Guest column: deSter and Riyadh Air co-create signature onboard dining collection

This is a special feature from the November 2026 Middle East, Asia & Africa issue of *PAX International*, on page 40.

In this guest column, Daniel Knies, Senior Category Director Premium Dining, Onboard Bedding, Crew & Galley Equipment at deSter, shares the story behind Riyadh Air's tableware collection from brand vision to onboard experience.



The range pairs the Bedouin tent-inspired Canopy Twist motif with accents of Riyadh Air's signature lavender color

The cabin interior, service style and onboard dining experience all shape how passengers perceive an airline brand. Together, these moments create an impression that extends far beyond transportation.

Yet some of the most powerful touchpoints are also among the smallest, from a welcome-drink glass to a breadbasket.

After decades of designing onboard products for airlines around the world, we have learned that great airline tableware design is never just about the product itself. The most successful collections begin with understanding what makes an airline unique and how that identity can be expressed consistently throughout the cabin experience.

Copyright DutyFree Magazine. All rights reserved.



Daniel Knies, Senior Category Director Premium Dining, Onboard Bedding, Crew & Galley Equipment, deSter

Understanding the airline
That challenge sat at the heart of our recent collaboration with Riyadh Air.

As Saudi Arabia's new world-class national carrier, Riyadh Air was created with a bold, modern vision that combines digital innovation with warm Saudi hospitality. Every touchpoint is designed to support that ambition and create a seamless, passenger-centric travel experience. For an airline built from the ground up, every detail matters and every onboard element becomes an opportunity to express the brand in a meaningful way.

Unlike many brand elements, tableware is experienced repeatedly during the journey, making it one of the most tangible expressions of an airline's hospitality philosophy.

In Riyadh Air's case, the ambition was clear: to create an airline that feels premium, contemporary and authentically Saudi. That vision became the foundation for every design decision that followed.

Now boarding brand identity
Bringing those ideas to life is the role of deStudio, our in-house innovation center. deStudio turns airline ambitions into scalable onboard solutions, combining concept development, industrial design, engineering and implementation support. Every project starts with the airline's vision and operational requirements, then moves through technical drawings, prototyping and sampling to production.

The goal was not simply to create a collection of products but to create a dining experience that

Copyright DutyFree Magazine. All rights reserved.

reflects the airline’s vision of modern Hafawa, authentic Saudi hospitality.

In Business Elite and Business Class, deSter co-created a collection that blends elegance, cultural storytelling and functionality. The signature Canopy Twist motif, inspired by the flowing forms of Bedouin tents, appears throughout the range alongside accents of Riyadh Air’s iconic lavender brand color.

Several pieces were developed as signature elements of the premium dining experience. A dedicated caviar bowl with cloche elevates one of the most exclusive service moments onboard. A bespoke bread basket combines practicality with refined presentation.



The signature Canopy Twist motif, inspired by the flowing forms of Bedouin tents, appears throughout the range alongside

The collection is designed as a cohesive system, with each piece supporting different service requirements throughout the aircraft.

That same approach extends into Premium Economy, where the collection retains key design elements, including the Canopy Twist motif and lavender accents, creating continuity between cabins while adapting to a different service model.

Economy Class introduced a different challenge: bringing sustainability and brand expression together. The result includes one of the industry’s first fully reusable tumblers made from closed-loop recyclable materials, proving that operational efficiency, environmental responsibility and strong

Copyright DutyFree Magazine. All rights reserved.

