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HOTEL EZRA CORNELL

ISSUE TWO

Welcome Back!

Welcome to the second edition of the Hotel Ezra Cornell (HEC) 101 Newsletter. We are counting down to HEC 101 with new stories and more behind-the-scenes looks at what is happening across the hospitality industry. From holiday recipes to industry insights, there is a lot to explore this month. Happy Holidays, and we hope you enjoy this month's issue!

Philanthropy: Food Education Fund

HEC is proud to announce our partnership with the Food Education Fund (FEF), a New York City-based nonprofit dedicated to empowering the next generation of hospitality leaders. The organization works directly with public high school culinary and hospitality programs to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and professional network needed to build a successful career in the industry. Their mission is rooted in the belief that talent is everywhere, but access and opportunity are not; FEF bridges that gap through immersive and career-shaping experiences.

Through a combination of classroom learning, hands-on training, and mentorship, FEF prepares students for real-world success. Their programs include internships with leading restaurants and hospitality partners, entrepreneurship opportunities, industry workshops, and individualized career guidance. Students gain technical expertise, confidence, and professionalism to support them well beyond high school.

One of FEF's most impactful initiatives is its commitment to placing students in environments where they can build meaningful connections with industry professionals. These relationships often evolve into long-term mentorships, opening doors to careers in culinary arts, operations, management, hospitality entrepreneurship, and more. With each program, FEF helps students realize their full potential and envision futures shaped by passion, purpose, and possibility.

Can't make it to HEC Weekend? Donate today on the [HEC website](#).



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HEC Columns: Hospitality in all Industries

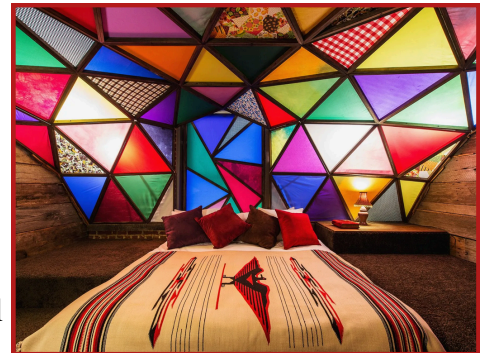
When Museums and Hospitality Collide: A Case Study of 21c Museum Hotels

By: Larissa Mallen

A museum-goer's dream: the opportunity to sleep and stay alongside the art. Introducing 21c Museum Hotels: Combining contemporary art with hotels and restaurants. The first museum was founded in 2006 in Louisville by philanthropists and contemporary art collectors Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson, who wanted to revive the historic 19th-century warehouses in Louisville, Kentucky, and create a cultural hub. Since then, the brand has expanded to Bentonville, AR; Cincinnati, OH; Lexington, KY; Durham, NC; and St. Louis, MO.

Currently standing outside the Louisville location is a 30-foot-tall, double-size, golden replica of Michelangelo's David, titled David (inspired by Michelangelo), by Serkan Özkaya. The Louisville location also showcases one of the coolest suites (and permanent sculptures), Asleep in the Cyclone, a room with a domed ceiling featuring geodesic design that incorporates various textiles, resembling stained glass. As a fully functional hotel room, guests can experience the colorful art of Jonah Freeman and Justin Loew throughout their stay. While not every room has a colorful sculpture on the ceiling, there is original artwork in every room.

Exhibits are open year-round and are free of charge, with the intent of accessibility to local communities. In short, 21c Museum Hotels aren't just an accessible expression of the local culture, community, and artistry; they also create a fully immersive space where that culture can be shared and experienced by visitors alike.



21c Museum Hotels: Asleep at the Cyclone

The Thrill of Service: How Hospitality Drives Theme Park Loyalty

By: Laura Fennessy

Amusement parks rely on immense customer loyalty to remain successful. A large part of how they gain this loyalty is by looking at their offerings through a hospitality lens and creating an environment that emphasizes customer satisfaction above all else.

The most common way amusement parks enhance customer enjoyment is by creating a themed experience, somewhere where customers can feel as if they are leaving the real world for a few hours. The themed experience is often fully cohesive across rides, retail shops, and restaurants.

The role of employees is also important because human interaction is vital to the hospitality experience. A positive interaction with an employee can create customer loyalty, while a negative one can lead to poor reviews about the park. In all fields that focus on customers, client contentment is crucial for their success.



Pixar Pier / Paradise Pier at Disney California Adventure

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The Airport Hotel Effect: Turning Travel Spaces into Destinations

By: Rena Salsberg

Today, airports increasingly serve as entertainment hubs rather than solely transportation centers, reflecting the broader evolution of the hospitality industry toward experience-driven service. Airports have expanded their focus beyond check-in counters and security lines, now emphasizing dining, retail, and leisure experiences that closely mirror hotel operations.

