



Extra Income

How to get more revenue poolside

By Judy Kenninger



Daily cocktail specialties are a unique serving idea at San Juan Marriott Resort.

At the Chatham Bars Inn in Chatham, Mass., guests enjoy lounging away summer days in their very own poolside cabanas. Each cabana is equipped with four chaise lounge chairs, folding tables, a refrigerator and plush towels, while cabana attendants will bring ice-cold beverages and anything else the guests need. The cabanas provide shade and exclusivity to guests—and a great source of profits to the resort.

“We have 18 poolside cabanas, and next summer season, they will sell for \$175 per day,” says Jessie Decker, recreation manager. “They’re our biggest source of poolside revenue.”

With economic pressures pushing room rates ever lower, resorts are looking for ways to supplement their revenue stream, and as Chatham Bars Inn has discovered, poolside is a great place to get started.

Cabanas Rentals

Shannon Pruce of LRA Worldwide, a research and consulting company, says she has seen the good, the bad and the ugly in

poolside cabana rental. “Just plopping a couple plastic chairs under an awning and charging \$100 a day isn’t going to make guests happy,” she says. “To do it well, you need to offer lavish appointments that are appropriate for the price point.”

Among her suggestions for extras are misting stations, Wi-Fi access, premium service, well-padded furniture, beverages, and maybe even a poolside concierge. “Some resorts have put together cabana menus that let guests select the extras that are meaningful to them,” Pruce says. For example, a family pack could include pails and shovels while a party pack might include a bucket of beer and chips and salsa.

What’s the ugly in poolside cabanas? Having staff who don’t know the cabanas are available or that guests in the cabanas should receive premium service. “Train everyone on staff in how and where to rent the cabanas,” she advises. “That way you won’t miss any opportunities for extra revenue.”

Tasting

The San Juan (Puerto Rico) Marriott Resort sees poolside time as an opportuni-

ty to serve guests while promoting the property’s many offerings. During the day, pool attendants offer guests a sample of the daily cocktail specialty and ask if customers would like to purchase one for a special price. Just prior to lunch time, the attendants may do the same thing with a sample of truffle-infused french fries for people to taste and be reminded that it’s almost time to eat at one of the many restaurants.

Two local customs are also featured. The traditional piragua is a pina-colada-flavored, Sno-Cone-like treat and is sold

from a pushcart that's wheeled around to serve guests. A poolside cigar store offers cigars hand-rolled while guests watch.

Another "sample" that's proved popular with guests is mini-massages, says Julian Cable-Treadwell, the resort's director of marketing. "We give a quick demonstration of what services are available in the spa, and the poolside concierge is there to make reservations for them," he says.

Expand Access

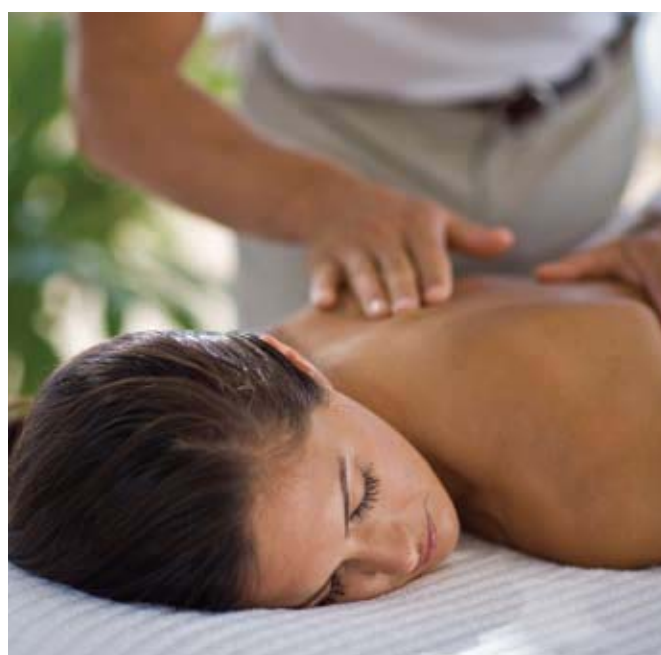
At the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, Laura Kneipp, membership and recreational activities manager, reports that her resort has been offering club membership to the local community for several years. "Traverse City (Mich.) is not a large city, so public facilities are limited," she says. "This way, local children have access to swimming lessons and indoor tennis courts." With two large outdoor pools, the resort offers year-round and summer-only memberships. Such programs make it feasible for resorts to offer more extensive amenities while cementing relations with the community.

Rentals

A new product called ZafeLock (www.zafelock.com) provides guests with added peace of mind while lounging near the pool or on the beach. ZafeLock is an umbrella base with a built-in safe for stowing wallets, room keys, I-Pods and cameras - a much more secure system than stuffing valuables in sneakers or under a towel. Company CEO Phuc Vu plans a product roll-out in March and says Wyndham Resorts will debut 1,000 of the units soon. "We anticipate they'll rent from \$10 to \$20 a day," he says. Resorts will pay about \$2 a day to lease the units. Because resorts lease the new system from Zafelock, no up-front investment is required..

Add a Phone

At the Vail Plaza Hotel, increasing food and beverage revenue was easy. The Vail, Colo., resort just added a dedicated phone



Poolside mini-massages can lead to last-minute or add-on spa bookings.

line near their poolside area, which features three small hot tubs and a pool. "It definitely helped create more food and beverage revenue," says Brian Dalrymple, spa director. Next on the agenda? Adding inexpensive swimsuits in the gift shop. "It seems half our guests seem to forget their swimsuits or swim trunks when they travel," he says. **R+R**



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