

Program Summary:

Transformation of a renowned restaurant into two distinct hospitality environments, redefining guest experience while honoring the legacy of a celebrity chef and culinary institution.

Program Statement:

After more than 35 years in operation, an iconic restaurant was reimaged to support a new generation of leadership while preserving the character that made it a New Orleans landmark. This renovation transforms the guest experience through the creation of two distinct hospitality environments: an intimate fine-dining destination and a more casual wine bar, each with its own identity but connected by a shared architectural language.

The main dining room was reconfigured to dramatically enhance a visual connection to the kitchen. The previous partial kitchen view was replaced with new glass panels framed within the original arches, creating a direct view of the culinary process and a dramatic ice podium displaying the evening's ingredients. The room has been pared down to just 12 tables, many set within deep banquettes, and features layered lighting, refined finishes, and carefully controlled acoustics to create an atmosphere of exclusivity and immersion.

In contrast, the wine bar embraces a more social character. Existing terrazzo floors, exposed brick walls, the iconic black bar counter, and woven wood ceiling panels were preserved and reinterpreted alongside new Venetian plaster surfaces, custom millwork, and contemporary furnishings. The result is a layered environment that respects the restaurant's legacy and redefines the guest experience.

IA-245.01

Building Area: (sf)

7,310 SF (Restaurant)

4,790 SF (Reno. Area)

Cost per Square Foot:

\$459

Construction Cost

\$2,200,000

Date of Completion:

September 2023



IA-245.02

The Kitchen as the Focal Point:

This renovation redefined the relationship between guests and the culinary process at this celebrity chef's flagship restaurant. The original chef's counter was removed and replaced with glass panels framed within original arches, transforming the kitchen into the visual centerpiece of the dining room. What was once a partial view is now a shared experience, and instead of just a few guests getting an up-close look of the work being done, now every diner has a direct visual connection to the culinary process.

Guests are invited to engage directly with the preparation of their meal, while a dramatic ice podium displaying the evening's ingredients reinforces the connection between cuisine, craft, and place.

This transparency is reflected in the architecture itself, which frames the kitchen as the centerpiece of the dining experience.



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The Existing Space:

Existing conditions photographs show the more enclosed nature of the original kitchen, and the lighter finishes.

The multiple wood tones between the ceilings, floors, and furniture create a mismatched appearance that lacks cohesion.

