

# What's In a Title?

## THE VP OF FOOD & BEVERAGE



Back in "the day" (circa 1970-2000), to attract casino business most buffets and some restaurants were loss leaders, meaning these outlets would price their meals so low that they would actually lose money. For those of us that can remember, in Las Vegas it wasn't uncommon to see a \$1.99 all-you-can-eat buffet, 49-cent breakfast, or \$3.99 prime rib dinner. But that was then.

In today's casino environment, Food, Beverage, Hotel, Retail and Entertainment attract business; however, the deep discounts of "the day" are long gone. And in many Las Vegas properties, non-gaming revenue surpasses gaming revenue. To learn a bit about the culinary side, we reached out to a food & beverage executive who has travelled full circle - he was in Las Vegas during that growth time frame, enhanced his experiences elsewhere, and recently has returned.

Sujoy Brahma started his casino career with Caesars Tahoe in 1991, transferred to Harrah's Las Vegas after the Caesars/Harrah's merger, and went on to become the Assistant Vice President of F&B at Caesars Las Vegas. He spent more than 9 years within Indian gaming before coming back to Las Vegas. He has his Master's degree from Johnson & Wales University. Here are his comments:

**G&L:** When did you join the MGM team?

**SB:** I came on board as Vice President of Food & Beverage for the Luxor and Excalibur Resorts and Casinos in February 2014 and assumed responsibility for a total staff of approximately 1,400, many of them actual day-one employees. If you can imagine the feeling of marrying into a large extended family, with relationships already cemented, opinions formulated, and bonds of loyalty established, that was very much like what it



Sujoy Brahma, VP of Food & Beverage  
at MGM Resorts International

was like to step into this role. Fortunately for me this was a strong group of professionals, totally dedicated to their properties and each other, and they welcomed me as the newest member with great heart!

**G&L:** Give us a rough organizational chart of your department.

**SB:** With the addition of a new executive team at Excalibur, my sole focus became Luxor where I continued in my position as VP for the Food and Beverage department, in one of the larger properties on the Strip with 4,400 guest rooms, a 120,000 square foot casino floor, and 1,184 slot machines. Those numbers alone sound intimidating, but when you factor in the number of guests that occupy that space on a daily basis, with an F&B staff of about 800 working 24-hours a day, the sheer quantity of food and drink we are providing still amazes me!

Of course, I have a great team of directors, executive and room chefs, and managers who are on the floor, consistently overseeing the outlets. I am particularly proud of the fact that within our MGM family of properties, despite the volume of visitors we come into contact with, the Luxor Food and Beverage Department maintains one of the highest rankings for friendliness and guest satisfaction...that's a great testament to the attitude this team brings to their jobs every day.

**G&L:** What are some of the advantages, and challenges, of being on the Las Vegas Strip?



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**SB:** While our number one priority is, and always will be, an over-the-top great Vegas experience for our guests, I know we are not unique in that feeling amongst the other casino properties. Luckily for us, however, is the very exciting growth and development presently going on at our end of the Strip, with the new Arena slated to open in 2016! Because we anticipate a huge surge of foot traffic and increased visibility for the Luxor, our leadership has made a significant financial investment in upgrades and renovations to many of our existing venues. Our Pyramid Café received a substantial facelift, both front and back of the house, and another exciting project was the acquisition of the LAX Nightclub. We took this space and made significant improvements to the physical area itself, and added a much larger dance floor as well as state-of-the-art lighting and special effects. The success is tremendous, and the decision to reinvest in a professional nightlife venue again was a great one.

## Food & Beverage Salary Ranges

Casino Size	Manager	Director	Vice Pres
Small	50K-65K	60K-80K	75K-95K
Medium	60K-75K	80K-120K	105K-135K
Large	65K-85K	95K-145K	140K-180K
Mega	70K-95K	110K-170K	160K-200K

**G&L:** Describe a typical day in your work schedule.

**SB:** With the scope of our operation, there is never a “typical” day. Maintaining a strong bond with the supervisory team is very important, as well as making sure the message we are delivering to our employees and guests represents the core values of sincere engagement demanded by our COO, Renee West. One-on-one sessions with all F&B employees are crucial, as is the process of maintaining a

great working relationship with the Vice Presidents of other departments, vendors and outside suppliers. Because MGM encourages its executives to give back to the community in the form of volunteerism, I do serve on the board of several organizations also.

**G&L:** What have been some of the culinary changes/trends you have seen over the years?

**SB:** It does seem like the culinary world changes as quickly as the Las Vegas Strip does,

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*- Sujoy Brahma, VP of Food & Beverage at MGM Resorts International*





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and I personally am excited that the trend is swinging toward responsible stewardship of our resources. I see the 'Farm to Table' emphasis continuing, as well as strong growth in organic and special dietary menus. People are demanding to know where their food comes from, and are prepared to pay a little more, to assure their beef, poultry and pork are raised in humane conditions, and that their seafood comes from fisheries that do not overfish the waters. Just as our guests are becoming more concerned with what they put into their bodies, as part of a larger corporate family, we at the Luxor try to be good stewards by recycling all paper, glass, and plastic products, as well as sending our food waste to participating farms daily.

**G&L:** Where do you see the future of the industry going?

**SB:** Overall I see the dining piece becoming an even larger part of the casino world, as more properties move toward ownership of their venues and gradually move away from tenant-lease situations. Food and Beverage has become a huge profit center in its own right, and while I do see us evolving away from the popularity of the celebrity chef concept, those restaurants have created destination dining venues that gave our non-gaming guests a great reason to visit Las Vegas!

I am excited about the future, both of the industry and our town. We will continue to focus on creating a huge welcome for each

guest who comes through our door, and providing an exciting career path for hospitality professionals who have chosen to be part of our family.

I'd like to thank Sujoy for his candid insights, and hope that our readers enjoy it, too. If you have any comments or questions I would love to hear from you. Until next issue, bon appétit!

*Marc Weiswasser is a Managing Member of CasinoRecruiter.com, an Executive Recruiting firm for the gaming & hospitality industry. He can be reached at 702-798-0180, Marc@CasinoRecruiter.com or www.CasinoRecruiter.com*