

Innovation Insights

Customer Conversations Provide Food for Thought

When Hyatt invited guests to the table to share their expectations about hotel restaurant and banquet food, some surprising and healthy ideas emerged.

“Staying in front of food industry trends is a constant challenge,” says Susan Santiago, vice president of food and beverage for Hyatt Hotels & Resorts. “We have to discern which trends represent substantive changes, so we connected with our guests to learn what’s really important to them and what will make a difference in their travel experience.”

for Hyatt’s food and beverage innovation. “We see more female travelers staying with us, and women are more apt to be vocal about their needs, especially around dining,” says Santiago. “They told us they want healthy food available while they’re on the road.”

In response to customer feedback, Hyatt now has a rotation of vegetarian



Haile’s Salmon Teriyaki on the *For Kids, By Kids* menu

or feel out of place when they order a meal, it makes for a better overall travel experience.”

Hyatt also reworked its children’s menu with input from a team of young people led by 12-year-old Arizona chef Haile Thomas, host of the online show “Kids Can Cook.” Fried chicken nuggets and mac and cheese are absent from the *For Kids, By Kids* menu, replaced by mahi-mahi and an all-natural steak—which ended up as the summer’s number-one seller among kids. “I was surprised at how discerning and sophisticated our young guests’ palates are,” says Santiago. “The fact that they wanted tofu on the menu just blew me away.”

“The changes we have made are examples of the lengths that we go to on the food and beverage side for all our guests,” says Santiago. “When we set out to serve up a more satisfying experience, we wanted it to be exactly what our customers are asking us to do.”



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Nearly a year’s worth of conversations with customers shaped Hyatt’s new philosophy, which focuses on healthy people, healthy communities and a healthy planet: *Food. Thoughtfully Sourced, Carefully Served.* “We asked all of our chefs to adopt the new philosophy, and they have embraced it,” says Santiago.

Hyatt’s hotel restaurant and banquet service menus emphasize portion control, calorie counts, food nutrition and natural ingredients, all based directly on guest feedback. Company-wide, Hyatt has mandated that at least five ingredients on each menu reflect local vendors and ingredients, and Santiago’s team continues to enlist vendors who use sustainable practices. Hyatt chefs and their associates even take field trips to local farms to gain first-hand knowledge of the locally and sustainably sourced ingredients featured on their menus.

The expectations of women travelers were a top consideration

items on its banquet menus. Hyatt’s new offerings in-room and in its restaurants include a “perfectly portioned” menu with items of 500 calories or less and a “create your own” menu option with choices of different proteins and cooking techniques. “We launched these menus based on the feedback we got from women, but an equal number of men and women order from them,” Santiago says. “Since guests do not have to make a special request

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