

# FOOD MANAGEMENT

OCTOBER 2019

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# FOOD MANAGEMENT

## RESTAURANT AND FOOD GROUP PUBLISHER

Sarah Lockyer, sarah.lockyer@knect365.com (212) 204-4220

### EDITORIAL

#### EDITOR IN CHIEF

Becky Schilling, becky.schilling@informa.com

#### EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Mike Buzalka, mike.buzalka@informa.com

#### SENIOR EDITOR

Tara Fitzpatrick, tara.fitzpatrick@informa.com

#### CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Sue Pearsall, sue.pearsall@informa.com

#### DESIGNER

Joe Anderson, joe.anderson@informa.com

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Michael Browne, michael.browne@informa.com

Gloria Dawson, gloria.dawson@informa.com

Joanna Fantozzi, joanna.fantozzi@informa.com

Lisa Jennings, lisa.jennings@informa.com

Nancy Luna, nancy.luna@informa.com

Russell Redman, russell.redman@informa.com

Ron Ruggless, ron.ruggless@informa.com

Jenna Telesca, jenna.telesca@informa.com

Bret Thorn, bret.thorn@informa.com

#### PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Christi Ravneberg, christi.ravneberg@informa.com

#### DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Digital Content Manager: Leigh Anne Zinsmeister, leighanne.zinsmeister@informa.com

Assistant Digital Editor: Holly Petre, holly.petre@informa.com

#### DATA & EVENT CONTENT DIRECTOR

Alan J. Liddle, alan.liddle@informa.com

### BUSINESS

#### DIRECTOR, INTEGRATED MEDIA SALES

Kent Scholla, kent.scholla@informa.com

#### MEDIA SALES

Northeast Sales: Bob Baker, Robert.Baker@informa.com (732) 429-2080

Southeast Sales: Susan Shepherd, susan.shepherd@informa.com (404) 386-1709

Michigan, Ohio, Indiana Sales: Jerry Rymont, jerry.rymont@informa.com (216) 931-9720

Midwest Sales: Rebecca Roberts, rebecca.roberts@informa.com (512) 295-3050

Midwest Sales (IL, WI, MN): Jenifer Singer, jenifer.singer@informa.com (224) 806-1251

West and Northwest Sales: Sherylen Yoak, sherylen.yoak@informa.com (714) 813-5526

Inside Sales, East, Canada and International, MUFSO: Janet McLiverty, janet.mcliverty@informa.com (732) 530-2995

Inside Sales, West: Rory Gordon, rory.gordon@informa.com (203) 358-4101

Operators/Classifieds/Franchising/Real Estate: Leslie Wolowitz,

leslie.wolowitz@informa.com (212) 204-4399

Director of Client Success and Solutions: Jason Bogovic, jason.bogovic@informa.com

Account Manager: Dominique Correa, dominique.correa@informa.com

Manager, Digital Operations: Lydia Mayer, lydia.mayer@informa.com

Client Success Support: Isabel Erese, isabel.erese@informa.com; Jennifer Freund, jennifer.freund@informa.com

#### MARKETING

Media Marketing Director: Jesse Yeung, jesse.yeung@informa.com

Sales Marketing Manager: Tom Glancy, tom.glancy@informa.com

Social Media Marketing: Amanda Ciccattelli, amanda.ciccattelli@informa.com

#### EVENTS

Group Show Director: Monique M. Levy, monique.monaco@informa.com

Event Manager: Jesse Parziale, jesse.parziale@informa.com

Event Marketing Director: Kathryn Frankson, kathryn.frankson@informa.com

Marketing Specialist: Marie P. Smith, marie.smith@informa.com

#### SUBSCRIPTION & PRODUCTION

Print: Kathy Daniels, kathy.daniels@informa.com

List Rental Manager: Smartreach.Sales@penton.com

#### EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

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## INFORMA CONNECT NY

605 Third Avenue, 22nd floor, New York, NY (212) 204-4281

#### Managing Director

Aharon Shamash, aharon.shamash@informa.com

#### VP, Marketing

Denise Rosplock, denise.roslock@informa.com

#### VP, Event Operations

Sharon Lalloway, sharon.lalloway@informa.com

#### Director of Finance

Shawn Merselis, shawn.merselis@informa.com

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# FROM THE EDITORS

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**MIKE BUZALKA**  
Executive editor

## OVERHEARD

*“A big part of our program is that we sign a service level agreement with the school [that requires them] to provide us with a certain amount of time for the students to eat.”*

— BENJAMIN FREEDMAN, PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOLS  
READ MORE ON PAGE 32.

## MEETING THE EXTERNAL THREAT

**T**his month's cover feature deals with a topic many *FM* readers must confront—competition from the outside. Traditionally, onsite foodservice held its own against offsite competitors because it was cheap, convenient and filling, and customer expectations were low.

Obviously, that's no longer the case. Not only are your customers regularly leaving your premises to patronize nearby eateries—when they're not bringing in gourmet packaged meals they bought in grocery stores—but also a growing number of those outside establishments are coming into *YOUR* house with their food through remote-order/delivery services made easy to use with mobile apps.

How to fight back?

We've found a whole range of strategies, from simply competing head-on with matching price and quality offerings—an expensive proposition not for everyone—to “if you can't beat 'em, join 'em” gambits that bring external restaurant brands in-house or, in the case of some universities, extending meal plans to cover select outside restaurants so the campus dining program at least gets to share some of the dollars spent outside.

In fact, the whole experience of looking at this issue reinforced for me the resilience and ingenuity of the onsite dining community, because there are plenty of examples of operators successfully meeting the external challenge in all sorts of creative ways.

Some are embracing new technologies such as remote ordering, something I expect will boom in our industry over the coming years, certainly in colleges, B&I and hospitals but even in K-12. Closely allied with remote ordering is delivery, which a number of venues have tested, though with mixed results so far.

But perhaps the most interesting—if brazen—response has been from those operators who are going on offense by themselves competing for outside business. While some of this has traditionally gone on in the catering area, new avenues seem to be opening up, such as a B&I dining operation that externally markets its own brand of spice rubs, or the hospital café that has a booming delivery business to customers off the hospital's premises for its line of freshly prepared, healthy meal and beverage choices.

External competitors may have some advantages, but so do you. Use them.



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COVER PHOTO: LOOOBY/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS



# GRAB AND GO

QUICK LOOKS AND TIPS TO STEAL

## THE FRUITS OF COMPETITION

Renaissance Charter School found that turning fresh produce sampling into a kind of popularity contest with kids voting on their favorite fruits and veggies made them much more likely to participate and also to encourage their peers to participate.



## ALLERGEN-FREE DC IS ALL-YOU-CARE-TO-EAT

Thrive is a unique all-you-care-to-eat dining center at Michigan State that only serves dishes that are free of the eight most common food allergens, plus gluten. Despite its allergen-free emphasis, Thrive also draws non-allergic students because it has developed a menu heavy on familiar-looking items.

## SOME REAL SMOOTHIE OPERATORS

The self-branded, scientifically themed Smoothie Lab gives Babson College Dining a unique brand complete with creatively named selections (Acai-tope, anyone? How about Bowl-tonium?) with which to compete against off-campus smoothie and acai bowl bars.



TOP: IDEABU/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS



## HAVE YOU TRIED AFGHAN FOOD?

At Stony Brook University Hospital's Market Place Café, guest chefs on a monthly basis set up shop, using the main kitchen as home base, then creating a one-of-a-kind action station for one day in the café. Last summer, one of the guest chefs was local restaurateur Zahra Mirzai of Choopan Grill of Selden on Long Island. She prepared halal ginger chicken naan wraps, a good representation of a cuisine with influences from all over the Middle East, Asia and beyond.

## Seen and Heard 2 TAKEAWAYS FROM AHF'S 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE



**Chris McCracken**, director of nutrition,  
UC San Diego Health Medical Centers

When we started looking at our food waste, we had to teach our cooks that they wouldn't get in trouble for overproduction. We had to create a culture of trust so we could make change.



**Dan Henroid**, director, department of  
nutrition and food services,  
UC San Francisco Health

When we started looking at waste, we also wanted to look into wasted money. One little thing was the coffee cup. I found we used 200,000 12-ounce cups a year. So we thought, could we use reusable cups?



## From Lima to Cambridge

With its exotic menu concept combining various proteins, grains and fried potatoes, the Peruvian themed Lomo Saltado has boosted participation numbers by a quarter at the Harvard Business School's action station where it appears quarterly.



## BOWLING 'EM OVER

Quinnipiac students overwhelmingly asked for a bowl concept to replace a tired Latin food station in the school's main dining facility, so Chartwells created the BowlLife build-your-own bowl concept. The result? A nearly 50% sales increase at the station.



Learn more about these ideas and get even more inspiration at [food-management.com](http://food-management.com).



