



Interior Design Is Not Kitchen Design

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Some of you may remember reading about the legislative fight against foodservice dealers last year in Florida. Many of you probably hoped it would never affect you. A few of you were right in the thick of it.

To recap, Florida wanted to restrict the design of foodservice facilities to licensed interior designers and architects. This law had been on the books for more than 10 years, but was never enforced until recently. What was new about it was the attempt to apply it to foodservice dealers. Thankfully the governor of Florida signed a bill that will now exempt foodservice equipment manufacturers and their reps and dealers from this law. While this law never specifically mentioned consultants, it is something we should be aware of. NAFEM, MAFSI and FEDA all stepped up early to fight this one for the people they represent. In the final days of the legislative session, these industry advocates proved their case that foodservice distributors know their products—and how they should be installed—far better than interior designers.

Why did this get my attention? I don't live or practice in Florida. I am a Certified Interior Designer (CID) in the Commonwealth of Virginia and a professional member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID). I have designed commercial foodservice facilities for 17 years.

As a CID, I would be allowed to continue designing kitchens in Florida had the law passed. But I know this is not right, because I understand better than most that my interior design expertise in no way equips me to design a foodservice kitchen.

In fact, I didn't learn anything about kitchens in interior design school. I distinctly remember my Hospitality Design professor telling us to block out an area for the kitchen in the hotel that we were designing because "someone else would be designing that part." Eventually, I became that someone else.

I learned what I know about kitchens from working. I learned from many talented people, but none of them have been certified interior designers and some of them aren't interior designers at all. While many of the skills that I learned in school

can certainly be used in my work, I did not learn how to lay out a kitchen or anything about the equipment and certainly nothing about utility requirements.

I learned how to draw, how to present, how to manage my time and my projects. And, of course, I learned about color and furnishings and building codes and lighting, but nothing about kitchens. It was later in my career that I became a CFSP and became ServSafe certified; it was later that I learned about local health codes. These are all extremely important to my knowledge base, but they are things that I didn't learn, and couldn't have learned, in school.

That is one of the unique things about foodservice consultants. We all come from very different backgrounds. There are consultants that have worked their way up in commercial restaurants and noncommercial kitchens. There are some who were in sales in this industry. Others have culinary, financial, or business backgrounds. And there are those who, like me, began with interior design.

Not only are foodservice consultants unique, so is the body of knowledge that we each must possess. There are MAS and Design consultants whose services can vary greatly. There are many different types of venues, sizes of projects and scopes of work. As a successful member of a project team, foodservice consultants are able to speak a little of everyone's language. We coordinate space with the architects, utility requirements with the engineers and finishes with the interior designers. We assist with questions in the field from the contractors, dealers and installers. Then, of course, we know all about the equipment and the latest technologies, too. Although we may bridge the gaps in the project team during a kitchen project, as FCSI consultants, we certainly don't claim to be experts in anything but foodservice.

Each of us has a unique body of knowledge that we employ on our projects. We should never try to do the job of the others on the project team. Hopefully the professionals on the team, and the licensing boards that support them, realize this too.

