

UCLA Opens Healthy Bruin Plate

In 2013, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) launched the Healthy Campus Initiative, with a goal of being the healthiest campus in America. With the opening of its new new dining hall, the Bruin Plate, the university is certainly on its way to achieving that goal.

The new facility is part of a housing development project that brought 1,500 new beds to campus. “There has been a real move by UCLA to make the university more of a residential campus, so the idea was to have more beds and more spaces available to students so they could live on campus rather than having to commute,” said Rebecca Kendall, senior media relations representative.

Bruin Plate is all about healthy eating. “The idea of healthy eating in the facility really came about from student feedback,” said Daryl Ansel, director of Food and Beverage for UCLA’s Housing and Hospitality Services. “Prior to this, we had developed a remodeled dining hall that features Pan-Asian food. That filled a certain void and a certain desire by our students. We had already been in the mode of doing a lot of dialogue with our students through focus groups, surveys, etc., and the next thing we heard was they wanted fresher food, healthier food, less processed food. That was the start of it.”

Ansel said that students have grown up with healthier and fresher options available to them. “These students have grown up in an age when, across the country, food has gotten to a higher quality. A common reference for them was Whole Foods, as a point of ‘this is a type of food we are used to.’ We always try to give our students the type of food they are used to, and we think food is a very important thing at UCLA to help our students get through their college years and make them happy. We want the lifestyle here to be good. We heard

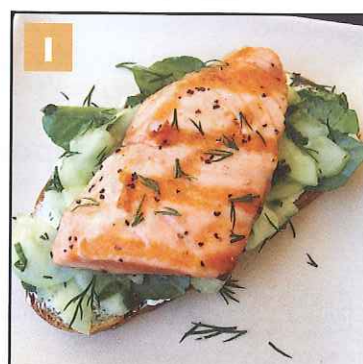
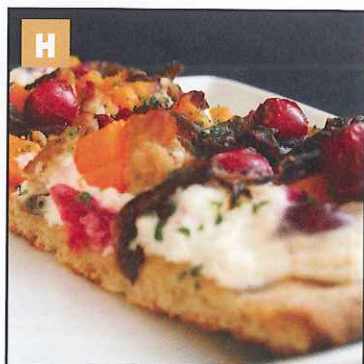
them loud and clear.”

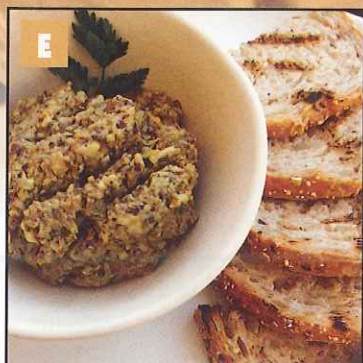
When deciding how best to create a dining facility that offered the healthy and fresh items students wanted, Dining had to first take a look at the infrastructure of its traditional dining outlets. “We noticed that the higher take-rate items on our menus were fried items — those quick to prepare, but fried and previously frozen — in combination with burgers and pizzas and that sort of thing,” said Alex Macias, assistant director for Dining Services. “What we wanted to do was change the paradigm. We didn’t want to make it to where it would be too traumatic.”

The second thing they did was define the infrastructure for Bruin Plate and decide which changes were necessary. “The first, obviously, was removing all of the fryers,” he said. “We made a conscious effort not to have fried food. We have never been happier with the decision. The guests haven’t batted an eye, or they haven’t said anything contrary. The way we were in the past, you would see students protest and use the mediums that we use for feedback.”

One thing that was decided was that every offering in Bruin Plate would be healthy. “It would not be like a lot of restaurants that have their healthier menu and a few items that were healthy,” said Ansel. “We decided it would be better to do everything healthy, but yet, focus on flavor and freshness — not to try to sell healthy, but sell flavor and freshness, while eliminating some of the difficult temptations and trade-offs.”

