

FLX TABLE: HOW DOES A RESTAURANT WITH ONLY 12 CHAIRS GET SELECTED AS THE BEST NEW RESTAURANT IN THE US?

By John Bardawill, Founder and Managing Director of TMG International Inc.
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In the spring of 2017, FLX Table was awarded the honor of being selected as USA Today's Best New Restaurant in the country. FLX Table is one of the Finger Lakes region's premier dining experiences. Each evening, a set menu is served based on seasonality of products and it changes regularly.



“ The chef is literally 10 feet away in an open kitchen preparing each plate. I found this to be fascinating and a privilege to watch the chef in action as he was totally focused on the meals and plates ”



But why? It is just a restaurant! One of thousands throughout the U.S.

It helps that the owner and chef is Christopher Bates—a Master Sommelier—and that’s a big deal. According to the Court of Master Sommeliers, there are only 147 masters from the USA and only 230 worldwide.

FLX Table does not just offer great food. It offers an experience—through food, atmosphere, environment, and entertainment. It has mastered the concept of providing a memorable experience that is literally unforgettable. The stage is set for the experience through people promoting their experience: “raving fans”. People describe it as the most significant restaurant experience they have ever had. So what ingredients do they promote to make this experience “unforgettable?”

Firstly, they invite you into a room that is more like a winery, offering you slices of prosciutto. However, it does not come on a plate—but rather is sliced off from a leg as the server describes where the meat comes from and how it was cured. You are offered a beverage that includes both international wines and wines from the local Finger Lakes region.

After building up an appetite, you enter the dining area which consists of one table that seats 12. Whether you have reserved for a group of 12 or have only two seats, you are



guaranteed to talk to everyone at the table. After seating everyone, the host Isabel Bogadtke (Christopher's wife) will introduce the staff, the menu for the evening, and introduce you to the table setting which already has on it baskets of bread and a variety of spreads. It is a challenge in itself to try all the spreads and guess which ones are which. It fosters lots of interesting conversations and gets everyone meeting each other.



There are a total of five courses, each one a surprising combination, and each requiring a detailed discussion—full of excitement, unique ingredients, and lots of debate. You are right next to the kitchen and can watch the chef prepare the meal. Each course is described by the chef as it is served! And if you want, they will provide you with a pairing of wines with every course.

The only downside to the experience is if you go to the first setting at 5:30 pm, you have to leave by 8 pm as there is a second setting. Trust me... you do not want to leave!

Throughout the experience, the staff is friendly, focused, and there to ensure you have a great time. And it is obvious that that is their number one priority.

The table and atmosphere guarantee a warm and welcoming feeling that encourages conversation, lots of laughter, and a sense of how did we get so lucky!

Why did we feel lucky...well it is tough to get a reservation! To reserve, you need to go online a month in advance, book it, and prepay it. And don't count on getting your day and time or number of seats. When they first opened, the owners did not have the website up

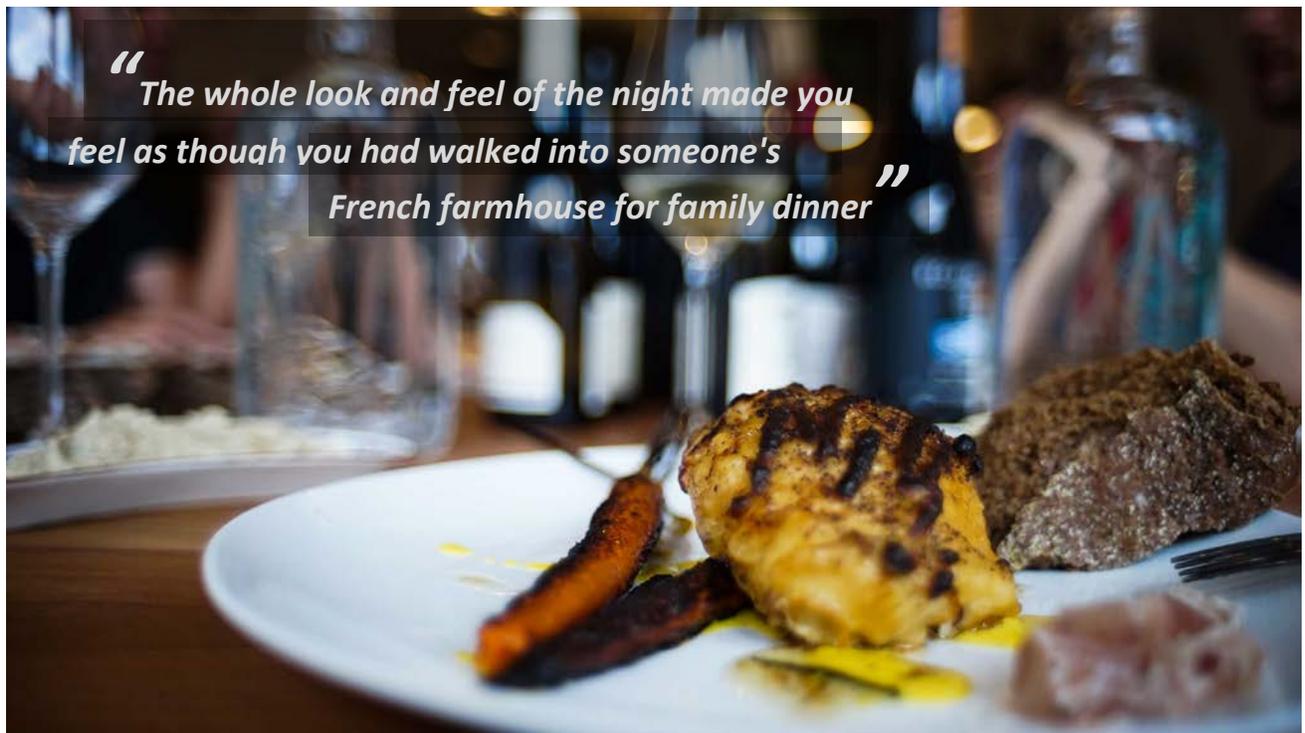


*“The staff was excellent both in interacting with us and presenting and explaining the dishes. ”
Super friendly and extremely efficient*

and running—and with the popularity of the restaurant exploding, had to deal with middle of the night calls as hundreds of people were trying to make reservations one month in advance.

As any great customer experience goes, I will not necessarily remember what happened, but I will remember how I felt.

At the end of the day, I don't remember everything I ate (there was a great mushroom dish and a duck dish), but I sure remember the experience...I am now just scheming my return visit and can hardly wait!



John Bardawill is the Founder and Managing Director of TMG International Inc., a results based consultancy focused on Customer Experience. John is the Chairperson of the Customer Experience Council for the Canadian Marketing Association. He has spoken at numerous industry related events and educational institutions, and is the author of several articles for a variety of industry publications.