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Dinner and a movie: One hot ticket for operators

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ECO-NOMICS:

Aquarium applauds sustainable seafood efforts

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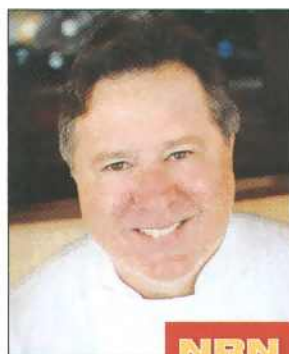
Operators find they knead bread to cut costs, stand out

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ON THE CUTTING EDGE:

La Madeleine's Costner journeys from kitchen to boardroom

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Norman Van Aken plans to open Norman's 180 in the Westin Colonnade Hotel in Coral Gables, Fla.



Operators taking up occupancy in hotels

BY PAUL FRUMKIN

Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group has opened restaurants in some unexpected places. The New York-based group has branches in a baseball stadium, a museum and a 6-acre park in Manhattan's Flatiron district. Curiously, though, the much-imitated restaurant operator has managed to steer clear of installing a restaurant in a hotel — until now, that is.

This month Meyer's USHG will join a growing number of restaurateurs with hotel alliances as it teams up with Ian Schrager to open its newest operation, Maialino, in the hip hotelier's high-toned Gramercy Park property in New York.

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EEOC to redefine disability laws

Proposed regulations expected to enlarge pool of people entitled to ADA protection

BY LISA JENNINGS

WASHINGTON — Foodservice operators and other employers will need to rethink policies and practices related to the Americans with Disabilities Act under proposed regulations that are expected to dramatically broaden the definition of what it means to be "disabled."

At the same time, opera-

tors could find themselves the target of an increasing number of disability-related lawsuits resulting from the new rules, experts say. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's proposed regulations would include individuals with epilepsy, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, intellectual disabilities, major depression and bi-polar disorder — to

The law was revised be-

cause federal lawmakers were unhappy with interpretations of the original 1990 rules by the U.S. Supreme Court. Over the years the court made it difficult for employers not considered disabled, including individuals with epilepsy, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, intellectual disabilities, major depression and bi-polar disorder — to bring a claim to trial.

Under the new ADA Amendments Act, or ADAAA, the basic definition of "disability" as an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity remains the same. However, the EEOC has been asked to revise what its regulations define as "substantially limiting," as well as to expand what

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Commodity costs may pressure chains in '10

BY SARAHE. LOCKYER

After a year of profit-friendly reductions in commodity pricing for nearly everything but chicken wings, the cost of which has risen on high demand, many restaurateurs are bracing for a tougher purchasing environment in 2010, where little wiggle room will be available for even slight commodity inflation.

Though most restaurant chains project that their 2010 commodity costs are likely to either remain flat or increase slightly from 2009 levels, there is not as much leeway to react to increased costs, given that top lines remain stubbornly flat and consumers have little tolerance for menu price hikes. Even more, cost-cutting moves like menu re-engineering or supply chain efficiency building have already been completed, observers note.



Chicken wing prices have risen on high demand in 2009, and experts believe even a slight increase in commodity costs in 2010 will have dire effects for restaurants on tight budgets.

"2010 will not be a good year for the industry," said John T. Barone, president of Market Vision Inc., a con-

sulting firm specializing in purchasing, and a contributing editor to Nation's Restaurant News. "Most op-

erators have done a lot this year to adjust their operations, and they are not sure

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