One approach that many airports have taken to mirror the hospitality industry includes the rise of premium lounges that closely resemble high-end restaurants and hotels. For example, the lounges offer à la carte dining, craft cocktail bars, spa treatments, showers, and quiet suites—services traditionally associated with luxury hospitality brands. Airlines and airports have begun designing these spaces to replicate the hospitality industry's main goals, including emotional well-being and guest satisfaction. The attention to detail in lighting, furniture, food quality, and staff training reflects the same service principles that guide hotel operations.

Beyond lounges, airports are becoming full entertainment hubs with art installations, live music, indoor gardens, movie theaters, observation decks, and even fitness centers. These features define airports as an integral part of the travel experience, not just a means of getting from place to place.



LaGuardia Airport's Terminal B

**REGISTER FOR THE
CONFERENCE TODAY!**

April 16, 2026 – April 19, 2026

Cornell University
Statler Hall and The Statler Hotel
Ithaca, NY 14853

The registration
link is live on
our website:

www.hotelezracornell.com.

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The Details Behind the Support Pod

Check out more behind the scenes on our Instagram!



Procurement Department

The Procurement Team's role is to serve as the backbone of the organization and support all of the other HEC departments. Because of this, the team has one of the broadest-reaching impacts on Hotel Ezra Cornell. At its core, Procurement has three main functions: budgeting (managing event revenues and donations), donor relations (reaching out to and negotiating with sponsors), and purchasing (obtaining all necessary items for the conference).

These responsibilities are essential for enabling every other department to operate effectively. This year's conference theme, *All in the Details*, especially resonates with Procurement Director Jason Orenstein '27, who explains, "The details have always been so important to the Procurement Team... we can't lose a detail with the money." Jason plans to be highly intentional in selecting sponsorships, ensuring that each brand aligns with HEC's values and reflects well on both parties. The department is also committed to providing donors with valuable perks and visibility. Working with the Rooms and Guest Experience Department, the Procurement Team also plans to source amenities that are exceptionally "individualized, personalized, and detailed, instead of just whatever someone will give us for free," said Jason. These decisions help create a truly bespoke experience for every guest. The Procurement Team is excited to build connections and deliver the most incredible weekend possible!

People & Culture Department

The HEC People & Culture (P&C) department is essential for maintaining a positive and collaborative culture within the HEC 101 teams. Two of their major roles this year are to design different HEC bonding events and to manage and train volunteers for HEC weekend.



Some of the bonding events the P&C team have put on so far this year, as seen in *Behind the Scenes of HEC*, include a Halloween gathering and a Thanksgiving charcuterie board event. The Thanksgiving event united all HEC teams for a night of food, fun, and TV. They built charcuterie boards and played the Thanksgiving episodes of the show *Friends*. Since all of the HEC teams are interrelated and rely on each other for success, events such as these help build a welcoming and collaborative environment. Aside from bonding, the P&C team spends a lot of their time working on hiring volunteers that other departments need for HEC weekend. After the volunteers are recruited, the P&C team is responsible for onboarding and managing them throughout the weekend. While this team's work may not be as visual from the outside, they are an essential part of setting the organization culture and why the conference runs smoothly.

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Holiday Beverage Spotlight

Holiday Spritz

Inspiration:

HEC 99 was the first time Isabelle Louis '26, HEC 101 Beverage Director, heard of a Hugo Spritz, now a staple of the modern spritz craze. For the holidays, Louis wanted to take that familiar, refreshing drink and give it a seasonal look without changing its essence. This new take of a Hugo Spritz is a brighter, deeper, jewel-toned look that instantly feels more festive and winter-ready. It is still recognizably a Hugo, but dressed up for the season and is something you can serve at a holiday party, a cozy dinner, or even as a signature drink!

Ingredients:

- 3 oz Prosecco (or sparkling wine)
- 1 oz St-Germain (elderflower liqueur)
- 1 oz Pomegranate Juice
- 1 oz Club Soda

Glassware:

Wine Glass

Garnish:

Pomegranate Seeds and Rosemary Sprig (dust the sprig with powdered sugar for an added holiday touch!)

Method:

1. Fill a wine glass with ice
2. Build your cocktail by adding the St-Germain, pomegranate juice, Prosecco, and top with club soda
3. Garnish with pomegranate seeds and a sprig of rosemary
4. Enjoy!



