

# Beyond The Blueprints: Building And Designing A Restaurant

**Blueprints** for Eckelberry's current project in the works: A.R.P. Cafe in Ventura

It was Benjamin Ford, son of actor Harrison Ford and owner of one of L.A.'s trendiest restaurants, Chadwick, who said the following of architect Anthony Eckelberry: "His experience and insights were invaluable to both the planning and the success of Chadwick Restaurant. His ability to translate my whimsical desires into a well-conceived plan and keeping in step with my philosophy, preserved what is already a landmark building. He made it contemporary to compete with today's restaurants. I commend him on his ability to collaborate with all the different personalities and egos involved in an operation of this type."

From the first consultation to your bistro's opening night, your decision to work with an architect, an environmental designer and interior decorators should be a well-thought out process that assists you in creating your dream restaurant.

Paris-born architect, Anthony Eckelberry has been designing restaurants for the past 15 years. His talent and versatility have led him to execute projects for such prestigious clients as Wolfgang Puck, Joachim Splichal and Ben Ford.

Ventura Star newspaper restaurant columnist Rita Moran wrote about Eckelberry's latest project, Hozy's Cafe, "The entire restaurant glows with the sense that someone with dining savvy has planned it well."

"There's no doubt that the artistic element of being an architect is the most fun," says Eckelberry. "But, that's just a small percentage. After designing the project, there's a different hat to wear when working with the city."



PHOTO: LORRAINE ECKELBERRY

## Does The Red Tape Match The Carpet?

It's complicated to convert a building that hasn't already been set up as a restaurant. It's the architect's job to help scout the location and to verify it as a properly zoned area. The labor of bureaucracy falls on the architect.

"The city is concerned with two issues," notes Eckelberry. "City planning oversees the outside of the building. Some cities, such as Beverly Hills, West Hollywood and Santa Monica, have a review board that goes through a process to approve the aesthetics."

Signage, color, materials and design are factored into the review procedure.

"The second issue," Eckelberry continues, "is a completely different

tries, the architect oversees or acts as the contractor and builder. I think it's a good idea for the architect to work together and team up with the contractor so the client doesn't have to find a plethora of sources."

An architect's responsibility of taking on the entire task places him at the site, day and night, watching new equipment come in, fixtures installed and furniture placed.

"I utilized the services of an interior designer at Chadwick, but also worked with engineers, flowing information back and forth."

Relying on an architect to not only build a fabulous restaurant, but a reliable team, is invaluable. "When checking out an architect, talk to their former clients to acknowledge the job was completed on time and not above budget. A restaurant hires its staff and plans a promotional campaign based on a specific opening date. It would cost the client a tremendous amount of money to have the project come in late."

### Material Whirl

The architect's submitted budget reflects the desires of the restaurateur. If the client indicates that they envision an upscale, trendy eatery, then they should be prepared for the architect to suggest exotic wood instead of pine, and precious light fixtures rather than a cheap chandelier.

"My budget is proposed at the beginning," confirms Eckelberry. "I meet with the client, and the first consultation is free if the building is in escrow or the prospective client already owns or is leasing a property. My mark-up is eight to ten percent, plus engineering fees, interior design fees, and whatever other services I am required to contract. If I am asked to purchase kitchen equipment, I always structure a separate budget."

"When I present the blueprints, I also bring along samples of fabrics, materials and ideas for furniture. As my project for the A.R.P. Cafe in Ventura commenced, I knew their theme was aerospace. I suggested a high-tech interior, using different metals such as titanium panels for the walls, stainless and wire cable backlit fixtures, and an exotic fabric based on wetsuit material for the booths."

Eckelberry estimates kitchen design alone to be anywhere between \$2,500-\$5,000, with plumbing an easy \$3,000-\$4,000.

Based on an average 2,000 square-foot restaurant, Eckelberry estimates about \$150-\$200 cost per square foot for build out: construction, excluding furniture, fixtures and equipment.

"The kitchen equipment will be around \$150,000 and the build-out about \$250,000," Eckelberry estimates. "Engineering costs such as plumbing and electrical would be extra, but not something that may be necessary when remodeling an existing space."

Rudy Reate of Reate Design Associates is an interior designer who looks at working with an architect as teamwork. "I sometimes cross paths with architects," explains Reate. "The interior designer is not a space planner like the architect, but together we can form a concept to meld interior space and structure."

Color, textures, design concept and materials are all key for the interior decorator. "I am concerned with the finish of the space," Reate adds. "Design is about the way you use it; you wouldn't necessarily want to match a rustic look with Asian cuisine, but if you do, you'd better add the proper accessories." ♦

**Architect Anthony Eckelberry's** projects include Chadwick (Beverly Hills), Pentimento (L.A. County Museum of Art), Pinot Pasadena, Pinot Provence (Costa Mesa), Cafe Talesai (Beverly Hills) and Rosti (L.A., Santa Monica, and Encino).

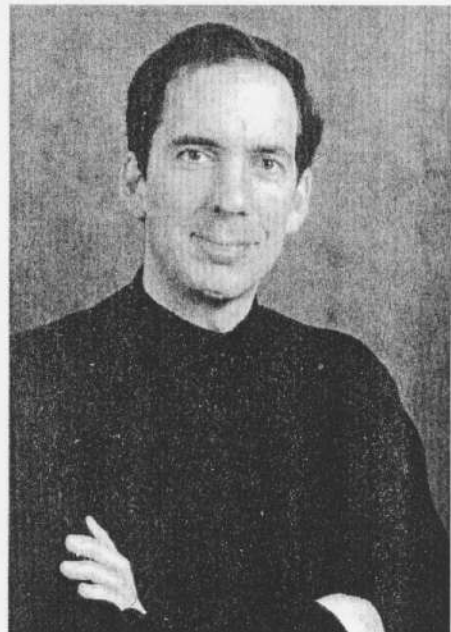


PHOTO: KETH GILLESPIE

group of government officials. The building and safety department is interested in structural and safety requirements, as set forth by the fire department.

"I take my drawings directly to the city planners. I've established some good relationships in L.A., but as cooperative as my contacts may be, it still takes four to six weeks for plan-check time, and five to six weeks to get a building permit."

Realtors are involved with the architect from the very beginning. "They know the profitable spots for a restaurant," Eckelberry continues. "They know ahead of time what the client is looking for, and even the history of how businesses have progressed in lucrative areas. Realtors can also be invaluable in knowing the pitfalls of working with the government. The absolute best bet is to work with a restaurant broker, rather than a commercial realtor who doesn't know the industry."

### Building A Team

The new trend of hiring an architect is getting a package deal. By dealing with only one "group," the restaurateur doesn't have to search beyond the blueprints.

"Traditionally in the U.S., the architect is one entity and the designer another, with the contractor representing yet another facet of the project," states Eckelberry. "In other coun-