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Pfister's Celia bringing diners into the kitchen

By **STEVEN SCHUSTER**, *SBT Reporter*

Another Milwaukee restaurant has given patrons a chance to watch the kitchen staff in action, but this isn't a counter seat overlooking a fast-food grill.

Celia, a restaurant at the Pfister Hotel, has added a "Kitchen Table," a glass-enclosed seating area adjacent to the new restaurant.

The Kitchen Table seats six to 12 guests and has a charge of about \$100 per person, depending on the type of wine selection that the patrons desire. An additional 18% gratuity, not including tax will also be added to the final bill. Reservations must be made a minimum of three days in advance, according to the restaurant manager Andrew Stockel.

The Kitchen Table is "served with a seven-course meal, and features five different wine selections." Stockel said.

The kitchen-view table is another way to maximize the experience factor, says the president and CEO of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, Ed Lump. "It's an ideal way to promote an upscale restaurant," Lump said. "You can make the dining experience very special for people."

The success of the Kitchen Table would not be possible without Tom Chin, the executive chef at the Pfister Hotel. "It has been a well perceived dining experience for the guest," Chin said. "The key to the success of a restaurant is that people really enjoy the whole experience and they want to come back to try new things."

Celia was created out of the space that had been used for the English Room.

Pfister general manager John Williams touted that table as "not just the average run-of-the-mill dining experience in Milwaukee. It's unique and ... has a one-of-a-kind menu. It's affordable and very special. It's great for business entertaining."

While it may be rare for diners at finer restaurants to see what's going on in the kitchen, a good number of them are interested in seeing the action, according to the National Restaurant Association, which says that 40% of surveyed adults indicated interest in display cooking — where customers can see their meals being prepared.

Williams believes that Celia's Kitchen Table "adds one more dimension to the restaurant, one more dimension to the Pfister, and one more dimension to Milwaukee. It's very special and we're proud of it."

Kitchen-table style restaurants exist all over the nation. The



UP CLOSE The new "Kitchen Table" at Celia in the Pfister Hotel offers diners a glass-enclosed table within the kitchen.

New York City restaurant group Smith & Wollensky now has a kitchen table at seven of its restaurants throughout the nation, according to the National Restaurant Association.

Minneapolis-based Buca Di Beppo, with a location in Milwaukee at 1233 N. Van Buren St., offers a similar type of dining experience, with a chef's table adjacent to its kitchens. The restaurants serve Italian-menu family-style meals.