



Feeding all the Senses

Howard Riell



Combining an immersive environment with high quality cuisine, a new wave of experiential dining that uses technology to create unique settings is having a moment.

The debut of Manhattan's spectacular Journey 360 experience has spurred much thought among restaurateurs and entrepreneurs around the country. Journey's immersive experience is pure showbiz! It features splashy floor-to-ceiling projections, a rainforest waterfall, a volcano, an underwater shipwreck, actors, 20-seat communal tables and most of all fine cuisine. But will it inspire repeat business? And, importantly, will the dazzling, high-tech lightshow overshadow the food?

"There's never been a better time to offer a personalized, immersive experience than now," says Arlene Spiegel FCSI, founder and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates in New York City. "

"People are hungry for adventures, luxuries, memory building and unique stories to share on social media. The addition of 'exotic' food and drinks adds to the sensuality of the experience regardless of the casual lounge, café, private dining, or total experience. Think Van Gogh exhibit in New York City with surround sound/sites.

"Guests will come hungry and certainly want to feel that there's talent in the kitchen," says Spiegel. "The added value is that the food itself, even at the bar, comes with the tangible visuals and storytelling that provide a narrative for the actual food and drink. With the collective culinary IQ on the team, there's no chance of the food taking second stage."



"Major cities are a good place to launch the full-blown version, and then more curated versions may work in other smaller, but sophisticated, business hubs," Spiegel suggests. "Partnering with major hotels in hotspots like Las Vegas is also a smart move."

"No need to fear sticker-shock over the price. Considering all of the effort and production that's gone into creating the total experience, guests will see the value." In short, the concept has legs.

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