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Kosher Restaurants Face Uncertain Future; Lament Regulations



Brooklyn, NY...Mr. Bunim Naiman, owner of the upscale Glatt A La Carte Restaurant in Boro Park, is miffed why Covid-19 regulations were so tough on restaurants. “We could probably enforce these

regulations better than any other segment of the economy,” he said. “We can move tables, distance chairs, take precautions in food handling and otherwise enforce social distancing.” Naiman’s lament comes at a time when nearly a dozen kosher restaurants in the New York city area alone closed their doors. According to Elan Kornblum, “The Restaurant Guy,” president of the Great Kosher Restaurants Media Group, some have closed due to their precarious financial conditions even before the pandemic hit, several lost their leases and others were directly affected by Covid-19. In the past few weeks, restaurants in New York and other cities were only permitted to serve

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owned by famed chef Jeffrey Nathan and the Brooklyn location of Wolf & Lamb. There is no telling how many more will be forced to close in the months ahead, Mr. Kornblum pointed out. Mr. Naiman says that diners are extremely anxious to return to conventional dining. "You cannot imagine how many of my patrons call to inquire when we will be opening the restaurant. In the many Orthodox homes, dining is the only social outlet and they really miss it."

Archives 

One of the major challenges for restaurants has been to keep some of their employees. Thanks to the federal Payroll Protection Program, some restaurants who might otherwise have been forced to close remained open. "The concern is going forward," said Mr. Kornblum, who feared that the end of the PPP would be a deciding moment for many. There was also concern about the Fall weather and the possibility of a second wave of the pandemic. Many restaurants became extremely creative, adding apps, and even taking their restaurants on the road. Midtown Manhattan restaurants have particularly suffered with the shutdown of most businesses. In the Wall Street area, both Reserve Cut and Wall Street Grill launched innovative outdoor dining. Kornblum says that despite the pandemic, many restaurants that scheduled openings before the crisis hit, are opening even now, betting on a resurgence of the kosher restaurant business. Several operators who had to opt out of Passover programs are returning with summer programs. The chat amongst these operators is whether they would be able to run the Passover programs in 2021. Many feel that it will take at least two years for the Passover programs to recover. In the Catskills kosher dining has returned albeit less than in previous years.

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