Delores Hernandez, registered dietitian with UCLA, was involved in setting the healthy criteria. “The first part was actually establishing nutrient guidelines,” she said. “For example, every entrée has to have less than 400 calories, the sodium has to be at a certain amount, same as the saturated fat — just to





make sure that we are actually serving something healthy, and not just calling it healthy when it really isn't. A lot of it was just to make sure that when the recipes were developed, that they all met those guidelines."

The other part was focusing on ingredients, and making sure that all the ingredients are fresh, healthy and wholesome. "We really focused on whole grains, so providing things like the faro, amaranth, quinoa, wheat berries, just these really whole grains," said Hernandez. "Staying away from refined foods; a lot of dark green vegetables. We always have something dark green that's roasted; it could be kale or Swiss chard. A lot of these vegetables are those that our students don't even know about. It is just focusing on the ingredients because once the ingredients are healthy, they really fall into the guidelines easily. All of our proteins are lean. For seafood, we try to get the seafood from the Monterrey seafood recommendations. We are focusing on ingredients first."

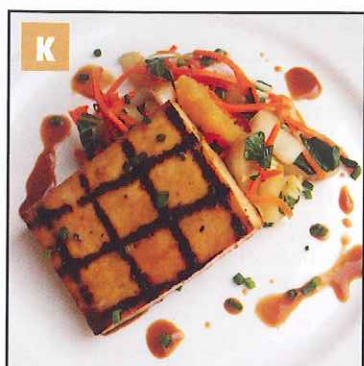
The facility itself is set up like a food court. "Students come in and are able to eat from every one of the platforms," said Macias. "We have five stations in total, and we made a conscious effort of looking at each one of them individually, along with the nutritional criteria that we established."



At Freshly Bowled, chefs create healthy bowls using grains, beans, fresh vegetables and lean proteins. "They can be customized, so the neat thing we have done is instead of having a bowl that has chicken and work our way down, we have actually gone from the vegan side and created stews and roasted vegetables and grains, and made them customizable by adding the proteins," said Kevin Aiello, executive chef for Bruin Plate. "One way I look at it, a lot of times if you went up to a kitchen anywhere, you might have said you would have the vegetarian, and they would take out the chicken. We designed bowls with the vegan and vegetarian in mind that is just the opposite, and it has made them really nice. It is very green if you look at it from a different view."

Instead of featuring traditional pizzas, Stone Fired features crisp flatbreads and tortillas prepared in a Wood Stone oven. "We have lean proteins," he said. "A lot of times we will build a salad on top of the flatbreads or the tortillas. We finish them with fresh herbs, maybe a balsamic reduction. It is very colorful and flavorful."

The Simply Grilled station is exactly how it sounds. "It is lean proteins, everything from tri-tip to salmon," said Aiello. "We run a free-range chicken out there every day that is marinated in a different way. It is very popular, and



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it is always available for students to come in and eat a protein. For lunch, we make all of our own patties and stackers. A lot of them are open-faced patties or open-faced stacker sandwiches. We make our own vegetarian patties in the same area with grains. It is very popular.”

The Farm Stand and Harvest platform features the center-of-the-plate items. “Because we introduced the grain and the vegetables, we can go a little less on the protein, but it still is a nice portion,” he said. “At that station, we feature a vegetarian or vegan entrée every day.”

The salad bar, Greens and More, features local, fresh greens. “It is a beautiful salad bar with no canned items,” said Aiello. “We use all fresh vegetables. We steam or cook off at some level, or serve it in its natural state. We make all of our own dressings, which is a big hit. Included with that station, we toss the salads to order, with a California olive oil and vinegars if you’d like. I think it is a way to use less dressing.”

Sweet Bites is the dessert station. “We have really cut desserts out except that we have a Greek yogurt bar with all kinds of berries and other fruits,” he said. “We are going through about 80 cases of strawberries a day.”

Ansell added, “We call the station Sweet Bites, with a suggestion that you just need a little sweet end to a meal to finish off your palate, as opposed to a full portion or rich dessert.”

The beverage program at Bruin Plate also follows a healthy profile. “We are not serving any commercial types of sodas,” said Guadalupe Morales, general manager at Bruin Plate. “We are using a blend of juices.”

