

HONG KONG

HALLYU

China-based Dong Dae Mun restaurant takes its design cues from Korean Wave culture.

By Kaileigh Peyton, Associate Editor

Mong Kok, Hong Kong's most trend-setting district, is revered as a hipster hangout of shops and clubs that include an explosion of curbside food stands and international restaurants.

The locale has also become a center of *hallyu*, the popular flow of South Korean culture throughout Asia and around the world. So it's not surprising that one of the district's most exciting new restaurants, Dong Dae Mun, is serving up Korean-style barbecue in a vibrant setting where community and culture are a big focus.

RIGHT A colorful wire mesh feature wall partially separates the VIP area (shown in background), granting privacy while allowing sights and sounds from the dining room.

BELOW The location's neon entrance signage (shown) spells out "Dong Dae Mun" in Chinese characters, denoting the brand, as well as symbolically referencing its melding of cultures.



Even the restaurant's name is a nod to Dongdaemun Market – Seoul, South Korea's enormous street market district that's become a must-see tourist destination. Appealing to its millennial, social media-savvy patrons, the restaurant's environment is upbeat and engaging.

"I had to make it energetic and create a vibe for the younger crowds," says Raymond Ng, designer and director, RN Design Studio (Hong Kong). "Our target audience is ... 18 to 25, so you don't want to create a fine-dining, quiet place for them to eat – it would be awkward."

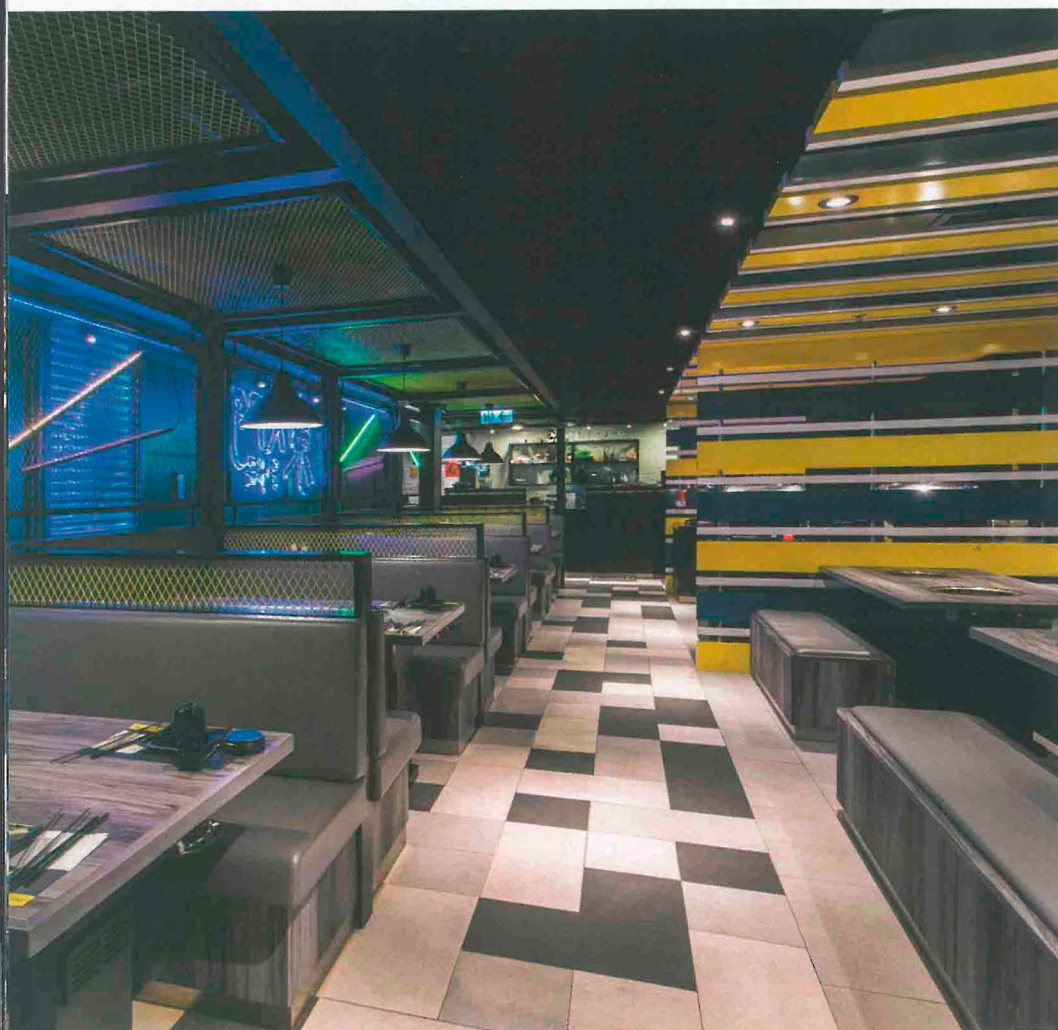
Korean barbecue's family-style approach is a clear fit for its gregarious clientele. The cooking and serving method consists of thinly sliced beef, pork, chicken or other meats, cooked over a communal gas or charcoal grill in the center of diners' tables, with an assortment of oils and seasonings as well as various small sides to fine-tune the cuisine according to taste.

Designing the restaurant around the grills created a unique set of challenges. To provide an exhaust for the stoves and keep customers clean, air ducts are hidden beneath the tables and bench seating. The restaurant's layout was dictated by the routing of its duct



LEFT Expansive tabletops allow for placement of maximum sides and fixings for guests to customize dishes.

BELOW Natural-toned floor, table and seating materials balance the loud hues in the restaurant's bold ceiling and wall treatments.



placement, fixing the table and seating arrangement in place once the tubing was installed.

"[It's] a key point in designing for a Korean barbecue restaurant because you don't want [customers] to feel greasy and oily after a meal," Ng explains. The tables were specially designed for the restaurant and custom-fit with the gas grills. A plastic laminate tabletop material was selected for easy, post-grub cleanup.

Throughout the dining room, guests are treated to a visual feast of tones and textures: Colorful mesh walls partition the space, providing a sense of openness; neon-lit accents emulate Dongdaemun and Mong Kok's urban street signage; and the restaurant's corporate colors (blue and yellow) are visible in the wall and ceiling treatments. Natural-toned flooring and furniture were elected to balance the atmosphere, while the "invisible" painted-black ceiling conceals its low height.

Celebrating the fusion of Asian cultures, a graffiti-covered brick focal wall acts as the design's objective: A side-by-side depiction of bustling Mong Kok and Dongdaemun avenues, painted by one of the district's street artists, visually transports restaurant-goers to the meccas of *hallyu*. ▴

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

RESTAURANT
Dong Dae Mun, Hong Kong

DESIGN
RN Design Studio, Hong Kong

LIGHTING
Soul Collection, Hong Kong

GENERAL CONTRACTOR,
CEILING, FIXTURES AND
FURNITURE
Champion Decorations
Limited, Hong Kong

FLOORING
Simple Tiles, Hong Kong