

Restaurants now a feature of office buildings

Perhaps an indication of a pervasive need to have work-life balance, more and more office buildings in rising business district Bonifacio Global City are hosting restaurants on the ground floor and lower levels.

Two of Manila's highly rated dining places are located in office developments put up by The Net Group: the trendy Je Suis Gourmand by Chef Marc Aubry at Net One and Bistro Filipino owned by acclaimed Chef Roland Laudico at Net Square. Offering a similarly casual ambience, Eat Well, Bastys, Teriyaki Boy and Dell's Foodhall at Net Quad have also developed a following.

Charlie Rufino, president of The Net Group, explains why: "At the end of the day, people relate well to the retail experience -- restaurants in particular." A trendy restaurant brings a certain cache to a real estate project, he says. Thus, The Net Group plans a building by focusing first on the restaurant and retail concept and preparing the best infrastructure for it.

To attract restaurateurs and other food retailers who are always conscious of their expenses, The Net Group which operates primarily in Bonifacio Global City promotes the use of piped-in gas as cooking fuel. Piped-in gas is supplied by Bonifacio Gas in the rising business district and also in the commercial section of Eastwood City.

Serge Bernal, Bonifacio Gas general manager, reports that piped-in gas offers savings of up to 40 per cent compared to electricity. Moreover, buildings connected to the Boni-

facio Global City and Eastwood networks enjoy the protection offered by state-of-the-art facilities. From a centralized location, the fuel is released in vapor form into the network. Building owners tap into a system of high-grade pipes that conform to world-class standards and distribute the gas to users in their projects. When retailers and other locators get gas from the network rather than from traditional cylinders, the presence of gas is greatly minimized in their developments. This situation is not only safer, it also minimizes the wear-and-tear to a property incurred from the handling of heavy metal cylinders.

Bernal discloses that in addition to savings, most locators, for their part, prefer to use piped-in gas because they don't need to maintain an inventory of lpg cylinders and risk running out of fuel in the middle of a busy day.

Raymond Rufino, vice-president of The Net Group opines that in a city, people circulate at the street level so ground floor retail is critical in influencing their perceptions. He recalls how Je Suis Gourmand at the ground floor of the Net One Center building influenced the early impres-



Charlie Rufino

sion of many visitors of Bonifacio Global City.

Despite the ambitious plans for the district, few people took the vision seriously in the early part of the decade -- until they started frequenting restaurants like Je Suis Gourmand. "Je Suis Gourmand in particular attracted many visitors to the Bonifacio Global City. It helped people realize the amazing growth and development of the city, as well as experience the kind of lifestyle it offered. Bonifacio Global City was no longer just a future plan - it was already a reality!" he says.