

# the personal touch

The Steelite International guide to making the personalisation trend work for you



# Express yourself

Great design is all about engaging other people in your vision.



Getting that crucial emotional response from the consumer is what drives the process. And to achieve that goal, you have to understand the mood of your market, what fires up consumers, and what inspires them to make purchasing decisions.

My 30-year design career has taken me from art schools in Manchester and Loughborough to VP Design at Steelite International, and it has taught me that these factors never stand still. Consumers' priorities change fast, so my new product development team at Steelite never stand still either.

As a designer, one of the most exciting trends to stir up the ever evolving hospitality industry is the greater personalisation of food and drink offers out of the home. The modern consumer wants an eating out experience that is:

- authentic
- unique
- exhilarating
- on their own terms
- suited to their own preferences and individuality
- Instagram friendly, to share the experience

The personalisation evolution is driving so many of the trends we see in today's hospitality and foodservice industry – like the interests in premium ingredients with

provenance and the rejection of stiff and restrictive rules of dining. It celebrates the individual, giving consumers the opportunity and space to fully express themselves through the choices they make and where they spend their time. Operators that tap into this dynamic will get the emotional response that keeps consumers happy, engaged and loyal.

Tableware is a key part of the personal and intimate experience operators bring to consumers. It's the backdrop of the main event – the food. Great tableware can make your brand. And bad tableware can break it. More than anything, your tableware can help you tell your personal story.

So to find out why the personalisation trend is important, and how you can give consumers the distinctive and personalised eating out experience they're looking for, read on.

**Andrew Klimecki**

VP Design, Steelite International



The  
**MODERN  
CONSUMER**

wants an eating out

**EXPERIENCE**

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**UNIQUE** authentic

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**indivi  
dual  
ity**



Instagram friendly,  
to share the

**EXPERIENCE**



# Telling your story

Weekly openings and closures are a feature of the restaurant scene. And operators that set themselves up for the long haul know that having an engaging story to tell keeps consumers coming back.

So whether you're an independent business, a break-through brand, or a major player, projecting your brand personality will set you apart from the crowd and give consumers a reason to get to know you better. And that personal connection drives repeat custom, word of mouth recommendation and social media sharing.



The casual, trendy and eye-catching UK brand, Bill's, is a success story that began life as Bill's Food and Produce Store near foodie haven Brighton. It won over consumers with a sunny and contemporary take on café culture. It's vibrant and fiercely individual style was local legend, and caught wider attention fast. Today it has 87 UK locations, and is still growing.

Images above: Bill's Facebook

## create a BACKDROP

Food that makes you pay attention deserves **unique presentation**. And from laid back casual to fine formal, we know what makes food stand out. **Tableware** is the scenery to food's theatre, so getting it right helps you **tell your story**.





# Our research SHOWS\*



8 OUT OF 10

consumers consider the quality of tableware as important or very important when choosing where to eat out.

62%

of diners agree that the right tableware enhances the mood of the occasion.

## Curate your SCAPE

The unstoppable Nordic trend is still making waves with its ethos of stripped back simplicity and getting back in touch with nature.

Our new collection, Scape, draws on the natural world with its free form shapes and patterns. Play with colour and texture to tap into the Nordic style on the plate.



\*Source: Steelite International/One Poll: What inspires diners in the UK?, 2012

# Wanting it their way

The future belongs to millennials, and they're calling the shots when it comes to the range of food, style of service and sense of atmosphere offered by operators in all sectors of the out of home eating market.

They're looking for experiential value – millennials want to eat off-menu, find the next big thing, and be challenged with new cuisines and flavours. And operators are responding with bespoke, on demand experiences to satisfy their appetites.

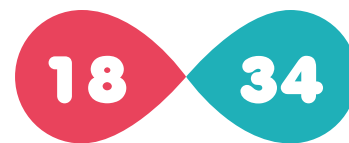
When everyone's on the hunt for the hot new opening, brand loyalty seems like the biggest loser of this fast paced world. But creative operators can tempt millennials to stick around by exploiting their space's potential by inviting in pop-ups, making ad-hoc partnerships with other brands, offering flexible menus and walk-in policies, and embracing an all-day and all-night culture by designing the space for day and evening vibes.

