



Thinking Outside the Box: The History of the Circular Dining Room

The Hotel Hershey is known far and wide for its Circular Dining Room, a restaurant whose innovative shape was entirely Milton S. Hershey's idea.

Mr. Hershey had seen other establishments seat single diners – such as he often was – behind pillars or at tables with obstructed views; he didn't want this to happen in his dining room. He's also quoted as saying, "In some places, if you don't tip well, they put you in a corner. I don't want any corners." So his Circular Dining Room was built in a semi-circle without pillars or corners, offering each guest a view of the Hotel's breathtaking Formal Gardens.

Mr. Hershey was serious about his wishes, regardless of the architectural challenges they may have brought. Initially a column existed in the center of the dining room, primarily for support. But Mr. Hershey asked to have it removed, and instead a hidden truss system was developed to support the room's ceiling.

The 13 windows that overlook the gardens are made of colored leaded glass and depict birds and blooms native to central Pennsylvania. The Rudy Glass Company in the nearby town of York created the windows in partnership with a local blacksmith, and Mr. Hershey's own employees crafted the ornamental woodwork and ironwork.

The Circular Dining Room completed a \$1 million renovation in January 2008. The renovations – which included new paint, carpet, furniture and lighting; the addition of a 1,200-bottle, temperature-controlled wine cellar; and a hand-painted

ceiling mural that complements the stained-glass windows – maintain the room’s historic integrity while creating a fresher atmosphere.

The Circular Dining Room serves imaginative American cuisine that incorporates regional and organic products, and the menu changes with the seasons. The restaurant is noted for its use of chocolate, Mr. Hershey’s signature product, in dishes both savory and sweet.

A standout offering of the Circular Dining Room is its award-winning Sunday brunch, which is a favorite among locals and visitors alike. In addition, the restaurant offers an eclectic list of wine and spirits from the most acclaimed regions in the world as well as the most sought-after producers. Today its wine list features 350 labels.

In November 2008 the venue was awarded the AAA Four-Diamond Award for the 21st consecutive year. In July 2008 it received its 13th consecutive Award of Excellence from *Wine Spectator*, and in June 2008 the Distinguished Restaurants of North America (DiRōNA) presented the Circular Dining Room with its award for Achievement of Distinction in Dining.

The restaurant continues to be a favorite site for visitors to Hershey, and it’s the place central Pennsylvanians go to celebrate engagements, anniversaries, graduations and other special events. The Circular Dining Room consistently strives to improve the guest dining experience by enhancing food and beverage offerings, the décor of the room, and its level of service as its staff continues to live up to Mr. Hershey’s specifications.

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