



# how to space plan a successful restaurant

*“Good space planning is essential to the success of any restaurant. By this I do not mean squeezing in as many covers as possible. This will not help if customers are cramped or if service is difficult.*

*Although it is crucial for a restaurant to be attractive in appearance, it will soon lose its allure if it is slow or inefficient or if mistakes occur when delivering orders at the right time and temperature to the right tables.*

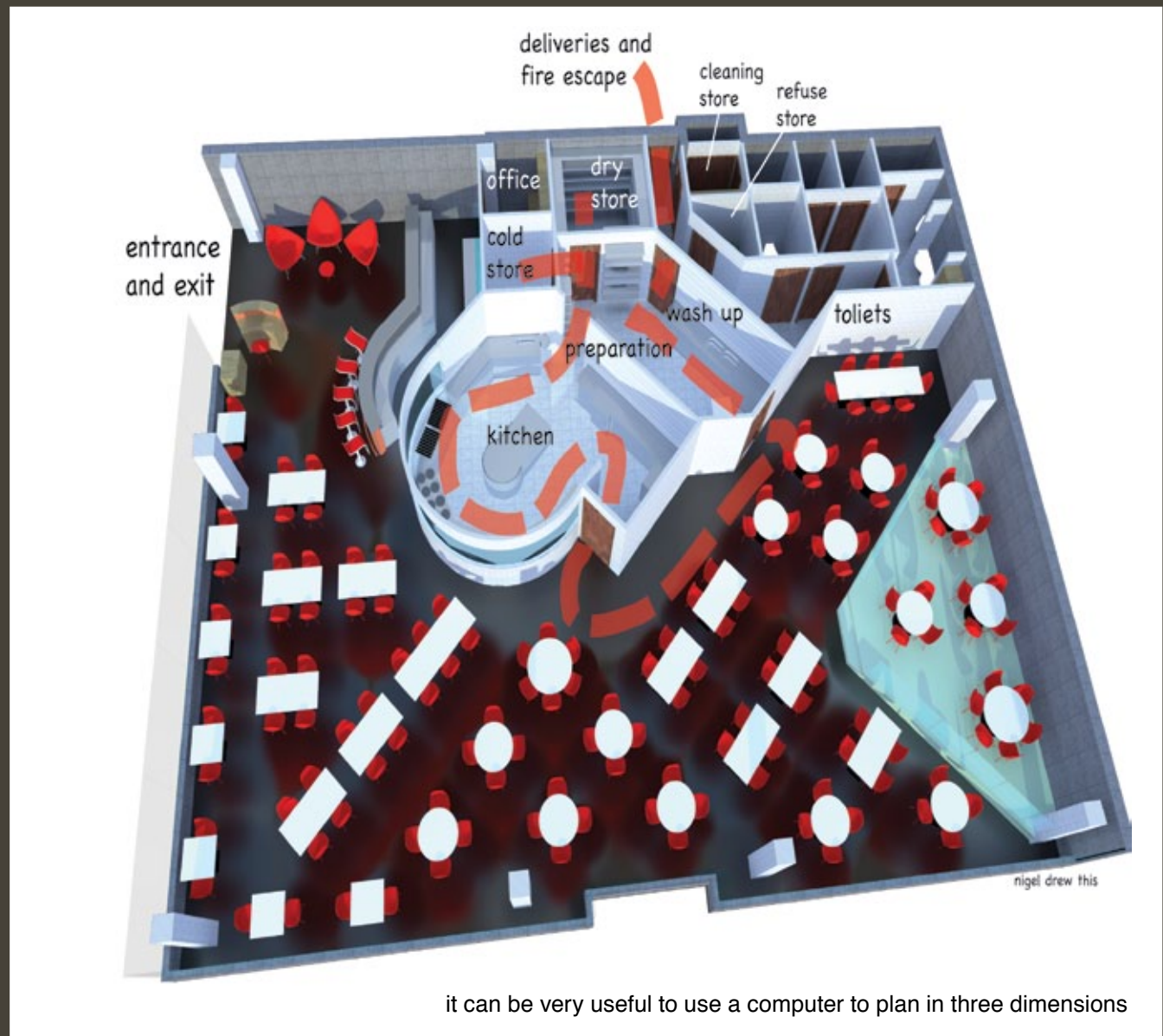
*All in all it's worth spending plenty of time space planning any restaurant so here's how I advise you go about it.”*



I have found that back of house planning is even more vital than front of house. Your dining room is your salesroom, your kitchen is your factory and everything should be geared to running the two together as sweetly as possible so that food arrives to the right table, at the right time, at the right temperature and with the minimum disturbance to other diners.

