

A watercolor illustration of the Arcade Food Hall storefront. On the left, a vertical red sign with the word 'ARCADE' in white, 3D-style letters is visible. The building has large glass windows and doors. Through the glass, a two-story interior is visible. The upper level features a long bar with numerous blue-topped stools. The lower level shows a staircase, potted plants, and a display case. To the right, an open glass door reveals the interior of a shop or kitchen area with shelves stocked with various items. The overall style is artistic and hand-drawn.

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Aver Insight
JKS Restaurants' relaunch of Arcade Food Hall
May 2022

What's in a name?



- JKS Restaurants – the award-winning London-based group behind the likes of Gymkhana, BAO, and Hoppers – took over Arcade Food Theatre last year
- The site is at the base of the iconic Centre Point, a 1960s mixed-use 34-storey building next to Tottenham Court Road station, first launching in 2019 and closing in the early throes of the pandemic
- They have changed the name, dropping 'Theatre' from its previous incarnation, turning to the more conventional 'Food Hall', and relaunched in late April

Has it changed?

- The internal layout is almost identical – a large central bar, surrounded by dining tables, with a collection of open kitchens and additional seating further back
- The first-floor space once again takes on a dedicated concept with a more restaurant-style setting, this time Thai restaurant, Plaza Khao Gaeng
- The big change has been to the ordering system, moving from 'collect at the kitchen' to a traditional table service



The central bar

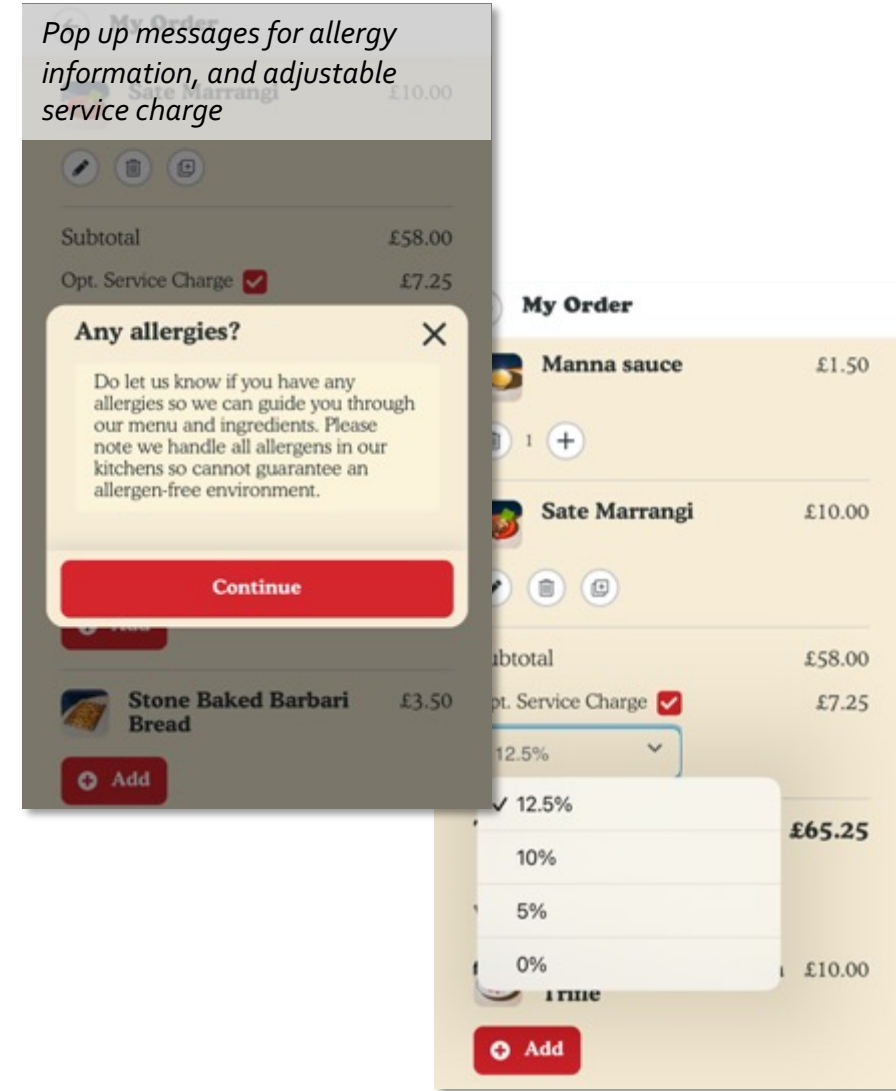


Plaza Khao Gaeng

Has that made a difference?



- The ordering system is a marked change for the Food Hall; a much smoother process that works better for the space
- Each table has a QR code to an online ordering system
- The app has some nice touches, such as being able to change the service fee, and entering any allergies for direct kitchen feedback



Not without its flaws

Satay from Bebek! Bebek!



