

CAMPUS DINING

by design

VIRGINIA KETTERING RESIDENCE HALL at University of Dayton

Photos courtesy of University of Dayton

When it came time to renovate the 25-year-old dining hall in the Virginia Kettering Residence Hall at the University of Dayton, dining services tried something new. A design team transformed an all-you-care-to-eat (AYCTE) servery into a modern, sophisticated, relaxed, inviting restaurant concept with two themes: an international venue called Passports, and a deli-style eatery called the Grainary. The \$3.9 million renovated facility opened in October 2011.

"The concept of a two-themed restaurant resulted from extensive conversations and focus groups we conducted in 2009 with 60 students who serve as dining services food consultants," says Paula Smith, executive director of dining services. "The students nearly unanimously said that they wanted something completely different than any other facility on campus. Through that same process of student input, we identified the two theme platforms that had the most appeal and built the restaurants around them."

At the opening, University of Dayton President, Daniel Curran, Ph.D., complimented Smith and the staff and said, "This is a great day for the students. Besides the outstanding academic experience we have, this facility enhances everyday living experience."

Passports features a four-foot-diameter Mongolian grill with an ingredient bar where customers help themselves to a variety of fruits, vegetables, meats, sauces, and spices, and place them in a bowl. They then hand their personal selections to one of four hibachi-style cooks, who complete the hot preparation.

Passports also features a burrito bar containing choices of five meats, four homemade salsas, two rice varieties, two types of beans, freshly made guacamole, queso, homemade corn chips, and a variety of vegetables. Customers can choose to combine these ingredients in burritos, nachos, and quesadillas, in a variety of size offerings.

Also at Passports, a sushi chef wraps ingredients such as crab sticks, asparagus, and smoked salmon in seaweed and sticky rice, and tops them with wasabi mayo. Customers can select from approximately 24 different rolls and other creations.

The Grainary presents more familiar campus fare. Students can indulge in a wide range of fresh bakery items, salads, deli sandwiches, homemade soups and cereals.

The deli features signature sandwiches, cold or grilled, created with meats, fresh vegetables, dressings, and spices. The salad area combines the fresh ingredients with homemade dressings for signature salads with a selection of flavors from around the world.

The chef station features a self-ventilating induction stove and an area for display cooking. During breakfast, omelets and breakfast sandwiches are made to order from more than 20 different ingredients. A variety of dishes are offered at lunch and dinner, ranging from flatiron steak, a stir-fry noodle bar, and pasta tosses to vindaloo chicken and a variety of other international items.

It is not just the menus that make the two restaurant themes so inviting to students. Careful attention was paid to the overall ambiance. The facility features intimate seating throughout—Passports seats 134, while the Grainary seats 128—with half-circle booths, high-top bars, and three 10-foot, live-edge, wood tables. Hanging lamps spread soft-focused lighting throughout the serving and seating areas. A 75-foot-long glass frontage presents artworks superimposed

on six-foot glass panels, which filter the incoming light. Opposite that, there is a wall of lit panels that continuously change color.

“With such a dramatic change in theme and menu, we wanted an attractive, very contemporary décor with an edgy look to create a welcoming environment for the students of today,” Smith says.

Sustainability was also an important issue in developing the renovation. Dining seats are made out of recycled plastic cola bottles, the china was produced in the neighboring state of West Virginia, and all carry-out packaging is compostable, with the exception of the recycled bottles.

The Grainary is open from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Passports is open from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. every day. Together they serve about 2,350 customers daily. The restaurants are staffed by a 10-person management team, 38 full-time employees, 20 part-time workers, and 60 part-time students. Total square footage is 13,459: kitchen and preparation areas are 4,785 square feet; the serving area is 4,124 square feet and the dining/seating area is 4,550 square feet.

“The redesign continues to be a great success, with higher sales and excellent customer reviews from students, faculty and staff,” Smith says. “We expect that success to continue next year as more and more students are familiar with the restaurants and with additional parking spaces to serve faculty and staff.”

Smith projects the restaurants will pull in \$2 million in revenues for the 2011-2012 fiscal year, a 46 percent increase over the pre-renovation facility.

Key people involved: University of Dayton facilities management and dining services staffs; Cathy Ford, project manager; Barbara Gilbert, general manager, Passports and The Grainary; Paula Smith, executive director, dining services; Bob Mesher, Mesher, Shing, McNutt, foodservice architect and consultant; Albin Khouw, Porter Khouw, kitchen consultant; Ray Barry, Edge & Tinney Architects; Messer Construction, general contractor. ♦

Top to Bottom:
At the Grainary, customers inspect the bakery case before making selections.

A chef prepares sushi in Passports restaurant.

Seating near the Grainary, which offers booths, tables and counter seating gives customers many selections for their dining experience. Graced by 20-foot windows, it has a light, fresh feeling and overlooks the intramural field.

Students display their selected menu fare from the deli in the Grainary.

