

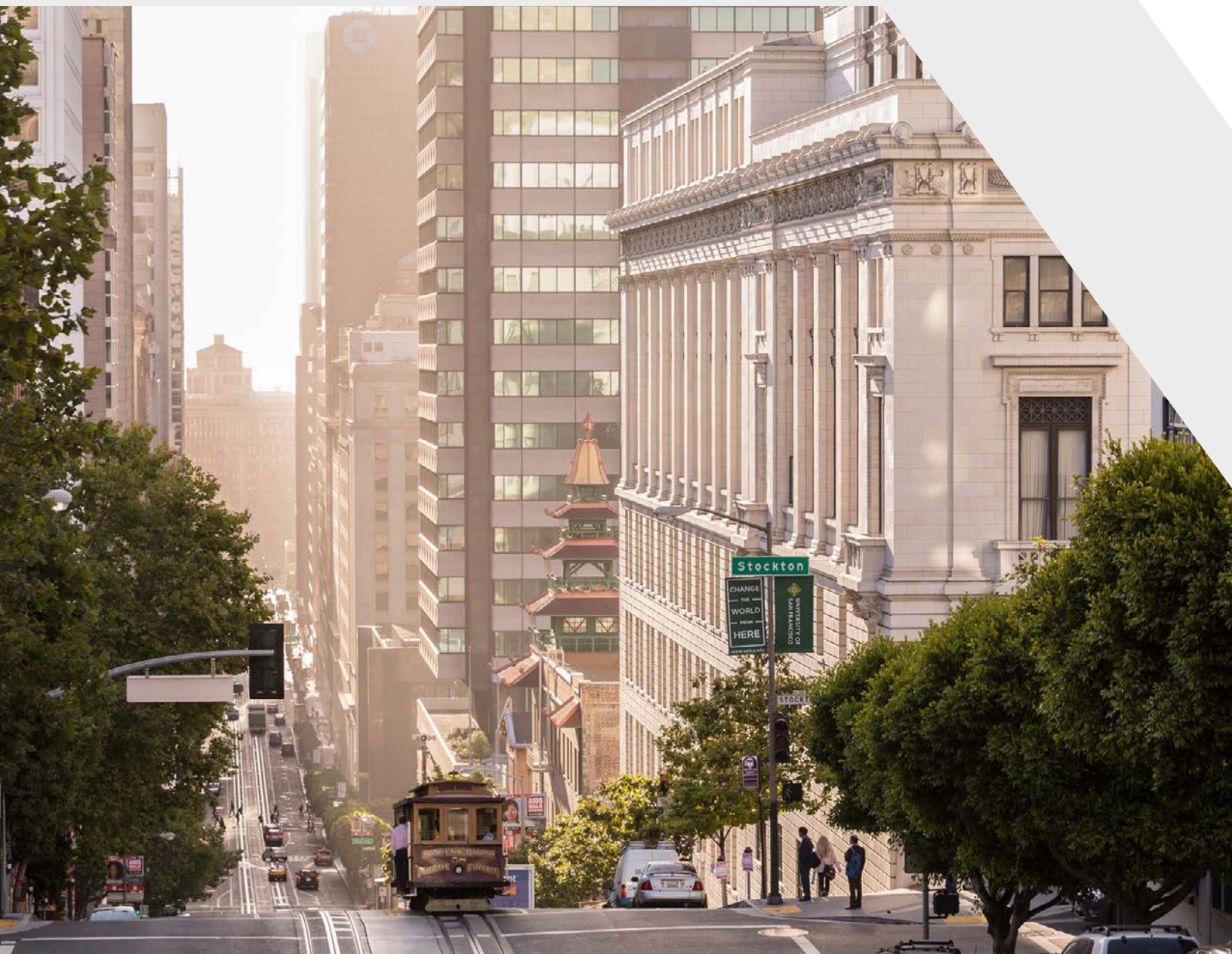
Case Study
The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco



THE RITZ-CARLTON
SAN FRANCISCO

The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco.

