Immersive dinner theater

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The National Theatre is inviting audiences to enjoy their latest production, “Network”, with a curated three-course meal. The new play, directed by Ivo van Hove and starring Breaking Bad’s Bryan Cranston, will have an onstage restaurant called the Foodwork, where theatergoers will be seated and served, after arriving through a secret entrance.

Van Hove and his partner and designer Jan Versweyveld are renowned for their interactive sets, as demonstrated in their performance ‘Roman Tragedies’, where audience members could wander the stage and purchase snacks and drinks from onstage vendors.

“The set and the music are like an extra character for me,” said Van Hove in an interview with the Financial Times. “It’s not like we rehearse something and then you make it more beautiful by bringing a set and sound. No, it has to be a total togetherness of all these elements.”

Dishes for the fine dining experience include Portland crab cocktail, ox cheek bourguignon and gin and tonic sorbet. Audiences can choose to dine at tables or on the iconic Lyttelton stage, with tickets limited and only available through an online ballot system.

Another London based art platform, The Vaults are no strangers to immersive dining experiences, having hosted themed interactive dinner shows like 'Alice's Adventures Underground' and 'Dinner with the Twits'. The latest production, “Beauty and the Feast,” is brought to life by events studio Darling & Edge and quirky supper club the Grubclub, who have crafted a three-course theatrical feast complete with eccentric performers and gluttonous culinary delights. The banquet includes dishes like whole spiced pumpkins, blue cheese cheesecake and a forest of meringue mushrooms.
“Chamber of Favour” by Gingerline offers another unforgettable theatrical dining experience by transporting guests to five contrasting parallel realities, each containing a different course. To enhance the element of mystery, audience members only discover the location of the dining experience one hour beforehand, unaware of the evening’s theme or menu until the moment they walk through the doors. The production, launched in 2010, is currently in its final sold-out run.

As explored in our Food + Drink: Trends and Futures 2017 trend report, multisensory dining experiences are on the rise, with 71% of millennials saying they love to attend food-focused events and UK spending on eating out at a five-year high. When it comes to experiential, the bar is continually being raised, particularly as they become more ephemeral and exclusive. In order to cut through the noise, brands will need to think spectacular.

Main image: Beauty and the Feast

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