## HACK THE MENU

Take a look at the menu at London's Joe Allen, serving authentic American cuisine, and there isn't a burger in sight. Yet the restaurant has become notorious for its off-menu burger that's available to those in the know.



Image: Joe Allen Facebook



The millennial demographic can be loosely defined as people around 18–34 years of age, and they've kick started the experience economy that we all now live in with their demand for adventure, novelty and individuality.

## Why cater to millennials?

It's no surprise that operators take their lead from millennials. After all, 18–34 year olds account for 29% of the UK population but 46% of the visits in the eating out market\*.

But that's not the whole story. Millennials as a group are a major influencer of consumers' evolving preferences as a whole. Take contemporary fast casual brands – Meatliquor's punky and rebellious brand image, Abokado's international flavours, Leon's lifestyle-conscious accommodation of dietary choices, and Five Guys' fully customisable menu, all have the millennial market firmly at the centre of their business models. Yet the contemporary fast casual market is performing well across the board, with penetration increasing by 1.7% in a year in the 18–34s bracket, and trebling in the 35+ bracket. So by keeping millennials happy, operators can gain appeal in every other customer segment too.

\*Source: MCA Eating Out Report 2016



## Get in line

**There are no reservations at Grey Dog, NYC,**

only a long ever-present queue. The restaurant is in demand, but consumers know they're getting an experience that's sought after, so they're happy to line up. And the queue is the ultimate confirmation that it'll be worth the wait.

## Power of the

# POP UP



### L'I Darlin in Sydney, Australia

recently hosted cult American West Coast burger chain In-N-Out for six hours only, in an exclusive chance to experience the famous burger. Queues that stretched down the street proved the power of the savvy collaboration.

**More than ever, FOOD & FASHION are the ultimate partners in crime**

as consumers search for 'the' places to be seen. MCA says, "With food now a key attribute of self-identities, consumers are becoming keener to stay on top of the evolving trends and seek out concepts tapping into them."<sup>\*\*</sup>



## Consumers want to please themselves

when it comes to menus and courses. They're taking a pick'n'mix approach. MCA says consumers are increasingly choosing to order starters only, with **starter-only occasions now making up 3% of all dinner visits.**\*

\*Source: MCA: Menu and Food Trends 2017

## las IGUANAS

Steelite customer, Las Iguanas, has a vibrant, colourful and quirky South American style with a sense of fiesta at its heart. Its head of food development, Glenn Evans, says,

The next generation of diner is more knowledgeable and discerning. So it's important to promote the fundamentals – fresh, authentic food with provenance and sustainability. Offering more customisable options makes it a more personal experience. We know spice can be very personal, so we let the customer make the choice from any of our freshly prepared spiced sauces, marinades and butter.



Image right: Las Iguanas Facebook

# Ingredients with a story to tell

As a brand you need to stand out, but that doesn't mean you have to go it alone.

Championing other businesses that complement your brand values, by shouting about the farm that supplies your beef or the dairy that makes your cheese, makes your offer distinctive.

Home is where the heart is, and operators looking for vital differentiation from their competitors need look no further when sourcing their supplies. Building your brand around a promise of ingredients with provenance gives you a personal story to sell to your customers.

Selecting suppliers with care shows the personal touch consumers are looking for. And not forgetting that 60% of consumers regard ethical products as indicative of an ethical company\*, so it's never been more important to take provenance and sustainability seriously.

Chef proprietor, Simon Hulstone, says, "We've always championed local, healthy and sustainable produce, and our farm shows that we're ready to stand by that ethos. Customers love the story – they really respond to the message of a small, family run establishment that gives something back to the local economy and environment. By supporting us, they can be part of that too.

"The farm is really unique, and is central to our identity now. It sets us apart from other local establishments in the area. It has inspired the design of the restaurant and the logo, as well as our character and food philosophy. Our menu changes daily to incorporate the produce coming out of the farm, and all our staff are versed in seasonality so they can talk to the customers about what we do.



Family run, independent Michelin-starred South Devon restaurant, The Elephant, has long been known for its fine food. But it's also famous for a grow-your-own passion that goes beyond a kitchen herb garden. In fact its 96 acre farm is dedicated to supplying produce for the restaurant all year round.