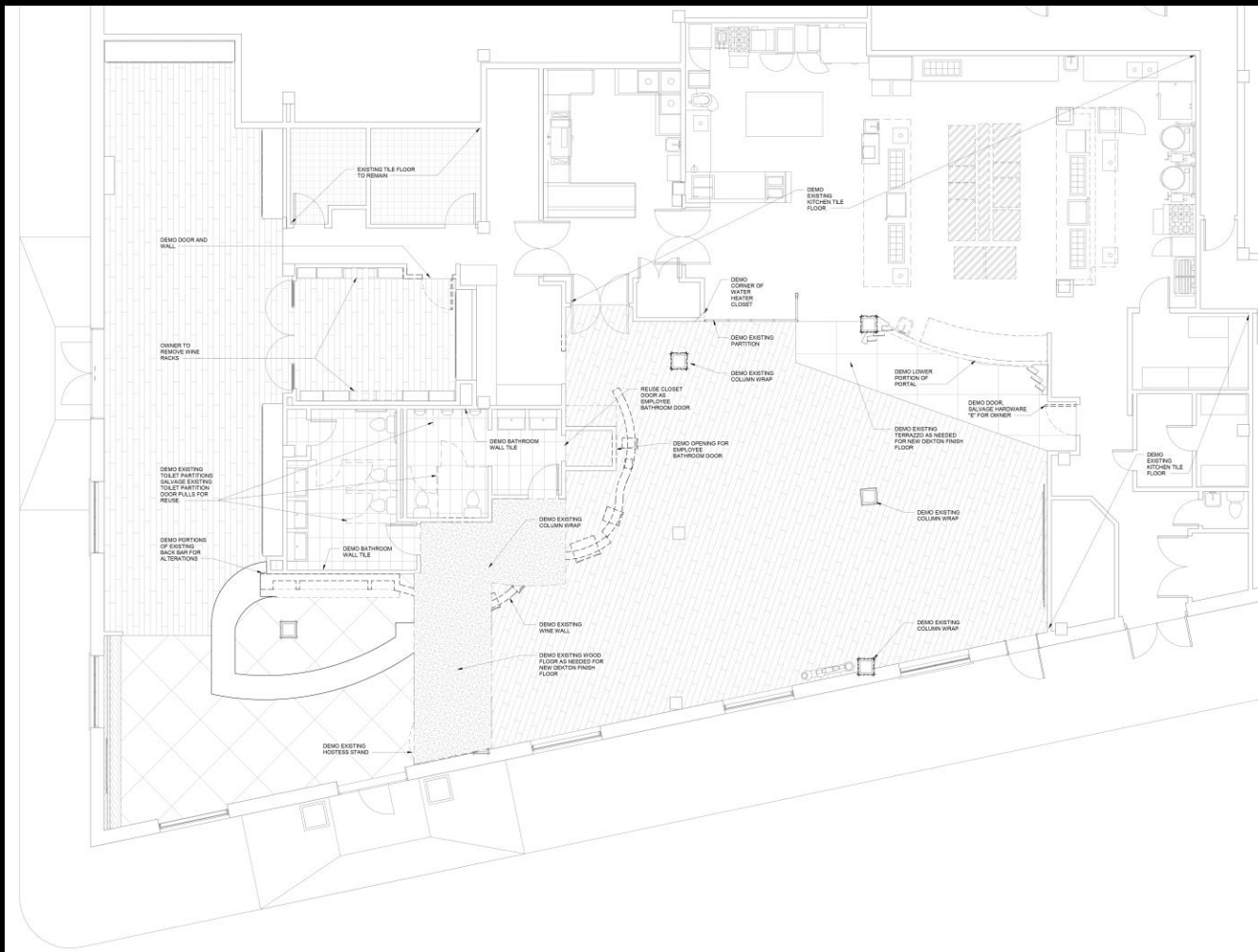
IA-245.04

The Existing Space:

The demolition floor plan highlights how the layout needed to change to reflect the new vision of the restaurant.

Previously the dining room wrapped around a typical restaurant bar, and the wine room served as a traditional private dining room.

The removal of the primary restaurant equipment and chef's counter shows how the customer experience was intended to change with this renovation.

