



Lighting à la Carte

Our expert serves up fresh lighting for restaurants.

Q: I'm looking for some new lights for my restaurant and was wondering what the most flattering hue is for my guests. I want them to feel energized and like they are at a party. Is it better to have sconces or ceiling lights?

A: I think lighting is a very important component of a successful restaurant. My recommendation is to mix up the color temperatures of the lighting a little bit.



Projecting a pattern of light can create the effect of dining under the stars.

People look best under the color of dimmed incandescent — that would be between 2200K and 2400K. Think of how you look in candlelight or in front of a crackling fire. If you have artwork or plants as part of the décor, I would illuminate them using a 3000K color temperature. This is a crisper light that will make colors pop. Consider the use of LED MR16s or LED PAR20 lamps for the accent lighting. They are dimmable and last 25,000 hours. Make sure that the CRI is 90 or higher.

It is very important to have a level of ambient light in the restaurant, not just spots on the tables. This can be done lots of different ways, from running a crown molding around the room

with lighting behind it, creating a cantilever that runs the perimeter of the room, or installing floating panels with lighting on top (these panels can be made of a sound dampening material to serve double duty). You can even use torchiere lamps as a source of ambient light for a quick fix.

If you go with the more architectural solution, I would recommend a linear strip LED that has a warm color temperature and is dimmable. You could also select a color-changing LED that includes white (most color-changing LEDs only have red, blue and green). This will give you a wider variety of colors to dial in, including lush warm whites. I would have you take a look at AION (www.aionled.com) and its candlelight version (2150K or the company's RGBW series, if you want to go with the color-changing option).

I do like to see hanging decorative fixtures in a restaurant space — they help humanize the scale of the environment and create some visual sparkle. There are dimmable screw-in LED bulbs that come in the color of dimmed incandescent (2400K) from companies like Green Creative (www.gc-lighting.com).

You might consider projecting patterns of light on the walls, floors or ceilings to create a more party-like atmosphere. Take a look at the projector made by Beachside Lighting (www.beachsidelighting.com). They only show four patterns, but there are actually hundreds to choose from. They are easy to change out so that the shadow patterns don't become stale visually.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

Edison Light Globes offer a dimmable filament-like LED lamp with a 2200K color temperature.

www.edisonlightglobes.com



ASK RANDALL

If the question fits, you must submit.

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Or send questions to:
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Whitehead has worked on projects worldwide, appeared on the Discovery Channel, HGTV and CNN, and he is a regular guest on Martha Stewart Living Radio. Visit his website (www.randallwhitehead.com) and follow his blog (www.lightmakesright.com) for more information on books, upcoming seminars and the latest lighting trends.