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great taste

MAGAZINE

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Edible Flowers

Hyatt Regency
Huntington Beach

PICTURED: Vegan Vichyssoise dusted with Wild Flower Graffiti



Carsten E.
Regional Chef



Chef Emathinger
Karl Strauss Brewing Company

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Laguna Beach CA



Building Your Brand

by Phyllis Ann Marshall

We Americans love our brands and others worldwide have learned to love them too. A brand identity is reassuringly familiar and in a restless, changing world, it promises consistent qualities -whether in a special car, a line of clothes, or a favorite restaurant. We tend to connect “name brands” with large corporations, but in our industry, a consistent, clearly articulated brand identity is crucial for the independent restaurant. This is true whether you are just starting up and making your first impression on the dining public, or if you are updating your brand as you prepare to expand into new locations.

To gain attention and be relevant in today’s market, your restaurant needs a powerful and professional image that is consistent, recognizable and that clearly tells what your restaurant is all about.

Many think that to “build a brand” you start with a name and logo, but the truth is that the name and logo must represent the spirit of the concept and the owners’ vision. Your brand must be flexible, expandable and have the clout to impress and differentiate. It works best if it has the depth and character to create stories or doorways into the brand so the eatery has its own culture, like a club where the folks you target want to belong. Take a lesson from Starbucks; the explosion in their popularity and the evolution that took a cuppa’ Joe from one buck to four.

A new restaurant must carefully build a total brand identity, carrying its images, colors, and concept consistently from name, logo and signage throughout the entire operation and all collateral materials including the menu. Often during the makeover of an established restaurant, the owner needs to rebuild the brand by



adjusting and expanding current features to meet today’s sophisticated standards. A professional brand building approach positions the restaurant to compete, adds value, and establishes a reputation for competency. It’s no longer enough to just hang out a shingle. Now all the images go on a website, tell the story in detail and may, if written well, entice the press.

The catalyst for a brand identity can be a name, image, or vision. A case in point is Stella’s Serious Italian Restaurant, a popular new restaurant that opened in December off Crown Valley Parkway and PCH in Dana Point. The name Stella’s — Italian for “star,” conveys the vision of the partner, Joseph Morano. Working his way West from New York, Joe dreamed of his own ocean-view restaurant in Orange County. It would not be an ordinary Italian neighborhood place, but one that fulfilled his dream of a glamorously sensual restaurant and lounge with great hospitality; a real sense of place that was warm and friendly like a “Stella”. The

portraits of Stella commissioned by partners Jan Yoss and John Younesi along with strong interior design themes balance the masculine and feminine to help tell the story.

La Creperie Café in Belmont Shore, a “line-out-the-door,” six year old favorite, that was bought, moved and re-imagined with stunning décor and popular menu by Dora and Patrick Parmentier is another good example. Their brand needed to be tightened up, made more cohesive, and expanded to better represent the restaurant’s exotic flavor as the couple prepares to open new stores in Manhattan Beach and Orange County. La Creperie has an amazing story with many interesting doors into the brand. Locals, students, tourists, and all creative folks who love the food and fun, visit at all hours, expanding normal restaurant dining times and creating crepe cravings from morning to late night. It is clearly “Club LC” that many want to belong to. The new logo has strong European flair. The new tagline —



Bohemian Bistro & Bar — sets the differentiation and the new menu adds a sense of Ooh La La.

At the Wells Beach Steakhouse in Maine, opening this month, the challenge was to develop a brand identity that would integrate with — and guide — the remodeling of the premise and capture two distinct clienteles; the summer tourists and the year-round regulars. Dick and Sheri Varano's dream was to transform a New England cottage into an upscale steakhouse as a sister restaurant to Verano's Italian Dinner House and Billy's Chowder House. The name was chosen carefully to designate the location, the initials WB to double as a traditional steak brand and nickname and the T-Bone Lounge to be the Club for the locals with a separate menu. The sign needed to tell it all. In addition, a yardarm will feature the flags of the U.S., Canada, and Maine along with a WB Steakhouse cocktail flag which will rise each afternoon accompanied by the blast of a foghorn to signal the opening of the restaurant in hopes of attracting guests and the Boston press.

FoodPower is a Restaurant Consultancy specializing in independent and small chain restaurants. www.foodpower.com and works closely with On the Edge Design, known nationally as restaurant branding experts. www.ontheledgedesign.com ✂



THE SPICE RACK



with Chef Gabriel Caliendo



Lavender

In the fields of Provence, when spring and summer meet, the aroma of lavender is released and perfumes the air for miles from the fields. A native of the Mediterranean region, southern India and tropical North Africa, Lavender is a member of the mint family with a unique aroma and powerful essential oils, so it must be used sparingly when preparing food or drinks.

The culinary uses for lavender have been honed by the French chefs of the Provence region over centuries. The flowers can be candied and used in confections and as cake decorations. Lavender is infused into sugar and often used in pastries or to sweeten tea. Tea bags themselves incorporate lavender flowers or buds for flavoring. Lavender is mixed with rosemary, marjoram, basil, bay leaf, and thyme to create "Herbes de Provence" for seasoning poultry and meats and the nectar of lavender is used by honeybees to create a high quality lavender honey that is recognized worldwide.

In addition to its culinary uses, lavender is used in many other applications. The flower buds are used in potpourris, and the oils from lavender are a popular choice for aromatherapy. Pouches of dried lavender are helpful in deterring moths and freshening stored clothing. Lavender is also a popular, easy to grow option for landscaping due to its beauty and aroma.

Lavender contains medicinal properties as well. The essential oil contains antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. Examples of lavender uses include: soothing and healing insect bites, relief of acne and treatment of skin burns.

Enjoy the beauty, aroma, and flavor of lavender this summer. Search the web for some great recipes and uses for this Mediterranean bush and flower. I highly suggest that you order some Lavender honey to compare the flavor to another quality honey.