

CATERER

MIDDLE EAST

Serving the region's catering professionals

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Open sesame

Menu planning, staff training and sourcing ingredients; all in a day's work when opening a new restaurant

Savour the date

As Ramadan approaches, date suppliers across the Middle East prepare for a surge in demand



Grande Dames

Cecile Bonnefond talks candidly about maintaining a brand and being one of only two women to take the helm at Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin

• Laroche • Dietary requirements • Flatware • Egypt profile • Rivoli Group • Dante •

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Bon Appetite!

Island hotels need to look at their set up

Offering innovative solutions Guenter Kuhn, managing partner from German-based K&P Group explores the pitfalls of island dwelling outlets

Labelled as the eighth wonder of the world, Dubai's island construction consists of three groups of artificial islands; Jebel Ali, Jumeirah and Deira, all of which are designed in the shape of a palm tree.

Also currently under construction at present is The World, which comprises 300 artificial islands. On each of these manmade islands will sit high-end luxury villas, vacation apartments, hotels and restaurants.

The operational and organisational structure for this gastronomic feat has to be well planned in order to offer guests on each island the best possible service and culinary offering.

Firstly, regardless of the size of the property, each restaurant needs to not only serve world-class food, but it also needs space. This includes preparation rooms, kitchens, space for all forms of stores including cooled, un-cooled food and equipment, and changing rooms and lounge rooms for the staff.

In the majority of cases, the space that is needed for utility and social rooms is generally underestimated in the planning sequence, as kitchen designers and architects are involved too late in the process.

In the end, last minute solutions have to be made, resulting in small spaces whether for staff lounge areas or storage areas for equipment. To prevent this though, strategic plans need to be made from the beginning.

Looking at the Palm Islands' and The World, the decision the restaurant makes about the scope and size of its utility rooms in the back-of-house should be based on two key principals. On the one hand is the well being of the guests, and on the other, the economic aspects.

It is obvious that building and

running a hotel on the islands will be expensive — without taking into consideration the production and storage facilities. The main goal though is to make a compromise between ways of producing meals at the expected quality, and economical facts; like the space available.

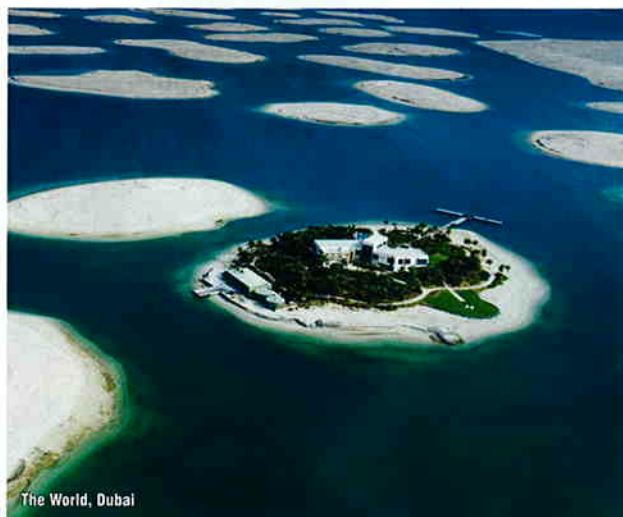
In most traditional hotel and restaurant constructions, the kitchens and production rooms are built onsite, with the entire raw foodstuff catered and prepared for at this location. But with the island construction, this cannot always be possible.

Looking at an outlet's needs, the main considerations are food production, sending waste back to the mainland, and at the same time transporting hotel and restaurant staff to and from the island.

The costs for this approach would be very high and make the project unprofitable, so what are the alternatives?

The major solution would be to build the kitchen on cheaper ground on the mainland, and then let the set up — mise en place — be undertaken onsite. The last stage of food preparation only needs a small pantry kitchen and fewer surfaces than a conventional kitchen, so this will indeed save on space. The main benefit of this solution is the decreasing of costs, as expensive spaces for facilities and staff can in fact be reduced to a minimum, and goods and staff transport costs can also be reduced.

For this process, the central cook and chill method provides the best solution for such an external production method. Basically, this method follows the principle that all the warm components are prepared in the main kitchen on the mainland.



The World, Dubai

“ In most traditional restaurant constructions the kitchens are built onsite... looking at the island constructions, this cannot always be the case ”

After cooking, the food will then be chilled as quickly as possible to 3°C. Under these conditions, food can be stored for up to four days.

Transporting the food to the restaurant on the islands then takes place under cooled conditions to the onsite kitchen. This takes a lot of meticulous pre-planning, but alongside our cooperation partner Jockers Architects, we have developed this cook and chill process for a hotel in Dubai. The concept is based on the fact that all set up and preparation work is done outside the hotel, meaning a smaller space is needed for a hotel kitchen, as it is solely used to regenerate the food.

Where to build staff quarters in order to cut down costs and time

To further increase the general performance of an outlet, it is best to place the staff apartments near the plant. This is becoming ever more important in Dubai due to the escalating traffic. Ideally, the building should be modular structured and should contain 20 accommodation units for approximately 800 employees. The accommodation units should also be flexible in case of different family sizes.

Looking at the dynamics of the kitchen, the most economical way when space and land is limited is to

THE COOK AND CHILL PROCESS

Food production in the central cooking plant

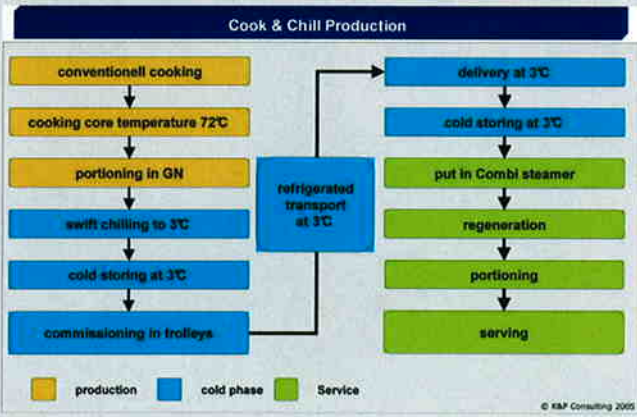
- Undertake the usual food preparation, with some adaptation to recipes to suit the new process if required
- Chill the food
- Within 90 minutes chill the food to 3°C

Portioning into GN Containers

- Portioning to take place in cooled conditions

Transportation and regeneration

- Food is transported in the container from the kitchen plant to the island-based hotel
- Regeneration takes place in the finishing kitchen on the hotel site
- After 30-40 minutes of regeneration, the food is then served



have the main production kitchen stretching over two floors, with the meal production taking place on the first floor, and the utility, social and technical rooms located on the second.

The curved roof above the main kitchen should also have a solar energy system in place, and also a ventilation system to protect it against weather and dust. Underground heat exchangers are another new innovation, which permits the use of solar energy for unbroken production.

In summary, production and staff facilities in hotels can be reduced, not only does this save capital but also it avoids unnecessary transportation. The 'spare' space can also be used to a better end; so instead of engineering space, it can be used for more guest rooms, a meeting room or a wellness area.

In this way, it is possible for the hotel to further increase its profitability, while the guest can enjoy the benefits of new and innovative zones.

PROS AND CONS OF THE COOK AND CHILL PROCESS

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central cooking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation requires high investment from companies for production and transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised processes and high quality maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff must be intensively trained on this process to guarantee success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production and service must be timely independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menus and recipes must be standardised at all times
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production processes for hot meals can be reduced from seven to five days a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All set up and preparation work must be done by staff outside the hotel kitchen

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