SETTING UP FOR a Summer of Staycationers

As we work our way through the roadmap to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers are keen to get out and about, booking holidays and short breaks across the UK and Ireland. Following the announcement of hotels and accommodation reopening, bookings have been coming in thick and fast, but how are operators coping with balancing new regulations and changes in consumer behaviour while offering guests a relaxing break away from it all?

Despite the restrictions of lockdown, many guests are still nervous about communal dining and buffet-style meals, leading to a huge shift to in-room dining. The more time a guest spends in their room, the more we need to focus on that space to make it a positive experience. Small changes such as enhancing refreshments available in guest rooms will help to minimise the stress on room-service staff so they can prioritise food orders, but you can also go one step further and personalise in-room refreshments, as Rebecca Hill, Owner of Galtres Lodge and Forest Restaurant explains:

“I have always wanted to make these bespoke, in fact I want to tailor the whole hotel opening to the guests’ preferences by adding a section to our confirmation email or pre-arrival email with an optional questionnaire which would ask questions like: are you a warm person or a cool person, are you a tea or coffee drinker, do you like sweet or savoury? If you don’t want to answer then you wouldn’t have to, but if you do, then we could have your room set to a warmer temperature, with extra tea bags and a savoury treat instead of the usual homemade muffin that we provide – depending on your answers.”

It may not always be possible to offer an extensive menu for in-room dining, but for premises with usable communal spaces such as a lounge, library or conservatory, converting them into private dining spaces could help to encourage guests out of their rooms while delivering a more intimate, exclusive dining experience.

“Avoiding communal dining spaces doesn’t have to mean missing out on a luxury experience, as the food itself, regardless of setting, should remain central. Providing a guided tour of local delicacies through successivedishes can immerse guests in the personal culinary journey they desire.” Comments Tim Hall, Executive Chef at Bught Island Hotel.

BREW-TIFUL BREAKFASTS, BUT NO BUFFET

It is doubtful that the much-loved breakfast buffet has gone for good, however many hotels and B&B’s are moving away from the buffet and turning towards grab-and-go or table service breakfast options and they may not look back. Historically, buffets generate a lot of waste in food and staff time. Providing a positive alternative could help hotels make some long-term cost savings, however there is no doubt that to pull this off, serving the most important meal of the day will require extra thought.

Research by Delifrance has reported a significant shift towards individually wrapped products, stating that for remembers, almost half (49%) of people surveyed would now opt for individually wrapped pastries and 12% want to see a wrapped selection of mini pastries. This change in consumer behaviour has resulted in an increase in demand of 400% for their wrapped pastry range.

This trend has been echoed by the Westabove Food Company who have seen sales of their individually wrapped pastries increase in the past few months. “We know that as the hospitality sector adapts to the new post-COVID world, they will need to find new and innovative ways to offer their consumers healthy and nutritious food that is easy to prepare, convenient and with hypoallergenic packaging,” says David Bone, Foodservice Channel Manager, Westabove. “Our range of protein packs, grab and go products can help caterers build customer confidence and satisfy their requirements.”

MAXIMISE ALL OPPORTUNITIES

Encouraging guests to spend more time on premise in bars, cafés and restaurants will increase the overall average spend and build sales from key profit centres. There are a number of initiatives to take a advantage of, depending on your target market; offering a picnic lunch for day trippers, a lunchtime meal deal for guests on a budget, afternoon tea or bottomless brunches will all be used to attract a cross section of guests and increase footfall.

Delifrance’s pre packed individual croissants

Taylors of Harrogate coffee bags