

Restaurant kitchens without attached dine-in space have started to appear in American cities. Samantha Lande explores the reasons behind delivery-only restaurants and asks if they are likely to take off.

Dining in at yours

I magine getting delivery from your favorite locale but not being able to dine in a physical restaurant. That's the latest trend popping up in cities like New York, Chicago and San Francisco. These delivery-only restaurants, sometimes called "ghost restaurants", don't have a space for patrons to dine-in.

However, there are other costs often associated with a delivery-only restaurant that aren't always present for sit-down operations. Arlene Spiegel FCSI, founder and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates, feels that even if there is name recognition with the chef behind the restaurant, there is not enough brand connection. "It's a romantic notion to think that people will just order from the places that have a celebrity chef behind them or a cute name," she says. Many of these restaurants rely on good press and a solid social media program to get followers.

Flash in the pan?

Spiegel does not think we'll continue to see the delivery only concept. "As an operating model is not efficient. There are still infrastructure costs and customers are still tied to the actual restaurant experience," she says. "Why wouldn't I order a delivery or carry out burger from my favorite local burger joint instead of the new guy?" ■



DELIVERIES FOR NICHE DIETS

One type of delivery only restaurant that has proven its niche is that designed for specific diets. Whether it be gluten free, anti-inflammatory or for weight loss, they are winning the delivery-only restaurant category, according to Arlene Spiegel FCSI.

Kitchfix in Chicago specializes in anti-inflammatory cooking and has gained a big following. It delivers meals throughout the city and suburbs, has pick-up points at various exercise establishments and created a pick-up storefront. Food Matters by Tricia Williams has also been wildly popular in New York City for its diet-friendly food that many celebrities subscribe to. Both outlets have dietitians on staff. The only downside to these deliveries seems to be, the more niche, the more expensive.