When planning it helps if you consider a restaurant as a production line in which each stage of the operation has to be laid out in the correct, efficient order. This may sound obvious but frequently I come across big mistakes. For example, recently I redesigned a very large restaurant in the UK that had been planned and built (for an experienced operator by a big firm of architects) without a dry store or an office.

I believe that form should always follow function so I always start by planning the back of house. The first piece of information required to do this will be a schedule of food service equipment including all cooking, preparation and cleaning and storage items. If you are planning to appoint a designer then you should provide this schedule up front as part of the design brief.



it can be very useful to use a computer to plan in three dimensions

If you have not prepared an equipment schedule, this then it should be the first thing you and your designer work on together after you have decided on your target market and menu. Our team includes an independent food services equipment specialist who can help build up the schedule, but many operators can get by very well with their own knowledge and the help of good equipment suppliers.

What this means is that if you have not at least drafted a menu you are not ready to start designing and if you do you'll probably have to start the whole process over when you get around to working out the food offer properly. It's better to do it once and do it right so here is my order for space planning a new restaurant: -

If possible food deliveries should be made at the back and refuse collected from there. Accordingly, the dry, refuse and cold stores should be near the rear exit. For the sake of good hygiene the refuse store should be outside in a yard or be between the prep room and final rear exit, off the main corridor and fire escape route and separated by a fire door

and separate ventilation system. In some regions these technical aspects are regulated within the building codes.

Next inside should come the preparation room. A preparation room normally has no cooking equipment, just preparation benches, sinks, benches, juicers, peelers, dough makers, racks and so on.

Dry and cold stores may be within the preparation room or between the rear exit and preparation room, either will work.

Some small sites will only have a front entrance; this is not ideal. In this case the same principles apply but you may have to schedule deliveries and collections daily before you open. It never creates a good impression when catering-size consignments of food show up during service.

In some cases the restaurant will be on more than one floor so back of house areas may be on a different level from the dining room and bar. The same principles apply. You will probably connect the back of house to the front with a hoist instead of a doorway. In this situation it helps to have a concealed rinse sink near the front of house hoist opening so you can avoid transferring food scraps in the hoist. You should have separate hoist cars or separate compartments within a single hoist car for clean and dirty loads.



If you require your own washrooms it helps to place them near the kitchen since the kitchen will require heavy-duty fume extraction and the toilets can then share the same ventilation duct routes (but not the same ducts as this is normally contrary to building codes).

The next stage in the production process is the main kitchen. The kitchen will include the entire heavy cooking equipment like ranges, fryers, grills, griddles, ovens and tandoors. There will also be more tables or benches, a large sink and perhaps fridges or freezers in which prepared food is kept close at hand for cooking-off.

It is best if all the heavy cooking equipment is arranged so that it is close together near to the final pass point to the dining room. All of the heavy cooking equipment must be located under fume extraction canopies. If the heavy cooking equipment is divided you will require divided canopies but generally it is best to try to locate everything together under a single canopy.

The final stage in the food production line is assembly. Once the food has been cooked the

dishes must be plated. Usually, there will be a bench or hot cupboard in the kitchen between the cooking off area and pass door or hatch for this purpose.

It is common to have a display kitchen that customers can see into. If you want a display kitchen consider carefully how to connect it to the preparation room or supply kitchen. Island display kitchens are tempting for designers but unless they can survive without restocking during service then unfinished food will have to be carried to them this will look unprofessional. Also balancing the ventilation system is critical where there is an open display kitchen. The system must be strong enough to extract cooking fumes so they don't enter the dining area but set up so that it can't pull strong drafts past the diners. This requires some clever engineering.

Now the food is taken to the table and is served. Once it has been consumed the process reverses. Dirty plates are returned and there should be a 'dump' inside the return point next to a large sink and a line of washing up equipment. It will help smooth flow if the pass point and return point are apart. Often



the washing equipment is lined down one wall of the prep room with all the prep equipment on the opposite wall. In this way the prep room serves a dual function as a wash up room. But a separate wash up room is better if there is space. The wash up equipment line will normally require a steam extraction canopy.

The refuse store should be close to the wash up area to facilitate the quick disposal of food scraps. In hot climates or when refuse collections are not frequent the refuse store should be chilled.

The last items of equipment in the production line will be a plate rack where all the clean plates are stored and a rack for large utensils.

So that is back of house. If it is planned well it will run smoothly, require fewer staff and there will be fewer accidents and spillages.

Once you have that right, the dining area, entrance and bar designs will follow naturally and you will have gone a long way to creating a successful business.

My last two pieces of advice :-

Plan well in advance on a drawing board or computer. It really is much better than trying to plan in the moment when the builder is asking you what you want him to do.

If you want a professional job, get a professional to do it.

