

UNH Cooks Healthy

With the focus on finding healthier ways of feeding students, colleges and universities are always in search of ways to do just that — while maintaining the quality and flavor that is expected. Many have found ways to do this by choosing new equipment.

The University of New Hampshire (UNH) in Durham takes its commitment to health and wellness very seriously — and recently purchased equipment to help it achieve its goals.

UNH is an active participant in *Menus of Change: The Business of Healthy, Sustainable, Delicious Food Choices*, a ground-breaking initiative from The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health that works to create a long-term, practical vision for the integration of optimal nutrition and public health, environmental stewardship and restoration, and social responsibility concerns within the foodservice sector and beyond.

Some of the initiative's principles include:

- Reward better agricultural practices
- Globally inspired, largely plant-based cooking
- Focus on whole, minimally processed foods
- Think produce first
- Choose healthier oils
- Red meat: Smaller portions, less frequently
- Reduce added sugar

“We are going to pretty much consider that our bible on any new recipes that we write,” said Chris Kaschak, executive chef for Holloway Commons on campus. “That is going to be lowering sodium, changing the proteins, cutting down on the red meat and getting the students to understand portioning.”

He continued, “It is so imperative that we are on board with that. It is the way of the future. We have to teach and educate our students how to eat.”

Kaschak is putting some of those principles into practice at the grill area of Holloway Commons, which recently completed a renovation of the facility. Dining installed a Shuttle Precision Impingement Oven from Ovention.

“It is based on an impinger,” he said. “Basically, this works with hot air. What is really nice about this, if you look at an impinger oven, your product runs right through, you set the temperature and that’s it. This unit actually encapsulates the product, so when it goes into the cooking bay, there are arms that will drop down to seal the product in. What this does is retains the heat, and that makes it very cost effective. You can actually adjust your temperature of the vessel, as well as the way you want to have your heat dispersed.”

Kaschak said it is great for cooking healthy. “It is a healthy way to cook: limited fat, hot air; it doesn’t get any cleaner than that. My concept at the grill area using that Ovention oven is getting rid of



Kaschak

all the starchy products, cutting down on the protein. One of the things is the grilled zucchini with the piece of cod right on top of it — 3 ounces of cod, 4 ounces of grilled zucchini and out it goes.”

The unit allows Dining to move away from frying products. “We used to fry a lot of products, but with this unit, I can take that French fry and put a full bag on that half-sheet pan, press the button, and four and a half minutes later, it comes out absolutely fantastic,” he said. “It is crispy, cooked completely through; and the oven is staging the next product. In a conventional fryer, that was taking three and a half minutes. It is very similar in time. I had three fryers, now I have two Oventions.”

The unit is used at lunch for fries, and in the evening it is used for the main entrees, be they grilled vegetables or lean proteins. “I am going to be doing a lot of different ingredients out of that little oven,” said Kaschak. “It will probably be doing one product out of it per evening. For example, it might be the grilled zucchini, it might be grilled broccoli, it could be cod medallions. I also have a clamshell, so I will be doing grilled onion steaks. I will be caramelizing those, so as that cod comes out, I’ll have a really nice piece of charred red onion steak with that cod on it with just a little bit of lemon-thyme oil, and out it goes.”

He continued, “I’m doing grilled bok choy, roasted asparagus and buffalo cauliflower, which is basically cauliflower that I am going to roast off very simply and top it with a little bit of buffalo sauce. That is going to be a protein plate. That is something that is going to go out as a main line item once a month. I am changing it up. I have four different types of concepts that I am going to be utilizing that oven for in that concept.”

Kaschak also plans to use the oven for an allergy-free zone that is being created in Holloway. The area where it is being built does not offer any ventilation. “I first saw this piece of equipment at a conference, and the one thing that I noticed was that it was not under a hood system. I said, ‘Wow, this little piece of equipment can put out some really nice products, and I can basically put it anywhere.’ If you are in an existing facility, and now all of a sudden you free up a little extra space, you can install it. The old area now could be enclosed and could be a new allergen-friendly zone. It doesn’t have to have ventilation anywhere.”



—OCH