## With hospital summer feeding program

In this month's podcast we talk with Andrew Bergman of ProHealth Care System in Wisconsin about starting a summer feeding program for the community's youth. **BY BECKY SCHILLING**



**ANDREW BERGMAN**

*Manager of food service,  
ProHealth Care System, Waukesha, Wis.*

Bergman was named the Future Horizon Award recipient for 2019 for the Association for Healthcare Foodservice (AHF).

**Tell us about  
your summer  
meal program.**

It's our second year and we work with our department of public instruction. During the summer months when students are out of school and they don't have access to nutritious meals we try to pick up that gap at our local hospitals. We offer nutritious boxed lunches whenever our café is open, 7 in the morning to 7:30 at night, every day of the week. The only thing you need to do is be a child ages 0-18 and show up and you'll get a free meal.

**How did you  
guys find out  
about the  
program?**

We found out about two years ago when we were at a local AHF meeting at UW Health in Madison and they had just instituted the program there. We were instantly interested in it because there's a huge need in our community.

**What steps did  
you take to get  
the program  
running?**

I had to fill out applications and go through training. I had to submit two weeks' worth of menus and have a site inspection from the department to look at our facility and monitor our food production to ensure that we were serving safe food and that we were serving food that fell within the USDA guidelines.

**Was it difficult to  
work within  
those guidelines?**

Absolutely not. We went above and beyond. For example, they said we could offer one serving of fruit or one serving of vegetables, but we decided that everybody loves fruits and vegetables so we're including both in the meal.

**What's a  
typical meal?**

Our meals come in a clear box. Every day is different. We offer servings of whole grains, fruit, vegetables and milk, which is a requirement for the meal. You can get a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and hummus and carrots to make sure you get that protein. Our most famous is ham and cheese, because what child doesn't like ham and cheese?

**Is this food you  
are already  
ordering?**

We figured the food we serve our patients is healthy enough to serve the students as well, so it's products we already have on hand. All of our meals are produced by one or two people in the department who produce meals for our Meals On Wheels program and our adult care population. We extended their hours by one hour each day. The labor balanced out so we didn't even have to pay any overtime. Every meal served to a child is reimbursed by the USDA. If there's a parent in line with a child, there are no questions asked. We serve them for free. We believe if you have a need, we're going to serve you.

**How did you get  
the word out  
about the  
program?**

This year we did a large kickoff event where the fire department and mayor showed up. We also served about 200 meals that day and because of that we've seen a huge increase in participation this year. Last year, our goal was to serve about 500 meals. We ended up serving 775 meals, about 1,500 pounds of food. This year we increased our outreach and are hoping to serve around 2,200 meals. **FM**

One On One is Food Management's podcast featuring an intimate conversation with an industry icon or thought leader. For more One On One interviews, visit [food-management.com/one-one](http://food-management.com/one-one).





## Aramark acquires food delivery firm

Fresh meal service currently operates in three markets in competition with on-campus dining operations. **BY MIKE BUZALKA**

ARAMARK HAS ANNOUNCED its acquisition of privately held Good Uncle, an app-based on-demand food delivery service operating in the college market that brings freshly prepared, restaurant-quality meals to conveniently located pickup points around campuses. Currently, Good Uncle operates in three markets: Syracuse (Syracuse University) and Hamilton (Colgate University), N.Y., and College Park, Md., (University of Maryland) whereas Aramark operates at more than 400 campuses nationwide.

Good Uncle's current model is based on delivering its own unique menu options—which emphasize fresh, healthy ingredients and fresh preparation—prepared in its own production kitchens to campuses in competition with existing campus dining offerings. How—or if—that approach will integrate with

Aramark-operated campus dining operations is yet to be determined, but in announcing the acquisition, Aramark did state that Good Uncle will operate independently and maintain its unique brand identity.

Launched in 2016 at Syracuse University, Good Uncle uses centralized production and a fleet of specially equipped vehicles to deliver its meals to popular spots on and off campus, including dorms, Greek chapter houses, study areas and off-campus apartment buildings.

Students sign up for a 15-week semester's worth of meals at a time and receive credits at the beginning of each week of the semester (except Thanksgiving in the fall and spring break in the spring), with unused credits rolling over week to week but needing to be used by semester's end.

## YOGURT GOES TO THE BOTS

Frozen yogurt is a healthy but delicious treat that appeals to just about everyone, except perhaps dining operators who have to keep the machinery clean and sanitary while allocating labor hours to serving it. None of that is a problem for the in-house dining team at Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) University Hospital in New Brunswick, N.J., thanks to an automated frozen yogurt “robot” installed three months ago that doles out servings of chocolate and strawberry frozen yogurt with a choice of half a dozen toppings such as chocolate and rainbow sprinkles, peanuts and Fruity Pebbles 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are two portion sizes, and each offers a choice of two of the available toppings.

“It's pretty much like a vending machine, but it's the coolest thing,” enthuses Tony Almeida, RWJ's director of food & nutrition.





## Domino's opens 'Innovation Garage' test lab

Pizza chain also rolling out e-bike delivery program nationwide.

BY JOANNA FANTOZZI

**T**ech-forward brand Domino's Pizza Inc. is opening an "Innovation Garage" at its headquarters in Ann Arbor, Mich., to test out delivery and in-store technology. Unlike a test kitchen, this 33,000-square-foot, two-story facility will not be open to the public, but it will still operate as a fully functioning Domino's pizza theater fitted with the brand's latest customer-facing technology like ordering kiosks, carryout trackers and GPS delivery tracking.

"As a pizza company with a focus on technology, we want our team members to have a workspace that encourages experimentation and fosters an environment to take risks, test innovations and fail fast so they can bring their best cutting-edge ideas to life for the brand's customers and stores," Kelly Garcia, Domino's chief technology officer, said in a press statement.

The Innovation Garage, which opened



The 33,000-square-foot, two-story Innovation Garage will work on customer-facing technology like autonomous delivery.

in August, is designed as an open-concept space for 150 employees with workspaces, meeting rooms and a separate space for delivery inventions.

Here, Domino's will continue testing its growing fleet of robot employees, like the R2 vehicle from robotics company Nuro, Domino's first completely unmanned autonomous delivery vehicle that will be tested out later this year, along with the constantly improving customer interface that will make ordering and receiving pizza from a robot easier than expected.

"Domino's previously tested autonomous pizza delivery with Ford, but in that case, a safety driver was always at the wheel of the car," company spokeswoman Dani Bulger says. "Testing the customer interface on autonomous pizza delivery vehicles entails everything from how customers are notified that the delivery vehicle is near to seeing how customers interact with the vehicles when they retrieve their order. We want to make the customer experience as simple and as friendly as possible, so that means gathering as many learnings as we can."

Since the Innovation Garage is not open

to the public, Domino's employees can use the space as a blank canvas to test out store layouts, different ways to order, and new customer-facing technology and interactions. Domino's would not elaborate much on future technologies beyond the previously announced R2 vehicle and such innovations as its recently announced e-bike program.

"Domino's will continue to focus on delivery excellence—by AVs, robots, e-bikes, etc.—and innovations that benefit customers and team members, like GPS delivery tracking, hotspots, ordering kiosks and DOM voice ordering technologies," Bulger says.

The national e-bike program will let delivery drivers choose a motorized e-bike rather than a car or a traditional bike to make their deliveries. The program, a partnership with Rad Power Bikes, was previously tested in Houston, Miami and New York.

The chain will roll out the bikes to corporate-owned stores in Miami, Salt Lake City, Baltimore and Houston later in 2019, while franchisees nationwide will have the option of buying the bikes. **FM**



Built for congested urban areas, the e-bikes can carry up to 12 large pizzas plus drinks and sides.



Opening the new fast-casual Mexican concept cost \$200,000 and involved construction in spring and summer of 2018.

## Campus dining triples sales with Mexican concept

Fairmont State University's Chilaca draws sales with customizable Mexican street food. **BY AMANDA MCCORQUODALE**

**C**hilaca is a long and curvy pepper that grows in Mexico. It's also an incredibly successful Mexican dining concept on the campus of Fairmont State University, home to 3,800 students in rural West Virginia. In fall 2018, Chilaca replaced an Asian concept in the school's student union and in the months since, business has more than tripled in the new space. "When we began monitoring Chilaca's performance against the dining concept it replaced," says Stacy Wiroll, a corporate chef in Elor North America's Culinary Program Development, "we found an average projected revenue of \$250,000 annually compared to \$70,000 per year at the previous concept."

Fairmont State reached out to Elor to develop the new concept after polling its student population about what they

wished for in a new on-campus dining location. "It wasn't that the existing concept wasn't doing well but that the school wanted to put something in that was new and exciting," says Wiroll. The students overwhelmingly asked for Mexican.

Wiroll reasons that Mexican fare is so popular because it's a type of food that everyone is familiar with that also offers many ways to showcase a variety of vibrant, interesting flavors and ingredients. "Many of the students grew up with a taco night," she continues, "and with Chilaca, we're able to upgrade on that culinary memory by offering authentic and exciting ingredient choices."

