

prevue

meetings + incentives

Culinary in the New Age

Meeting professionals have
a great deal on their plates

MEETING AGAIN WITH CONFIDENCE

Caribbean & Mexico slowly reopen

SMALLER U.S. CITIES SHINE

These destinations are even more attractive today

ATLANTIC CITY REOPENS

Plentiful venues, culinary adventure & safety protocols

Food for Thought

How cruise lines are adapting their F&B offerings in the wake of COVID-19.



We spoke with **Scenic**, **Uniworld** and **Hurtigruten** about resuming operations safely, and their food and beverage programs in this new normal.

Scenic

Scenic and **Emerald Waterways** are projected to resume river cruises on Sept. 1, 2020, with the *Scenic Eclipse* anticipated to resume ocean cruises on Oct. 1, 2020 with a sailing in Central/South America en-route to Antarctica.

These upcoming dates come with the caveat that the company will not sail any of its ships until it can be certain that the safety and health of its guests and crew are safeguarded. Scenic is working with **CLIA** and other government health agencies to develop a full range of safety measures for when services resumes.

The new protocols will include guest and staff health screening, increased cleaning on ships, no buffets (all meals will be individually served), developing a network of medical specialists along the rivers (for river cruising) and adhering to social distancing aboard all ships and during excursions.

"Our philosophy from the very beginning was to have small restaurants serving mostly a la carte," says Tom Goetter, executive chef aboard *Scenic Eclipse*. "Because firstly, of course, the quality is much better than any buffet in the world; and secondly, we've been focusing on our footprint since day one, meaning that our food waste and garbage waste should be as low as possible."

Goetter sees some positives coming out of the process of the industry adapting to the threat of COVID-19, and explains how the *Scenic Eclipse* is already ahead of the curve by having minimized its use of buffets to reduce food waste since its first sailing. The only buffet option is the Yacht Club, serving breakfast and lunch, which will be rebuilt to eliminate contact between guests and food, with portions served by kitchen staff wearing PPE.

"I'm super excited about it somehow," says Goetter. "I don't think it's a big deal for us as a cruise ship, but I can imagine that bigger cruise ships that serve many buffets will face more challenges. But for the *Scenic Eclipse*, with our concepts and our food style, I think it's an easy one. There'll be some changes, but guests will get used

to it, and I think guests will forget about the classic buffet."

The *Scenic Eclipse* is only six months old, and Goetter has no concerns about being able to provide incentive groups with a dazzling culinary experience, even in the COVID era. The ship boasts nine restaurants serving food from all over the world, but Goetter tries to cook locally as much as possible, matching the ship's menus to the areas where it is sailing. Before the pandemic, it had been scheduled to visit Portugal, so its European menus remain untouched.

"If you want to stay with us and try every single dish that we have on board, you would need to stay with us for over two months," says Goetter. "Out of around 2,500 recipes, we've used maybe 1,800, so I still have a lot of recipes for whole seasons and regions in my pocket that we haven't yet used because of COVID-19."

Hurtigruten

Hurtigruten began to gradually restart its operations in June with scheduled voyages between Bergen and Kirkenes along the Norwegian coast. The first sailing was with *MS Finnmarken* and departed on June 16, with *MS Richard With*, *MS Trollfjord* and *MS Midnatsol* also set to sail the route over the summer months.

The cruise line will be reducing its overall number of guests to provide plenty of space to move around on board. In its larger restaurant spaces, more seating sessions will be added to accommodate fewer people having meals at any given time, and self-service buffets will be replaced by chefs serving plated culinary creations to individuals.

"Our chefs create amazing dishes that reflect the beauty of each traveler's voyage. We take the best of our Norwegian heritage of fine dining and add local ingredients for spice and color as we progress from Pole to Pole," says Robert Cao, global director, charter & incentive sales, Hurtigruten. "Each day is a new culinary experience, as our experts in the kitchen set to work creating a delicious variety

of meals. Our goal is to see that the culinary journey is as exciting and satisfying as the voyage itself. We are committed to continuing to work with local purveyors to provide a unique and safe experience."

Hurtigruten offers three distinct culinary experiences on board. Aune serves international dishes, often with a Norwegian twist. The Fredheim restaurant features an open kitchen and serves an array of international street food including chicken kebab and NY-style beef dog, while the Lindstrom restaurant uses traditional Nordic techniques to create classic dishes with a modern twist.

"While we will continue to bring culinary experiences and flavors of our destinations to guests, we will also add more meal times to ensure our guests have ample space to move around and have transitioned meals to a la carte and table service," says Cao.

"It will be more important than ever to continue our commitment to sustainability and responsible sourcing. This includes sourcing our food supplies locally across the



"There'll be some changes, but guests will get used to it, and I think guests will forget about the classic buffet."

Tom Goetter, Executive Chef,
Scenic Eclipse

globe as we actively explore the authentic and local tastes of the areas we visit."

Uniworld

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises voyages are suspended through July 31, when it anticipates resuming operations under new protocols that will include health screenings for guests and crew prior to embarkation; gloves, face mask and individual hand sanitizers available for each guest; sanitizers in all public areas on the ship; and enhanced cleaning and sanitation of staterooms and public areas.

"Food and the onboard dining experience have always been and will remain a highlight of our cruises," says Wesley Bosnic, v.p. of charter & incentive sales, **Uniworld Boutique River Cruises**. "Guests will continue to enjoy personalized service in our dining venues, and we will continue to exceed their expectations providing delicious freshly prepared meal choices. We source from local vendors along the waterways we sail. We have small supply loadings to ensure we get the freshest ingredients as possible and to avoid long onboard refrigeration. And we always keep a keen eye out for seasonal specialties sourced from local suppliers."

All meals will be served by waitstaff under the new protocols, and self-service buffets will be discontinued. All restaurant dining will have reserved seating so that guests can dine with the same people each day, and two seating times will be available for each meal to limit the total number of guests in the restaurant at any time.

"Uniworld maintains a strong focus on healthy food options and a wellbeing concept that is offered across our fleet," says Bosnic. "Healthy entree choices have been on our menus for years. We have an extensive library of delicious recipes that have been tried and tested and enjoyed by our guests. They will serve us well in the current situation as we expect a greater demand for foods that could help boost immune systems." – Steve Grasso

scenicusa.com; hurtigruten.com;
uniworld.com



One of many culinary options on board Uniworld



Scenic's bento box as a lunch option