Stony Brook Opens New Food Court with Sustainable Focus

The new Roth Food Court at Stony Brook University in New York opened last fall featuring five new food concepts. The concepts were chosen after extensive surveys of student preferences. They include Wendy’s, Mamma Leone’s Pizza (made-to-order personal pies), Seawolves Subs (made-to-order), an International Market (rotisserie chicken, home-style sides and ethnic entrées) and Pura Vida, an organic, fair-trade coffee bar.

The food court was designed for maximum efficiency and to accommodate anticipated new technology that will eventually allow students to pre-order meals online and from personal hand-held communication devices. The interior walls surrounding the dining seating area were removed, creating a very attractive room overlooking Roth Pond and the landscaping on two other sides of the building.

It now has traditional tables and chairs, as well as more comfortable lounge furnishings and wireless capability to encourage more students, faculty and staff to congregate and socialize in this area, helping to further develop a sense of campus community at Stony Brook. The new design of Roth Food Court will allow it to serve more than one million customers per year, possibly making it the most utilized dining facility on the Stony Brook University campus, whose food service is provided by Chartwells.

The changes at Roth Food Court are not just physical, but philosophical as well. As part of the launch of a very serious sustainability initiative, Stony Brook University will be the first campus in New York State and the first location on Long Island to introduce an in-vessel composting unit that utilizes aerobic decomposition to process foodservice waste, while avoiding odor and pest problems.

Kitchen waste from the dining center becomes compost. It is anticipated that many of the new biodegradable consumer food packaging products, including paper to-go containers, will also be converted to compost. The compost will be used to enrich the campus landscaping.

Also at Roth Food Court, as well as at other foodservice locations, Campus Dining Services is implementing the “Trim Tracks” program, which measures and records waste produced in the kitchen. For instance, when a chef peels a cucumber, the cucumber peelings are collected for measurement and recording. Over time, Dining Services will be able to see a complete picture of what is thrown away and document trends over time. Customers will also be asked to sort their waste into separate bins for compostable, non-compostable waste and plastics.