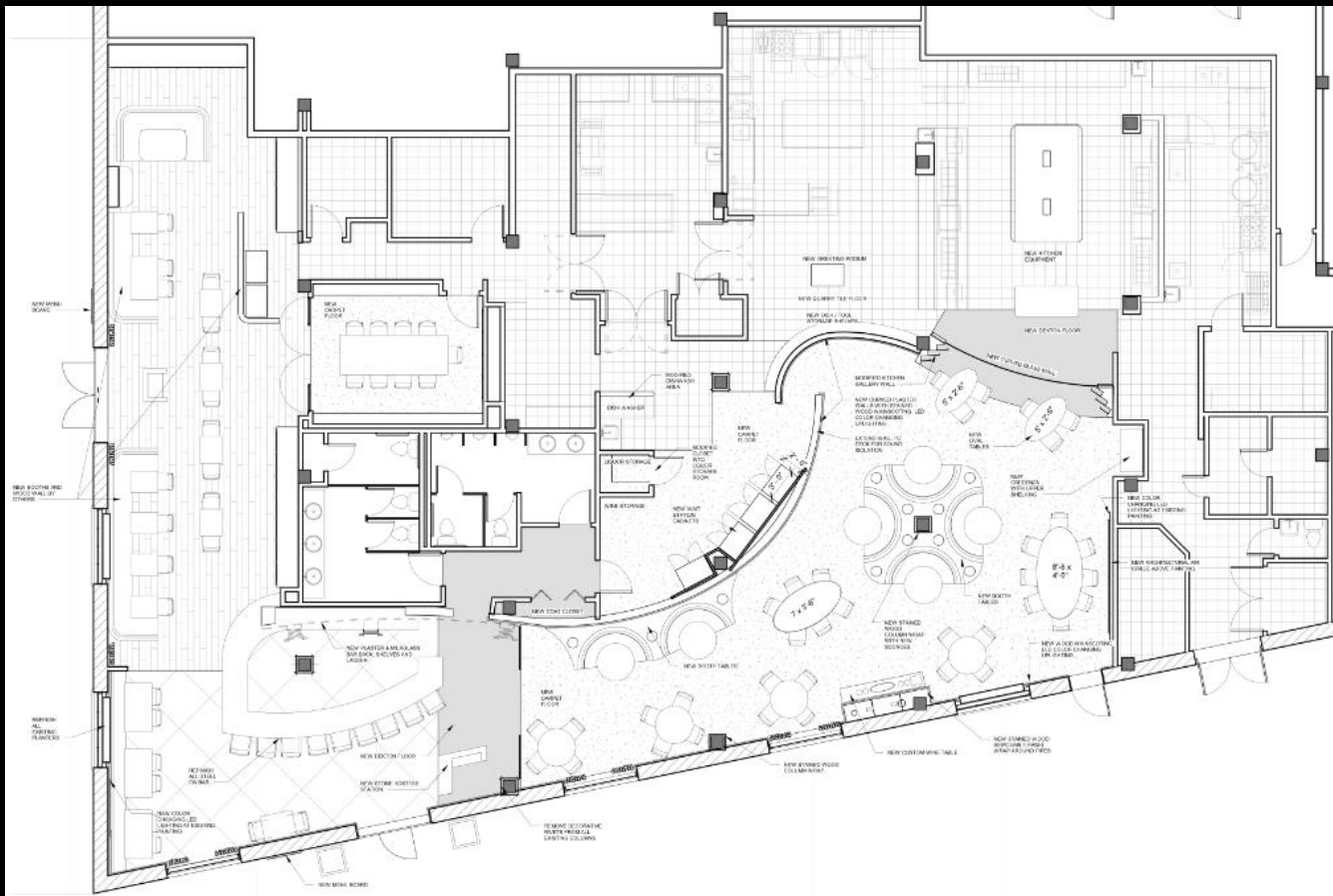


The Reimagined Space:

The dining room has a greater visual connection with the kitchen and the limited number of tables highlights the exclusivity of the experience.

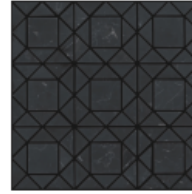
Milk glass panels provide a physical separation between the dining room and wine bar, while back of house spaces and shared restrooms provide an additional buffer.

The wine bar is more open, particularly to the reimagined bar seating area. The tables are closer together and generally seat fewer patrons. The wine bar also has its own entrance from Julia Street, while the restaurant continues to be accessed from Tchoupitoulas Street

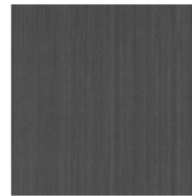




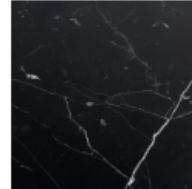
Monet Honed Marble Mosaic
Nero Marquina



Dupione Ink Horizontal Stria
Commercial Vinyl Wallpaper



Nero Marquina Black Marble



Golden Truss Carpet



IA-245.06

Progress Renderings & Interior Design:

These progress renderings and material samples highlight the vision our client was seeking to achieve – a nod to the past with its eyes on the future of New Orleans fine dining.

