

# Pentagon *Salutes Revised Food Courts*

Options Range From Quick Bites  
to Sit-Down Dining

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**H**aving completed the last in a seven-year three-stage renovation of Pentagon foodservice, the iconic Department of Defense (DoD) building's cuisine spans the spectrum from fast food to fine dining.

Three main food courts comprise the lion's share of Pentagon food service. Two of the food courts, each offering seating for approximately 250, feature a mélange of branded and non-branded concepts, including Peruvian Chicken, Taco Bell, McDonald's, Dunkin' Donuts, Sbarro and Panda Express, plus clerk-served salad bars and fresh sandwich and Panini stations.

The largest food court, the Concourse Food Court, is also the one opened most recently, in September. It is an 875-seat space that houses a Burger King, Subway, Popeyes, Starbucks, RollerZ, Surf City Squeeze and a Dunkin' Donuts/Baskin-Robbins joint concept.

Single-unit food service operations, which are spaces featuring and run by only one business, include a 180-seat Sbarro; the Center Court Café, a 70-seat café located in the middle of the Pentagon's Center Courtyard; a 40-seat Subway; a 24/7 Dominic's food service operation; and various cart operations.

On Dec. 2, 2009, foodservice renovation plans culminated with the new Pentagon Dining Room opening its doors, introducing a fine-dining experience and signaling the work had reached completion. "This facility," said Jeff Keppler, business manager/contracting officer for the Department of Defense Concessions Committee (DoDCC), "is a 220-seat tablecloth restaurant that also offers two private function rooms, capable of seating 40 and another with a capacity of 20. The Pentagon Dining Room menu has an American regional focus highlighting products and ingredients from across the United States."



## RENOVATIONS

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The first renovated food service operation opened on March 11, 2002, six months to the day when it was damaged in the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon.



which included a plane crashing into a section of the Pentagon. That particular food court is located in the damaged section of the building. "In fact, on the morning of 9/11, a final construction walk-through was taking place to turn over the facility from the Pentagon Renovation (PENREN) team [of various government employees and contract support] to the Concessions Committee," Keppler said. The food court received extensive damage from jet fuel, smoke, water, etc., and thus could not be opened later that September, as planned. Work was required to repair walls, ceiling, refurbish or install new serving and production kitchen equipment, seating and more.

The second renovation came three years later, providing a second medium-sized food court and the 180-seat Sbarro restaurant, both of which opened in early 2007. Construction on the Center Courtyard Café began in the spring of 2007. It opened in March 2008.

Next, construction for the Concourse Food Court project began in mid-2007. The court is located in the main retail and food service part of the Pentagon along with 16 retail stores; Market Basket, an outlet of a small chain that has other locations in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Ill.; and the Pentagon Dining Room.

The single-unit Market Basket operation followed in July 2009. Market Basket offers fresh sandwiches,

a sushi bar, and gourmet retail grocery items in addition to extensive hot and cold bars where customers purchase food by the pound. "[It] has been extremely well received by the Pentagon population," Keppler said.

Finally, the Concourse Food Court opened in September 2009.

## FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS

All of the food service operations in the Pentagon are operated via a Memorandum of Agreement between the DoDCC and NEXCOM that began in mid-2001. The various food service operators hold individual competitively bid contracts with NEXCOM to operate in the Pentagon. There is no one single food service provider performing in the Pentagon, and each of the food service operators uses its own sources for food requirements.

"McDonald's uses their folks, Subway uses their folks and so on," Keppler said. "As does even the Pentagon Dining Room, which is not a brand-name operation, but they might use U.S. Foods, Sysco, whomever."

The DoDCC, a seven-member committee, is a non-appropriated fund instrumentality serving civilian and military employees in the Pentagon and the Navy Annex. Specifically, it issues contracts to others for the provision of all food services, 331 vending machines and 33 activities providing retail goods and personal services.



On December 2, 2009, the new Pentagon Dining Room opened its doors.





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The DoDCC uses its revenues, after paying its operational costs, to provide funding to four civilian Military Welfare and recreation (MWR) funds benefiting military and civilian employees working in the Pentagon and the Navy Annex.

Regarding the awarding of contracts for these renovations, Keppler commented, "The DoDCC has either utilized existing Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) contracts or requested a competitive solicitation be released by NEXCOM for a specific type of food service menu segment for which there was not an existing contract."

As he explained in depth, "If NEXCOM had in place the contracts that fit whatever kind of food service we were desiring, then we use an existing contract. If we had a requirement for something that they didn't have a contact for, then through them and their contracting office, we went out and solicited industry for that specific menu segment. Market Basket is an example. Another is the Pentagon Dining Room, because NEXCOM doesn't typically have locations that use that kind of a service."

## CUSTOMER VOLUME

The DoDCC's food service partners average 15,506 daily transactions, and there are approximately 160 personnel working for the various foodservice con-

tractors. Keppler points out that although the DoDCC has not experienced a full year of sales as yet with all operations open, for the most recent fiscal year, food service sales were \$17,005,925.

An exception is operations for the private dining areas (e.g., the one for the Joint Chiefs), which are overseen by the individual DoD service branch they serve. "Many of the DoDCC food service partners offer catering services wherever needed throughout the Pentagon," Keppler added.

Nutrition is an essential aspect of food service operations. Since many of the Pentagon food service offerings are branded, they are not reviewed internally for information about nutrition. Additionally, the DoDCC is not involved in the specification of branded food program ingredients. But Keppler reported that a "new initiative has recently started to highlight some of the non-branded food offerings that meet a 5-5-5 rule: less than 500 calories, less than five grams of fat, and 5 or more grams of fiber. This initiative just began in the last month or so and is available at a number of our non-branded food operations."

## FOOD SERVICE SECURITY

The DoDCC oversees food service, retail and vending service on board the Pentagon reservation. However, at the Navy Annex, it oversees only food service and retail.

The DoDCC must operate with the high levels of security required for both employees and deliveries. "This is a challenge," Keppler acknowledged, "but this is the Pentagon. We have 25,000-plus hungry customers, and our job is to provide them the food and variety they demand. What we have to do to accomplish that is part of the job. And, I might add, our partners meet that challenge successfully every single day we are open, as do their suppliers."

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