

MICROS speeds up the Red Spice Road



Red Spice Road opened in the heart of the Melbourne CBD in November 2007, with a goal of bringing the spice trails of Asia to the alleyway culture of Melbourne.

The atmospheric 200-seat restaurant includes a bar, private dining rooms, and an al fresco courtyard. And its contemporary Asian menu is designed around communal dining – using a variety of influences from South East Asia.

“We use lots of traditional ingredients and methods,” says Restaurant Manager Gavin van Staden. “But the food itself is a tweak on the original; we’ve added some modern flavours and ‘westernised’ it a little bit.”

Van Staden has been there from the beginning, and was heavily involved in the set-up of Red Spice Road.

When it came to selecting the best available technology for the new restaurant, he chose MICROS RES point of sale, MICROS Materials Control (for inventory control), and the ResPAK reservation and table management system by Analytical Systems.

“I’ve been using MICROS and ResPAK since about 2000, and I insisted on it for Red Spice Road,” van Staden says.

Red Spice Road has nine MICROS terminals which run RES 4.0. Each terminal incorporates the MICROS Payment Gateway, which provides for fast, integrated credit card processing without EFTPOS terminals. They also have printers in the kitchen and bar.

According to van Staden, the set-up offers a number of efficiency benefits for his restaurant.

“It’s docketless, so it helps us make sure everything’s on the bill. It’s also traceable, so orders aren’t lost. And we can quickly check what’s happening at a table without going to look at it.”

For customers, van Staden says the benefits mostly revolve around speed and responsiveness.

“Service is quicker for customers – both for food and drink,” he says. “When they want to get their bill, the credit card gateway means staff can go to the nearest terminal and have it ready in 30 seconds. The billing process now takes about a quarter of the time it used to.”

“That means we can turn tables quicker, and we don’t have to keep the next customers waiting.”

Improving inventory management

MICROS Materials Control gives Red Spice Road the ability to get a snapshot of inventory at any time. Van Staden believes this helps make the restaurant more profitable.

“Knowing what’s in inventory helps us keep costs down, and get the margins right. We can also see where wastage is coming from.”

An example was the restaurant’s beer wastage. After the Materials Control reports highlighted that they were going through 20% too much tap beer, van Staden was able to investigate what was causing the problem.

“We found out there was just an adjustment we needed to make to the taps. It would’ve been very difficult to pick that up without the reporting.”

The benefits of an inventory management system also flow into the front of the restaurant.

“From a customer’s perspective, there’s nothing worse than hearing something’s out of stock after you have ordered it,” van Staden says. “Using Materials Control doesn’t necessary stop this completely from happening, but it does alert staff to tell customers before they order.”



The MICROS system allows van Staden to more accurately predict usage, and means he can often get away with carrying a lower level of stock.

“Instead of doing one big order a week, I can check stock levels on Thursday and do a second order based on our expected usage patterns for the weekend.”

Getting more bums on seats

Van Staden describes the ResPAK reservation & table management system as an essential tool for his restaurant.

“With 200 seats, and all the adjustments to booking times and numbers that go with them, we just wouldn’t be able to cope in a paper-based environment.”

To automate their booking system even further, Red Spice Road introduced the ResPAK real time online reservation system in 2008. It proved more popular than van Staden expected – to the point he believes they now receive about 20% of their bookings online.

“Some people obviously prefer the speed and convenience of booking a table themselves. And we’ve made it easy for them,” he says. “It makes us more productive, as we don’t have to physically take as many bookings.”

The integration between MICROS and ResPAK also helps improve the efficiency and timeliness of reservations, as it allows van Staden to easily monitor what’s happening around the restaurant.

“If a customer has asked for the bill, MICROS sends a messages to the visual displays, so we know their table is about to become available. We can then send word out to the customers waiting in the bar area, and keep the tables turning over more efficiently.”

Rewarding customer loyalty

Red Spice Road uses the functionality of its MICROS and ResPAK systems to offer its customers membership status, loyalty rewards, gift vouchers and a paging service.

Van Staden believes the extra emphasis they place on marketing and rewards is an important part of their service offering.

“There’s definitely a connection between technology and the ability to deliver better service. And I believe it helps give us an edge on our competitors.”

Specifically, van Staden describes how he can use the ResPAK previous bill import facility to see what a customer had to eat and drink last time, or how much they typically spend.

Not only does this help Red Spice Road reward customers who provide great value to their restaurant, it also helps the staff deliver a more personalised experience.

“It’s great to be able to see a customer’s preferences,” he says. “For example, we can give them their favourite table without even asking them. The staff don’t even have to think about it – it all just happens behind the scenes.”

Putting technology to work

Having used the systems for some time, Van Staden says the improvements in the way the MICROS and ResPAK technologies work together have been significant in the last couple of years.

“I used to have to reset the interface once every fortnight, but now I can’t remember the last time I had to do it. It’s 98% uptime... verging on 99%”

Today, he wouldn’t consider running a restaurant without them.

“I’ve been in the industry almost 20 years, and I’ve seen all the systems. No other solution gives you the functionality of MICROS and ResPAK.”

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