City-based restaurant and hospitality consulting firm, and **Glen and Co.**, a New York City-based architectural and interior design firm.

The reworking of the space became necessary due to limitations of seating and serving resulting during the COVID-19 pandemic, says **Arlene Spiegel FCSI**.

The basic equipment package at a food hall varies. Flexibility is essential, although a few pieces of equipment are somewhat commonplace, says Spiegel. That list often includes upright and undercounter refrigerators, hot food holding units, a small

rapid-speed oven and induction heating units. In addition, wells and countertops that can hold hot or cold items with the flip of a switch contribute to the flexible lineup.

The hall will feature seven proprietary concepts developed by the in-house culinary team with Spiegel's input. Concepts include barbecue, burgers and chicken, tacos, international sandwiches, flatbreads and greens, bakery/grab-and-go and a bar. All concepts will share a common seating area.

Equipment selection focused on providing a 90-second to 3-minute turnaround threshold to keep the flow moving. Most new equipment sits in the front of the house. "We captured all of the benefits of the old buffet's back-of-the-house to support various concepts," Spiegel says. "The bakery/grab-and-go and the burger and chicken concepts have their own back-of-the-house prep areas."