

## Seven Top Tips to Maximise Restaurant and Café Income Through Design



If you are the owner of an independent restaurant or coffee shop, most of your effort will go into providing great food and drink. As a culinary expert, you'll know exactly which innovative dishes should be on the menu to draw customers through the doors.

However, while quality cuisine is essential, there are also other key ingredients needed to find the right recipe for restaurant success. Style, ambience and the physical design of your café or eaterie are among the factors which will help to decide how popular your establishment is and how much income it generates.

In this short guide, we suggest seven ways to maximise your income by making the right design choices when arranging a restaurant or coffee shop refurbishment.

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## **1. Maximise Covers**

Whatever the size of your premises, you need to make the best use of space in order to serve the largest possible number of people in comfort. This means it is important to include space planning at the outset of your restaurant design.

Choice of furniture can help to fit in more people. For instance, in a coffee shop or an outlet serving quick lunches, low-footprint seating, such as high stools and wall benching, can create extra places. It's also worth considering versatile furniture, which can be adapted to changing demands through the day. One example is to choose small tables which will cater for couples or single people during the morning or at lunchtime, but can easily be slotted together to create larger tables for groups of friends or colleagues dining in the evening.

However, although fitting in more people is an important way to maximise profits, don't overdo it. A restaurant's staff need space to move, and customers won't be attracted by an area which looks overcrowded and cramped. This means intelligent use of space is essential, considering workflow issues as part of the mix.

Planning the kitchen and serving areas is just as important as laying out the main dining areas. For instance, just a small amount of extra counter space in a takeaway sandwich shop can mean the ability to prepare two sandwiches at a time instead of just one. This cuts queuing times for customers, and makes it possible to serve more people within the same time period. Similarly, creating a small waiting area within a restaurant's bar section allows customers to wait in comfort if tables are busy, instead of turning them away. Try to find a contractor who will not just carry out a refit or refurbishment, but can also help you with this type of creative space planning.

## **2. Send Strong Hygiene Messages**

When a restaurant has just opened, its gleaming look will help to attract customers, but that bright new look can soon start to fade. However meticulous you are with cleaning, the sight of furniture, walls and flooring which are chipped, scuffed or scratched can translate unconsciously in customers' minds to a lack of hygiene. This means regular refurbishment is a good idea, to prevent the overall atmosphere becoming shabby.

Furniture, equipment and layout all need to meet industry standards. It's essential to keep hygiene compliance in mind when designing the restaurant and choose materials which are easy to clean, as well as leaving enough space to make the cleaning process easier. Leather chairs may seem like an extravagance, but can be kept looking pristine much longer than fabrics that stain easily, meaning the initial outlay could be worthwhile.

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### **3. Inviting Shop Front and Design**

Your restaurant's shop front needs to be inviting from the street, to start selling what's inside and sending the right messages about your food and ambience. You don't want to look like a high street coffee shop if you are actually an upmarket bistro – or vice versa.

Before deciding on how your exterior and interior should look, you need to think about your intended clientele and how to attract them. Every element of your restaurant's design will attract some people and turn away others. You want to attract your target segment and give subtle signals to markets that you are not trying to cater for.

For instance, colourful décor, high chairs and toy tables will help to attract parents with younger children, while softer designs and lighting could woo couples seeking a romantic night out. High-tech materials will appeal to business people, while natural finishes like wood and stone will give a greener, environmentally aware look, popular with younger diners. Traditional comfort, such as leather armchairs, could attract older families and seniors. Another option is to design a restaurant with separately-themed zones to appeal to different groups of customers.

### **4. Modernise Washrooms**

Washrooms are sometimes regarded as an afterthought, but that could be an expensive mistake. Many people judge an establishment on how clean and presentable the toilet facilities are, so if they look tired and outdated they can let down the rest of the design. Washrooms which may be perfectly hygienic and regularly cleaned can still give a bad impression if fittings have worn finishes, or if there are cracked tiles or taps that don't work properly. All this means that, when designing a new look for your restaurant, modern washrooms are an essential that must be included.

### **5. Encourage Linger**

In most types of restaurant, except for fast food eateries, the design should encourage people to stay longer – or at least not encourage them to leave too quickly. There can be a significant increase in spend per customer if they stay for dessert, ordering a second coffee or another drink. Even in a coffee shop with a high throughput, customers who have come in for "just a coffee" can be encouraged to order a sandwich or a slice of cake as well if the seating looks inviting. It also helps if the design includes the right kind of counter displays or self-serve cabinets to present these items attractively.

More people will be encouraged to stay if you avoid uncomfortable seating, or wobbly tables and chairs. You also need to avoid draughts, temperatures that are too cold or too hot, lighting that's too bright or too dim and excess noise. So pay attention to issues such as air conditioning and noise management as part of any redesign work.

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## **6. Tackle Problem Areas**

A restaurant refurbishment is a perfect opportunity to put right problems with the existing design. This includes tables which are close to kitchen doors and toilets, or queues of customers right next to seated diners. Issues of this type can often be addressed through creative design solutions, such as screening off doorways while still allowing access, or putting a partition in between queuing and dining areas.

Partitioning off areas in this way might risk cutting out light or making a space feel cramped, but solutions such as using glass partitions, perhaps with manifestation, colour or textures, can give the desired effect of privacy and separation while also feeling light and open. Expert contractors can advise on choosing the right materials to give the desired effect, for instance, using opaque or clear glass in different areas of the building.

## **7. Set Financial Expectations**

The appearance and design of a restaurant or coffee shop sends out subtle but powerful messages about what prices customers expect to pay. Choice of materials has a big part to play in this, as does the choice of fittings, style and lighting.

Ideally, you want people to be drawn in by the expensive-looking design, and pleasantly surprised by the level of the cost, rather than expecting a cheap meal because it looks basic and then being shocked when it costs more than they thought. However, if you are worried that people might wrongly think they can't afford to come in, displaying a menu with prices at the entrance will help to give them the confidence to walk through the door.

Overall, designing the look of your restaurant just as carefully as you design the menu will help to attract customers and maximise profits. An experienced restaurant designer can advise you on making the most of space and creating an atmosphere designed to draw customers in – and bring them back for more.

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