



Wining and dining

Starting a restaurant is a thrilling adventure, combining creativity, business savvy, and a passion for food and beverage — we look to the world’s greatest restaurants for inspiration

Concept, plan, finance, location, design and brand marketing will all help to start a restaurant, but how to put it on the map? Find a celebrity partner and a world-class chef.

A restaurant concept — think USP, distinctive dining experience and creative twist — should reflect the passions of its owners for authenticity and cater to the tastes and preferences of its target audience. Of course, a solid business plan, desirable location, and exterior and interior design plans are essential to attract investors and secure financing. Then branding and

positioning is key; there are no corners to be cut here in contracting the very best to build the perfect restaurant.

A celebrity investor, partner or chef helps too. “Japanese food traditionally in New York and in my experience even in London was very by the book, but it wasn’t what Nobu was doing — the food was amazing.” Robert De Niro told CNN Travel on the beginning of the Nobu empire.

Nobu Matsuhisa recalled the conversation with DeNiro in a CNBC interview: “He said ‘Nobu, I’d like to open a restaurant in New York together with you’

and he invited me to New York, and I stayed four days. Also, Bob didn’t explain too much. So, you know he invited me to open a restaurant, (and) I so appreciated that he likes my food (and I said): ‘Bob, thank you so much but it’s still too early to open it because my first restaurant was not organised yet.’ So, he said ‘OK!’”

De Niro was not used to hearing “no”, but respected and appreciated Nobu’s position. “After, like, four years, he called me. ‘Nobu, maybe time to come again to New York?’ I was so surprised but now I can trust him because he was waiting

for me for four years. I so much appreciated (it) and he trusts me, he was a big support to me, he wants to open a restaurant in New York, and with me, we did it.”

“Celebrities are also people, of course they are famous... My restaurant at the beginning had only 38 seats, (so) we cannot save a table for a special guest, you know, first come, first served. I don’t mind (if it’s) celebrities or young kids or regular people, (people were treated on) all the same levels.”

When restaurant, chef and menu are ready to go, finding the very best maître d’ and staff is the finishing touch before the launch campaign begins with media.

“Many times, Nobu says that if you had to divide [it up], what is more important, service or food? ➤

Above: Noma is a three-Michelin-star restaurant run by chef René Redzepi and co-founded by Claus Meyer



Right: Chef Nobu and co-founder Robert DeNiro Below: Toni Braxton and Anita Tsoi at Nobu Bottom right: A slice of plankton cake; a dessert from Noma's seafood season menu



He would say 60% service, 40% food. Because people remember service," said Nobu co-founder Meir Teper who has now supported the business in moving into the hotel industry too. noburestaurants.com

Just look at some of the world's other fine dining establishments.

NOMA (COPENHAGEN, DENMARK)

Noma, led by Chef René Redzepi, is celebrated for its inventive approach to Nordic cuisine. By focusing on locally sourced

and foraged ingredients, Noma has redefined fine dining and set a high bar for culinary creativity. The restaurant's emphasis on seasonal and sustainable ingredients would inspire anyone to develop a unique and environmentally conscious menu. noma.dk

THE LEDBURY (LONDON, UK)

The Ledbury, headed by Chef Brett Graham, is acclaimed for its refined British cuisine and seasonal dishes. The restaurant's

emphasis on local produce and its commitment to high standards of service truly exemplify how focusing on quality and customer experience can set a restaurant apart. theledbury.com

EL CELLER DE CAN ROCA (GIRONA, SPAIN)

El Celler de Can Roca, run by the Roca brothers, is known for its modern take on Catalan cuisine. The restaurant's success stems from its blend of traditional flavours and cutting-edge techniques. Their approach

highlights the value of innovation and teamwork in creating a memorable dining experience. cellercanroca.com/en

MIRAZUR (MENTON, FRANCE)

Mirazur, by Chef Mauro Colagreco, offers a unique blend of French and Argentine influences. The restaurant's commitment to fresh, locally sourced ingredients and its stunning Mediterranean location demonstrate the impact of location and quality on the dining experience. mirazur.fr ■