

restaurant development + design

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product prepared in a variety of ways and is an immersive brand experience created around Fieri's celebrity and personality.

What's changed most about how you approach restaurant design today compared with 5 or 10 years ago?

Mercier: We rely a lot more on technology in the early phases of design and focus in more sharply on operations, flow and functionality before aesthetics. Restaurants and kitchens today are so much more sophisticated and operationally advanced, and the bar on food prep has been raised so high. Chefs want to offer much more authentic experiences, which impacts kitchen layouts and equipment needs. We also have many more open kitchens to work with.

There's more collaboration today, too, between operator, consultant, chef, designer and architect, before getting to what the aesthetics of a place might be. That's critical to getting the level of efficiency required to be competitive today. And code compliance is a bigger issue. Here in California, it seems every two or three years, we have new or revised codes to comply with. That makes it tough because a lot of stuff that was OK for one unit suddenly isn't OK for the next.

Henken: The industry overall is more competitive, but specific to design, there is less emphasis on decoration and more on integrating a brand and a differentiated experience. Clients are also more aware of demographics, trends and what's going on in the marketplace. Thanks to the internet, there's so much information readily available, people are savvier and expectations just keep rising.

Technology, too, has changed how we communicate design as well as the environment that we're designing. It's increasingly integrated both front and back of house. And with takeout and delivery growing so fast, footprints are starting to change. There are a lot of restaurants out there now that probably could have built smaller dining areas. In the past, we designed a restaur-



At Kid Rock's Made in Detroit, McIntosh Poris Associates created an immersive experience that celebrates Rock's Detroit roots and his love of country. Image courtesy of Jason Keen



Michael Poris

AIA, Principal, McIntosh Poris Associates, Birmingham, Mich.

Education: University of Michigan, BS in Architecture; Yale University, studies in modern history; Southern California Institute of Architecture, Masters in Architecture; apprenticeships with Cesar Pelli, Thom Mayne, Frank Gehry, Richard Meier, Frank Israel

First design job/project: Drafting Kmart parking lots in the 1970s

Favorite app: Instagram

Favorite place to go for creative

inspiration: My memory. With all the experiences I've had and all the places I've traveled, if I could access a tenth of it, I'd be in great shape.

Restaurant design pet peeve: Generic designs with no story or sense of place

Advice to young designers: Listen. You need to understand what every stakeholder in a project is saying and apply that in order to create something that works for everyone.

rant and kitchen to serve the number of tables out front and the number of turns anticipated. Now, when you have so many more orders being picked up or staged for delivery, you have to change your approach. And you have to work harder to ensure that the experience for on-site and off-premise diners is equally good.

Poris: Ten years ago, we weren't thinking as much about what the experience should be and about making things unique as we were about creating really

cool designs — something you might see in a glossy magazine spread but that could just as well be in Amsterdam or London as in Detroit. The big change is our focus on making each project unique, so that it couldn't be just anywhere but has a specific and thoughtful connection to place.

Technology, of course, is another big change. Designers can do things like incorporate giant digital images and wall art, for instance. It's pretty amazing, but it's also a little overwhelming and, I think,