Chilaca, positioned in the university's Falcon Center dining hall, offers a customizable fast-casual experience that gives a unique option to typical food court choices. Guests have the option of

a burrito, tacos, salad, or a rice or nacho bowl. Next, they pick a main filling—cilantro lime chicken, conchita pork pibil, beef picadillo, tofu or fajita vegetable—as well as secondary fillings (e.g. corn, peppers and jicama root) and add-ins such as guacamole, queso and a creamy chipotle adobo sauce. The concept is open Sunday through Friday for lunch and dinner. The food is prepped in the central kitchen before being delivered to Chilaca where guests have the chance to have their tacos and bowls built to order, which helps cater to dietary restrictions.

"Tacos have been our No. 1 seller," says Wiroll, "along with the pork pibil, a Mexican-style pulled pork that has been marinated with fresh-peeled garlic, lime and orange juice and achiote paste, then seasoned with cumin, cinnamon and black pepper. It's something you don't



see every day at a fast-casual concept.”

Part of delivering more enticing food options to students was making sure the concept also stood out in its appearance and branding. “Just as the menu is inspired by Mexican street food, the interior design takes inspiration from a street vendor’s aesthetic,” she

says. “There’s a street art-style mural on the wall and most of the surfaces are polished but unfinished such as the concrete countertops and panels of corrugated metal.”

The fast-casual concept averages \$6.35 per transaction, she says, with about 1,230 transactions per week. In

2018, 8,552 customers visited Chilaca compared to just over 4,700 visitors in 2017 when the previous concept was in that space in the dining hall.

In fact, Chilaca has been such a success that Elior is opening another one at Albany State this fall with plans in progress for a third at Bowie State University.

## What’s the carbon footprint of your menu?

Michigan Dining develops carbon scale tool to assess menu items’ greenhouse gas emissions, further understanding of our food and climate change. **BY TARA FITZPATRICK**

**M**ost of those in the foodservice industry have a bit of knowledge about how carbon footprints relate to food. But there are misconceptions. For one, measuring carbon footprints/greenhouse gas emissions is about much more than focusing on the trucks that bring the food. It starts further back than that, looking at the impact of such things as feed and fertilizer.

When looking at say, a sandwich, scientists can trace each ingredient to the amount of carbon it’s using in the form of fuel, put back into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, adding up to bad news for our planet. To better understand the concept, check out this video from NPR [youtube.com/watch?v=jRQEI-C5GDg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRQEI-C5GDg).

At the University of Michigan, dining’s sustainability team, with the help of Dr. Martin Heller, a research specialist from the university, has created a decision tree that sorts menu items into a scale from low to high carbon impacts. The tree helps the team understand how much a menu item contributes to climate change. Depending upon the way different food items are produced, and the energy and resources required for their production, the greenhouse gas emissions from different food items can vary significantly.

The dining team has found that while it’s good to source local food for lots of reasons, it’s not a deciding factor in reducing the carbon footprint.

“Whether it’s an apple from California or from Michigan, in the grand scheme, that’s not as important. From a carbon emissions standpoint, most of that is coming in before that product leaves the farm or factory,” says Alex Bryan, sustain-



Michigan Dining is looking at carbon as a determinant for menu development.

able program lead at MDining. “It’s really farm operations, growing the feed, using fertilizers and cow methane. That’s where we find there’s a pretty significant carbon impact.”

For the past year, dining has been gathering data in a pilot program and bringing students into the action through digital signage, social media and publishing a white paper this fall.

“We now have data [from last year] to back it up that this has a big impact and we can make a real change, so we’ll start to lean into it more and start messaging more,” Bryan says. “We want to educate our customers, just like putting calorie counts out there, we can get them excited about understanding the complexity of tracking greenhouse gas.”

Cutting through that complexity, Bryan and the team have found several key takeaways about carbon footprints to simplify

menu planning choices:

- **Plants have a lower carbon impact than animal products.** Raising livestock, especially ruminant animals (beef, lamb, goat) is associated with high amounts of greenhouse gas emissions;

- **Using more fish and seafood** (focusing on fish that are lower on the food chain) is a good rule;

- **Treat meat and cheese as condiments** and make plant-based ingredients the centerpiece of the meal; and

- **Beans, legumes, pulses and whole grains** are all generally great for reducing carbon impact.

Bryan hopes that the white paper and the overall experience will help other universities with their own carbon footprints.

“Climate change is already impacting our lives,” Bryan says. “So, it’s crucial that we understand the carbon emissions associated with the food we purchase.”

# Organic c-store replaces deli in university res hall

SUNY New Paltz venue offers a unique dining option that serves as a destination for health- and diet-conscious students from across campus. **BY MIKE BUZALKA**

**T**he Roost is the only food venue on the SUNY New Paltz campus located inside a residence hall. Opened four years ago as a New York-style deli concept, it had difficulty attracting customers because of its location away from classrooms and because it wasn't distinctive enough to encourage students to come over if they weren't already nearby.

Last summer, a move was made by the university and its dining services provider Sodexo Campus Services to change that by converting the Roost into an organic c-store open seven days a week.

"It can easily target resident students," explains Sodexo marketing specialist Rachel Tantillo, "but we have to work hard to bring in off-campus students as well as

other customers such as commuters, staff and faculty who could take advantage of the offerings."

Student feedback data indicated that students wanted to see more healthy and accessible options for food and were willing to have the option to pay more for higher-quality food and snacks.

"We had this space that was serving the same purpose as other locations on campus, so we thought we could reimagine it to provide the students what they were asking for," Tantillo explains. "The rebranding also allowed us to offer new and exciting things that would give people a reason to walk to this location."

The renovation and rebranding has allowed Sodexo to stress the healthy, organic, vegan and gluten-free options

**"WE GAVE STUDENTS A REASON TO VISIT US WEEKLY AND HAD TO WIN OVER THE STUDENTS WHO DIDN'T LIKE THE CHANGES."**



Fresh organic choices are a differentiating characteristic of the newly rebranded Roost.



Sitting inside a res hall and away from classrooms, the Roost has to give customers not living nearby a reason to come there.

available at Roost to draw a distinction with the food served elsewhere on campus, she notes. "While we want to offer something that all students would love here, we target those who are health-conscious, environmentally-conscious and have dietary restrictions."

Converting the deli into a c-store required a minimal investment because the space in which it sits was designed as a dining space from the beginning; so the update only required minor changes from the original concept, such as removing seating and putting up more shelves.

Challenges included not only the difficulty of getting students to walk to a side of campus with no classrooms, only three residence halls, but also, once the change was made, to placate students who missed the original Roost concept. This was tackled through a combination of relentless marketing and the building of a strong new identity for The Roost.

"We gave students a reason to visit us weekly and had to win over the students who didn't like the changes," Tantillo says. "It was therefore important to tell the story of why this change had to happen and why it is good."

This seems to have paid off as, for example, many unique items there continue to be sold at a rapid pace because they fulfill specific customer needs and desires, and customer feedback and sales figures indicate that many appreciate the changes. **FM**



## K-12 foodservice team now feeding seniors

Seniors in close-knit California community get access to great meals, important social time through efforts of school district. **BY TARA FITZPATRICK**



The foodservice team from Newman-Crows Landing is now feeding seniors in the district's senior education center, and it's a way for seniors to socialize, a vital element in aging well.

Since 2008, the Newman-Crows Landing (Calif.) Unified School District (NCLUSD) has been home to the McConnell Adult Education Center. And just recently, the district's foodservice team has taken over feeding the seniors.

"We felt we could provide a better experience" to the meal component of the senior program, which is under the Congregate Meal Program, administered by the Stanislaus County Agency on Aging, says Caralyn Mendoza, chief business official with NCLUSD, who oversees the nutrition services department.

According to local newspaper editor Dean Harris of *The West Side Index*, the new dining setup is beneficial to the seniors in this tightly knit community.

"The seniors gave high marks to the food program, which is now operated by NCLUSD nutrition services department," Harris writes. "I have to say that my school lunches never looked as good as what they were serving...I really

also enjoyed the social aspect of the gatherings."

Harris noted that coffee is out when the room opens at 10 a.m., "and folks are welcome to come and visit and play cards while they wait for the 11 a.m. lunch. That's a hugely important component, as is providing seniors with access to sound nutrition."

The school had to wait for a grant cycle to come up in order to apply, and at first, the application wasn't approved by the county, citing not enough resources. The district serves about 4,100 meals per day, including a second-chance breakfast and a weekend wellness program, and Mendoza insisted that the resources to feed seniors were there, too.

"It's a natural extension of what we already do. Part of the reason we could do this program is because we have enough production staff and a person who can monitor when they are here already on staff," Mendoza says. "It isn't a huge stretch to add 15 to 20 meals a day

to what we are already doing."

Met with resistance, "we asked our county supervisor to intervene on our behalf," Mendoza says. "They wanted to award the contract to a group to come from over 30 miles away, to be pre-packaged and reheated."