“Juice is used as a component in all of our different beverages,” said Ansel. “We have 100 percent juice, and then we have fruit spritzers, which are carbonated. They do have some natural sugars in them. It is one part syrup, 10 parts fizzy water, which is a much better profile than a typical soda. We also have infused waters that are infused with fruit flavors. Those are always served with some kind of fruit garnish.”

Dining Service works with a manufacturer for the spritzers. “We formulated the syrup with their help, and they make it for us,” said Ansel. “It is our own proprietary recipe. They make them custom for us.”

The organic coffees and teas are from Dillanos Coffee Roasters. “We wanted a fair trade product, and they had a fair trade product that we thought was good flavored,” said Ansel. “We were able to get it at what we thought was a reasonable price.”

Sustainability was also a main factor for the facility, which Ansel hopes will soon receive Gold Leadership in Energy and

HEALTHY DISH IDENTIFIERS

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| <p>A: Aromatic Spiced Chicken Over Forbidden Brown Rice</p> <p>B: Banana-Pecan Buckwheat Pancakes</p> <p>C: Beet and Tahini Spread</p> <p>D: Beet Carpaccio With Arugula, Quinoa and Goat Cheese</p> <p>E: Cashew-Mushroom Spread</p> <p>F: Coconut Corn Salad</p> <p>G: Curried Tempeh Salad Sandwich</p> <p>H: Fall Harvest Flatbread</p> | <p>I: Salmon, Dill, Goat Cheese and Cucumber Open-Faced Sandwich</p> <p>J: Farro Egg Souffle Vegetable Medley</p> <p>K: Ume-Soy Tofu with Bok Choy Carrot Slaw</p> <p>L: Honey-Soy Chicken with Mitzuna Bean Sprout Salad</p> <p>M: Mixed Green Salad with Chimichurri Beef Tenderloin</p> |
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Environmental Design (LEED) status. The use of local and sustainable products was always part of the plan.

“The hard part in terms of sustainability was really sourcing for us, which is a challenge and a cost impact,” he said. “At lunch we are serving 1,000-1,500 students. Where at dinner, we are serving 1,600-2,000. We need a lot of volume when we find a supplier. Almost 30 percent of our goods are sustainable. We have done pretty well. We have a goal of 20 percent by 2020 for all of our venues. That is the most we have achieved in any of our locations by far.”

Although the facility is all you care to eat, Ansel does not like that term. “It is a term that has been around college dining forever,” he said. “The idea behind all-you-care-to-eat is to offer a wide variety. We have very small portions. We do that because we allow students to have a number of dishes. It is like eating tapas. We know they are going to eat multiple dishes, but we also have portion guidelines and educational programs to help students understand what a proper portion is, what the proper amount of calories is, etc.”

With sustainable and healthy offerings, the facility has the highest per-plate cost on campus. “This was known going into it,” he said. “It was an investment we made. Our range of cost through all of our facilities is wide from \$1.50 per plate at our sandwich shop. Here, it is \$4 per plate. The next nearest one is our Pan-Asian, which is about \$3.50 a plate. It definitely has cost implications, and we planned for it. It is within our budget. It is part of what we think is the right thing to do, and we manage our budget.”

The reaction from the students has been great. “We have gotten a lot of positive feedback from the students,” said Morales. “We have a line every day. The minute we open for dinner, there is already a line of about 100 people. It is great for us. It tells us that we are doing something great. We are doing well. The students love the food; we get a lot of feedback; we can see it in the consumption rates.”

Ansel was a little worried about the reaction when they made the decision to go healthy. “This is our biggest facility, and when we decided to go with a healthy sustainable theme, we were worried we wouldn’t be able to fill such a large facility. We had plans to maybe create some hangout space and use the space in different ways, but I think we are all surprised at how many students come in. It is our busiest dining hall. It doesn’t seem to be cooling off at all — it is not just because it is new. This is the way our students want to eat, and it has already started to invade our thoughts when we look at other menus and other locations.”

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