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TABLE MANNERS

Appropriate tableware leaves a lasting impression on guests even before they take their first bite. Hoteliers, therefore, consider it while planning the overall restaurant design and concept

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

“Faced with a choice between the survival of the planet and a new set of matching tableware, most people would choose the tableware,” British writer George Monbiot cheekily remarked once. Well, there is no other time than now when these words ring true. The right tableware is of paramount importance in the business of hospitality, as it can leave a lasting impression on guests.

Currently, there are many tableware options available in the market, but hoteliers and restaurateurs need to select a pattern depending upon the style, cost, durability and also the segment it will cater to. “We focus on providing our guests a unique experience at the restaurants. We have recently introduced ‘steak stones’ at our barbecue restaurant, which provides an option of cooking on the table to the

guests visiting at the restaurant,” said Abhishek Pani, F&B manager, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach.

The right choice of tableware is very essential for an F&B outlet as it elevates a guests’ dining experience. “All our restaurants use Electro Plated Nickel Silver (EPNS) coated cutlery. This tends to be a little expensive, however, gives our cutlery longevity and an expression of luxury. We use steak knives from Jean Dubost, a French company that manufactures high-end cutlery, to lend the finest dining experience possible, said Abhishek Basu, Executive Assistant Manager, Food & Beverage, The Leela Mumbai.

He added that while selecting glassware and crockery, the hotel keeps in mind the restaurant where the product will be used. For example, in a high utility area like banqueting, it uses Rona pattern glassware, which is sturdy, and the well-established

Nikko crockery, which is resistant to wear and tear. In its fine dining restaurants it uses beautiful glasses from Schott Zweisel and Riedel, which accentuates the beverages poured in them. “Both these companies make state-of-the-art glassware, most of which look stunning as tableware. Other brands of crockery used in our hotels include, Rosenthal, Royal Doulton, Revol, Bauscher, Dibbern, Villeroy & Boch,” he added.

TREND CHECK

Most hotel chains look at user-friendly, cost effective and stylish products while planning to purchase tableware. Unorthodox plates have found their place on the dinner table. Eye-catching plates in mismatched colours, unconventional shapes have usurped the identical, fine china place setting. “Bowls are the new plates as we have become more mobile

Did You Know?

A TMR report said that the global glass tableware market is expected to be valued at \$14.2 billion in 2024, growing at a CAGR of 6.1% from 2016 to 2024. According to a TMR analyst, 'skyrocketing investments made by international hotel chains into emerging economies such as India, China, and Japan is currently placing a massive demand on the production rate of glass tableware.'

eaters — less inclined to sit for family dinners around the table — and bowls, with their 'coupes', are easier to cart around without worrying about the food sliding off from flat plates. These days, trends in glassware have moved to more classic, old-fashioned beverage vessels, as well as variation, a different glass for each style of drink," said Pani.

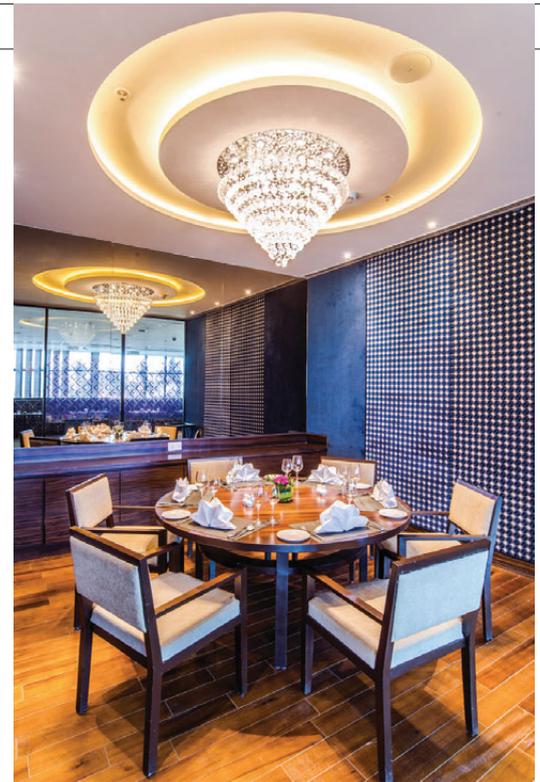
Colour is one of the most significant variations in cutlery segment. Guests have welcomed and accepted the bold colours in the cutlery sector. Ashutosh Garg, F&B manager, Double Tree by Hilton, Pune has identified three major trends. According to him, most restaurants in this part of the world go for classic chic,

with a focus on crisp and clean white or cream tableware. "Another trend we observe is the appreciation of nature — sustainability, eco-friendliness, earthy tones and wooden elements. Some trends over the last year include asymmetric designs, both in glass and chinaware. Coloured plateware used as signature pieces has been in use for many years, but trends are now leaning towards the complete collection. Chinaware will always be a timeless trend to showcase elegance and exclusivity," he said.

Ateet Vengurlekar, principal architect and interior designer of Blue Arch Interiors & Architects added, "Nostalgia still plays a major role, although enamel pieces are not quite as 'new' as they were a year ago and slate is getting a bit passé as it becomes more mainstream. Pots and pans are shrinking and being used to present foodstuffs on the table — and chrome and copper abound. Rustic is still popular and there aren't many suppliers who don't have a roughly hewn organic shape or two to farm out to clients."

