



Dining in the Lap of Luxury

Butler: What is your definition of professional hospitality?

LJ: Look at me...I'm 51 years old, I love food and I love the hospitality industry. I go to bed at 3am and get up at 6am. Despite having just three hours sleep every night, I still look forward to giving the best service I can to my customers. If anything, I reckon the industry needs more people with this attitude. Communication is critical in any business and unfortunately, the majority of managers and directors out there would never dream of handing out their mobile numbers. Mine is on all the time and I always answer it. I encourage my customers to give me a call to either give compliments or criticism regarding their experiences at any one of my branches. Here, I'll give you my number for your readers. If they want to chat about the industry or have any questions about my business they can call me on 082 491 2825. I also answer each and every email I receive. All comments can also be sent to teasers@mweb.co.za

Butler: How important are your staff members to your business?

LJ: I built this business with my staff. My guys are motivated. If you have motivated staff you can really build a company. However, we have strict house rules. I'm known as a hard-assed guy in the industry but I have to be. Everyday my managers (myself included) have hair inspection and nail checks with each and every girl that works for Teazers. The girls are also not allowed to smoke and drink on the floor. My kitchen staff are also very important to me. They take pride in their work and it shows in the quality of the food. Cleanliness is very important, especially back-of-house. If your staff can see that you place emphasis on cleanliness and provide them with a tidy, organised working environment, they'll follow your philosophy and work hard to keep their working conditions clean, ultra hygienic and an all-round pleasant place to earn a living.

Lolly Jackson and his chain of Teazers branches are never far from controversy, public assumptions and speeding fines. Nevertheless, love him or hate him, the self-proclaimed "King of Tease" is one of the leading pioneers in the hospitality industry.

“ I may have no formal hospitality training, but I do know that professional customer services, top quality food, premium beverage brands and yes, good clean entertainment are all key ingredients for a success business in this industry ”





“ I’m actually the biggest seller of Moët & Chandon in South Africa... ”

Butler: Almost everyone who has been to a Teazers branch has something good to say about the food. What’s your secret?

LJ: Fresh ingredients, passionate staff and a pinch of my culinary flair! Look at it this way; I want my customers to order freshly prepared food off a menu, not join a queue at some buffet where the food is of cheap, sub-standard quality. I can confidently say that the food served in any of my branches can stand up against any top restaurant across the country.

I even train the kitchen staff myself. You see, I eat out a lot and research what the other guys in this industry are doing. I also like to experiment in the kitchen. Okay, I may not be an executive chef but I believe my passion for good quality food takes me a step closer to that level.

People must remember that the majority of my customers are red-blooded males with big appetites. The two chefs I had a couple of years back were absolutely brilliant. Unfortunately, the trend of serving these tiny fancy food items didn’t work in my restaurant. With a heavy heart I had to let



them go and take over in the kitchen. The first thing I did was change the serving size of my steaks from 300g to roughly 500-600g. Only then did I realise that bigger steaks need bigger plates which forced me to change my whole range of crockery.

South African consumers want quality and quantity so I don't mind plates coming back with some food still on them. At least my customers are full, content and come back soon.

Food prices may rise but I keep my menu prices the same. Hey, what you lose on the swings you gain on the merry-go-round.

The saddest part of my business is that the people who criticise what I do, don't realise how good the food really is.

Butler: You have an impressive range of wines and premium beverage brands. What is the most popular drink served at Teazers?

LJ: Without a doubt it's Moët & Chandon. I'm actually the biggest seller of the brand in South Africa. Alcohol plays a big part in this business, but at the same time I have to give my customers what they want. If someone wants Chivas Regal, he/she must get Chivas Regal. Unfortunately, people who work in some clubs decant premium brands only to replace the bottle with a cheap alternative.

I really disapprove of this practice and encourage all establishment owners and managers to keep an eye out for dishonest staff behind the bar.

Butler: For a restaurant, the décor and lighting are impressive and the furniture looks expensive.

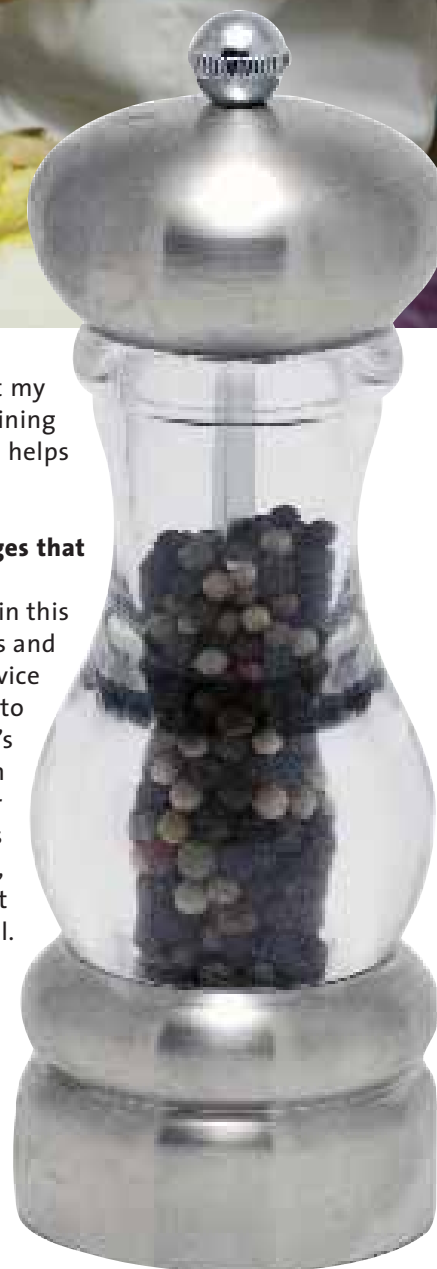
LJ: That's because it is! This is not a normal restaurant so the chairs are different here. Each one costs around R4 000 and I have to refurbish them every three years. I've got 400 chairs in each of my eight stores, you do the math!



Regarding décor and lighting, I look at what my customers like and listen to people when I'm dining out. It all forms part of the experience and it helps me sell a fantasy not a reality.

Butler: In your opinion, what are the challenges that lie ahead for the hospitality industry?

LJ: Well, to try and satisfy the various cultures in this country is very difficult. I also think that hotels and restaurants still don't provide the quality service that they should. They still have a tendency to make the most basic mistakes. On one hand it's great for me and my business as I try and learn from other people's mistakes. Yet, on the other hand, it's kak for the industry as some players are letting the whole team down. For example, I know that first impressions count and most of the time, this is done during a telephone call. The telephone at my front desk doesn't ring more than twice because let's be honest, the last thing you want as customer is to sit on the phone waiting for someone to take your business.



Butler: Lastly, what advice can you give the industry?

LJ: Have clean toilets! Come on guys, please! When you're buying a house, the women will usually comment on the kitchen while the men will check out the garage and more importantly, the bathroom. There is nothing worse than a restaurant with outside ablution facilities. It really pisses me off if I have to walk out of the restaurant, down some corridor and into a really dirty toilet. Unisex toilets are just as bad. What the hell are people thinking when they open up their business and expect both genders to share an ablution?!

I really believe that an establishment's toilets should be as clean as the kitchen, if not cleaner. The whole hospitality experience can be made or broken by how the manager maintains his/her toilets. Unfortunately, most restaurateurs don't spend their money where it's needed the most. 🇿



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