

A New Look for Washington Hospital's Café

In less than one year, Cura Hospitality's dining team at The Washington Hospital in Washington, Pa, met the ultimate challenge – manage a new hospital's food service operations, while renovating retail dining services. A huge undertaking, the results are outstanding.

Working in conjunction with Washington Hospital's architects, engineers and administration, Cura's goal was to upgrade the retail dining food service, expand seating and significantly improve flow of guest service which was achieved by using underutilized space in the hospital's kitchen.

As an added benefit, Washington Hospital administration was able to tap into the retail expertise of Chris Fitz, district manager. Fitz was excited to offer his specialties and ideas to the hospital. "Our goal was to enhance service by incorporating best practices – including trend-forward merchandising, scratch and made-to-order cooking, on-the-go fresh food offerings and overall healthy initiatives," said Fitz.

The transformation of this typical 1970's single serving line has WOWED guests as they now enjoy dining in a contemporary designed scattered food court system. Seating has increased from 120 to 165, flow of services has improved by adding a third point of sale, and several dining stations were added offering a variety of made-to-order favorites. Sales during the first week of surpassed projected sales by 21%.

For breakfast, guests can select homemade French toast, pancakes, breakfast meats and even sausage gravy and biscuits– a local Washington, Pa, traditional menu item. For those looking for a healthier option, a fresh fruit, yogurt and grain

bar is also available daily.

Guests can also select items from the specialty bar, which features exhibition-style cooking where foods like stir-fries, pastas, and a baked potato bar are prepared to-order by the cooks and kitchen prep staff.

According to Rich Constanza, Cura general manager of dining services, "Prior to the renovations, our cooks and prep folks were always in the kitchen because of space unable to be a part of the front- of-the-house. Now, our cooks, including Linda Gatten, Dolores Waggett, Lucy Loughman, Betty Allison, Jane Auld and Frank Kovacicek, are out in front, engaged and excited to be part of our team."

Grilled items are also available daily, such as homemade burgers, and specialty sandwiches like Washington kielbasa and kraut, barbecue pulled pork and buffalo chicken sandwiches. "The difference in the grill is increased variety, a more consistent product and all items that are available daily – which is huge since menu items prior to Cura's arrival were only available on specific days, like fish sandwiches on Fridays," said Costanza.

Other stations include a served deli bar where sandwiches are made-to-order, but the center of the excitement is the extensive salad bar which is three times its original size, offering a huge assortment of vegetables, grains and other fresh ingredients; home made salad dressings, chili and soups made fresh daily! A wonderful addition to the salad bar is the composed salads created by Donna Allen, prep cook. Seafood salad is her specialty.

For those on the run, on-the-go foods like pre-made salads and sandwiches, as well as desserts are available for lunch. Although many food stations are new, past favorites were incorporated on the menu.

"Our cook, Frank Kovacicek, prepares a homemade macaroni and cheese, and stewed tomatoes are still offered on Fridays," said Costanza. "In fact, all menu items are posted on digital signage created by onsite brands marketing. The signage is contemporary and in addition to the menu items, offers fun food facts and nutrition information."

The café's renovations also extended the dining room and vending services.

Other members of the Washington Hospital Dining team include: Scott Brissel, executive chef, Doug Kerley, retail manager; Donna Newton, assistant director of dining; Vicki Capone, patient services manager, and Jason Katula, assistant director of dining.

Visit the café for a bite, open daily from 6:15 a.m. to 7:15 p.m. For more information, visit www.washingtonhospital.org or www.curahospitality.com. †

