

A honey of a wall

15 When restaurateur Charles Phan decided to open a second location of Out the Door—the casual sibling of his Vietnamese-inspired Slanted Door in San Francisco—he insisted that the design be non-thematic. No bamboo, no red lacquer, no Buddha statues. To come up with an architectural expression that subtly linked the food and space, architect Olle Lundberg designed a “honey wall”—hollow, back-lit glass panels filled with honey varieties of different colors and viscosities. “We had a jar of honey in the office that had crystallized and I noticed that light still passed through it,” Lundberg explains. “I figured that if we made the panels thin enough, the crystallization would create some amazing patterns.” He was right. Not only does Out the Door’s amber honey wall serve as a striking design element and light source, it also pays homage to Phan’s culinary talents. “Honey is an edible product that when sealed, never goes bad. It’s a timeless food, just like Charles’ cooking, which is constantly evolving,” says Lundberg.

Automat redux

16 Horn & Hardart went out of business in 1991, but new millennium diners can relive the experience at Bamn! in New York City. Co-founder Robert Kwak discovered the latest permutation of the automat in Amsterdam and licensed the technology for the U.S. Thirteen vending machines sport 6-inch-square heated windows that are half the size of the old Automat’s. Instead of meat loaf, they offer finger foods like pizza dumplings, mac and cheese croquettes and beef sliders (\$1.50-\$2.50). Each row of compartments has its own

controls to keep the food fresh and at temperature. Kwak says he’s had interest from gaming. “Casinos like the idea that guests can eat quickly and get right back to the poker table.”



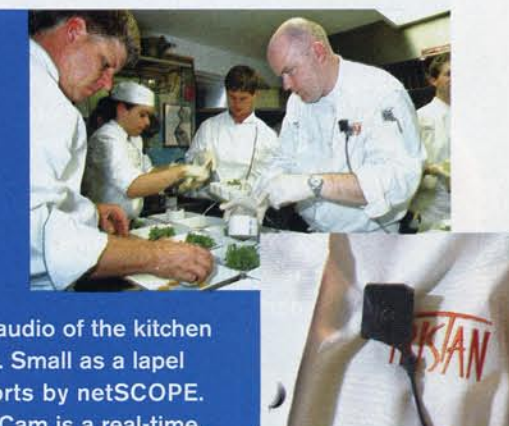
Make my commercial!

17 Scott Shickler, CEO of Nirvana Café and Grille, in Roswell, Georgia, is leveraging his commitment to community outreach

to generate some unique buzz. With his new “Create Our Commercial” challenge, local middle school kids are taught by a marketing pro how to create and produce ads. They can then upload their commercials to the Web. The top-rated will play on Nirvana’s Website, possibly television. “We made youth empowerment a core mission of the restaurant, so we’re talking about how to make a difference in the lives of young people everyday,” says Shickler, a self-professed “social entrepreneur.” “Ultimately, the reciprocity of good will comes back to the business.”

On air kitchen

18 Wearing a tiny ChefCam on his collar, Ciaran Duffy, executive chef at Charleston, South Carolina’s Tristan, sends live streaming video and audio of the kitchen action to his Website, www.tristandining.com. Small as a lapel pin, the technology was developed for sports by netSCOPE. Duffy says it’s a powerful training tool. “ChefCam is a real-time, play-by-play analysis of the kitchen’s strengths and weaknesses,” he says. It’s also a lure for customers. “There’s a romance to being in the kitchen with the chef, and the broadcast from the kitchen makes every table the chef’s table.”



Fire works

19 Incredulous diners at the Omni Saigon Hotel’s Nishimura Restaurant watching their Paper Hot Pot or Kami Nabe withstand live flames might think the vessel is made of a highly engineered material. They may be even more surprised to learn that the pot is, in fact, simply Japanese paper and the pyrotechnics did not evolve in a N.A.S.A. lab but in old time Osaka. The magic relies on a type of alcohol jelly whose flames burn only vertically, never licking the paper pot’s sides. Although the dish may appear futuristic, Chef Ryoichi Iwashita pays homage to Hot Pot tradition with a kimono-clad server pouring warmed broth from a teapot, before customers add their own mix of udon noodles, vegetables and seafood or Kobe beef.

