

Cuisine in the time of Covid-19 at City Lodge Hotels

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Running a food and beverage service at a quarantine or essential services hotel during the lockdown is a balancing act. The strict protocols of social distancing need to be observed while serving tasty, nutritious meals three times a day to guests, who have to stay in their rooms as public areas like the restaurant are closed. The City Lodge Hotel Group caters for its quarantine and essential services guests either produced by its own food and beverage teams or produced and delivered by professional catering company.



Divisional director: operations, Tony Balabanoff, explains: “Our menus have been developed on a 21-day cycle so as not to subject guests or staff to menu fatigue. Each meal includes hot and cold offerings: breakfast and dinner consist of three-course meals and lunch is a two-course meal, taking into account any religious, medical or allergy requirement. All meals provided to us by Fedics, a Tsebo Catering Solution, are developed with a registered dietitian, ensuring that recommended daily nutritional requirements are met.”

An example of the kinds of dishes on offer:

- **Breakfast:** Toasted muesli, fresh fruit and fruit yoghurt, savoury beef and egg cup OR peanut butter and banana oats. All breakfasts are served with toast and preserves. A balance of carbohydrates and protein is provided for a sustained release of energy throughout the day.
- **Lunch:** As starter, an olive and feta summer salad drizzled with a French vinaigrette served with a choice of butter chicken and turmeric basmati rice and fresh sambals OR tomato, mushroom and broccoli bake served with sautéed potatoes as a plant-based option. Focus is placed on a variety of vegetables with enough fibre to provide an array of nutrients to support the immune system.
- **Dinner:** As starter, a traditional Greek salad served with a choice of either grilled fish with lemon butter sauce, savoury rice and seasonal vegetables OR a vegetable-filled burrito. To end it off, a berry swirl sponge with fruit compote is available as dessert. The right balance of nutrients is provided to assist in a good night's sleep.

Feedback from guests on the meals has been positive, with one diabetic guest staying at City Lodge Hotel GrandWest in Cape Town saying, “Nothing worse than being fed the wrong food as a diabetic when you have little control. Well done on getting the diet right! Means everything.” Another wrote in a letter of appreciation, “Thanks to your dietician and the balanced and flavourful food we have received while staying in your comfortable hotel, you and your staff have been more than helpful and considerate of our needs.”



City Lodge Hotel, Town Lodge and Road Lodge brands do not usually offer room service, but this has become the order of the day as guests are required to eat in their rooms. The team was determined to make this as pleasant and dignified a process as possible under the circumstances. In quarantine hotels, all meals are delivered to the guest's door on a trolley by a team member wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). The staff member knocks on the bedroom door, greets the guest and hands them their meal. All meals are presented in disposable containers which are responsibly discarded after use. Once the guest has finished their meal, they place the empty containers in a disposable bag provided and place this outside the bedroom door for collection by a staff member.

Where a tray was used, the tray of discarded disposable containers is collected by a staff member wearing PPE, the bag disposed of in the correct refuse bin and the tray placed directly into the dishwasher. Trays are soaked in water hotter than 80 degrees Centigrade and thereafter sprayed with a sanitising solution of Polycide (a very strong disinfectant cleaner) and left to dry after soaking. There is no cross-contamination between clean trays and dirty trays, or dirty trays placed on sanitised surfaces.

Guests are welcome to order additional portions if they require, which will be charged to their hotel accounts. In addition, the hotel provides a snack solution for in between nibbles, with guests able to purchase items such as biltong, crisps, chocolates and cold drinks by contacting reception.

Where guests want to buy in essential items independently from local supermarkets, these may be delivered to the hotel and received applying the hotel's stringent delivery and acceptance of goods protocol. This includes but is not restricted to: goods, where possible, must be received outside the hotel and delivery personnel must not be allowed to come into the hotel; all outside packaging must be sprayed and wiped down with Polycide and left for a minimum of five minutes before packaging is opened; outside packaging, where applicable, is discarded immediately and individual goods wiped down with Polycide; all surfaces that come into contact with delivered goods are sanitised; appropriate PPE worn by staff throughout; and correct handwashing procedures followed.

City Lodge Hotel Group's chief operating officer, Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo, says, "We remain hoteliers, even during the lockdown, and want to ensure that our guests are comfortable, happy and safe. Being in quarantine is not easy, neither is being away from your family as essential workers, and we know our guests look forward to mealtimes. Our teams try as far as possible to ensure all of our guests' dining needs are met. Our #Café restaurants may not be open but we do our best to recreate the experience, following strict safety protocols, in our guests' rooms."

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