

# Sustaining a New Facility at Bates



When you have 1,700 students on your board plan and a single facility that was meant to feed 500, an opportunity to build a completely new dining facility is most welcome.

“The infrastructure of the building could no longer support what we were doing in it, so we had some really tough issues in terms of being able to put equipment in, have equipment work, etc.,” said Christine Schwartz, dining services director at Bates

College in Lewiston, Maine, who was in this situation. “Plus, we had to flip the facility three times in order to feed the students.”

The school first had to explore whether it should renovate the old facility or build a new one. “The problem with the old facility was that it had been added onto multiple times, so none of the floor plans matched when you began to look underneath,” she said. “They would have to pull a brand new electrical line to the building at a very exorbitant cost. We were at the point where if we put in a new piece of equipment, we had to take out an old piece of equipment. We couldn’t put in a toaster and a microwave next to each other and operate certain pieces of equipment at the same time. We blew fuses every day. It kind of got comical after a while. It was like you went to work and it was a combat zone.”

Like many other dining facilities constructed in the last few years, sustainability is a major factor in its operations, but it is nothing new to dining services. “We have, ever since I have been here and I have been here for 12 years, been leaders in the collegiate industry in terms of our commitment to sustainability, especially decreasing our carbon footprint and food shed,” said Schwartz. “We divert 82 percent of our waste from our waste stream. We have a huge commitment. You will not find a Dumpster at my loading dock. We don’t do that. Just by who we are and how we do business, which is always how we have done business — this isn’t something new for us — drove what we wanted in the new facility.”

Waste removal was an important part of the new facility. “The loading dock has its own dedicated recycling door, so that



we are not crossing trash with a product coming in,” she said. “We built a recycling room, which is air conditioned. We have a central collection point for our grease, which is actually picked up and we are paid

for it. It is made into biodiesel. It is not much but it beats having to pay to have it taken away.”

The school also maintains another of its sustainable initiatives in terms of reducing waste from the previous location. “We reduced packaging through the door, so we get as much as we can in bulk,” said Schwartz. “Any overproduction goes to a food bank, so we are very conscious to begin with about how we do business.”

This waste reduction has led to a decrease in the cost of its removal. “Some of our peer schools spend as much as \$85,000 in waste removal,” she said. “We spend about \$17,000. So, our program is significant.”

Another factor in its sustainability efforts includes buying local whenever possible. Currently, 28 percent of its items are purchased from local sources. In order to take full advantage of local products, a blast chiller was installed in the new facility.

“We put in a blast chiller, which allows us to flash freeze or flash chill items,” said Schwartz. “Our goal really is to bring our percentage of local purchases up to about 30 percent, which is tough because we define local as the state of Maine. What this blast chiller will allow us to do with this increased storage space in the new facility is to buy products that are in season for Maine.”

She continued, “For instance, the no-brainer is blueberries — buy them, flash freeze them, store them and use them, during the academic year, at a significant savings.”

Sustainability is an instrumental part of other areas of the building as well. “It is a self-ventilating building,” said



**Architect:** Sasaki Associates, Inc. of Watertown, Mass.  
**Foodservices Vendor:** TriMark of South Attleboro, Mass.  
**Contractor:** Consigli Construction Co., Inc. of Portland, Maine



Schwartz. “It has no air conditioning, except the air coming back from the platforms, and the kitchen, because otherwise you wouldn’t be able to survive. The ceilings were made from either reclaimed wood or FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)-certified wood. We have a high grade of recycled carpet on the floor. The countertops are made of Richlite, which is a paper product that is compressed and made into countertops. It is a recycled product.”

When it came to designing the front end of the facility, flexibility was important. “The college is not going to build another dining services operation for 40 years,” she said. “I wanted to make sure that we picked a design that had longevity. We didn’t build our platforms by concept, we built them by grouping and cooking philosophy. We don’t have an Asian platform and we don’t have an Indian platform. We have a grill and a Euro station, which we call because of the design of the equipment.”

She continued, “We do have a meat-free station. We have a brick oven and a salad bar. The reason we didn’t specifically put a cooking cuisine to these stations is because I wanted to have the flexibility to think about how we are grouping the equipment and what we can use that equipment to do. I didn’t want to limit us to one particular type of cuisine.”

The centerpiece of the facility is a brick oven from Wood Stone. “It was a difficult piece of equipment for me to embrace because it was one of the most expensive pieces we put in,” she said. “I actually flew out to Bellingham, Wash., with my chef, because I just wasn’t sold on it. I spent a day there and was just amazed by the things you could do – you can do anything in it. We are just now beginning to test the limits of the oven and we are nowhere near capacity. It is phenomenal what you can do out of it. We are doing artisan breads. We are doing dessert. We are doing some overnight cooking with the residual heat. We ended up actually going for a bigger-size oven.”

Another popular station is meat free. “The crossover acceptability has just been outrageous,” said Schwartz. “People who wouldn’t think about or look at anything vegan now are always stopping at the station.”

The Grill, another station, does not offer your standard hamburgers and hot dogs. “There is a fryer there, there is a flat top, there is a char broiler, but we are doing things like the Asian soup bowl,” she said. “We’ll cook the chicken right there. We are doing salmon, straight off the grill. We are serving a flat iron steak this Saturday night. I didn’t want it to become fast food.”

Scratch cooking is part of the operation as much as possible. “We pretty much prescribe to whatever we can, as

much as we can, with scratch cooking,” said Schwartz. “That is our philosophy because I like to control the ingredients that are going into our products. Some things you have to buy premade. You just have to be responsible for what you buy.”

Just like the stations, flexibility was an important part of equipment selection. “We looked at having equipment that can be moved, that can be replaced, that can be integrated, that can be exchanged, so we have the flexibility as the market changes and as trends change, we can change with them,” said Schwartz. “What I originally wanted was to have each hood run separately, but for the balance of the building, we couldn’t do that, so we grouped the hoods together, so I don’t have to put all the hoods on at once if all the platforms aren’t working. So that is an energy saver. The equipment that we put in is equipment that has a good working history and will take us where we need to be in the future.”

She is very pleased with how the facility has turned out and knows the reason. “From day one, the administration had dining services involved. I sat on every committee, the planning stage, the programmatic, the conceptual stage. I looked at shop drawings, I looked at beveled edges or not on the tables, whether I wanted the doors to lock or not, whether I wanted to have the faucets come out of the back or the front, every step of the way, we were involved in every single decision that involved food service. When we moved in, we knew what we had.”

—OCH




VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • BASILS

## STONE HEARTH

COMMERCIAL COOKING EQUIPMENT

- 300+ College and University Installations
- Custom and Specialty Oven Options
- Engineered for a changing foodservice market
- Industry Leading Customer Service & Support
- Manufactured in the USA
- 7,000 Installations Worldwide

CALL US TODAY TO DISCUSS YOUR VISION!

WWW.WOODSTONE-CORP.COM (800) 988-8103