Squid from Tipan Tipan



Chicken sandwich from Manna



Tuna maki from Sushi Kamon

- The ordering system contains all the operators on-site, so in one order you can choose 7 items from 7 different eateries (you can see my choice of 4 to the left)
- The choice is superb, but the problem this creates is with the lack of inter-operator communication
- Rather than receiving dishes with staggered timing as you would at a restaurant, the table is more likely to receive everything at once, meaning less table space, feeling rushed to finish plates, and food going cold
- If you want to order bit-by-bit to avoid this, it starts afresh, meaning you have to repeat putting details into the app and paying separately each time

The more things change...



- Aside from the name, and table service, only a few minor changes are noticeable
- A new games room at the rear retains the 'bar meets food hall' vibe
- Two classic arcade machines now occupy the basement level, though this appears more a nod to the name than a functional addition
- There's a new dedicated DJ booth, but the atmosphere feels more relaxed, potentially to cater to day-time users such as flexi-workers



...the more they stay the same

- The visual from the outside remains low-key, to the extent you might walk past it without even noticing
- The central bar still dominates, taking the majority of the main dining space
- Kitchen-side dining is still available, retaining the connection between chef and diner that the original Arcade sought to champion
- It still intends to be an 'all-day' space, open from 8am to late, with the coffee, sandwich and pastry counter occupying the same place as before
- Neat finishing touches remain, such as plentiful charging points and bag hooks



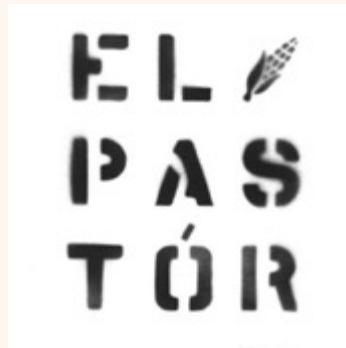
Counter-top kitchen seating remains



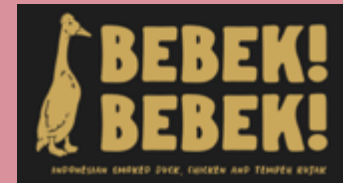
Arcade Provisions has bakery items from Flor

The operators

Then



Now



How's the food?

Like JKS generally, the array of Arcade operators focus mostly on cuisines from Asia



- The previous collection of operators comprised strong, known names given the space to trial new concepts and dishes
- The new collection is less famous, but follows the JKS ethos of innovation, with a focus on cuisines from across Asia
- Our opinion: food quality is good but not spectacular, with each operator having slightly more expanded menus than the previous iteration
- A new addition is a dedicated dessert brand, Jelladrome, which creates Instagram-friendly items



A lemon & gin trifle from Jelladrome

Dealing with the new normal



The Elizabeth Line opens on May 24

- Arcade Food Hall has opened at the ideal time, with the impending launch of the Elizabeth Line (May 24) set to bring more people through Tottenham Court Road
- All of the surrounding office and resi development create opportunities for Arcade to reach new audiences
- However, there has been a marked change to worker behaviour, with people choosing to socialise more mid-week than end-of-week. Arcade will have to tailor its offer to meet these new demands

Making headlines

Arcade Food Hall: 'You could come every day and never be bored'

Evening Standard

Arcade Food Hall Centre Point is reopening on Tottenham Court Road

TimeOut

Latest opening: Arcade Food Hall

BigHospitality

Britain's food halls are bigger than ever – and with a twist

The Telegraph

Arcade Food Hall is relaunching at Centre Point with all-new kitchens

HOTDINNERS

EATER
LONDON

Come Play at the Arcade

Exciting new kitchens and a smoother ordering system from JKS Restaurants make the Centre Point food hall a London dining destination for 2022

In conclusion...

Strengths

- **Table service** makes a big difference – the main failing of the previous Arcade was confusion around queues for ordering and payment, which made it feel over-crowded and slowed the kitchens
- The menus offer a **good amount of culinary diversity**, and the specialist dessert operator is a nice touch
- **Theatrical dining** is still very much on-trend, so retaining that element was important
- It feels like **it suits the location**, and is well placed to benefit from additional footfall due to the Elizabeth Line



In conclusion...



Improvements to be made

- More could be done with **the way it is presented externally** – by having such an understated exterior, it feels like a venue only for customers who have booked, and does not do enough to encourage spontaneous walk-ins
- The ordering system is an improvement, but **the way food is delivered** needs to be considered
- A debate as to whether it should be **more well-known chefs / restaurants** to draw crowds
- There is still a **slightly confused layout**, created by the design, which remains unchanged from the original Arcade

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