Images: The Elephant website / Southdown Farm blog

\*Source: AHDB Focus on Foodservice 2016





We've learnt to

**respect** produce and  
**avoid wasting ANYTHING**

- as well as the main part, **the roots,**

**bulbs,** and **pollen flowers** from

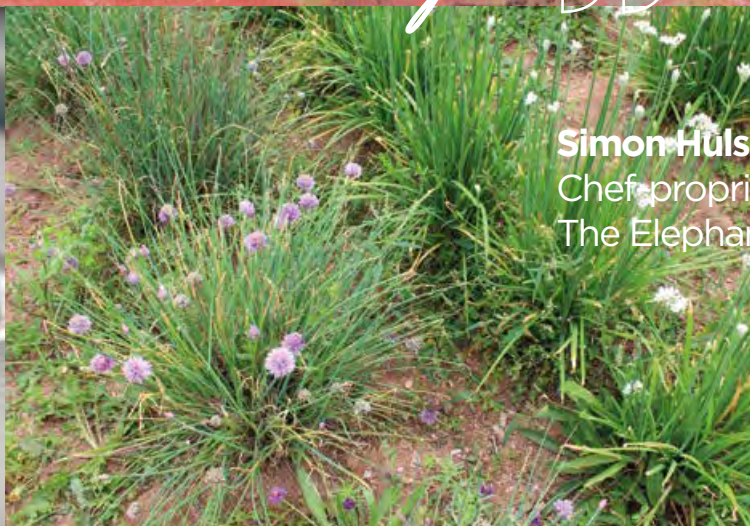
**one vegetable** can all get used.

And we see it as part of **educating**

the **customers** too. It's become so

much a part of our **UNIQUE style**

and *personal message.* 



**Simon Hulstone**  
Chef-proprietor,  
The Elephant



# Make it personal

We're in the midst of a tech revolution. From electronic food ordering systems to online hotel check in, hospitality is embracing digitalisation.

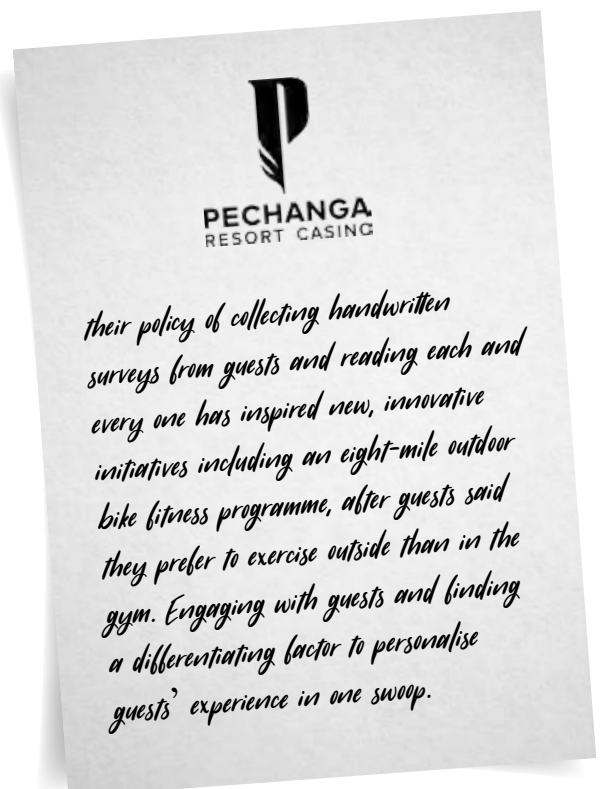


But the age of contactless payment and online booking comes at the risk of putting the customer at a distance or losing the personal touch.

Great customer service is still the key to success, so engage with customers' preferences to stay ahead. This could be as simple as gathering data on a party's dietary requirements when they book, so that front of house can offer reassurance on their menu choices on arrival. Or finding out which type of tea a guest particularly enjoys to make sure they have their favourite peppermint in their room each day.

You don't always have to choose between tech and a personal approach. 58% of millennials visit an operator's social media channels before visiting, which offers a great opportunity to use it to your advantage. Australian customer intelligence platform, Local Measure, uses its social media monitoring system to route guest information to operators, from 'Ms X has complained about her bathroom towels, can they be changed?', to 'staying at your hotel is on Mr Y's bucket list – make him feel special!'