CHANGE IS IN

Incidentally, hospitality establishments keep changing their tableware as they run



Howard Johnson Hotel Bengaluru prefers crockery with rolled edges as it avoids them from cracking and chipping.

food promotions and festivals. "For example, the glassware we use in a Tuscan food promotion will be different to the ones we use in a Burgundy food fest, with quality coming forth each time. Branded ceramic plates used in our specialty Indian restaurant will change to segmented EPNS



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POPULAR TABLEWARE BRANDS: ROSENTHAL, GUY DEGRENNE, SCHOTT ZWIESEL, LIDO ONEIDA, JEAN DUBOST.

thalis during a Rajsthani festival and to a different rustic banana leaf during Onam," said Basu.

In most cases hotels prefer to retain the same tableware for at least a year, as guests associate the restaurant with a specific kind of tableware after which it is usually changed. Chef Chakradhar, executive chef, Howard Johnson Hotel, Hebbal, Bengaluru added, "While procuring tableware we especially keep in mind the temperature change the crockery will be subjected to, and hence prefer non-porous, scratch resistant and durable products. Crockery with rolled edges is also preferred as it prevents it from cracking and chipping."

SUPPLIER SELECTION

Since tableware is a high usage product, hoteliers ensure that it addresses the practical and aesthetic needs of their brand. Usually the shape, colour and pattern of the tableware are as per the theme and service style of the restaurant and key elements of durability and cost are usually kept in mind.

Rohit Tokhi, executive chef, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi said, "Each of our F&B outlet's cuisine and theme is complimented by the tableware and glassware used. The Asian restau-



➔ Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach recently introduced 'steak stones' at its barbeque restaurant, which provides them the option of cooking food on the table to the guests.

rant's theme is highlighted by the colour and specific crockery from Thailand, which is CP Celadon. This has the cracked ceramic effect and the art comes from that region."

"While procuring tableware, we ensure it is genuine and from a well-known brand with a perfect finish. Also, it should be easy to handle, stack, easily available for replenishment and it should be perfect as per commercial standard set by the food outlets," said Nishant Choubey, corporate chef, Roseate Hotels & Resorts.

Ashvini Kumar, executive chef, Four Points by Sheraton Navi Mumbai added, "Market survey based on a particular brand's distributor, the vendor's history on procurement are important. Other than that, the other key elements in vendor selection are excellence, handiness, accessibility, durability, upkeep maintenance, make and cost."

TRAINING RIGHT

Considering the fragile nature of tableware, chefs and kitchen staff need to be trained to care for these products as this reduces breakage. Padmanabhan Anand, corporate executive chef, MRG Hospitality & Infrastructure explained, "creating awareness with the staff and also careful use of the ware are some major ways to ensure longevity. Apart from this, always keep in mind the technological advancement in the field. For example, chip resistant crockery are available in the market today, so choosing this would bring down the discard of chipped crockery."

Shyam Kumar, F&B Director, Shangri-La Hotel Bengaluru added, "The restaurant's chief steward plays a vital role in safeguarding the tableware from damage and manhandling. Chefs are also decision makers at purchase time and are well aware of the safety precautions to be maintained while working with expensive tableware. It is important to factor in generous storage space for such material instead of increasing space to accommodate more covers in the restaurant."

Satyajit Kotwal, GM, The Resort, Mumbai added, "We do conduct trainings from time-to-time to sensitise our staff and people about the cost invested into procuring the crockery, cutlery, glassware, etc. This is not a one-time activity, but an on-going process. On a monthly basis, we also discuss the cost of damage and breakage. Aside from the look and feel and ethics of the plates, there are many practical things to consider like how long the dishes will last, are the plates too heavy, too wide, or too awkward to hold for the servers, etc. But basically, we have realised that for maintenance of the ta-



➔ Saffron Spice restaurant, Mumbai.



➔ Padmanabhan Anand, corporate executive chef, MRG Hospitality & Infrastructure.



➔ Abhishek Pani, F&B manager, Novotel Visakhapatnam Varun Beach.



➔ Ashutosh Garg, F&B Manager, Double Tree by Hilton, Pune.



➔ Rohit Tokhi, executive chef, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi.



➔ Bowls are the new plates as people become more mobile eaters and since these are easier to carry without worrying about the food sliding off from flat plates.

bleware, it is best to follow the methods prescribed by tableware manufacturer. It certainly helps in increasing the life span of every item."

VENDOR CHOICES

Choosing the right vendor for the varied needs is based on some broad based criteria like the range of products available, customer feedback, cost and lead time. Vendor selection based on experience is essential, but it need not be the only criteria.

Sonica Malhotra, joint MD, MBD Group, opined, "We undertake an extensive sampling of the various brands that fit the profile of the restaurants and our budget and choose the appropriate tableware.

A full table is laid with complete cutlery, glassware and other hollowware and after arriving at a satisfactory combination, the procurement head is handed a complete list of BOQ's to negotiate final delivery cost and timelines."

With the influx of hospitality brands in the Indian market, there is a need to make a difference and this can come with thoughtfully chosen tableware. Sanjay Mamgain, corporate executive sous chef, Lords Hotels & Resorts explained, "Using 18/10 cutlery as against the 18/0 options are a good way to ensure its longevity. 18/10 cutlery is recognized as the best quality available in the market. It includes 18% chrome and 10% nickel, which make the cutlery highly resistant to acid erosion

and rusting. Buffing every three to four months helps to keep the wares new looking and well maintained. Most importantly avoid using them as kitchen tools and treat them preciously."

As guest profiles alter with a focus on technology that allows photographs everywhere and all the time, it is all the more important that tableware is chosen right. After all did you know that there are currently more than 180 million posts on Instagram tagged with 'food' and appealing tableware was never more important than today. **H**



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