Efficiency, Elevated.



RATIONAL Finishing® System Reduces Labor, Time and Food Waste.

To combat rising labor costs and streamline its labor-intensive banqueting process, while further elevating quality, the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco underwent a major change and transitioned its group dining and banqueting from traditional convection ovens to RATIONAL combi ovens. This wasn't a speculative or arbitrary move. It was a strategic shift in operations that would deliver a return on investment within a defined time frame, verified through a financial analysis and pilot program developed in partnership with RATIONAL.



THE RITZ-CARLTON

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About Ritz-Carlton Hotel Group

The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco is part of the Ritz-Carlton hotel group, which was established in 1983 with the purchase of The Ritz-Carlton, Boston and the rights to the name Ritz-Carlton. The management company has grown from one hotel to 97 hotels and resorts worldwide with plans for further expansion in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas. The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company is an independently operated division of Marriott International, based in Bethesda, Maryland, U.S.

**The Ritz-Carlton,
San Francisco**
600 Stockton Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

Goals

- > Optimize productivity, efficiency, quality and aesthetics
- > Decrease operating costs, with emphasis on labor costs
- > Contain food costs by reducing waste and overproduction
- > Delight guests with cuisine that is consistently outstanding

Approach

- > Analyze benefits and ROI to justify investment
- > Execute pilot program to validate reduction in labor, time and food overage
- > Develop custom workflow for banqueting process
- > Remain open-minded, optimistic and ready to embrace change
- > Leverage technology to gain competitive advantage

Equipment

- > 2 × SelfCookingCenter® 202G

Results

- > Achieved forecasted ROI in 10 months
- > Decreased food waste by 15%
- > Elevated consistency and quality of food
- > Increased banquet food quality score 2%
- > Anticipate saving \$1 million over 10 years

Cover image: Iconic cable car passes by the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco.

Optimal Efficiency in an Opulent Setting.

Five-Diamond cuisine, a tight labor market, and a labor-intensive banqueting process: these and other factors played a role in the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco making the transition from traditional ovens to RATIONAL combi ovens for almost all of its group dining and events.

Set within a century-old building atop Nob Hill, the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco is the city's only AAA Five-Diamond hotel. It has 336 guest rooms and suites, and a variety of meeting spaces that include conference rooms, an outdoor terrace, and a grand ballroom that seats up to 500 for dinner. On a given day, the banqueting team of chefs, kitchen staff and support staff may prepare food and manage dining operations for hundreds of guests. The hotel is known for its delightful “Streets of San Francisco” buffet that highlights neighborhood foods and local cuisine. (The on-property restaurant, Parallel 37, has its own menu and operates separately from the banqueting function, and the kitchen has four additional SelfCookingCenter® units.)



The stately entrance to Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco welcomes guests.

“It is a constant evolution, utilizing hyper-seasonal ingredients with top-of-the-line technology. We’re very excited about the outcome.”

Michael Rotondo, Executive Chef,
Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco

From Traditional Ovens to Combi Ovens.

The RATIONAL SelfCookingCenter®, and particularly the Finishing® process, has streamlined and optimized the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco's approach to group dining. Elegant entrées that uphold the Ritz-Carlton tradition of excellence are now prepared, plated, flash frozen and rethermed for guests at weddings, banquets and other events.

This represents a major change for the Ritz-Carlton going from a banquetting system of just-in-time production and service to a time-wise division of production and service.

The driving factor behind the change was to increase efficiency and decrease operating costs, with an emphasis on reducing the cost of labor. RATIONAL worked with the Ritz-Carlton to conduct an analysis that provided a financial measure of the proposal's profitability, based on the hotel's rate of spend and potential savings. RATIONAL and the Ritz-Carlton also carried out a pilot project that validated the concept and demonstrated ROI, using Ritz-Carlton and RATIONAL equipment and Ritz-Carlton personnel and menus.