The district's solution was to do bulk meals, Mendoza says. "We plate them onsite as they come in." Plus, "our facility is our elementary school across the parking lot."

The proximity and the district's commitment to chasing down the grant led to the application's approval, and the program to feed seniors officially launched in July. Already, "the feedback has been tremendous," Mendoza says. "They are happy with the food choices, the available fresh fruit and the décor."

The funding for the program is a little different from NSLP, Mendoza explains, in that the county applies for funding for the entire county, and funds are allocated based on past participation. The reimbursement rate is \$5.50 per meal, and there is a \$3 suggested donation per meal.

"We're funded for 17 meals per day on average," Mendoza says. "Our first day we did 19, although Tuesdays and Thursdays are lower because there's no exercise class." Still, on days that had been averaging just five meals are now up to 10.

To increase participation further, the district recently hosted a senior awareness event, with a lunch preview for about 100 seniors. Menus are printed in the weekly paper and alerts are going out in church bulletins.

"For this program, it's not only about the food," Mendoza says. "It's about the social experience that goes with it. We wanted to create a space where they felt welcome and looked forward to it."

# Leaving federal school lunch program benefits high school

Cape Elizabeth High School dropped out of the National School Lunch Program last spring and is now seeing a bump in meal counts.

BY MIKE BUZALKA

**T**he federal National School Lunch (NSLP) and National School Breakfast (NSBP) Programs are the bedrock foundations of most K-12 school meal programs, which is why the vast majority of public school districts in the country participate, accepting the restrictions and mandates in exchange for meal subsidies and free commodities.

But if a school or district has only a negligible proportion of its enrollment eligible for meal subsidies, the advantages diminish and it may find it can do better on its own, free of the federal restrictions.

That has so far been the case for Cape Elizabeth High School in Maine, which left the federal meal programs last fall.

"We had quite a large participation that started to dwindle down after the new regulations [mandated by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2012] kicked in," explains Peter Esposito, school nutrition director for the Cape Elizabeth and Scarborough School Departments. "We tried to do different things to keep within the guidelines, but our students are at an



Students "can get pretty much any vegetable they can think of off our salad bar," says Dining Director Peter Esposito.

this move because only about 3% of its enrollment of around 550 qualify for NSLP subsidies—and most of them weren't getting the subsidized meals regularly anyway, Esposito says—so it made sense for the meal program to simply continue subsidizing meals for those few students out of its proceeds while modifying its offerings to generate more sales.

Participation has indeed jumped since the program went non-NSLP, by over 100 meals a month, which works out to about \$12,000 in added revenue each month.

Among items Esposito is now able to serve is pizza made with standard dough.

been staples of the modified program, with encouraging results.

"For some reason, [students] seem to get a bigger kick out of that and it has expanded the meal counts," Esposito reports. "Kids these days have trained palates—they go out to restaurants, they know what good food tastes like so if we take that all away—especially at the high school level—they're just not going to eat it."

However desirable customization is, the realities of short high school lunch periods also dictate that plenty of premade grab-and-go choices are stocked so kids can also get something quickly.

In another attempt to deal with the short time windows, Esposito says he is looking at testing an online preorder option that would let seniors and staffers place orders ready for pickup.

Another popular menu change involved that morning staple, bagels. "They weren't buying almost any bagels [before] because we had the 2-ounce, whole-grain bagel and kids were [instead] stopping at the corner bakery to get bagels and it was just ruining our business," Esposito explains.

Now, breakfast sales have followed lunch sales on its upward course. **FM**

## PARTICIPATION HAS INDEED JUMPED SINCE THE PROGRAM WENT NON-NSLP, BY OVER 100 MEALS A MONTH.

age where they are going to be going to college and [they wanted to] make their own choices, so we ran with that."

The school board agreed with the decision to leave NSLP, and Cape Elizabeth High embarked on its new course last November. Nearby Scarborough High School, where Esposito also oversees the meal program, is following the same course starting this fall.

Cape Elizabeth was able to make

"Before, we had done specialty pizzas, but the high school kids just didn't like the whole-grain dough because they were used to the pizza they could get outside," Esposito says. "Now we can do different doughs with our specialty pizzas and also regular pastas."

Special events have also been added, like a cafeteria staffer rolling sushi.

Customization and self-service similar to what many colleges now offer have





Morrison Healthcare's Central Table operates more like a fast-casual restaurant than a traditional cafeteria.

## A hospital restaurant competes beyond the four walls

Central Table's simple model proves that healthy dining can have broad appeal. **BY MEGAN ROWE**

**C**entral Table Café looks and feels like a standalone restaurant—one that just happens to be in a hospital.

Actually, three hospitals, with more on the way. Morrison Healthcare's answer to demand for a health- and wellness-centered product, Central Table is up and running in three locations: Regional Health Orthopedic & Specialty Hospital in Rapid City, S.D.; Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla.; and University of Miami Health System in Miami. Two more are in the pipeline.

The cafés, with a plant-forward menu, sustainable and efficient operations, minimal labor and infrastructure requirements and a design modeled on a commercial fast-casual restaurant, have won over patients, visitors and Morrison's healthcare clients—along with the general public.

Because they tend to operate in satellite markets—away from a main hospital campus, with few options for healthy fare, Central Table sites also draw in guests from beyond the four walls of the facility.

The Rapid City site, for example, is adjacent to a hotel and office buildings, which have fed traffic into the restaurant.

Since opening last January in Rapid City, for example, that strong response has resulted in sales 144% ahead of projections.

Menu choices at Central Table, while streamlined, offer enough variety to appeal to a broad base. It's a mix of oatmeal, greens, noodle and grain bowls along with smoothies, soups, salads and folded flatbreads, with flatbreads and a Southwestern-style bowl leading in orders. Bone broth and vegetable broth are available throughout the day.

The Rapid City location caters to a lot of orthopedic rehab patients—many of them athletes—so it's logical that the menu stresses protein. "Add a protein" options for salads and bowls include braised pork or beef, grilled chicken, roasted turkey, vegan sausage, bacon, turkey bacon, egg or hummus. Whey powder, almond butter, spinach, flax and other seeds can be blended into smoothies.

Each location has the same core menu, with some nods to the local preferences. In Miami, café con leche and Cuban toast are a breakfast special, Cuban bread is an option for the flatbreads and Latin chicken soup is a choice. The Rapid City operation has partnered to buy locally butchered beef from a cattle supplier that specializes in animals with a smaller frame, lower weight and lower carbon footprint than conventional cattle.

The menu is deliberately simple and can be executed with minimal equipment. About 35 ingredients can be combined for 20 or more build-your-own variations on entrées. The concept "is self-contained," adds Pete McQuiston, senior director of food and nutrition for Rapid City Regional Health, Morrison Healthcare. The menu can be produced using induction burners, ventless ovens, juicers, blenders and an egg cooker. Because there is no grease and no hood, the cost to build out a space is about \$1.4 million.

# Hospital's new market focuses on people, the planet

Spectrum Health's Michigan Street Market engages community, serves Butterworth Hospital with a sleek design, fresh produce mini market, local sandwiches and sushi, fresh smoothies, house-smoked meats and more.

BY TARA FITZPATRICK

**T**he main cafeteria at Butterworth Hospital, in Grand Rapids, Mich., had, up until recently, been nothing more than that: a hospital cafeteria, last updated sometime while Reagan was president.

But the Spectrum Health foodservice team had a better vision in mind as a slow-moving renovation finally began to take shape. The same space now has a whole new community-focused vibe, along with added features that have made guests' food choices fresher than ever.

Kevin Vos, senior director of hospitality support services for Spectrum Health, says the renovation project actually started with a hospitalwide move to the room service model about 10 years ago; the past seven years have been major kitchen overhauls, moving slowly and forcing the foodservice team to face the challenge of temporary operations and a return to a central kitchen and limited menus, precisely what room service had been getting away from. But it all came to fruition with the completion of the new kitchens and the opening of the Michigan Street Market and Grill a few months ago.

The Market is now the main food hub in the central lobby of the three-tower hospital campus, with as many as 10,000 people walking through every day. There



The Michigan Street Market's new chef, Mick Rickerd, brings culinary expertise and connections with local farmers and businesses.

are thousands of hospital staff working in the building as well.

This has been the Spectrum Health's team's way to show off what Vos calls "upping our game."

That game plan started with an open kitchen, rather than closed-off space, allowing the serving area to become more spacious. Traditional large-scale production has been replaced with an of-the-moment setup: fresh farmers' market/grilled-to-order food.

"From the start, our mission statement

for the grill is to prepare whole foods sourced locally and prepared fresh daily to provide nourishment for the body, mind and community," Vos says. "We hired a new chef, Mick Rickerd, and he has relationships with local farms and vendors."

The market is focused on purchasing local produce and ingredients, now working with a collective that comprises 120 local farms and businesses, including Ingraberg Farms, Tolman's Meats, Kind Crumbs Bakery, Field and Fire Bread and Ana Sushi, an immigrant-owned sushi company.

