

# A League of its Own

Why NBA Courtside Restaurant is a singular dining experience

By Morgan Kish

**Y**ou can call it whatever you want: just don't call it a sports bar. While a quick glance at the 10,000-square-foot NBA Courtside Restaurant in Toronto might make it seem like another typical sports-themed establishment, the state-of-the-art venue—the first of its kind in the world—is so much more.



Open since April 2023 and featuring a globally inspired food and beverage program, NBA Courtside Restaurant is a premium casual dining experience that celebrates the NBA through custom art and décor. The restaurant's dining rooms are designed to reflect the path of a player's journey to becoming an NBA champion, with a boutique NBA retail store and two patios along the Toronto waterfront as core parts of the experience as well.

"Our partnership with the NBA and the ability to leverage NBA IP makes this a unique venue," says Todd Sherman, president of Urban Dining Group (UDG), the company that manages NBA Courtside Restaurant. "This is the first restaurant of its kind in the world. We're not what people think we are. We offer more than what you'd expect."

From the initial design phase to opening day, Sherman had a vision for

NBA Courtside Restaurant as a next-generation venue—and its restrooms were no exception to this commitment to high quality. "It was important that all our assets were cutting edge, made of high-quality material and had a very fashion-forward feel to them. I feel that investing in really good quality, highly durable products is essential for us as an official NBA branded attraction."

### All-Star Restrooms

When it comes to restaurants, there is perhaps no place where reliable and durable products matter more than in the restroom. Recognizing this, Sherman and NBA Courtside Restaurant specified a wide variety of durable, sustainable

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fixtures that also lessen the burden on the restaurant's facility maintenance team, including next-generation sinks, faucets and flushometers.

"The main criteria for our restroom selections were heartiness, quality material, and timeless design," Sherman says. "We wanted materials and products that stood the test of time, so we don't have to replace them every three to five years. And we wanted the design to be state-of-the-art to match the décor of the restaurant and to meet our guest appeal."

As the most visible functional element in the restroom, the designer sinks at NBA Courtside Restaurant are eye-catching pieces that help enhance the restaurant's overall look and feel, while pairing perfectly with the faucets and flushometers from a visual perspective.



Sherman says the physical design, look and performance of the products in our restrooms are best in the market.

With decades of experience owning and operating more than 30 restaurants in the downtown Toronto area, Sherman and UDG understand that—in addition to aesthetics—maintenance is a critical

part of any premium-casual restaurant, and NBA Courtside Restaurant is no different. “Our maintenance is critical to us, especially with having the branding that we do. Choosing the products that we did allows us to have restrooms that are easier to maintain. They’ve helped us solve all those problems.”

The touch-free faucets and flushometers at NBA Courtside Restaurant are true game-changers. The restaurant’s maintenance team can use an app to adjust and configure the Bluetooth-connected products right from their smart-phones—from tracking battery life and water usage metrics to customizing usage and activation settings.

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### **A Sustainable Standout**

Sherman says water conservation is an important factor to consider for any restaurateur. “If you’re going to open a high-profile, well-designed restaurant, there is no other option besides touch-free.”

That’s why NBA Courtside Restaurant specified hands-free faucets with ultra-low flow rates on its sinks, flushometers, and



urinals, all in an effort to conserve water. Each of these fixtures features industry-leading water-saving technology that benefits the restaurant both now and in the future.

Sherman has noticed the overall fit and finish of restrooms has been elevated over the last half decade in restaurants around the world, and it doesn't just stop there. Other notable sustainability initiatives in restaurants include the innovation and progress of LED lighting instead of incandescent bulbs, the use of plant material such as moss walls and hedge greenery, and even takeout containers. Sherman's restaurants, including NBA Courtside Restaurant, haven't used plastic or Styrofoam takeout containers in at least six years.

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## One-on-One with... Todd Sherman, President, Urban Dining Group

### What does a typical day look like for you?

With four different brands and a real estate portfolio, I would say no day is typical, but each day usually involves 50-100 emails, two to four meetings (whether in-person or Zoom), and visits to various hospitality sites.

### What's the biggest item on your to-do list right now?

The next step is continuing to open regional restaurants in the Toronto area, including one in September. From a big picture perspective, we'd like to begin exploring opportunities in the U.S. as well.

### What was the best advice you ever received?

Never judge anyone. We're in the guest business—the hospitality space is not the space in which to judge people.

### What's the best thing a customer ever said to you?

I've heard a lot of great things from customers, but having people say what a great time they had at one of our venues when they host an event, or a guest saying we went above and beyond expectations both mean a lot. Because we're a guest-facing industry, we get to interact with people from start to finish. We get the opportunity to be face-to-face with a guest through the entire experience. We're grateful for every compliment we get.

Morgan Kish is Sloan's Senior Product Line Manager for Sinks, Faucets, Soap Dispensers and Showerheads. Sloan has been providing innovation in water-saving fixtures for 118 years.