

CASE STUDY:

Full-Service Restaurant Transformation – “*La Consentida*”

1. Project Overview: Breathing New Life into a Century-Old Space

La Consentida is not just a restaurant—it’s an experience. Set inside a 100-year-old building, this project presented a unique opportunity to create a luxurious, high-end Mexican dining destination while preserving the character of its historic structure. SM Engineering & Design was entrusted with the complete transformation—from structural reinforcement to lighting, interior design, and final execution.

The client’s vision was ambitious: to design a space that would reflect the richness of Mexican culture while standing apart from traditional, folkloric aesthetics. They wanted vibrant colors, sophisticated materials, and curated details that elevated the space beyond expectation.

This was a project that demanded technical excellence, aesthetic precision, and an unwavering attention to detail.

2. Structural Reinforcement: Strengthening a Century of History

Before any design work could begin, our team undertook an in-depth analysis of the building’s structural integrity. With over 100 years of wear and age, the existing materials showed visible deterioration. Walls were unstable, ceiling beams had weakened, and foundational shifts had occurred over time.

We began by conducting structural risk assessments and working closely with our engineers to calculate the loads, stress points, and reinforcements needed. The solution included:

- Installing **metal beams and structural columns** throughout the ceiling and perimeter.
- Reinforcing old masonry walls with **steel framing and internal anchors**.
- Raising select ceiling sections to improve airflow and lighting design flexibility.
- Ensuring full code compliance for commercial occupancy and safety.

These changes laid the foundation—literally—for everything that would follow. Without them, no aesthetic choice or design element would matter. The success of *La Consentida* started with its invisible, engineered backbone.

3. Complete Infrastructure Planning: Precision Below the Surface

Once the structure was secure, the next phase was the technical planning of the entire building infrastructure. Unlike typical interior design projects that only focus on finishes and furnishings, *La Consentida* was built from the inside out.

Our scope included:

- **Electrical plans** to support high-capacity kitchen equipment, ambient and task lighting, and full audio integration.
- **Plumbing design**, customized for both commercial kitchen functionality and luxurious restrooms.
- **Lighting design**, mapped in coordination with ceiling heights, wall materials, and decor features.
- **Structural detailing**, coordinated with local regulations and peer-reviewed by certified professionals.

Every technical plan was executed with precision, ensuring long-term durability, energy efficiency, and seamless integration with the final design.

4. The Design Concept: Modern Mexican Elegance

The aesthetic concept for *La Consentida* was rooted in the vibrant soul of Mexico—but refined with high-end sophistication. The client wanted to move away from typical themes and create a space that could belong in any design magazine while still feeling undeniably Mexican.

We focused on:

- **Material selection** that emphasized contrast: warm wood tones against bold ceramics, raw concrete with polished brass, and handwoven textiles paired with modern surfaces.
- **Textural variation** throughout the space. No two walls are the same—each features a unique combination of materials, including stone, wood, tile, and hand-painted finishes.
- A **color palette** developed through academic color theory, influenced by psychology and human behavior in commercial spaces. The final selection played with **deep terracottas**,

vibrant teals, muted golds, and dark greens, each carefully chosen to evoke emotion while balancing harmony.

This level of design discipline ensured the space was not only beautiful, but also emotionally resonant and commercially effective.

5. Customization & Artistic Collaboration

A defining feature of *La Consentida* was its focus on bespoke, locally crafted details. This wasn't about importing mass-produced elements—it was about storytelling.

Some highlights include:

- **Lighting fixtures imported from Italy**, carefully selected to bring a soft glow, warmth, and elegance to each seating area.
- **Handmade dining tables**, crafted by a Puerto Rican artist, using reclaimed wood and custom ironwork. Each table is a conversation piece, reflecting the identity of the space.
- **Decorative accents and art pieces** sourced from both local artisans and curated international collections.

Even the smallest decorative items were chosen with intention—everything had meaning, form, and function.

6. Ambiance Engineering: Designing How Guests Feel

Beyond the visual, *La Consentida* was designed to stimulate every sense. We approached the restaurant not just as a space, but as a curated journey for every guest.

Key experience elements included:

- **Acoustic planning** to control reverberation and ensure a lively but comfortable sound environment during peak dining hours.
- **Zoning** for the dining area, bar, and restrooms to create flow without disrupting intimacy.
- **Lighting mood mapping**, with zones of warm ambient light, brighter work-focused kitchen lights, and layered pendant lights for depth and drama.

Every decision supported the client's goal: to make *La Consentida* a place where guests come not just to eat—but to stay, to feel, and to remember.

7. Results & Reflection: A Space with Soul

The final result is a restaurant that is bold yet elegant, vibrant yet calm, luxurious yet grounded in culture. It is a space that defies stereotypes about Mexican-themed restaurants, proving that cultural expression and refined design can exist in perfect harmony.

The client was thrilled—not only with the outcome but with the journey. We handled every detail from structural correction to the last decorative touch, providing peace of mind, expert execution, and results that exceeded expectations.

La Consentida now stands as a statement piece in Puerto Rico's dining scene, embodying the transformative power of architecture, engineering, and design working together.