The partnership has already had a positive impact on the local businesses involved, Vos says.

"To date, we've sold about 21,000 trays of sushi, which has led to Ana increasing her staff," he says. "We've been able to see the impact."

The impact is there for Spectrum Health, as well, with about 5,000 average transactions per day Monday through Friday with a drop-off on weekends. That's a 27% increase over the same sales period last year. Lunch alone has seen an increase of 49% in people served. And 34 new employees were hired to work at the market, funneling \$495,000 in annual wages back into the community. Vos says



Borrowing a page from upscale grocery stores, the Michigan Street Market greets customers with rows of gorgeous farm-fresh produce.



the market is on track for annual revenue of about \$9 million.

And of course there is the impact on those who are eating there. The most popular food item at the old cafeteria was chicken fingers. Now, Vos says, it's the salad bar, the Green BEET, which consists of a traditional make-your-own salad line on one side, and a variety of composed grain salads on the other side.

The move away from chicken fingers (which have plummeted down to 12<sup>th</sup> place in top selling items) surprised him, Vos says.

"I really do think the market has changed the conversation around food," he says, adding that meat portions have gone down from 5 to 7 ounces to 3 ounces for any given item and there are more vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free choices than ever before.

Another big hit has been smoked local meats, made in a smoker that's working almost around the clock to keep up with demand. A new smoker could be on the list very soon, Vos says. The meats are turned into sandwiches at a Panera-style grill area (Vos' favorite sandwich is a riff

on the Reuben). There's also an international concept, Heirloom, where staff members are sharing their family recipes. A juice concept offers quick liquid meals and when you first walk into the market, fresh produce is available, too, setting the tone for the place.

Rickerd says he found a quote once on a restaurant wall that sums up his attitude about this new market: "People matter most, local is a priority, seasonal makes sense, authenticity rules, quality grows, delicious triumphs, pretense loses, comfort feels good."

## DoorDash assists hospital's food recovery efforts

University of California-San Francisco Health contracts with a local leftover food pickup service called Copia that uses notable commercial meal delivery concerns as pickup options. **BY MIKE BUZALKA**



Onna Lee, patient food services supervisor, and DJ Santos, retail chef, UCSF Health Nutrition and Food Services, prepare leftovers to be picked up by their food recovery service.

**T**he state of California is on the forefront of dealing with recycling and food waste issues, efforts that are pursued even more vigorously by some localities such as San Francisco.

That is particularly relevant to the University of California-San Francisco

Health (UCSF), as this summer the city put into effect a regulation requiring companies like UCSF to divert organic waste and recyclable materials from landfills. Coming next year is a state mandate that will require UCSF to begin implementing programs that will allow it to recover 20% of edible food waste by 2025.

The facility is getting a jump on all this with a food recovery program that uses a local non-profit called Copia to collect its unused but edible food and deliver it to various social service venues. While food recovery isn't unusual, Copia's approach to pickup and delivery is.

"When they [Copia] first started, they were hiring their own drivers and trying to coordinate all the logistics," explains Dan Henroid, director of nutrition & food services for UCSF Health, "but they realized pretty quickly that they couldn't scale the business [doing it that way] so they started contracting with services like DoorDash."

The way it works at UCSF is that a driver comes and picks up edible leftover food each day so that the volumes remain manageable for a standard passenger car, though an effort is made by the service to send larger vehicles if possible. The food has already been blast-chilled and pack-

aged, usually in covered aluminum pans.

It is then delivered to social service venues like a Ronald McDonald House, an addiction recovery organization called Teen Challenge and various halfway houses.

"Our biggest challenge is that because they use a service like DoorDash, you don't always get the same driver," quips Henroid, who says that UCSF had turned to Copia several years ago after using another service that focused on waste reduction rather than recovery.

"At the end of the day, even if I'm making reductions in [organic waste], I still got it, so what do I do with it," he asks rhetorically, "so we made a conscious decision to go to a food recovery service."

Copia not only puts unused food to good social use in an efficient way but also generates reports detailing not just how much food was recovered and donated but also what that means in terms of environmental impact such as gallons of water saved and pounds of carbon dioxide not emitted. It also facilitates communications between UCSF and the recipients of its excess production, Henroid adds.

"They do a pretty good job of not only helping us understand where the food is going but what they do with it," he notes. He cites oatmeal as an example. The medical center had been donating unconsumed production of that breakfast staple early on but conversations with cooks on the receiving end pretty soon revealed that it wasn't very usable, so it's no longer sent. **FM**

# BEATING THE STREET

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ONSITE OPERATORS ARE **FEELING THE HEAT** FROM OFF-SITE COMPETITORS TARGETING THEIR CUSTOMERS, **BUT SOME ARE FINDING WAYS TO BATTLE BACK.**

BY MIKE BUZALKA

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With gourmet and exotic fare now widely available for delivery from restaurants with only a few taps on a smartphone, and an array of premium frozen or shelf-stable packaged foods available from just about any retail grocery store for consumers to bring to work or school, onsite operators are feeling the heat from external competitors.

So how do they respond to these encroachments onto their turf? **Here are seven ways.**



### CO-OPTING THE COMPETITION

Some colleges make peace with at least some of their competitors by incorporating them into their meal plans, but few schools have gone further to accommodate off-campus competitors than Duke University, where a rotation of independent food trucks and delivery options from off-campus commercial restaurants is allowed to operate during the evening and late-night hours and gets paid through Duke's Merchant on Points program, which allows students to use their meal plan points for these purchases.

These options remain "a strong enhanced supplemental part of dining program," says Robert Coffey, director of dining services. "With ongoing renovations with additional residential buildings, we are developing new locations for the food trucks to rotate and better serve the students," he adds.

### DELIVERING CONVENIENCE

As remote ordering and food delivery expands in the broad commercial restaurant market, they are also appearing in more onsite operations as a necessary competitive response. That's true even in K-12, where remote ordering is seen not just as a way to capture business lost to nearby c-stores and QSRs but also as a way to efficiently offer customized meals within the narrow time windows imposed by school lunch schedules.

"I really feel like that's the way retail is going—you can order your McDonald's food online now and someone will bring it out to your car," explains Catherine Beam, executive director of school nutrition services for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina. "That's what our kids are used to in the real world, and we're trying to see if we can make that work for us in school."

Beam rolled out a remote order option at one of her district's CEP high school sites last November as a pilot to test its impact on meal participation and is continuing it this fall. In fact, she says she plans to expand the service in October to a second district high school that isn't CEP, "so we can work out payment issues with the software vendors."

On the corporate dining side, a survey of 1,500 U.K. and U.S. employees earlier

this year found that the vast majorities of respondents in both countries said they would substantially increase their patronage of onsite dining options if mobile ordering were available.

That's a strategy the Best Concept Award-winning in-house dining opera-

tion at the Citi global headquarters in New York City (see the July/August issue) already offers at its deli, where remote-ordered meals can be picked up in a high-tech vending machine at any time, meeting the challenge of external competitors with longer operating hours.



Conveniently packaged premium meal options like these "salads in a jar" can now be made easily available through high-tech "smart" fridge vending machines from vendors like Farmer's Fridge.



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools recently experimented with preorders at one of its high schools, because "that's what our kids are used to in the real world," says Executive Director Catherine Beam.



## WELCOME TO THE MACHINES

Sophisticated vending machines or so-called “smart fridges” like the one at Citi allow onsite dining programs at both businesses and institutions to extend service hours cost-effectively while providing high-quality meal choices that rival external options. And unlike traditional 24-hour unmanned micromarkets, they require only minimal footprints and basic utility hookups and don’t need to be in secure, restricted-access locations.

They can also be more flexible. For instance, “smart” fridge units from West Coast-based vendor Byte Technology not only stock a widely diverse array of fresh meal solutions but also dinner meal kits of the type marketed by companies like Blue Apron and HelloFresh, which not only helps retain more in-house business during the day but can even capture some dinner business as well. Byte already has licensing deals with major contractors like Aramark, Sodexo and Canteen, which will help take the technology national.

## TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY

Poaching dinner business traditionally surrendered to commercial providers lets some onsite operators compete with the street through a kind of behind-the-enemy-lines excursion. Others open their



“Smart” fridge units from vendor Byte Technology stock not only fresh meal solutions but even dinner meal kits that can help an operation capture some off-site as well as onsite meal business.

cafés to street business, hoping to offset—or better—the business their internal customers take to outside restaurants.

Some operators are even looking at branding their own products and selling them externally.

For example, the in-house dining program at Sam’s Club in Bentonville, Ark., markets a commercially available line of spice rubs developed by Executive Chef Daniel Concepcion.

“I hooked up with a spice company called Spiceology,” he says. “I sent them recipes and they created a customized rub product for us that is now on the market and sold [both] independently here

and on their website.”

