

# KITCHENS, NOT CASINOS

## THE CASINO-LESS CONDO-HOTEL IS ON THE RISE

By "Lucky Chuck" Kapelke



Chuck Kapelke has written for a number of magazines, including *Rolling Stone*, *San Francisco* and *Continental*, as well as *Let's Go* guidebooks.

Leonardo di Caprio and Pamela Anderson both bought condos in the Panorama Towers. Ben Affleck bought himself a luxury pad at Aqua Blue. And even jet-setting George Clooney recently invested in one of the many condominiums sprouting up across the southern Nevada desert.

And now you, too, can own a condo near the Sin City Strip. Well, okay, you can rent a condo for a few nights, anyway, thanks to the increasingly popular real estate model of the "condo-hotel," by which individual rooms are sold as condominiums, but are rented to overnight hotel guests. (The "rent" is split about 60 percent for the owner, and 40 percent to management.) And, as it so happens, these places are great for meetings.

Two new condo-hotels opening this month—The Signature at MGM Grand (shown below) and the Platinum Hotel and Spa—have several perks that few hotels offer: outdoor balconies, full kitchens with stoves and a comfortable respite from the steady jingle-jangle of the casino chaos. It's the kind of solitude that business groups often require in between their after-dark shenanigans.

"When the owner is not in residence, the hotel acts like any fashionable hotel in the country," says Peter Rockwood, vice president and general manager of the Platinum. "It's a seamless transition; guests will never know that the hotel is a condominium."

### THE SIGNATURE AT MGM GRAND

May 2006 marks the opening of the first of three 576-suite towers that make up The Signature at MGM



Grand, a new luxury condo-hotel property attached to the massive MGM-Mirage property. Tower II is scheduled to open in December 2006, while Tower III is slated for a May 2007 debut.

The Signature aims to be all about delivering the kind of service that the megahotels can't always muster. In addition to 24-hour concierge services and perks like in-suite massage, guests at The Signature get to use a private entrance, sleep on 300-thread-count sheets, soak in Jacuzzi tubs, watch flat-screen HD TVs, or whip up meals in high-end kitchens with full refrigerators and four-burner stoves.

"When you come to The Signature, the experience will be like a Four Seasons or Ritz-Carlton," explains Frederic Luvisutto, executive director of The Signature at MGM Grand. "You could have a very large group stay in the MGM Grand, and put the executives or directors in The Signature. Or the reward for an incentive trip could be to stay in The Signature."

Each tower will have a fitness center, outdoor pools, poolside cabanas, and evening cocktail service. Each of the tower's lobbies will have retail stores and fitness centers, Starbucks and a delicatessen. All three towers will also be nongaming and nonsmoking.

Tower I does not have dedicated meeting space, but Towers II and III will have board rooms and other small meeting spaces totaling about 2,600 square feet each. Need anything larger, and you can tap into the MGM Grand, including the 380,000-square-foot MGM Grand Conference Center. The pool areas and other public spaces will be rented out to groups, along with the lounges at the Towers' bases.

"Within a year, we will be doing a walkway from The Signature to the Convention Center," says Luvisutto.

The 550-square-foot junior suites start at \$200 per night. One-bedroom suites start at \$310 per night. Two-bedroom suites, which span 1,500 square feet, start at \$510 per night.

For more information, see [signaturemgmgrand.com](http://signaturemgmgrand.com) or call 800-929-1112.

### PLATINUM HOTEL AND SPA

Between the boutique spa, town car service and multiple swimming pools, few guests would realize that their rooms at the Platinum were recently sold to someone for between \$450,000 and \$1.5 million.

Then again, maybe they would: the suites have full kitchens, replete with refrigerators, stoves and cooking "islands"; fireplaces; and pull-out couches in the living room. The outside terraces offer views of the Strip on one side and the desert-city sprawl on the other.

After dark, the Platinum's pool area turns into an outdoor cocktail lounge with cabanas and fire pits. And the restaurant, next to the pool, has a 25-person private dining room with A/V hook-ups for business presentations. The Platinum also has other small meeting and event rooms.

Eight two-bedroom units span 2,165 square feet with dining rooms and larger living rooms. "You could have a breakout for up to 15 people in there," says Rockwood. You could have our chef come up to cook a meal for you in the suite."

The 3,350-square-foot rooftop terrace, called "Misora," is only open for catered private events (through in-house catering). This 17th-floor space can hold about 330 people for cocktail receptions or 225 for a meal. To rent Misora costs \$5,000 during the week, \$10,000 during the weekend.

"Our prices will be competitive with the four-star hotels in Las Vegas, the difference being that, here, they're getting a suite," says Rockwood, who estimates rooms will rent for \$189 per night and up. For more information, call 702-365-5000 or see [lplatinum.com](http://lplatinum.com).

### LIBERACE MUSEUM

No entertainer embraced the over-the-top kitsch of Las Vegas more than Liberace, which is why a visit to the Liberace Museum, 2.5 miles east of the Strip, is always a hoot for groups.

"We're a different kind of place," says Carole Fishman, group tour coordinator and events manager