The top rendering is of the dining room and illustrates the new visual connection with the showpiece open kitchen. Each diner has a view of the work being done and has the opportunity to step inside the kitchen. The dining room features floor-to-ceiling Venetian plaster walls and elegant Golden Truss carpet.

The bottom rendering of the wine bar is more intimate and features the original exposed masonry walls and well-recognized bar counter. The project also created elegantly redesigned, high-end restrooms.

The renovations create a contemporary, timeless interior design concept. Similar materials are used to connect the two spaces while still creating different guest experiences. The original woven wood ceiling panels used for acoustics were retained and refinished, while the new smooth Venetian curvilinear walls create a sense of whimsy.



IA-245.07

A Nod to the Past
With a Look Toward the Future:

The restaurant entry has traditionally been off Tchoupitoulas Street and that remains unchanged after the renovation, but the entry experience has completely changed. While you still enter and see the bar, dining room patrons are ushered past the host stand and the milk glass panels to the more secluded dining room.

The beautiful exposed brick and wooden woven ceiling panels remain but have been refinished a darker hue to match the moodier vibe of the dining room while standing in contrast to the brighter wine bar.

The mixture of new and old materials is reflective of the restaurant's desire to retain its long-standing legacy while also acknowledging its progression to a future with a new generation of chefs at the helm.



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A Look Back:

Looking back at the dining room entry, you can see the visual and physical division between the restaurant and the wine bar.

Material selections were intentionally used to absorb sound and support a quieter, more immersive dining environment. The dining room features new carpet, luxurious banquettes, and custom dining room chairs, all of which help with the acoustics of the space given their soft materials. The original restaurant featured wood floors, which reflected sound throughout the space. To create a more exclusive and intimate dining experience, an appropriate auditory environment was essential to complement the exquisite cuisine.



IA-245.09

Introducing Luxurious Banquettes and Pops of Color:

The new dining room layout introduces luxurious, deep-set banquettes that create more intimate dining experiences than a series of tables in a line.

The banquettes have a commercial-grade faux velvet finish, which adds a touch of luxury while still being easily cleanable for optimal practicality.

In the dining room, the client envisioned a darker, more reserved ambiance. We achieved this goal by re-wrapping the columns in a cherry wood finish and staining the woven wood ceilings a dark finish. Otherwise, the finish selections are generally neutral, deferring to the glowing kitchen with its custom green casework, and the beautiful large-scale abstract artwork.



IA-245.10

The Kitchen as a Centerpiece:

The redesign transforms the kitchen from a back-of-house function into the visual and experiential heart of the restaurant.

The primary kitchen equipment of the original restaurant was removed and replaced with world-class, bespoke tools for cooking. This new equipment does not shy away from attention with custom green finishes inspired by the restaurant's brand identity, making this hearth of the kitchen the centerpiece of the restaurant.



IA-245.11

A View from Within:

It is in this portion of the kitchen that diners are invited in to observe the chefs in action.

The kitchen island closest to the glass is for expediting. It is where the finishing touches are put on dishes before they are ushered out to the guests in the dining room.



IA-245.12

A Different Experience at the Wine Bar:

In contrast to the dining room, the wine bar has its own unique feel. Here the existing terrazzo and wood floors remain, rooting the overall design to the restaurant's familiar former aesthetics.

Smooth Venetian plaster walls and refinished woven wood ceilings tie the wine bar and dining room together.

The rear of the photo reveals the immense wine collection on display throughout the space, as well as the new host stand just inside the new Julia Street entrance.



IA-245.13

A Different Experience at the Wine Bar:

The exterior walls of the wine bar are largely finished with the historic building's original exposed brick masonry, which adds a wonderful texture and warmth to the space.

The interior walls are largely lined with wine coolers, allowing patrons to gaze at the vast collection of over 30,000 bottles.

In the wine bar, the tables are generally smaller and closer together to facilitate the more casual experience for this component of the restaurant.