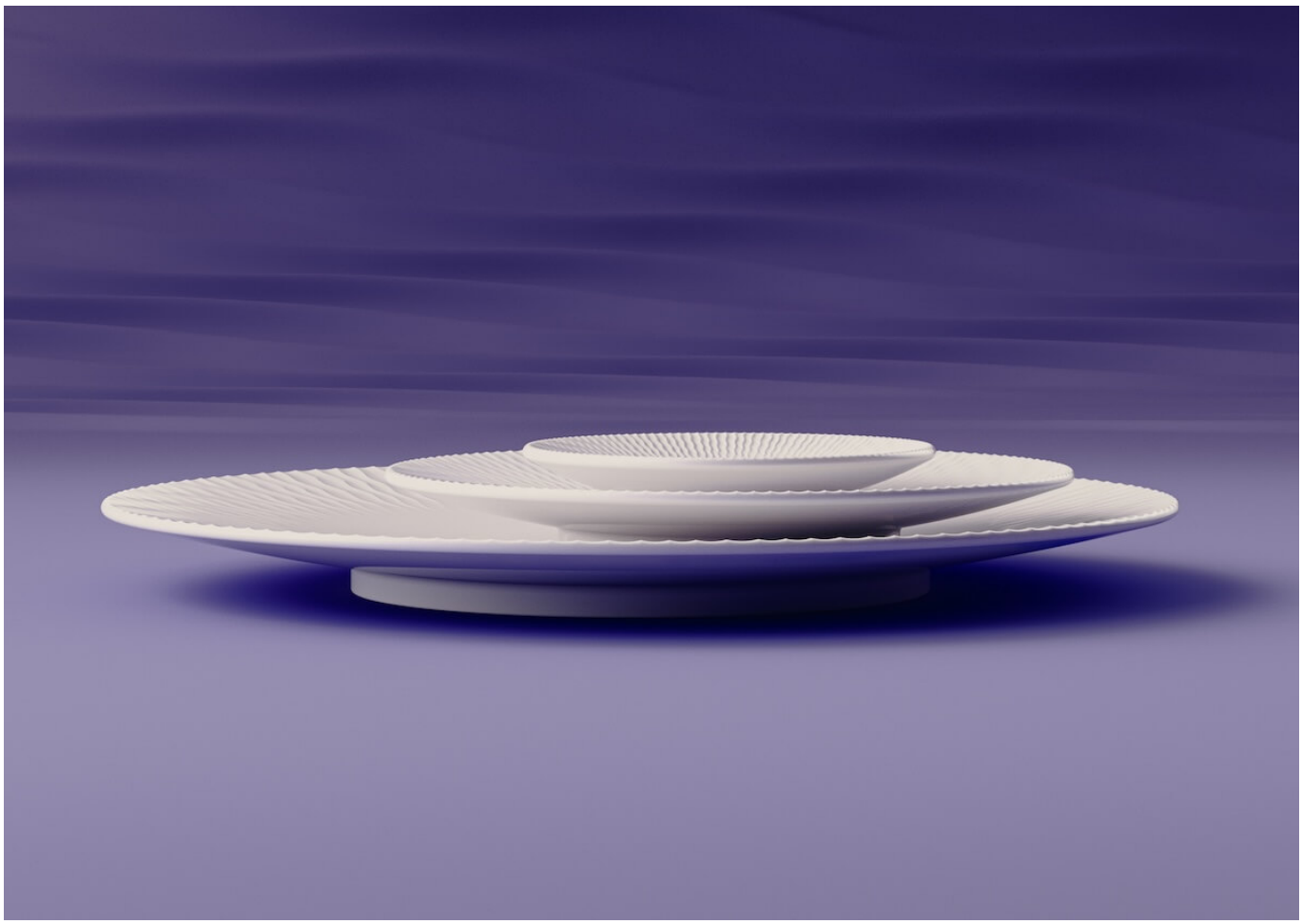
design need not compete.

Simplification is also key. Rather than creating entirely separate product worlds for each cabin, selected design elements and service pieces work across multiple environments, helping maintain consistency while supporting efficient operations.

Every onboard product needs to meet airline requirements around durability, sourcing, handling, storage and service execution.

Throughout the Riyadh Air project, deSter partnered closely with the airline to ensure that every design decision supports both the airline's ambitions and the practical realities of onboard service.

The result demonstrates what can happen when design, hospitality, sourcing expertise and operational requirements are considered together from the beginning rather than treated as separate workstreams.



The signature Canopy Twist motif draws inspiration from the flowing forms of Bedouin tents

More than tableware

The Riyadh Air collection illustrates something we often see across the aviation industry: onboard products deliver the greatest value when viewed as part of the overall passenger experience rather than simply a procurement exercise.

From a reusable tumbler in Economy Class to a signature caviar presentation in Business Elite, every element contributes to a cohesive onboard experience that reflects Riyadh Air's identity.

At deSter, this is what airline tableware design is ultimately about.

Copyright DutyFree Magazine. All rights reserved.

Not simply creating products but helping airlines translate ambitions into meaningful onboard experiences through thoughtful design, operational expertise and close collaboration.

Copyright DutyFree Magazine. All rights reserved.