The commercial product not only generates extra revenue but also elevates the status of the in-house dining program in customers’ eyes, Concepcion notes. “Part of my goal here is to change the way people think of corporate dining, so that it’s not just grilled cheese and burgers.”

Remote ordering and delivery are other avenues that can extend an in-house foodservice to external customers.

For example, the Fresh Healthy Café (FHC) unit at St. Francis Medical Center in Missouri not only offers preorder and delivery internally but also has a growing offsite business through an external



The Fresh Healthy Café at St. Francis Medical Center does a robust delivery business with customers outside the hospital grounds.



delivery service called CarGo, which is “booming,” reports FHC Co-owner Rick Hetzel. “CarGo delivery continues to grow and has become very popular with our customers, [so] we have recently added another delivery contractor, Waitr.”

### DELIVERY

Operators also continue to experiment with meal delivery as a way to reach more internal customers.

For example, Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center last year launched a remote order/delivery service in a surgical waiting area that allows families awaiting results of procedures to order and get food without leaving. More recently, it opened a kiosk delivery site for one of its support buildings where customers can place a food order and self-shop for chips, beverages, etc., while their order is prepared. “Now that we have that up and running we will be working to launch [an] additional kiosk in the [Women and Infants unit] patient area with delivery,” says Mike Folino, associate director of nutrition services.

Food delivery is definitely a growing trend on college campuses as 39% of college students now expect delivery in under one hour, according to research

cited by Chartwells Higher Education. Chartwells recently expanded the popular on-demand food delivery program it piloted early this year at the University of Houston (UH) to additional retail concepts and more delivery locations.

“We look forward to expanding this delivery concept to other campuses around the country,” says Vice President of Marketing and Communications Salli Darden. “The model tested and created by the University of Houston dining team is flexible and nimble enough to execute on campuses of all sizes and needs.”

### RECOGNIZABLE QUALITY

Perhaps the simplest answer to external competition is to offer choices that equal or better what can be found on the street. That’s the approach used by Manhattan-based Citi, where an eye-popping food hall deploys concepts designed specifically to mirror the most popular venues located nearby, and often do them at least one better.

“If we wanted our colleagues to stay in the building, we had to compete—we had to beat these [nearby] restaurants at their own game,” explained Jessica Fink, marketing and hospitality manager for Citi’s

dining contractor Restaurant Associates.

Of course, few organizations can afford the massive financial and infrastructure commitment Citi made to its in-house dining program, but there are alternatives. In the challenging downtown Chicago market, the management at the multi-tenant AMA Plaza engaged a firm called Fooda to bring outside restaurant brands on a rotating basis to its hot food station to provide variety cost-effectively while leveraging the equity of established brands, especially local ones.

A similar strategy is pursued by FoodWorks, a division of Compass Group that now has several hundred partnerships with local restaurants, which it deploys into client sites on a rotating basis. FoodWorks’ clientele includes not just businesses but also institutions like Northwestern University and Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago.

FoodWorks launched last year in Chicago but “it’s growing so fast we’re just trying to keep up with the demand,” says FoodWorks President James Kallas. “We’re in 20 markets now, but we’ll probably be in 30 by the end of our fiscal year.”

Of course, leveraging the market equity of recognized commercial restaurant con-



Services like FoodWorks bring commercial restaurant concepts into onsite cafés, leveraging their brand cache to benefit the in-house dining operation.





Sam's Club brands its own spice rubs, which are sold commercially to external customers.

cepts has long been a way for onsite dining providers to compete with the street, but today, these licensing liaisons are moving past broad-market QSRs to more specialized concepts.

For example, Sodexo has in recent years shifted its commercial brand portfolio from an emphasis on national brands to a mix of national and regional, up-and-coming brands in order to appeal to customer preferences for more challenging culinary adventures.

"Things that 20 years ago were exotic are now commonplace and we want to make sure we're staying on top of those trends," explains Don Wood, who heads up national brand partnerships for Sodexo.

#### OUTSIDE HELP?

Popular commercial restaurant brands may work in most onsite environments but, minus a few exceptions such as pizza chains that have modified their products to fit NSLP restrictions, they have limited application to the K-12 environment, at least those participating in federal meal programs—one reason why a few K-12 schools that can afford to do so have met the offsite competition challenge by freeing themselves of federal school meal regulations and withdrawing from the program.

But for the vast majority of schools, that's not a viable option, so they work to produce dishes that meet both federal guidelines and student preferences (and financial limitations). To capture more high schoolers, some are turning to intercept strategies like kiosks and even food trucks in parking lots to waylay



Contractors like Sodexo are reaching beyond mass market QSR brands to more specialized chain concepts like Firehouse Subs to better appeal to in-house customers.



The Food2You late-night campus meal delivery service at Oregon State has been successfully operating for four years now, bringing pizza, salads and other fare directly to dorm rooms.

teens coming to school in the morning or heading to their cars at lunchtime if they have an open campus.

The School District of Palm Beach County in Florida has seen significant early success by renovating all its high school cafeterias into food courts filled with branded station concepts that mimic mall food courts (for more, see p. 32).

Another possible solution for some districts is an emerging industry of external meal providers that work with parents

and districts to deliver appealing but federal-compliant meals to schools. The most prominent is Revolution Foods, which has contracted with major districts like Oakland and Boston, but there are other smaller vendors offering this type of service in some local markets, such as Chefables in San Francisco and Red Rabbit in New York City. Both work with districts to allow parents to preorder National School Lunch program-compliant (and therefore reimbursable) lunches that are then delivered to the schools. **FM**





# GOING COMMERCIAL

A long-term renovation initiative is transforming dining areas in Palm Beach County Schools sites into food court-style spaces that attract teens. **BY MIKE BUZALKA**

**T**he High School Reengineering Program (HSRP) in Palm Beach County Schools (PBCS) in Florida seeks to transform the cafeterias in the district's high schools into the kinds of commercial-type food court venues that their teen customers regularly frequent when they're not in school.

The renovations concentrate on upgrading the serving and seating areas, though some also get upgrades in the back of house, primarily through adding more prep tables and prep space in the kitchen, says Benjamin Freedman, senior projects coordinator for Palm Beach County Schools Food Service. "In some we also put in an extra walk-in freezer," he adds.

However, "it's more about changing the look of the serving lines from that institutional look with the ceramic tile and mica counters to a much more sleek modern look, like what you would see in a college or a mall."

The overall cafeteria footprint doesn't change in most cases, though it may be reconfigured by adding walls to separate different parts of the venue. The renovations do all include the installation of five self-developed dining concepts to better evoke a food court

ambiance in terms of layout, as well as to provide meal choices that resemble the kind of options a commercial food court would serve.

Those concepts are:

**CAFÉ SOL Y MAR** (the most popular), which menus items like grilled chicken quesadillas, mojo pork and cheesy chorizo;

**ASIAN XPERIENCE**, with a menu offering items such as teriyaki chicken, Szechuan beef, "fried" rice and sweet & spicy Thai broccoli;

**BEYOND BURGERS**, with offerings ranging from housemade flatbread pizzas and spicy chicken sandwiches to barbecue pulled pork and Philly cheesesteak;

**THE GOURMET DELI**, offering freshly made wraps, subs, salads and parfaits; and

**FRESH & FAST**, the program's "greatest hits" concept that sells grab-and-go versions of popular selections from the other concepts.

Every serving line is reimbursable and available to every student, Freedman emphasizes, "so you don't have a situation

## IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

**"Our lowest increase school still serves 170 more meals a day than before the program."**

—BENJAMIN FREEDMAN

**34%**  
INCREASE  
of lunch participation in the converted high schools.

**2,000**  
MEALS A DAY  
the amount of meals our busiest school serves

where free/reduced kids go to one place while the paid kids go to a la carte line.”

### SEEING RESULTS

The renovations completed so far have produced impressive results, with the converted high schools sustaining an average 34% increase in lunch participation. “Our lowest increase school still serves 170 more meals a day than before the program,” Freedman offers, and “our busiest school serves over 2,000 meals a day.”

Those elevated participation bumps are not random, he concedes, because the program has specifically targeted the low-hanging fruit—sites with moderate free/reduced populations and low participation—first in order to build a case with a substantial demonstrated return on investment right off the bat.

HSRP focuses on high schools because these are the sites that traditionally have the biggest participation shortfalls, Freedman adds. Renovation investments in lower grades would generate much less of an increase because they already typically see high participation.

“Where we see our biggest increases typically is in the free/reduced population,” he adds, “and that’s where we see the biggest opportunity to get a lot of extra students, though we’ve also seen large increases in low free/reduced schools with paid kids as well.”

The menu has undergone considerable

change with the implementation of HSRP, with a big new emphasis on fresh, whole produce being one of the most prominent, Freedman says. In fact, most frozen vegetables with the exception of staples like peas and carrots have been replaced by fresh alternatives that are processed in-house.

“We make our own fresh broccoli florets, we chop whole onions ourselves and we make fresh mojo with fresh cilantro and fresh lime juice,” Freedman says proudly.

