



Background

Red Spice Road is located in the heart of Melbourne's laneway precinct and is quickly becoming a Melbourne favourite. Inspired by the cuisine and culture of South East Asia, Red Spice Road launched in 2007 and offers an intriguing mixture of flavours and aromatic spices brought to life by their renowned head chef, John McLeay.

The Red Spice Road ethos is around the sharing of food, conversation and their beautiful Asian-inspired spaces are designed around communal dining. Serving contemporary style South Eastern cuisine, the menu is comprised of banquet style shared mains. With a choice of courtyard dining and the CBD skyline as a backdrop, or communal style seating under the largest indoor lantern in the Southern Hemisphere, Red Spice Road is receiving favourable reviews and tributes from both critics and dining patrons. Their unique and highly flexible venue suits groups from 15 – 220 which is giving Red Spice Road the reputation of being the event organiser's perfect solution.

Above all, Red Spice Road's purpose is clear: To exceed the expectations of dining patrons with the quality of their food and service. To help achieve their purpose, they recognised the potential for a simple online booking management system for them and their dining patrons. This case study has been conducted and compiled by a 3rd party to review and assess the impact and benefits Red Spice Road restaurant experiences as a result of partnering with bookarestaurant.com

*Case Study interview conducted by Leading Matters Pty Ltd with:
Gavin van Staden, Restaurant Manager, Red Spice Road, 27 McKillop St, VIC 3000
www.redspiceroad.com*

What made you choose bookarestaurant.com as your online booking partner?

Analytical Systems Pty Ltd (AS), the inventors of bookarestaurant.com, has been in business for many years specialising in reservation, table and guest management solutions. I have used their ResPAK software in every restaurant I have managed since 1999 and if a restaurant I managed didn't have it, I made sure we got it! They are the most highly experienced and proven restaurant system software engineers out there and I trust them implicitly.

bookarestaurant.com is a division of AS and when I reviewed the benefits and opportunities provided by bookarestaurant.com, I could see it works favourably both ways for us as a restaurant, and for dining patrons as well.

The best part is, it's easy and it costs the restaurant nothing to join. All the staff at bookarestaurant.com knows their product inside out and their service is second to none. They are instantaneous in their response and I don't know any other company like that. In truth, I can't fault bookarestaurant.com – it has no short comings and it excels in what it does.

For dining patrons the site is so simple and easy to use. One of the main advantages is that it takes the pressure off our patrons – they can jump online, see what we have available and make an informed decision about their booking and get instant confirmation of their arrangements. I believe the stress-free booking approach helps set the tone for the whole dining experience, which we want to be both relaxed and enjoyable for them.

From a business point of view, it's really simple and convenient for us to use too. I can customise our site whenever we want to get bookings outside our busy times. This means I can fill a table that wouldn't normally be filled and even offer patrons an incentive to perhaps take a later booking – like a bottle of wine for example. I can make our web presence active at different times to suit us – say during less busy times like 6pm or 9pm. I can even turn off all the tables if we're fully booked. It saves phone calls from clients and our time in taking calls and people calling back.

In what ways were your expectations met by bookarestaurant.com?

It did what it promised and it exceeded my expectations because of the benefits to both our top and bottom lines and it worked more quickly and more simply than I could have imagined. The feedback from our dining patrons has been great too. They love it and they use bookarestaurant.com regularly because of the benefits they perceive. They can make their bookings in real time at any time and their expectations are expertly managed from the outset. They don't have to wait for call backs or emails and they can come straight to us first if they want to. They have choices and, in a time poor world, their bookings are fast, easy, free and they're instantly confirmed.

In what ways are you able to quantify the results of having used bookarestuarant.com and how have you been able to assess this?

The impact on our business is huge. For the first 30 days of online bookings the income generated was \$30,375 and all it cost us was \$18 in booking fees.

The total number of covers booked in just the first 30 days of using bookarestaurant.com was 675 and after just 1.5 months 36% of our bookings were made through bookarestaurant.com and it's ever increasing.

We have 1500 covers seated on average per week. The average table size is 3. That's 500 phone reservations per week. At a conservative average call time of say, 2 minutes, that's a whopping 16.6 hours at least of time spent on the phone per week! That estimate excludes the time allowance for call backs from patrons enquiring and calling back to confirm. bookarestaurant.com takes at least 1/3rd of those bookings for us *plus* we get all the benefits of filling the tables we may have never been able to fill.

