



THE TABLE IS SET

Modern tableware is inspiring and beautiful and is becoming a conversation starter at hotels even as they are ensuring it is both unique and functional

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

Every hotel has its own unique story, which they need to showcase through all elements of the hotel that carry an identity of the brand, to show continuity of the story, and to maintain the brand's standards.

DO THE NEW

Tableware has evolved over the years, from classic clean round plated to ceramics for all kinds of cuisines used throughout the hotel across different food and beverage outlets and in-room dining to the now different concept-driven tableware for different outlets. Sudhir Ahuja, Managing Director, Beyzaa Hotel & Suites,



☛ Sudhir Ahuja, MD, Beyzaa Hotel & Suites

says, "Dining is an experience, and chefs tell a story with their creations. Beyzaa means white, simple, serene, pleasant, and stylish, with a touch of red (adding class to the elements of Beyzaa). Hence, the accessories, tableware, cutlery, and crockery play an important part in defining hotel standards and guest expectations and setting us apart from our competition. Our experience tells us



☛ Keith Rajan, EAM F&B, The St. Regis, Mumbai



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that minute details are what the customer remembers. We have worked on accessories in the hotel - tableware, coffee mugs, the room table accessories, cutlery, personalised glassware, the no-smoking tags, and complimentary cookies, 'come in, eat me' tags; enticing the guest to give it a try. At our restaurant Motor Works, cutlery is customised as per the name. For the Brewing Company - the coasters we use for service of beer and other alcohol are cork coasters - the same material used to cork bottles, showcasing how carefully we have selected all small ingredients which make the story of MWBC." Corelle, WMF, Luzerne, Oneida, Art Evo, Narumi, Arthur Krupp, Villeroy & Boch and Noritake are some of the leading tableware manufacturers and are constantly into product innovation to improve their market position.

BESPOKE VIBES

Tableware speaks a lot about the restaurant. It gives the guest the first impression or the halo effect before they take the first bite. Hence, choosing the right and eye-catching tableware is as important as plating delectable food in front of guests. Tableware also reflects the restaurant design, concept, and content of the food. Keith Rajan, EAM F&B, The St. Regis, Mumbai, adds, "We choose the tableware based on the concept of the venue, the menu which has been curated and works around the look and feel of the space, keeping it simple where it needs to be and elaborating the whole experience when it comes to presentation and service—keeping it minimalistic on the table and giving enough space for the food and beverage to do the talking. A fascinating mix of materials that combine artisanal-looking design, handmade mood, stoneware ranges, and earthy nuances are in demand. At the same time, for fine dining spaces, Villeroy & Boch and Noritake have some great collections to choose from."

Johny Joy, Assistant Director of F&B, Grand Hyatt Kochi, adds, "As hoteliers, we ensure that the table-



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ware's shape, colour and pattern are set as per the restaurant decor and are cost-efficient and durable. Two focus areas are the right storage area and well-trained colleagues to handle the equipment. Table settings have become less fussy but still maintain high quality. Each food and beverage serving product is well paired with our selections of China, glass, and silverware. White crockeries reflect chef's creativity on the plate at a higher magnitude, and handcrafted cocktails by our bar chefs synchronise drinks in diamond cut series of our premium glassware."

TREND CHECK

Different unique coloured crockery with an earthen look and feel, adding extra weight to crockery makes the customer feel that food is serious business. Unique crockeries are also trending with the influx of young master chefs wanting to revolutionise food, breaking the chains of orthodox dining, making food, presentation and feel more involved for the guests. The latest trends in modern tableware offer nature-inspired colour choices and organic shapes that are now popular. Jaidev Dutta, GM, Holiday Inn Bengaluru Racecourse, says, "Trendy, classic, playful and elegant are all responsible for creating a traditional or contemporary look for the restaurant. There are a few trends loved by our guests, such as Zen tableware – dinnerware that takes you to a different state



➔ Jaidev Dutta, GM, Holiday Inn Bengaluru Racecourse



➔ Rubin Cherian, GM, Novotel Hyderabad Airport

of mind; the terracotta style, far-east triangular tableware, unusual shapes or nature-inspired shapes, white vintage, casual dinnerware inspired by tropical flowers and ethnic motifs, finally - sustainable cutleries." Golden accents and asymmetrical forms look elegant and attractive. Classic black and white pieces are always stylish and never go out of style, but the latest trends bring colourful designs terracotta, pink, deep red, and shades of blue and green are modern colour choices.