These additional specialized tasks do require extra training, and the staff at each new converted site undergoes a two-week training period with a dedicated staffer who was added for that purpose and who follows up the training with quality assurance inspections once the school year starts to make sure that everything is being done properly.

HSRP was launched eight years ago and recently completed the remodel of its seventh high school cafeteria, part of a long-term plan that will ultimately transform all 23 of PBCS’s existing high school cafeterias (any new schools built from here on out will have HSRP-style cafeterias from the ground up). An eighth is slated for remodeling next summer and a ninth has already been tabbed to follow that.

It seems like a snail’s pace schedule, but it acknowledges the realities, Freedman explains. “We had a very quick discussion

## WHAT MAKES PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOLS INNOVATOR OF THE MONTH

**Creating** a program to bring a more commercial style of service to high schools

**Increasing** participation by an average of 34% in renovated high schools

**Getting** buy-in from school administrators to increase the amount of time for lunch periods

about doing more than one school in a summer, but it’s just not feasible,” he says.

The renovations are self-funded from meal program receipts.

The decision to enact HSRP stemmed from a combination of wanting to efficiently serve a growing student population and a desire to implement a more customer-friendly style of service.

“We wanted to go from what is called a walkup line model where you have a server who is also cashier with a lot of pre-packaged items to a model with separate servers and cashiers,” Freedman explains. “Basically, you’re splitting [the server] into five distinct restaurants, each with its own staff.”

They also wanted to take on lunchtime compression, which tends to alienate students by limiting the time they have to get food and eat it.

“A big part of the program is that we sign a service level agreement with the school [that requires them] to provide us with a certain amount of time for the students to eat,” he says. The goal is to provide at least 20 minutes after the last student sits down, so schools are asked to provide 90 minutes of contact time, which could be divided into three 30-minute lunch periods or two 45-minute periods, but which basically gives every student who wants to eat in the cafeteria enough time to do so. **FM**



The Reengineering program produces branded cafés on campuses, such as the Café on the Hill at Palm Beach County’s Forest Hill Community High School.



Learn more about the Innovators at [food-management.com/fm-innovators](http://food-management.com/fm-innovators). Know an operator worthy of Innovator of the Month? Email Mike Buzalka at [mike.buzalka@informa.com](mailto:mike.buzalka@informa.com).





## Cryptid creatures and mythical pizzas

THE CITY OF POINT PLEASANT, W.VA., IS EXACTLY THAT: PLEASANT. You wouldn't guess that the mysterious Mothman—part urban legend, part local obsession—could be lurking in the beautiful hills here on the Ohio River. There are clues, though: A statue in the center of town; Mothman cookies and Mothman “droppings” (chocolate covered coffee beans) at the local coffee shop; and the tastiest clue of all that I had the chance to try myself was the Mothman pizza at Village Pizza, an otherwise totally normal pizza joint. The Mothman's torso is made of pepperoni, the wings are mushrooms, the legs are green peppers and the eyes are glowing pickled peppers with sliced olives as the pupils. No mystery here: it's delicious! (I could've used more legs and less wings, though).

## We tried LunchOwl

At our downtown Cleveland office, there are a few lunch options nearby...but they're not always the most convenient or affordable or healthy. So we jumped at the chance to try LunchOwl, founded by Cleveland native Scott Himmel, who delivered our lunches. I got the jerk chicken and couldn't have been more pleased.



## I DO... want a cheese fountain

Portillo's, the iconic Chicago-style eatery, has announced new wedding and engagement packages that include Chicago hot dogs, Italian beef sandwiches (what a great Chicago food item), signature crinkle-cut fries, onion rings and an eternally flowing cheese fountain. If you're in Chicago and on the fence about getting married, this could be the tipping point.



**TARA FITZPATRICK** is *Food Management's* senior food & beverage editor. Each issue she'll share insights into what's up-and-coming in the food scene.

### ALSO INSIDE

**FOOD FEATURE** FALL DESSERTS / p. 36

**MENU MIX** TAMALES / p. 40

**1 INGREDIENT, 3 WAYS** TATER TOTS / p. 41

### PACKAGING THAT PACKS A PUNCH

I'm a sucker for cute packaging, just ask my local Sephora! This little car caught my eye while I was working on a tater tot story. It's a badass muscle car from the '70s...made of cardboard...filled with loaded tots. Too cool.







CREDIT RIMMA, BONDARENKO/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS





# FALL DESSERTS: **BEYOND PUMPKIN SPICE**

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Embracing the pumpkin spice phenomenon to its fullest, chefs and bakers are letting the flavors of pumpkin pie lead the way into fall, with detours for maple, pecan, marshmallow and some surprises planned along the way.

**BY TARA FITZPATRICK**

**Each year this past decade,** Starbucks has released its PSL (Pumpkin Spice Latte) a little earlier. This year, the beacon beverage of fall flavor arrived on Aug. 27. More than a great product for Starbucks, pumpkin spice itself is a cultural phenomenon that's grown up alongside Instagram, home this time of year to millions of cozy fall posts with soft sweaters, crunchy autumn leaves and, of course, a big mug of pumpkin spice latte.



With the arrival of arguably way too many pumpkin spice products (dog food? deodorant?), some were quick to say this oversaturation has gone too far. But now, there's a "backlash to the backlash," culture reporter Rebecca Jennings writes in Vox, "the possibility that nobody really cares that much anymore. We seemed to have hit peak 'pumpkin spice hot take' in the year 2014." Or, as Eater put it, "Pumpkin spice has outlasted the ire of its detractors."

"I think it's a niche that if you don't grab onto it, you'll miss out on those 'Oh, my God, it's pumpkin spice season' people," says Justin Newgaard, a corporate executive chef with Morrison Healthcare. "And it's a great way to introduce any new flavor concepts you want and spin off new products. It's not just 'pumpkin spice' but bringing in root-to-stem

## COMFORT FOOD PIEROGIS GO FROM SAVORY TO SWEET

Pierogis are traditionally stuffed with mashed potatoes and cheese, served with sautéed onions and sour cream, a savory Eastern European fave in the upper Midwest. They've turned pierogis sweet at Laurel View Village, a CCRC in Davidsville, Pa., managed by Cura, part of Elior North America. This scratch-made menu item in the fall signature dessert series is a pierogi stuffed with apples, fried, topped with a stout-caramel sauce and served with cinnamon kuli ice cream (an Indian ice cream).



Fall-themed cookies, pear apple crisp and a caramel apple bombe all tap into different fall feelings.

thinking, using pumpkin seeds, a healthy fat with a bunch of nutrients, or looking at what the spices themselves can do for our bodies."

So let's see where this love of pumpkin spice flavors can lead us next.

## FARMHOUSE TABLES AND ORCHARDS

The fall season brings with it feelings of homecoming—and not just football festivities—coming home to flavors that comfort, especially in the sweet world of desserts.

So naturally, Newgaard is thinking back to childhood holidays spent "in the middle of nowhere" Missouri at his great-grandparents' dairy farm, where the produce grown there was canned and holiday dinners featured a harvest of local dishes. "The green bean casserole wasn't made with canned cream of mushroom soup," he recalls. "The green beans were grown there, and the cream was from our cows."

Now based in Kansas City and traveling throughout the Midwest to help onboard Morrison Healthcare accounts, Newgaard says we shouldn't fight that pumpkin-spice feeling.

That's something that rings true for the students at Prairie Hills USD 113 in Kansas, where pumpkin bars are "the undisputed favorite," says Brook Brubeck, the district's foodservices director. "They will choose those any day over any of our other muffins or breads."

When making a custom 'pumpkin spice' blend for the bars, Brubeck tends to reach for "a little more ground all-spice" in ratio to the other spices, she says. "It adds that little extra something special."

While Brubeck says she's a pretty big fan of all things pumpkin spice, she's leaning a bit more toward apples for fall menu items.

"Pumpkin may be king at the moment, but in my mind apples and autumn are



the perfect pair because I grew up on an apple orchard,” she says. “Obviously, this has a big influence on me, with fond memories of cool fall days spent picking apples and pressing cider, so to me, nothing says fall like a warm apple crisp.”

Brubeck hopes to create some scratch or speed-scratch recipes for hot breakfast items featuring apples and cider.

Speaking of crisps, Newgaard finds that fruits like peaches and berries are in a sweeter, softer state at the end of summer. That makes them harder to work with in a way but opens the door for dishes in which that consistency is perfect: crisps and cobbles.

“In the fall, you’ve got beautiful peaches and pears coming into the end of their season and they’re a little softer,” he says.