With bookarestaurant.com our bottom line is improved significantly in terms of saving time and resources through automating the booking process. In just one month we saved a minimum of 66.4 hours of time and resources.

As far as our top line is concerned, the figures speak for themselves. bookarestaurant.com promotes our table availability. As far as I am concerned, there is no other booking partner like bookarestuarant.com. *I reckon bookarestaurant.com is to restaurant bookings as what wotif.com is to hotels.*

If you were recommending bookarestaurant.com to a restaurant manager what would you say?

I strongly recommend bookarestaurant.com to any restaurant manager who wants to improve their bottom line by saving hours of phone and email communication time and resources simply through automating the booking process. They will also improve their top line by promoting table availability and therefore decreasing empty tables. I can't stress enough just how easy it is to use.

The bookarestaurant electronic booking diary manages all your bookings online and it's free-of-charge! The hardest thing you'll ever have to do is put in the times when you have table availability, come up with incentives and then just watch them fill up automatically with dining patrons who love to book online!

What would you say were the key factors in achieving such great results with bookarestaurant.com?

Good question! Firstly, I think of bookarestaurant.com as my booking partner. They provide a great service and they give me all the tools I need to get the best possible return on investment which we clearly do. I'd say the first thing anyone who is considering bookarestaurant.com as their booking partner needs to have is the motivation to succeed and then to take advantage of the tools available to them. One more thing – they shouldn't worry if they're not great with technical stuff. bookarestaurant.com can help with all of that. Technology is here to stay and I think restaurants that want to grow their businesses just can't afford to ignore it.

There are really just four key factors that I have found very successful and easy to implement into my restaurant operations. I suggest that any restaurant that followed these would also experience a high level of success.

1. Add a link on your own website. I have put a lot of effort into developing my website, www.redspiceroad.com.au to be a leader in the online hospitality space. It's really important that your website is inviting, welcoming and easy to use because it's the first impression you can influence and create. It has to be easy to navigate too and I know I get a ton of web traffic each month. Instead of forcing my dining patrons to call or email about booking information, I now link my website directly to my profile page on the bookarestaurant.com site. I'd say adding this link to our website has been the most important success factor in achieving the results we got from the beginning.

2. Establish your bookarestaurant.com profile. The way the bookarestaurant.com website works means new dining patrons can find our restaurant profile any time on their site. This is a real bonus for us because it's free marketing for our restaurant and it's our own micro site within bookarestaurant.com. It's quick and easy to do because the bookarestaurant.com site is so easy to navigate for restaurant partners. We see our profile as a great opportunity to stand out so that potential dining patrons will want to choose us! I recommend that potential restaurant partners write copy that is enticing and aimed at dining patrons. There's heaps of space to include lots of nice photographs of their food and interiors. You can even create a link to your menu and opening times. It's about making a great 1st impression and once you've done your profile, you can update it whenever you want to.

3. Setup table inventory. You have to show the tables you have available on the site so dining patrons can find your restaurant in their search results. We follow this simple "supply and demand" rule: Restrict supply when demand for tables is high (you have lots of bookings) and release supply when demand is low (you have lots of tables available – even at off peak times). Once you do this, you maximise bookings and that's the key to success! To be honest, we do micro manage the table inventory because we want to be seen wherever possible by dining patrons doing a search! We keep an eye on advance bookings and plan our table inventory for 100% full table potential. The key thing is, you have to have tables loaded to be seen. You don't really need to update daily, but once you get the hang of it, you'll see just how easy it is and you might even want to.

4. Tell everyone! Once you've completed the first 3 factors, which really isn't hard at all – especially if you use the expertise available from the team at bookarestaurant.com - tell everyone you know about bookarestaurant.com. When we first partnered, I sent out a customised email to my entire database telling them about the convenience of online bookings. There are so many ways of letting dining patrons know about the site. For example, you can place a bookarestaurant registration card in the billfold at the end of the meal and even include a short blurb in your "on hold" phone message. There are lots of simple but innovative things you can do to let people know and they can have a major impact on your bottom line. Oh, and ask your staff for ideas and ways to let people know about bookarestaurant.com. Involving staff in your innovations is just another great way to spread the word.