Holiday Dish Spotlight

Salmon and Spinach Quiche

Inspiration:

Eva Spak '28, a HEC Sous Chef on the Culinary team, designed a fun recipe for salmon and spinach quiche for you to try at home! Spak's inspiration for this item came from her travels over the summer. On her first day ever traveling alone, she stumbled into a café in Vienna and ordered a salmon quiche. The moment was perfect, and she knew she had to return to Vienna to order that quiche again. And she did return. One month later, while working in Budapest, she impulsively hopped on a train to Vienna on a day off and visited the same café for lunch. She chose to serve this quiche at the HEC Alumni Homecoming event because she wanted to share the joy it brought her with others.

Ingredients:

Crust:

200 g all-purpose flour
5 g salt
100 g cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
60 ml cold water

Egg Mixture:

1 large egg
230 ml heavy cream
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
50 g grated Gruyère or cheddar cheese

Salmon and Spinach Filling:

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 onion (finely chopped)
1 clove minced garlic
400 g baby spinach
½ teaspoon salt
100 g smoked salmon, chopped into small pieces
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill



Instructions:

Crust: Sift the flour into a large bowl. Add the salt and diced butter. Rub the butter in flour with your fingertips until the mixture is like fine breadcrumbs. Add the water gradually, just enough to make a firm dough. Knead the dough briefly on a floured surface. Roll out the pastry large enough to cover the bottom and sides of the tart pan. Carefully place the dough into a 20 cm (8") fluted tart pan and tuck it in. Prick the dough all over with a fork. Fill the tart with pie weights. Bake for about 15 minutes at 180 °C (360 °F). Remove pie weights. Cook for another 8-10 minutes until golden brown. Let the crust cool.

Filling: Sauté onions and olive oil in a large pan on medium heat for a few minutes until translucent. Add garlic. Sauté for 30 seconds before adding the spinach. Cook until the spinach has wilted. Transfer into a sieve to drain excess liquid. Add the dill. In a medium sized bowl, whisk the egg, cream, salt, pepper, and nutmeg.

Building the quiche: Spread the salmon pieces and cheese on the bottom of the pie crust. Add the spinach and onion. Pour in the egg mixture carefully over the top. Bake the quiche at 175 °C (350 °F) for 30 minutes or until just set in the centre. Let it cool before serving.

Student Spotlight: Matthew Merrill

As the fall semester wraps up, Matthew Merrill '26 shares insights from his time as a Dean's Assistant, building on his experience on the Dean's Board as well as HEC 100 Design Director. Merrill was first intrigued by the Hotel School since he saw it as a way to bridge his passion for food and entrepreneurial mindset.

He comments on how important mentorship is to him starting out and how he learned so much from the seniors who guided him. The hotel community has always been there for him, which led him to wanting to get as involved in the school as possible to pay it forward.

Merrill speaks to the unique role as a Dean's Assistant in that he has the opportunity to interact with both alumni and freshman students. As a student, he has seen it all, from the day students walk through the Statler Hall doors for orientation; they are part of a strong community that supports one another.

Merrill expresses how now, with graduation coming up in May, he is able to be the connection between alumni and the new Hotelies and, "inspire the next generations of Hotelies to make this place as good as it can be."

When asked about the key leadership skills he has developed as an HEC director and now as a Dean's Assistant, Merrill highlights the unique opportunities the school provides by giving students both the resources and the trust to make a meaningful impact as leaders. He shares that he has been inspired by a principle within the Hotel School's culture that "you get further in life when you treat others better," and he works to model that for other students in his leadership roles. He notes that carrying this level of responsibility while still a student helps students grow and fosters lasting relationships.



Matthew Merrill '26

Merrill reflects on his time at Cornell and the takeaways he will bring with him when entering the hospitality industry as an alumni. He argues that, "there is a necessity for an education in hospitality in today's world now more than ever." Merrill continues to explain that in order for companies to succeed, they need to bring a strong culture, and that starts with bringing service and showing appreciation towards their employees. In addition, with the rise of AI, people are increasingly seeking genuine human connection, and there is no better place to learn how to cultivate it than the Hotel School.

Merrill makes his final remarks in sharing that many of the Dean Distinguished Lecture speakers passionately spoke about their time in HEC and strongly recommended getting involved as it greatly impacted their time at Cornell. With this in mind, he encourages those thinking about going to the conference to register because he is inspired by this year's board of directors and the refreshing news that the perspective of HEC 101 brings. If these were not reasons enough, you can also see Merrill in action as a bartender in April!

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We Want to Hear from You!

Click [HERE](#) to share feedback about the newsletter.

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THANK YOU FOR READING!

All of the content was written and created by the HEC 101 Communications Team. Happy Holidays!

Yours in Service,

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