

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Bulgari Hotels debuts video series featuring yoga and cooking classes

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*Dario Schiavoni, director at Bulgari Resort Dubai, shares a video of how to make cocktails at home. Image courtesy of Bulgari*

By DIANNA DILWORTH

**Bulgari Hotels & Resorts** has launched a new digital video series to connect its global workforce with consumers stuck at home during coronavirus lockdowns.

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The new video collection stars real-life employees from real Bulgari hotels around the world, demonstrating their services so that fans can take part at home.

"The idea of producing video masterclasses was born to keep the connection with our clients in these difficult times," said Jean-Christophe Babin, CEO of Bulgari Hotels & Resorts, Rome.

"Due to the current travelling restrictions and limitations on having leisure time and shopping experiences, we thought that the best way to entertain our clients while at home was to focus more on our people than on our products," Mr. Babin said.

**Marriott Hotels**, Bethesda, MD, operates the Bulgari Hotels & Resorts brand. The world's largest hotel chain, Marriott has furloughed almost all its staff across hotel brands that it runs, including Marriott, Ritz-Carlton and Bulgari Hotels.



*Federico Zolofra, pizza chef at Bulgari Resort Dubai, stars in a cooking class during the shutdown. Image courtesy of Bulgari*

#### Video series

Bulgari sent out an email this week launching the new video series.

"The Bulgari Hotel teams from around the world have come together to share exclusive activities you can enjoy from home," said the launch email. "Even from afar, we are thinking of you."

The friendly message aims to connect with customers and to show its personality to those who have not stayed with the hotel.

"Bulgari Hotels is creating content that may help entertain those who take shelter at home during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Thoma Serdari, director of fashion and luxury at Brand(x)Lux and professor at NYU Stern, New York.

"The content comes across as authentic, improvisational, and caring," she said. "It is a great opportunity to look at something that has nothing to do with the news and that, on the contrary, reminds us of times when life was normal and full of experiences."

"They are contributing with content that is unique and directly speaks from the center of this pandemic's Italian tragedy, but also from the center of Italian elegance, ingenuity, and giving."

The pizza chef from the Bulgari Resort Dubai stars in [one video](#) where he demonstrates how he makes pizza from scratch so that diners can attempt their own pizzas at home.

The yoga guru from the Bulgari Hotel Shanghai leads a morning mindfulness yoga session from a suite in the hotel. The bar director at the Dubai resort shares a recipe for a cocktail from the bar's menu, so that viewers can try to make the drink at home.

"The idea was to entertain our followers, not just those who are clients," Mr. Babin said. "When sharing this particular content, we have adopted a broader approach by targeting our entire customer base comprised of both new and loyal clients, and both offline and online clients. Prospects that is, clients who have expressed an interest in our brand but have not yet purchased have also been scoped in the target."

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Since consumers are staying home, many are turning to their devices as a way to pass the time and entertain themselves.

Content has become a big part of the lockdown communications strategy for many luxury brands.

"There is no other way right now to genuinely connect with guests and customers or to stay top of mind," Ms. Serdari said.

"There is no expectation of payment either, which makes this type of communication much more genuine vis-à-vis an audience that may be even more open and receptive to explore something new," she said.

"Especially in the case of hospitality professionals who are usually behind the scenes, what a wonderful way for them to connect with their guests and to show the face that usually remains hidden."



*The Bulgari Hotel Shanghai is hosting virtual yoga classes during the shutdown. Image courtesy of Bulgari*

### Travel faces challenges

The travel industry has been one of the hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic. While some consumers hint that they cannot wait to go on vacation, only time will tell when they will follow up and stay in hotels.

Indeed, many hotels could close for good. Luxury hotel brands that own their property will likely be better off after the reopening of the markets.

"Operators of brands may have more trouble finding their balance, but it all depends on how leveraged some of these properties are," Ms. Serdari said.

While it may still be too early to ascertain the overall impact of COVID-19 on the global economy, one thing is true: it has hit consumers at every level of global wealth.

"When the markets suffer the ripple effect may have the power to reach everyone, even the higher strata," Ms. Serdari said.

"Be that as it may, luxury brands that have stayed authentic to their DNA and offer content that completes their profile

for the public to connect with them will maintain a positive brand perception," she said.

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