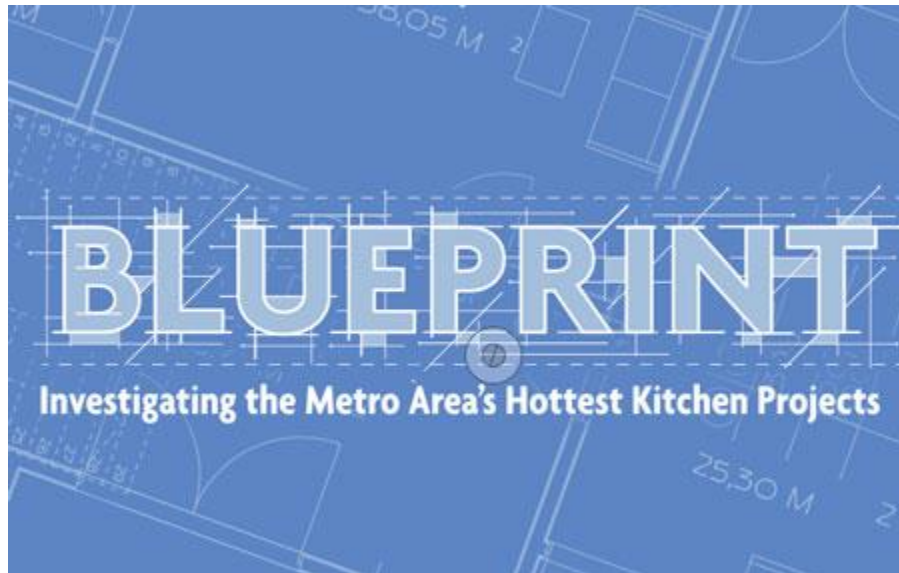




# Total Food Service

Metro New York's Foodservice Publication



## Sanfords Restaurant, Astoria, NY

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### **M Tucker's Team Led By Joe Steckmeister Works With Karalekas Brothers To Create New Vision For Iconic Astoria Eatery: Sanfords Restaurant**

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"My family's restaurant has been around since the '70s. In those days it was run by my dad and it was a diner. Over time we transitioned from a diner to creating our own signature dishes, and did away with that crazy menu diners are known for. Everything we make now is casual comfort food, made fresh, to order, with much better quality than before," noted Chris Karalekas.

My brother Gus and I took over the business and we changed it up some more. We did away with the iceberg lettuce and got organic greens, added ahi tuna, black angus steak, risotto, upgraded the quality of the food. But we didn't raise the prices. We were always affordable. Even our wines and craft beers are not marked up.

Then we decided to double our space. M. Tucker's Joe Steckmeister helped us redesign our last expansion, so we went back to him. We went from 65 to 110 seats. One of the focuses we wanted to have

was a larger whiskey exposure in our bar. We have one of the largest-single malt and bourbon supplies in any bar you're going to find.

With our expansion, we can accommodate large groups now and we doubled our kitchen capacity, all redesigned fresh by Joe Steckmeister and his team. He took our existing equipment and helped us spec everything out. We now have a 30-foot line, when before we had a 14-16-foot line. That's unheard of in most places, not even hotels have that.



We also added a combi oven, another cooktop, a burner, another grill, high-efficiency fryers, and cold station refrigerators. Joe and his team really helped us in laying out and fitting everything in properly and making sure the equipment fit our needs.

It's been a great experience. We'd bring Joe back in a minute. He's very knowledgeable, and easy to work with. He made something that could have been very difficult simple, pleasant and top of the line.

"It was pretty funny, 7 years ago during their first expansion they needed someone to help install new equipment. One night I went in and helped them set up their bar and kitchen. Last year they called me out of the blue and said, we own this property next store and when the tenants move out, we're going to double the size of our space," noted Steckmeister. This turned into a great project for us and "I can't say enough about Michael Terrazzino from our team at M. Tucker and his commitment to getting this project done "correctly and on-time," Steckmeister added.

We created a bigger bar, expanded the kitchen and went with new equipment. Chris and Gus saw it in just one direction, the same way they've done things for 20 years. The way the cook line was facing, the kitchen was going front to back. Finally after 2 or 3 meetings, I said, give me the weekend and let me work with the drawing. Starting with a clean slate I laid it out totally different, turning the kitchen 90 degrees, going off the back wall and setting up a real traditional cook line, chef's table, salad & dessert, dish/ware wash and expo area. When Gus and Chris saw it, they said yes that's what we need.



They knew what they wanted - high-end energy efficient equipment as opposed to the old-fashioned traditional gas-guzzlers. They were really careful with where they invested their money, they wanted quality brands – infrared char broilers, power fry fryers from Vulcan and an Eloma combi oven. When they went to the demo they liked the Eloma best; they liked the chefs presentation and the versatility. Chris said, I serve 1200 meals a day and every meal a la carte, this is just what we needed. He said, I need to put fish, steaks and chops in the oven together all night long.

They had a great menu to start with. They're easily a three-star Manhattan restaurant in Astoria, Queens.

For cold storage to support the bar and kitchen they installed brand new walk-in coolers and freezer in the basement. As for me, I loved how clean and neat everything they store is in perfect straight lines with everything labeled.

The existing bar was 9 feet long in the old restaurant. Now it's close to 22. They have a full menu with 200 different bourbons and whiskeys this is a real professional mixologist bar. And they have a huge wine cellar in the basement and an exposed glass wine room right off the bar.

They had a vision, they stayed with it, and they knew what they wanted. There was not a lot of different personalities, no interior designer no architect. It was, we're the boss, and we'll direct you. But we had a lot of leeway because they trusted our opinion; they went with everything we said.

Lessons learned? Patience. You had very strong-minded owners but at the end of the day, they did what I recommended and what turned out to be ultimately the right choice.





- See more at: <http://totalfood.com/articles/sanfords-restaurant-astoria-ny#sthash.Tvl6msQJ.dpuf>