

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY EAST DINING HALL

Harrisburg, Va.



Photos by David Hillis Photography

This large-scale and popular dining facility requires tremendous fire power to keep up with the demands at peak periods. Two large char-broilers, a griddle and bank of fryers do the job.

One hearth oven platform features pizza, the all-time college staple. It also offers casseroles, pasta and roasted meats and vegetables. The colorful salad platform (bottom) is situated front and center to emphasize that food offered here is freshly prepared with the freshest ingredients possible.

Edited by Donna Boss

James Madison University (JMU) needed a foodservice facility to serve the university's expanding East Campus and its new residence halls. After much consideration and option analysis, a team of Ricca Newmark Design consultants, led by Lenny Condenzio, FCSI, designed an \$18.8 million, state-of-the-art dining experience to meet the demands of the students, faculty and community customers who consume about 12,000 meals daily in the 700-seat facility. Working from a series of diverse, dynamic display prep and cooking platforms, the foodservice

staff is able to offer completely fresh cuisine to students, faculty and visitors who come from numerous states and other countries.

The 20,200-sq.-ft. dining facility, opened in Aug. 2009, provides food on all-you-care-to-eat meal plans. The space features nearly three-story-high glass walls showcasing vistas of the beautiful Shenandoah Valley; they add a dramatic backdrop—and great natural light—to the free-standing platforms and seating dispersed throughout the dining facility.

The new facility exemplifies the open kitchen

concept. Platforms are self-sufficient and contain all the inventory storage (cold and ambient) and production capacity required to produce meals. The design firm worked diligently to create platforms that provide ample food preparation areas with discrete walk-in refrigerators and/or freezers at the core; this allows chefs to do all of the prep work and cooking in front of the customers at each venue. There's virtually no back-of-the-house kitchen; Ricca Newmark assigned about 6,000 sq. ft. behind the scenes for a pantry, product breakdown area, a small cold prep area and warewashing support.

The entrance to the East Campus Dining Hall is a two-and-a-half-story-high foyer that leads into the huge servery. The space was designed to be open and uninterrupted, allowing customers to see myriad food concepts from one side of the servery to the other. Concepts begin with a working scratch bakery. Here, customers can sit on stools at the counter with their food to enjoy a full view of the bakers at work. Next to the bakery is an ice cream station.

Beyond the bakery, customers can see a hearth-oven platform. One side, with the hearth, is actually the facility's deli. Rather than just relying on bagged bread, bakers bake fresh breads to support a sumptuous deli display piled high with fresh meats, cheeses and deli salads. Hot and cold sandwiches and paninis are on the menu. On the other side of this station, chefs use two, in-full-view tandoori ovens to create authentic Indian selections, as well as other ethnic cuisines.

A second hearth-oven platform serves as the facility's artisan pizza station. Rimmed with counter seating and backed by floor-to-ceiling windows, the station is bright and lively.

A huge, circular center platform supports several concepts. A fresh soup and salad counter and two sauté stations—including one for vegan fare—are on one side. Around the other side of the circle is the grill. Equipped with two charbroilers and griddles, the chefs produce burgers, steaks, chicken and chops.

This circular platform is so large, it surrounds a walk-in refrigerator/freezer, the outer walls of which are finished in decorative tile to double as the back walls of the salad, sauté, and grill stations.

One of the more innovative and flexible platforms is an action station, a completely open general kitchen wherein chefs produce sauces, soups, casseroles, roasts and a wide assortment of other

Design Consultant: Lenny Condenzio, FCSI & Kathleen Seelye, FFCSI, LEED, Ricca Newmark Design, Denver

Project: 20,200-sq.-ft. university dining facility

Budget: \$18.8 million (Total Project)

Scope of Work: Concept development, master planning, space allocation, full interior, culinary, and graphic signage design, detail design, specification writing, site inspection, construction management, pre-opening inspection

Architect: Moseley Architects, Richmond, Va.

meals and meal components in full restaurant form. The equipment lineup includes kettles, tilt skillets, combi ovens and other back-kitchen basics. This station boasts a community/chef's table with seating for 20.

Dispersed and diverse seating, including booths, tables and counter stools right at the platforms, creates a dynamic and interactive environment for diners. By incorporating rich wood tones and natural stone materials with contemporary elements such as decorative metal work and colorful glass lighting, designers have created an intimate space in which customers can dine, socialize, and study.

This dining facility is the first building on campus to be eligible for LEED sustainability certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). Thanks to the vaulted glass foyer, the space is flooded with natural light, minimizing the use of overhead light fixtures and allowing nearly 90 percent of the regularly occupied areas to be day-lit. Other green elements of the design include energy-efficient kitchen hoods, ultra-low-flow kitchen sinks expected to save approximately 181,948 gals. of water annually, and regional and renewable building materials.

Special thanks go to Ricca Newmark colleagues Brenda Amsberry for interior design, Liang Chen, AIA, LEED AP for project design and Scott Benedict, project manager.



Diners are invited to sit near the production kitchen and watch the culinary staff create delectable, freshly prepared food.