The pilot involved a banquet consisting of three different entrée selections for 370 guests. Traditional ovens required an average of 6.5 hours of operation with 17.5 employees – head chefs, chefs and kitchen support staff – used throughout the different stages of meal preparation and service. The RATIONAL SelfCookingCenter® achieved a reduction of 10% in labor hours, cutting the number of required staff necessary to execute banquet service by 10 team members.

Despite reducing the number of staff, the banquet food quality score for the first six months using the system increased by 2% overall. Upon reviewing the results, Rainer Zinngrebe, vice president and corporate chef for Luxury Brands at Marriott International, particularly noted that “in the busiest banquet period instead of traditionally dropping a percentage, we were able to increase slightly.”



A lovely dish prepared in the hotel kitchen.

Embracing Change.

“We have really embraced the full potential of these RATIONAL combi ovens.”

Michael Rotondo, Executive Chef,
Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco

Some of the Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco chefs already had experience working with RATIONAL combi ovens, but the reheating of plated dishes for large banquet functions was new for everyone on the property. The team overcame challenges during the transition by staying flexible and creative as they developed recipes and methods that would work for their clients, menus, events and kitchen.

Food that can be prepared ahead of time follows the same process: pre-production and pre-plating up to 72 hours in advance using the RATIONAL Finishing® system. The process is to cook, plate, place on mobile plate racks; blast chill; then reheat and hold for up to 20 minutes before service. The Finishing® process keeps the quality of the food high, there is no need for additional staff, and it reduces stress in the kitchen.

“We have really embraced the full potential of these ovens,” said Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco Executive Chef Michael Rotondo. “We use them for everything from prep to cool down to pre-plating and finishing.” About 80% of plated group dinners and buffet items are prepared using the RATIONAL.

“It’s helped us from a cost perspective: our productivity has gone up, and we are able to save on labor. Now we are creating menus based on the technology that we have with the RATIONAL ovens, rather than creating the menu first. We are orchestrating our menus with an eye on how we can best utilize the oven,” he said.



In addition to the glamorous Ballroom that accommodates up to 500 guests, the Terrace Room and Terrace Courtyard venues each comfortably seat 140 guests for events.



Guests enjoy perfectly prepared and plated proteins.

Perfectly Portioned and Plated.

“Our productivity has gone up,
and we are able to save on labor.”

Michael Rotondo, Executive Chef,
Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco

Pre-plating also allows time for more – and more elaborate – garnishes on each plate, making the presentation more aesthetically pleasing.

“We pride ourselves in serving market fresh, market quality cuisine; we know the importance of using local produce and local protein; and we try to utilize that for our banquet business,” Rotondo added.

Another benefit is less waste. The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco hosts multiple events each week, and the chefs can better calculate how many portions are needed per event, cross-utilizing ingredients with different parties. “Cooking with the RATIONAL provides more efficient control over the production and portioning of dishes,” Rotondo said. As a result, food costs are contained and there is less waste, especially significant in environmentally-conscious San Francisco.

Executive Chef Michael Rotondo also relies on RATIONAL at award-winning Parallel 37 where guests enjoy globally-inspired California cuisine.



Collaboration and Creativity.

Before RATIONAL, the banqueting team might measure food quantities by the number of sheet trays or the number of gallons. Now, the focus is more on portions for each individual guest. This change in outlook has brought about greater transparency in what needs to be ordered and prepared, and the end result.

“Now we are creating menus based on the technology that we have with the RATIONAL ovens, rather than creating the menu first.”

Michael Rotondo, Executive Chef,
Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco

“I have enjoyed the journey we are having, with the utilization of the oven and the technology, and the collaboration we are having as a team and with the RATIONAL team,” Rotondo said. “It is a constant evolution, utilizing hyper-seasonal ingredients with top-of-the-line technology. We’re very excited about the outcome.”

The guests are excited and delighted, too. The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco was named U.S. News and World Report’s Best San Francisco Hotel in 2019.



A stunningly beautiful seafood dish prepared by the accomplished culinary team.



The banquet team also supports conference, meeting and private group dining.

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