



**PRESS RELEASE
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MEAN* Designs the Spatial Identity for The Migrant Kitchen Restaurants In New York

‘The Design of the Restaurants Brings Kitchen and Dining Room Seamlessly Together’

[New York, USA July 2022] MEAN* (Middle East Architecture Network) Designed the first dine-in locations for The Migrant Kitchen in New York City. Assigned with envisioning the spatial identity for the brand; MEAN* utilized design as a tool to communicate the brand story.

Nasser Jaber and Daniel Dorado founded the Migrant Kitchen in 2019, with the concept of ‘Food Inspired by Immigrants’. The idea started out as a catering business with a humanitarian mission, to provide meaningful opportunities for immigrants to display their cuisines and cultures while earning a decent living. At the height of the COVID crisis, the business pivoted from a standard catering operation to serving frontline healthcare workers fighting against the pandemic and quickly scaled its operations to serve over 60,000 meals a week to feed insecure communities across New York City. Over the past 2 years, The Migrant Kitchen acquired locations in the Upper East Side, Brooklyn, and Upper West Side.

Upon acquiring their first 2 brick and mortar locations in the city, The Migrant Kitchen entrusted MEAN* in Dubai to design the spatial identity for these restaurants. The main idea of their brief was to ensure that the story of TMK is communicated consistently in the interior of each restaurant with materials, features, and finishes while maintaining a unique identity for every location that echoes the character of its surrounding neighborhood.

The team at MEAN* conducted a careful study of the overlap of home kitchens from the Middle East to North America, and infused a contemporary approach into some of the common elements with the use of ceramic tiles, custom-made mosaics, and birch wood. Throughout the design process, MEAN* intended to seamlessly bring the ‘kitchen’ to the dining areas, by the use of materials and features that are found in kitchens all over the world. The contemporary youthful energy of The Migrant Kitchen is communicated through using the brand colors, as well as materials and finishes.

User Experience

The circulation of diverse user groups was considered within the small area of the floor plan, including disabled people, families, single diners, and pets. The design of the restaurants makes the best use of the indoor/outdoor spaces by providing versatile seating solutions and façade mechanisms that allow for flexibility in all weather conditions.

157 Columbus Avenue Location

At 157 Columbus, The design of The Migrant Kitchen location in the Upper West Side utilizes a simple floor plan and gives importance to the user experience within the 60-m2 plot. Careful consideration to the layout of the kitchen gives priority to the use of the small space to be given to indoor seating. The kitchen is placed at the back, concealed by a counter with a grab-and-go fridge. Towards the ‘back of house’, diners can use the bar seating overlooking the kitchen, while at the front, a custom bench with dining tables offers an ‘all-day-cafe’ spirit, encouraging diners to take their time with their meals.

A continuous interlocking birch wood structure engulfs the space and resembles a ‘pantry’. The wooden feature starts as a bench for diners, branching towards the ceiling and creating a welcoming space as it recedes to cover a column near the grab-and-go counter. The wooden members create a sinuous dynamic arched portal towards the ‘back of house’. In order to stabilize the lateral forces within the structure, horizontal wooden pieces are inserted doubling as shelves.

1433 First Avenue Location

The Migrant Kitchen location at 1433 First Avenue in the Upper East Side utilizes a linear, simple floor plan that makes the best use of the small 30-m2 space. Walking through the entrance, guests can be seated in a bar arrangement, aligned with a customized mosaic tile wall. Birchwood members overlap the mosaic tile wall and curve to create a welcoming arched enclave towards the ceiling. The kitchen is placed at the back with a grab-and-go counter at the front.



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About MEAN*

MEAN* Is an Innovative Architecture Practice that works at the nexus of design and emergent technologies.

Since its inception in 2016, MEAN* has developed projects of varying scales and functions. The overarching theme of the work produced by MEAN* responds to the contemporary context of the Middle East, developing a site-specific, native architectural language in juxtaposition to avant-garde technologies.

MEAN* utilizes cutting-edge computational design processes and digital fabrication tools to leverage the quality of architectural solutions. Our mission is to amalgamate computation, material research, and digital fabrication, to provide interdisciplinary solutions that respond to current economic, environmental, and social challenges.

MEAN* worked on projects ranging from large public buildings, residential, retail to small experimental structures and products. Most of which had been praised by international awards and publications for the innovative approach taken to materiality, fabrication methods, and outstanding design quality.

A major focus in the body of work at MEAN* remains rooted in the preservation of the character, ecology, and history of the locale, while projecting towards a globalized future. We aim to produce contemporary, visionary, and world-class architecture - with a vernacular mindset.

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