

Eating out in style Design)

(For STAR Lifestyle edition)

by

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(Restaurant

A journalist friend of mine asks me to pick a topic on lifestyles and interior design and jot down a few words. I say lets talk about it over a dinner meeting in some nice and trendy restaurant on Zamzama. He refuses the offer as there is no time but loves the idea of a comment on “Eating out” as eating out has now become a major part of our Lifestyle. I agree to share a designer’s point of view on this subject with the readers and show some restaurant project photos as reference.

It is a fact that a restaurant is probably the only internal environment that puts to test all the five human senses. The results can be most fascinating ...or... most frustrating depending on the Food and the interior design. Sometimes the food is fine but it does not taste so good because of poor lighting or bad interior design. The same is not true vice versa; unfortunately nicely designed interior of a restaurant may be comforting but does not cover up for poor food.

But frankly, apart from the sense of taste and smell that is normally taken care of by the chef and his team, whose delicious food and meticulous display and presentation of food can give you a visual and a mouth watering experience, it is the role played by the interior designer who can really win your heart by good environmental design. It is the total experience that leaves a more lasting impression and you crave for more.

The tactile senses come into play as soon as you enter into a restaurant. You can feel the different textures and finishes of various materials used in an Interior without actually touching them. The mental game of contrasts between glossy and rough surfaces can be pretty exciting. Although music on its own has a profound effect on human body but it is believed that good background music while dining can be really soothing and adds tremendously to the experience.

While carefully selected music takes good care of our hearing sense but at the same time it can have good effect on the human appetite. No wonder live bands or background music is an integral part of almost all trendy eating places. In fact live bands can double the pleasure of dining out and have become a part of our lifestyle.

So it is the total engagement of all the senses that completes the experience. On the whole it is the ‘visual sense’ that takes command and ties the experience together in the mind. It is the interaction between the eyes and the brain that really “cooks up” everything inside and you get all the right kind of stimuli. With all the right ingredients and combinations the experience can be ecstatic.

One may dare to say that we as a society are lacking in all forms of essential excitement and entertainment in life but have become, over a period of time, self sufficient in at least one aspect of fulfillment i.e. gastronomic excitement. And we all know that “eating out” is generally speaking a family affair, an occasion to meet, eat and have a nice time. With the result the city is riddled with all sorts of eating places full of style and different themes.

While planning a designer is confronted with catering for not only single and doubles tables, but for fours and sixes and eights. But today we see restaurants doing roaring business that show flexibility in seating and which rearranges its seating to cater for a large family gathering instantly. Thus a restaurant becomes one of the most challenging design project for an interior designer.

Let’s briefly touch upon concept planning of a restaurant from a designer’s point of view. And see what goes behind the scenes to conceive an eating environment and how it takes shape. As a starting brief for a restaurant project for a local five star, the name “Jharoka” was suggested by the owner. This was developed as a theme for the restaurant by the designer after some reading and collection of references of Jharokas from various sources.

Jharoka, basically means a protruding balcony. These balconies evolved during the height of mogul architectural era. It was designed to allow the royal ladies to enjoy the external environment without really losing on the compulsory parda or hijab.

After the research work a small session of graphic design delivered an ‘abstract motif’ which could be replicated in two and three dimensions and which became a conspicuous signature for the restaurant. This motive was used to create small niches and mini balconies, a modern equivalent of Jharokas. These little balconies would eventually house artworks and art objects of mogul era as a food for thought, a display of our glorious heritage.

This single motif was also used on the wall paneling and stone cladding. It was also used on the floor Pattern and then it became the front cover of the menu for the restaurant.

Pen and sepia ink sketches of Jharokas of mogul era were commissioned to a local artist and were displayed on wall panels dedicated to graphics. A huge oil color mural painting showing architectural splendor of the grand mogul era was also commissioned and which adorned the walls of a split level area on the poolside of the restaurant.

The play of textures and an earthy color scheme was employed for visual décor. Because this was a 24 hour coffee shop and a restaurant, a portion was laid out with casual furniture the rest was given the formal look with banquet seating. The floor Pattern echoed on the false ceiling and indirect lighting troughs that concealed all the services. Further excitement was added by split levels here and there with change of floor finish that is oak floor boarding on the raised floor and woolen carpet in the sunken flooring.

A carefully laid out and well designed restaurant adds tremendously to the quality food and thus becomes an experience that you would want to make it a habit and part of your lifestyle.

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24th December 2002