

House Of Baccarat

An Interview with Rick Corcoran, General Manager, Baccarat Hotel New York

EDITORS' NOTE Rick Corcoran is General Manager of the Forbes Five-Star AAA Five Diamond Baccarat Hotel New York. Prior to joining Baccarat Hotel, Corcoran was the General Manager of 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge in New York City. His passion efforts during his tenure at the lauded property earned him the SH Hotels & Resorts General Manager of the Year Award in 2022. Throughout his notable career, Corcoran held various General Manager positions with esteemed luxury hospitality brands in the United States, Canada, and the Middle East. These include Fairmont Chateau Laurier in Ottawa and the Fairmont Hotel Dubai. Stateside, he helmed the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco. He was also the Food and Beverage Director at the Fairmont San Francisco and Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City, and Hotel Manager at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver during the city's 2010 Olympic games. In his earlier leadership roles, Corcoran served as a Hotel Manager and Director of Food and Beverage for various Fairmont properties. A native of Quebec City, Corcoran is fluent in French and English and graduated with a diploma in culinary and hospitality management from Institut Du Tourisme Et D'hôtellerie Du Quebec.



Rick Corcoran

Will you provide an overview of Baccarat Hotel New York and how the property is positioned in the market?

When Baccarat Hotel New York opened in 2015, it reimagined the elegance and perfection of the legendary French crystal maker into a luxury lifestyle hospitality brand. The hotel's mission is to offer perfection of service that matches Baccarat's perfection in the production of crystal. To this end, this commitment to fine craftsmanship is woven into every element of service and design detail of the hotel. In New York City's very competitive luxury hotel landscape, there is no shortage of world-class properties, but none are associated with a storied luxury brand like Baccarat, whose artisans have produced custom designs since King Louis XV founded the company in 1764. Our guests are surrounded by one of a kind artistic works, or pieces from Baccarat's crystal

factory, making the hotel as much a celebration as master craftsmanship as the Baccarat brand itself. This, combined with the highest level of personalized and caring service, creates a singular stay experience that cannot be replicated anywhere else.

How valuable is it to have such a strong suite product and do you see this as a differentiator for Baccarat Hotel New York?

Our suites, which are residential refuges of exceptional style and unparalleled sophistication, are essential for attracting top-tier travelers from around the globe. The hotel's premier accommodation, the Baccarat Suite, features a series of salon-like spaces with soft seating that encourages long conversations over glasses of champagne. It's en-suite bar and Baccarat crystal glassware make for effortless entertaining. This is French hospitality at its finest. It all starts with a glass of champagne and spirited gatherings and ends with the perfect night sleep in the most elegant and comfortable surroundings.

PROPERTY BRIEF Baccarat Hotel New York (baccarathotels.com) is the first hotel and global flagship for the more than a quarter centuries-old Baccarat crystal brand. Directly across the street from the Museum of Modern Art and steps away from Fifth Avenue's legendary shopping, the 114 exquisitely appointed guest rooms and suites designed by Paris-based, luxury design team Gilles & Boissier delight the senses with lavish finishes and artisanal attention to detail. Generous amenities include stunning salon-style spaces showcasing an all-day dining menu created by two Michelin-starred Culinary Director Gabriel Kreuther in partnership with Executive Chef/Director of Food and Beverage Ashfer Bijou. Guests will also enjoy a beautiful barrel-vaulted bar featuring a kaleidoscope of Baccarat crystal stemware; a soothing Spa de La Mer, the first of its kind in the United States; and a 55-foot sunken marble swimming pool complete with day beds reminiscent of La Côte d'Azur. Baccarat Hotel New York has earned the prestigious Forbes Five Star and AAA (American Automobile Association) Five Diamond Awards.



Baccarat Hotel New York Bar



Baccarat Suite (above); The Grand Salon offers all-day dining (below)

How has Baccarat Hotel New York approached its restaurant/food and beverage offering, and what are the keys to being effective in this part of the business?

The hotel's Culinary Director is two-Michelin starred Chef Gabriel Kreuther, who works in close partnership with Executive Chef/Director of Food and Beverage Ashfer Biju. In the glamorous Grand Salon, elevated all-day dining and our signature afternoon tea service can be enjoyed amidst cascading custom-designed Baccarat chandeliers and red rose accents.

The hotel's bar, inspired by the stables of Versailles, serves hand-crafted cocktails, aperitifs, fine wines, and light fare. Guests can also enjoy gathering on the adjacent seasonal Le Jardin terrace overlooking MoMA. These sparkling dining and "cocktailing" venues are a celebration of *joie de vivre* brought to life in part due to the sparkling crystal at every turn and an atmosphere of refined elegance.

Will you discuss Baccarat Hotel New York's focus on offering personalized service and a customized guest experience?

What we have done here is created this modern day "House of Baccarat" and taken this brand which has for centuries stood for perfection in crystal, and has never been compromised, and created its first luxury lifestyle hotel masterpiece. In this vein, we refer to our team members as service artisans who ensure that this commitment to fine craftsmanship is woven into every element of a guests stay. They consistently put forth all effort necessary to meet all of our guests' very particular requests and are constantly striving to anticipate their specific needs.

How critical is it for Baccarat Hotel New York to build a diverse and inclusive workforce to mirror the diversity of the guests it serves?

It is quite imperative actually and you can really tell when you achieve this, as point-of-views are shared from a diverse perspective. For example, in a light-hearted way, I refer to our Executive Committee as the G8. It is comprised of more women than men, and we come from different parts of the world. There are so many more nuances and subtleties to any decision being made when you have this type of diversity. As for the inclusive component, I have always felt that the people more entrenched in the operation have most of the answers. But most importantly, everybody has a say, and in this way, all are engaged with an understanding that they contribute to our overall success.

How do you define the role of the general manager and what are the keys to being effective in the role?

The role of the GM is to be a generalist while also surrounding himself/herself with incredibly capable specialists. The key is to not micro-manage but instead let the people around you apply their own approach to how work gets done and then re-align them if and when needed. But most importantly, my role is to take care of team members. This has been the only constant in my career, and it has helped me tremendously in running

very successful hotels. If you show your team that you genuinely care, they will go that much further for you. Another important component for success is to be visible and present throughout the operation. When team members or the guests see you frequently, they become quickly comfortable telling you what's working well and what isn't. This has always provided me with opportunities to fix issues and build trust among the team and our guests, demonstrating that I "have their back" and am listening to their concerns. What's more, I have learned that the real benefit to taking good care of team members is that they tend to apply this same approach to our guests.

What excited you about the opportunity to lead Baccarat Hotel New York and made you feel it was the right fit?

Who would not want to run the best hotel in New York City? I've always been attracted to luxury. I truly feel that with our intimate footprint and size, we can really achieve a very high level of personalization through great service. Baccarat Hotel is a true oasis for our guests, and we work very hard to maintain this. The design is impeccable, and the property's layout is very conducive to exclusiveness and privacy. I know I can thrive and strive for greatness in this space and truly make a marked difference with our guests and team members.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in building a career in the hotel industry?

When I am asked this question, my initial answer is always "You have to love people." It sounds cliché but if you don't, the hotel business is not for you. I also love the fact that not one day is the same. For me personally, I feel the most blessed that my role allows me to make a positive impact on people's lives. What a privilege this is. I must also caution, however, that a career in hospitality is not for everybody. We tend to work when people are off and having fun, which often means working weekends and evenings. But I have found that working in this industry has given me so much fulfillment. I've literally been paid to discover the world and learn many varied ways to do things while meeting a lot of like-minded people that have become friends along the way. ●