## At the Pechanga Resort & Casino in Temecula, California,



## Be part of our social network









# Share and share alike

It's official – sharing's the trend that's bringing new opportunities to the out of home market.

**SHARING DISHES** is one of MCA's **TOP TEN** most important current trends affecting food menus in 2017.

Source: MCA Menu & Food Trends 2017

Consumers are seeking out food sharing experiences that feel homely and personal, and enrich their lives.

A quarter of diners like to share main courses, and more than half like to share desserts. But the number grows to almost 90% when it comes to sharing starters\*. Meanwhile, 90% of Londoners agree it's socially acceptable to taste and share food from plates with friends\*\*. The sharing trend is breaking the rules of traditional dining conventions, and bringing experiential value to eating out, making a visit to a restaurant more event than meal.

Small plates and platters perfectly lend themselves to storytelling to get your personal brand character across. The focus is on grazing and relaxing, allowing the evening to flow. And because there are more opportunities for diners to order food adventurously, operators are freer to get creative with their personal style.



\*Source: Technomic, The Dinner & Late-Night Consumer Report 2014, USA

\*\*Source: American Express, 2014



# Street food is HOT

In an eating out market that favours new adventures and personal experiences, it's no surprise that street food is still a hot trend.

Lee Desanges, founder of street food business, **Baked in Brick**, and winner of the **British Street Food Awards 2016**, says, "People love the thrill of seeking out their favourite street food traders from event to event, seeing and tasting food that's made by real people who love what they do."

"I've built up personal relationships with a lot of my customers, and I share my love of food with them. It's a little like having friends around for dinner. People become very personally attached to you and your brand."

"When they come to an event, they also want to try everything on offer, so street food also really complements the trend for sharing plates with friends. And because they're caught up in the mood, they want to share the experience on Instagram too."

"That informal, social atmosphere and the sense of coming together for a shared experience that you see on the street food scene is influencing everything else. I see a lot of restaurants taking inspiration from street food in their menus and decors – it shows what an impact street food is having. People want a more personal, flexible, customised experience everywhere they eat."



## Simon Xavier

**Executive Chef,  
The Restaurant  
Group**

**"Sharing dishes are now a crucial part of any menu in a casual dining setting."**

"Our customers tell us they love the flexibility that they bring to the experience. It makes it so easy to sit down for a couple of plates for a quick pit stop, or relax with a big group to graze and socialise. Small plates are perfect for upselling – after all, who can resist an extra dish?"



"At Chiquito, we have sharing starters served as platters, and a section of the menu dedicated to small plate street food, which has proven really popular. Customers love to try a new experience, and street food introduces them to new flavours, but without committing to a single dish. Our customers are definitely becoming more adventurous, and they want a personal experience that's all their own. Sharing dishes means they can enjoy a meal the way they like it, so it feels personal and tailored. That's a great way to keep customers invested in your brand."





# The social side of food

Good food is made for sharing – and not just with family and friends around the table, but with the world.



A third of consumers aged 18–34 regularly post pictures of meals on social media\*. And #food is the 25th most Instagrammed hashtag, showing consumers are hungry to show off what they had for dinner.

London restaurant, Bob Bob Ricard, famous for its 'PRESS FOR CHAMPAGNE' button at every table, is one of the UK's most Instagrammed restaurants, and it knows it's the details that matter. After the kitchen began plating on a new tableware set, owner, Leonid Shutov, told *The Financial Times*, "as soon as we changed to new plates, people got excited; we know we've done something right."

In the era of the food blogger, anyone can be a food photographer. And chefs have responded with plating that makes food look as good as it tastes, and brighter and bolder dishes. It's also kick started the rise of the signature dish, generating devotee interest in experiencing this 'one-off' encounter.

London bakery, Bread Ahead is tagged into over 6,000 Instagram posts from its legions of fans, the majority of which are devoted to its rows of signature doughnuts, beautifully dusted and ready for their close up.



Operators can take their personal style to the sharing and Instagramming crowd by creating unmistakable Instagram 'moments' for guests and diners. That includes plating dishes that stand out, incorporating curious details or focal points into the interior design like OTT centre pieces, or creating spaces that introduce a sense of theatre and staging, like open kitchens, feature tables, or an entrance that has serious kerb appeal.