#### CARAMEL APPLES FOR THE WIN

At Elon University, the North Carolina climate means fall is more pleasant

## FALL DESSERTS DOWN UNDER

Australia’s seasons are flipped, but the toasty Anzac slice, created by Australian cookbook author Katherine Sabbath, turns fall flavors upside down in a cool new way, a chewy, buttery way. First a bit of history: Anzac biscuits were part of Australia and New Zealand’s wartime experience. Anzac stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), established during World War I. The biscuits arrived in care packages for soldiers, preferred because, made with rolled oats and quite dense, they didn’t spoil easily.



breeze than changing trees, but the dining team makes the most of the season with a DIY caramel apple bar, offering a more gourmet take than your country fairgrounds.

With a metal barrel that looks perfect for bobbing for apples, Elon’s caramel apple bar shows off local ingredients with cute chalkboard signage. The caramel is ready for dipping and the experi-

ence becomes an incredibly interactive way to get into the fall spirit.

Caramel apples are also big at Sodexo’s operation at Alcon, A Novartis Group, in Fort Worth, Texas. Pastry Chef Nancy De Dios is a caramel apple fan and she also makes some of the most adorable fall-themed cookies ever.

And Metz Culinary Management chefs have created a sophisticated take on the caramel apple—a bombe made with cider, pecan brittle, a cinnamon apple brunoise and caramel mousse. Other fall desserts from Metz include pumpkin cheesecake with cranberry, pumpkin seeds, spiced anglaise and pumpkin pie ice cream; and orange flan with beet, walnut crumble, blood orange and ginger tuile.

#### A PASTRY CHEF’S FALL REFLECTIONS

Fruit is also a point of inspiration for Erica Hartzell, pastry chef at Columbia College in Columbia, Mo., which is managed by Aladdin, part of Elior North America. Hartzell is graduate of The French Pastry School in Chicago and has created pumpkin pie bites to rave reviews.

And like the other culinarians featured here, she’s harkening back to apple-picking days and making room in her fall repertoire.

“I remember apple picking with my family and then coming home and baking fresh apple pie and apple desserts with what we picked,” Hartzell says. “My more recent memories include baking everything and anything fall for the students and staff here.”

She’s been looking into creating a caramel apple crème brûlée soon. **FM**



Elon University’s dining team sets up an interactive caramel apple bar to ring in the fall season in full-flavored style.

## Tamales 101

Take a moment and learn the tips, tricks and tradition of making tamales. Plus, lower-labor tamale alternatives. **BY TARA FITZPATRICK**

Tamales are complex in the most delicious way possible: Formed with corn masa, stuffed with savory (or sweet) fillings, wrapped in corn husks (or banana leaves) and steamed, creating a divine eating experience. “The best part of eating that amazing piece of heaven is right when you open it, like a present,” says Mitssy Anaya, chef with Morrison Healthcare at the Hospitals of Providence in El Paso, Texas, where tamales are on the fall/winter menu.



### LEARNING FROM THE TAMALE EXPERTS

Ofelia Rivera, chef at Texas Tech University’s The Commons dining location, learned to make tamales years ago from her grandmother in Guanajuato, Mexico, “and hers were the best I’ve ever tasted,” Rivera says. “For me, tamales have always represented the start of the fall season. I remember coming together to make them around mid-November and continuing through Christmas.” At the Mexican concept, Parrilas, a tamales LTO will be served this fall: Red Raiders pork tamales with red chili sauce and green chicken tamales with green chili sauce as well as a sweet option with raisins or pineapple.



### OTHER TAMALE OPTIONS

Love the idea of tamales but not the additional labor? Texas Tech’s Rivera has made tostadas, gorditas and even quesadillas using tamale ingredients. “The flavor profile of tamales is delicious and can be applied to so many other great options,” she says. Tamale casserole is another easy option. Anaya of Morrison Healthcare has also made a torta with the tamale ingredients on the inside.



### SERIOUS GRAB-AND-GO POSSIBILITIES

Jose Santa Ana, executive chef with Sodexo at DirecTV AT&T in El Segundo, Calif., has made tamales filled with a variety of ingredients like chicken and mole, rajas and cheese, veggies, pork in red or green sauce and seafood.



### READY FOR THEIR STEAM BATH

Tamales are wrapped at Elon University, then steamed, keeping in all the delicious flavors and making the tamales super tender.



### TEMPTING TAMALES

And here’s the finished plate at Elon’s International Station. Served with a bit of salsa verde, it’s simple comfort food at its best.





## 3 trendy tot-chos

A crave-worthy combination of tater tots and nachos, tot-chos are the best of both worlds. **BY TARA FITZPATRICK**



### PULLED PORK TOT-CHOS

University of Mississippi

At Ole Miss' Vaught-Hemingway Stadium, these spicy tots are now available at the in-house Chops BBQ concept. The pulled pork is smoky, tender and covered with nacho sauce, jalapeños and barbecue sauce for a snack that's "sure to be a hit this season," says Centerplate GM Adam Martin.

### CRAB & LOBSTER TOTS

PPL Center, Allentown, Pa.

Spectra Executive Chef Andrew Wissa has created these gourmet tater tots for premium stadium seats. The tots are topped with blue crabmeat in a lobster Mornay sauce (Mornay is béchamel sauce with shredded cheese added). For those who like turf more than surf, there is also a "loaded bacon" version of the tots.



### SHORT RIB POUTINE TOTS

Paul Brown Stadium, Cincinnati

In preparations for this year's Bengals games, the Aramark team scouted food trends from coast to coast. This short rib poutine hails from the north, but using tater tots instead of fries is inspiration from out of this world. The tots are smothered in slow-roasted, fall-apart short rib, brown gravy, cheese curds and green onions.

# PRODUCTS

## SUPPLIER OFFERINGS



**CHEF PIERRE WHOLE GRAIN (SARA LEE BAKERY)**  
[saraleefrozenbakery.com/offers](http://saraleefrozenbakery.com/offers)

The best days begin with better ingredients. From IW & Bulk Muffins to tender Biscuits & Croissants, **Chef Pierre Whole Grain** baked goods satisfy demand for better food all day. Simply thaw and serve.



**BRAKEBUSH**  
[brakebush.com](http://brakebush.com)

**Brakebush** has a significant portfolio of chicken raised with no antibiotics ever to help foodservice operators meet consumer demand. The options include fully cooked sliced and diced chicken breast items and ready-to-cook IQF breast fillets, tenders and chunks—which provide excellent flexibility for numerous menu applications.



**BUTTERBALL**  
[butterballfoodservice.com](http://butterballfoodservice.com)

**Butterball Foodservice** has launched new turkey products to give more choices to K-12 foodservice directors and support them in their mission to keep students happy and healthy. There are 11 American-raised Butterball turkey offerings—sliced, sausage, franks and more—to use in school breakfast, lunch and snack dishes.

**TYSON FOODSERVICE**  
[tysonfoodservice.com](http://tysonfoodservice.com)

K-12 operators can add fiery flavor to their menus with the new Nashville Hot Chicken from **Tyson Foodservice**. The popular flavoring comes presauced on the chicken and in child-friendly portions. Available to K-12 audiences only.



**BOB'S RED MILL**  
[bobsredmill.com](http://bobsredmill.com)

Now it's even easier to enjoy oatmeal, thanks to **Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free and Organic Oatmeal Cups**. The convenient grab-and-go cups feature gluten-free oats, flaxseeds, chia seeds, fruits, nuts and spices. Product is available in eight flavors and ready in three minutes.





## S&D

sdcoffetea.com

**Infused beverages** Inspired by the traditional agua fresca, S&D has launched a new line of beverages made with real fruit juice, real cane sugar and natural flavors. These non-carbonated and caffeine-free beverages come in eight flavors.



## PILLSBURY

generalmillscf.com

Compete with chains in the baked goods department with the new low-labor, freezer-to-oven Mini Cinnamon Rolls from **Pillsbury**. No proofing or thawing is required with these bite-sized treats that meet consumer demand for mini indulgence and convenient on-the-go eating. Each case includes 360 rolls.

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# BY THE NUMBERS

FACTS AND STATS



## BASEBALL AND BRATS

When it comes to ballpark eats, there's nothing more iconic than a hot dog. And stadiums sell a *lot* of them. Here's a look at the top five hot dog-consuming Aramark-managed Major League Baseball stadiums.

**HOUSTON ASTROS**  
**900,000**

**BOSTON RED SOX**  
**800,000**

**COLORADO ROCKIES**  
**600,000**

**NEW YORK METS**  
**405,000**

**PHILADELPHIA  
PHILLIES**  
**365,000**

**9%**

The percentage of adults who consider the environment a top factor when making a food and beverage purchasing decision, according to the NPD Group, a market research company based in Chicago. Packaging is the most visible environmental concern, with 10% of adults saying they have switched to a different food or beverage brand because of its eco-friendly packaging.



College students generate 112 pounds of food waste per student per school year, which is more than twice as much food per meal as corporate employees, reports a study conducted jointly by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Bon Appetit Management Co. The study also found that dining in all-you-care-to-eat environments wastes more food than a pay-as-you-go model and that less food was wasted at breakfast than at lunch or dinner.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: THE CRIMSON MONKEY; ANDREPOPOV ALINAKHO/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS