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## Atlantic City Is In on the Bet

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NOT too long ago dining in Atlantic City meant choosing between 1950's fare like Chateaubriand and a flaming dessert served in a chandeliered room full of high rollers, or a mundane all-you-can-eat buffet catering to the tour-bus crowd. But now more restaurateurs are betting heavily that the Las Vegas formula will be a winner in Atlantic City too, making it a magnet for well-known chefs and high-end brand-name restaurants in lavish settings.

Borgata, the hotel, casino and spa owned by MGM Mirage and Boyd Gaming, led the way when it opened in 2003 several blocks from the casinos that line the Boardwalk. It offered a collection of high-profile restaurants: a branch of New York's Old Homestead Steak House; Suilan, a Chinese-fusion restaurant run by Susanna Foo, a prominent Philadelphia chef; Mixx, a Latin-Asian restaurant and nightclub with food by Edwyn Ferrari, who was at Nobu in Manhattan; and two restaurants run by Luke Palladino, a chef who worked with Todd English.

"Borgata proved that celebrity chef dining can work in Atlantic City," said Elizabeth Blau, executive vice president for restaurant development at Wynn Resorts in Las Vegas. "It has been at the forefront."

Borgata will expand next summer with a new hotel tower housing Bobby Flay Steak, Wolfgang Puck American Grille and Seablue by Michael Mina, whose chefs all have restaurants in Las Vegas. The places are being designed, respectively, by David Rockwell, Tony Chi and Adam Tihany.

"Dining has been a large part of our nongaming success," said Victor Tiffany, Borgata's vice president for food and beverage.

**The Tropicana casino hotel has, among others, the Palm, Carmine's,** Cuba Libre from Philadelphia and the Red Square vodka bar, an offshoot of a bar owned by Jeffrey Chodorow in Miami.

Mr. Chodorow is busy elsewhere in Atlantic City, too. He will open Rumjungle, a copy of a restaurant at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, and an Italian restaurant with Todd English, both at the Pier at Caesars. The pier will devote 320,000 square feet to dining, shopping and entertainment. Sheldon Gordon, the chairman of Gordon Group Holdings, a major developer, will open it next spring. It will extend 900 feet to the sea from the Boardwalk and will be connected to the Caesars hotel and casino by a bridge.

The Pier at Caesars will have branches of some other East Coast restaurants, including Phillips Seafood from Baltimore, the Continental and Buddakan from Philadelphia, and, from Boston, Sonsie, the Dubliner and a sports cafe called Game On.

Other well-known restaurants in Atlantic City include Morton's steakhouse at Caesars and, at Harrah's, a branch of 'Cesca that Tom Valenti isn't involved in. Atlantic City has also attracted beach bars, including Nikki from Miami Beach, in front of the Resorts casino.

"I brought Wolfgang Puck to Vegas 15 years ago, and look what happened," Mr. Gordon said. "Now you're seeing Atlantic City becoming a food city like Las Vegas. There will be a point in time, in the not so distant future, when Atlantic City won't be playing second fiddle to Las Vegas anymore."