

## Bite-sized information from the experts

How can you keep on top of the latest trends happening in the industry? Keeping an ear open for free seminars and training, like the recent program at Fine Food Brisbane, is a valuable way, says **Ken Burgin**.



INTERESTING, bite-sized and extremely relevant: that's how most people in hospitality want industry information and education. It was also the benchmark in developing the educational seminar program for the recent Fine Food Queensland Trade Expo followed by Food & Beverage Alive in Queensland, a two day training program especially for clubs, and sponsored by *Hospitality* magazine.

The three day program at Fine Food Brisbane covered a broad range of topics. My first session, 'How to Protect your On-line Reputation' offered insight into how to manage a world where everyone is a critic. It can be tough handling negative comments on review sites but one of the keys is to set up Google Alerts so you know whenever a comment is posted, be it good or bad.

Brisbane lawyer Con Castrisos and business broker Gil Wright provided invaluable information with their presentation 'Hot Legal Issues When Buying or Selling Your Business'. The opportunity to access information covering sale contracts, rent reviews, lease assignments, relocation, landlords, refurbishing and franchises without a significant fee attached is only available at such events. Wright reminded us that the more complex the business, the lower the resale value. A business that's simple to run may sell for twice the annual profit, but one with long hours and a complex format may be worth much less.

Working with suppliers to reduce delivery packaging was a key point from Restaurant and Catering Australia CEO John Hart in his 'Saving Money with Green Table' presentation which provided the audience with immediate access to sustainable

practices, cutting costs, adding customer appeal and increasing profits.

Continuing the money-saving theme, Geoff Hunter of Hobart Food Equipment and Keri Thomas of Stoddart discussed 'Food Service Equipment: New Technologies to Boost Efficiency'. They demonstrated how investing in new dishwashing and exhaust systems can cut the use of electricity, water, chemicals and labour.

'20 Ways to improve Kitchen Cost Control' is always a popular seminar and it was great to see the nods of recognition as I reminded the audience of the need to start with properly costed recipe cards: basic documentation that is often overlooked. There were even more 'ah hah' moments the next day when I presented 'Profitable Menu Design' with many in the audience heading back to add another fifty cents to all their menu prices immediately.

Three young Brisbane chefs, Sarah Mahoney of Kis Cucina, Shannon Saint of Easts Leagues Club and Tony Davis in Café San Marco, brought in a favourite cookbook and revealed how they keep up with food trends, new ingredients, equipment and changing customer demands.

Award-winning wedding venue Maleny Manor also has an award winning website. Marlene Murray showed how the venue uses its site as a selling tool with photographs playing an important part.

There was **more about** online marketing at the Food and Beverage Alive event the next day which identified dozens of clubs, restaurants and cafes making their websites work for them. Check [malenymanor.com.au](http://malenymanor.com.au) and [storybridgehotel.com.au](http://storybridgehotel.com.au)

Queensland chef David Pugh of

Restaurant Two and food consultant Alison Alexander brought their wide-ranging knowledge of the state's produce and growers together in two presentations. It was an eye-opener to see the enormous range of fresh food produced in Queensland.

A 'Service Wakeup Call: How to Create a Food and Beverage Team that Rocks' session from Paul Lyons offered dozens of great techniques to recruit and manage the best staff for the job. One of Lyons' top suggestions: spend more time assessing new staff for appropriate behaviour—it's easier to train for skills than attitude.

Paul Dimattina shared secrets for success of the family restaurant dynasty, the Dimattina Restaurant Group. In a situation where many of the staff are family members, a focus on training, and more training is an important ingredient in the recipe for the group's success.

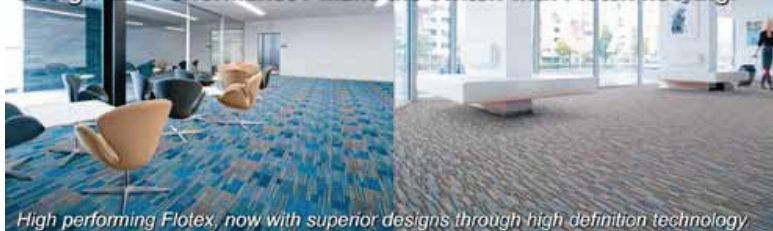
Winding up, more than 60 attendees at Food and Beverage Alive in Queensland gained valuable knowledge through sessions such as 'Food Cost Smackdown' that looked at how to keep an eye on and rein in food costs in this tough environment.

'Winning Menu Strategies' to create popular and profitable choices for a wide range of visitors provided some outstanding initiatives for participants to take away with them.

If you missed the seminars go to [www.FandBOnline.com](http://www.FandBOnline.com) to check them out.

*Ken Burgin is a leading hospitality industry consultant. For more information about Profitable Hospitality visit [profitablehospitality.com](http://profitablehospitality.com) or call 1800 001 353.*

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