EYE CANDY

A popular adage suggests that we eat with our eyes first. Tableware is amongst the crucial elements in the F&B department, following the cuisine and decor of the restaurants, for not only aesthetics but also an overall experience and the 'aha' fac-



➔ Sustainable tableware at Glass Kitchen & Bar, Holiday Inn Bengaluru Racecourse.

tor. Rubin Cherian, GM, Novotel Hyderabad Airport, says, "the Food Exchange restaurant features a local and modern speciality range and a smartly designed private dining room with signature warm elements with a range of finishes that set a benchmark. At the Gourmet Bar (a social dining space serving comfort food and cocktails), we showcase beautiful serve ware based on the decor palette of the restaurant. New launches such as the copper glow and sensory tableware are currently in trend. We choose and support the local vendors as it's important to the economics and culture of a community." The basics like salt and pepper shakers are now being replaced with salt and pepper mills. Another significant change is that table flowers are replaced with metal and glass showpieces.

MAKING A STATEMENT

Every restaurant/hotel gives a lot of thought to the choice of tableware. The first step in this journey is selecting the right supplier, which is essential for quality and durability. Next comes the



➔ Chef Rana Dominic Gomes, Area Chef South for Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels



➔ Trendy, classic, playful and elegant are all responsible for creating a traditional or contemporary look for the restaurant. Image courtesy: Glass Kitchen & Bar.

concept and theme of the restaurant based on which the tableware is selected. It is also essential to pay attention to the cuisine and target clientele. Today, visual appreciation is what attracts guests in their first decision. Visual appeal is the top priority when choosing a restaurant, followed by the overall experience, which plays a significant role. At the Leela Gandhinagar, each outlet stands out uniquely with respect to the theme and culinary creations.

For example, their speciality Indian restaurant 'Diya' serves exotic Indian cuisine inspired from the northwestern region mainly; and the haute opulent tableware set up in Diya further enhances the charm of relishing the delicious culinary curations. The tableware here for fine dining is a sensory element. Jaideep Anand, VP & GM, The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, explains, "Factors like colour combinations are mostly of silver metallic colour, blending with the exotic chandeliers that illuminate a beautiful tale, therefore making it the choicest of the preferred destination for dining in the twin city. At the same time, our all-day dining outlet, Citrus Junction, represents the yesteryear of Indian railways that is further enhanced with our traditional sitting railway style tableware and décor inspired by the Orient Express and Palace on Wheels. However, many modern contemporary outlet professionals also introduce trending tableware with copper tones, metallic gold lines, and subtle artisan touch."

QUALITY CALL

For every restaurant choosing the right tableware is a big decision requiring the right investment. Today, cutlery and table accessories are all about making the right statement to the right class and category. The second most crucial aspect is what is the cuisine being served and the theme of the restaurant. In today's social world, be it casual or fine-dining, impressions are a significant factor. Even just placing the cutlery in a box for a casual dining restau-



➔ Dining is an experience, and chefs tell a story with their creations. Image courtesy: Beyzaa Hotel & Suites. (above and below)



➔ Jaideep Anand, VP & GM, The Leela Gandhinagar and Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre

rant requires attention to the look and material. This would also be the same for the condiments, seasonings, and sauces, which are normally placed on the table for guests to help themselves. Chef Rana Dominic Gomes, Area Chef South for Royal Orchid & Regenta Hotels, explains, "In a fine-dining atmosphere, the cutlery is well-laid out on the table, with show plates and folded napkins, extra sauces are served in sauce boats by the server. In both casual and fine-dining, extra attention is given to the sanitation of the venue, furniture and most importantly, the clean and hygienically lined tablecloths. Our objective when choosing tableware is that customers find it practical and functional for the sole purpose of dining with ease."

GOING GREEN

Most conscientious hotels use ceramic dinnerware and crockery as ceramics do not contain any potentially harmful chemicals and are the most affordable and the most popular option. Also, a few fancy outlets use stone tableware as platters to create a different look and feel. Clay earthenware is another alternative to fancy crockery ranges. There is some great pottery and handcrafted tableware available these days, Lava stone and ash mud in some cases, whereas some artists are working on plant-based tableware made from corn and bamboo, and brands like East Rork, to name a few.

Several artisan brands in the market focus more on sustainable tableware than just mass production. However, given the quantity that is required to operate in a large-scale scenario that may not be of use to massive operations. In a growing sustainable world, there is always a push to be greener, and the whole concept of 'less is more. However, there have not been many changes in restaurants and fine dining. Nonetheless, it would be right to say that most hoteliers avoid unnecessary usage of cutleries and crockeries for single guests. Some restaurants are using disposable tableware for water conservation as well as cross-contamination. However, this is not a long-term solution. "We have also witnessed a rise in the bento culture where a complete meal is served in a single serving. This is done to avoid frequent visits to the tables. In a post-pandemic world, we have certainly observed a single-use rise. This is evident with restaurants providing salt and pepper sachets and wrapped cutleries," Gomes adds. The cook-and-serve concept is also trending since washing dishes is reduced, resulting in less water usage. India's hospitality industry is constantly evolving, which would be pertinent to the F&B space too. There is a constant need for innovation to stay ahead. Tableware is an excellent way for restaurants to create that difference and add a zing to the dining experience. ■