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## Mister Steer's Undergoes Facelift

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Mister Steer's is Montreal's oldest burger joint, founded in 1958. Its bar and 'classic burger joint' identity held a soft spot in the community's heart, but the restaurant hadn't received renovations since 1988.



"We want to attract a younger demographic to ensure our future," says Andre Blanchette, co-owner of Mister Steer. "Most of our customers didn't want us to renovate." Some patrons had been frequenting Mister Steer's since they were five.

The owners of Mister Steer wanted to hang onto the existing demographic while attracting a younger, hipper clientele. Igloodgn, a design firm, applied for the contract, and impressed the owners with the finishes and fixtures they chose to highlight.

"It began like any other project," says Anna Abruzzo, Igloodgn designer. "We were able to share a vision and able to convey that it was not so much a renovation as a passing of the torch to the new generation."

"There's a big mix of what is perceived to be vintage, but it's in fact new—it really created a bespoke restaurant for us that could never be duplicated," Blanchette says.

"We had to respect the fact that it is intrinsically a burger joint, we were looking for a meeting point between chic and everyday," Abruzzo says.

The design team worked on creating lighting that could morph the space from daytime to nighttime. "Having a burger at 11 a.m. is different than having a burger at 9 p.m., and we wanted the restaurant to reflect that," Abruzzo says.

One of the big changes to the restaurant was the elimination of the bar seating. The designers observed the restaurant before the renovation, and noticed the bar was consistently empty even at busy times. "Thirty years ago people enjoyed sitting at the bar," Abruzzo says. "Today, this is a useless feature."

The design team added a tile wall to the center of the restaurant, Abruzzo's favorite feature. The patterned tile looks like a quilt, "it created a look that could have been there for the last 50 years," she adds. "We

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wanted to give the space legacy, not take it away. We didn't want anyone to feel foreign going there."

"We always felt that Igloodgn did an amazing job—but it really came around full circle when our customers started saying 'It looks new, but doesn't feel like you renovated!' That was a huge compliment, and definitely reassuring to know that Igloodgn was able to pinpoint the essence of our brand and reinvent it without changing it," Blanchette adds.

Along with the physical renovation, Mister Steer updated their logo, website, and uniforms. "The new interior captures the spirit of Mister Steer that my parents opened in 1958—but we're in 2013" says James Gaspar, co-owner.

*By Kirsten Ballard*

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