

‘Their hands would go purple’: New York restaurants brace for second winter of outdoor dining

Before the pandemic, restaurants with outdoor seating were the exception in New York City. Sidewalk permits were prohibitively expensive, harsh winters were impractical, and muggy summers uncomfortable. But the social distancing rules that closed restaurant dining rooms across the country last year to curb the spread of Covid-19 had a devastating impact on the US restaurant and food service industry, which reported [\\$120bn in lost revenue](#) in the first three months of the pandemic alone (the running total is now \$280bn).

Industry Kitchen in the South Street Seaport has a 100-seat capacity, but when indoor dining shut down in December 2020, management invested in 11 greenhouses (like little clear-walled cottages) that could seat a party of four on the restaurant’s patio overlooking the East River. “This year, the general manager Aylon Hadar says, the restaurant is gearing up for another big winter season. They’ve added a large format cheese fondue and s’mores to the menu. “People are posting on social media so it’s part of the experience,” he says. “In the evening, when everyone sits down inside those huts and suddenly snow is falling...it’s amazing.”