Image middle: Bob Bob Ricard Facebook  
Image bottom: Bread Ahead Instagram

\*Source: Waitrose food and drink report 2017





# White Wash

Social dining experiences are all about informal sharing and easy access grazing.

So it's no surprise that the success of the board for presenting food has grown alongside the sharing trend.

Our **White Wash** serving board range offers a stripped back, modern, cool white presentation surface, **perfect for sharing platters**. Made from Steelite's cutting edge melamine, **White Wash** is practical as well as stylish, offering a **hygienic** and **dishwasher safe alternative** to wooden boards.



# Put a premium on it

Consumers' hankering for experiential value is fuelling an inflation of the price they're willing to put on eating out.

From a specialist single origin espresso, to the finest jamón ibérico ham, consumers want to live a little, and they're willing to pay for the experience of 'inclusive exclusivity'.

What makes a premium product means different things to different people, but it doesn't always mean out and out luxury. Which is why a burger can be elevated to gourmet where the product offers something special. Finding an unusual niche, such as making your patty from wagyu or single cut

beef; highlighting provenance by focussing on your links with local suppliers; or making the most of heritage with artisan buns made in the same way for generations, can all elevate a burger from ordinary to extraordinary.

Emphasising how your brand offers an exclusive experience through authenticity, quality and provenance of ingredients, and a unique and personal brand philosophy achieves a premium ideal at any price point.

**Nothing beats classic white tableware.**

**Except a premium and award-winning classic white tableware.**

Introducing **Willow** - your new white. Its combination of crisp style and precision technology reproduces the natural qualities of willow - a pale, beautiful wood with hidden inner strength and durability.



## The REAL deal

Consumers are dialling up demand for authenticity to the max, and the signs are that authenticity is becoming a default expectation. MCA says that the trend is



fuelling the growth of regional, specialist and adventurous concepts and NPD. Operators serving inauthentic or undifferentiated food are feeling the pressure from these changes.



\*Source: MCA Menu and Food Trends 2017





reddot award 2017  
winner

# Willow has won the Red Dot Award for Product Design.

The Award has worldwide recognition as a mark of outstanding design and innovation since 1955. The Red Dot seal of approval confirms our record of constant innovation.

# Go local

Visit any village in any region of France, and there's no escaping the cuisine régionale, with each restaurant offering its own take on the local dishes.

French localism is alive and well, and every region boasts its own unique style and distinctive cuisine, from the galettes of Brittany to the tartiflette of the Rhône-Alpes.

Like the foodservice industry, we know the importance of holding local values. Our integrity as a British manufacturer comes from our record of:

- using locally sourced supplies and materials
- our commitment to minimising our impact on our environment by recycling 98% of manufacturing waste, which in turn reduces quarrying, vehicle emissions and landfill
- investing in our community with our unique, local workforce

For hotels and restaurants, a strong sense of locality makes for a personal, special atmosphere, and creates a 'sense of place' that makes customers feel a strong connection to the wider environment. For consumers visiting the area, it serves up an instant taste of living like a local.

Celebrating localism doesn't need to be achieved through serving local specialities. Using local suppliers goes a long way to establishing a sense of place. And whether you're situated in a city, woodland, by the sea or in the countryside, bringing the outdoors indoors in your design celebrates your surroundings and brings a personal approach to your business.



Our tableware is made at our home in the Potteries, Stoke on Trent, and we use clay sourced in Devon and Cornwall, showing our commitment to British manufactured tableware.

Everything we make is for life – guaranteed by our lifetime edge chip warranty. As a Sustainable Restaurant Association approved supplier, we're proud of our record of recycling more than 98% of manufacturing waste.



*a personalised approach*

We move mountains to understand your personal setting, your business and your needs. Our designers can visit you to get to know your ethos and space, to make a bespoke solution that's tailor made for your setting. That could mean designing an exclusive range, creating a custom colour hue for an existing collection, or selecting an eclectic mix of pieces from our whole range to give you a unique look.



# your SCAPE setting

Taking inspiration from living elements of the natural landscape, playing with light, form and subtle textures, Scape is the chameleon collection that blends into your style and setting.

Its multi material, mix and match components delivers an innovative dining experience across any sector from laid back casual to fine formal.









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