



**CR
EAT
IVE.**



Letter from the CEO

Meaningful experiences happen around the table. Your dining program is not just about food; it's about a sense of community that fosters engagement, retention, and productivity.

At Creative Dining Services, we deeply understand the impact of community on the success of an organization and how to strengthen it through an exceptional dining experience. This guide has information about us, but it's also full of information and tips for you. We answer burning questions like, "How can my organization turn our dining program into an attraction and retention tool?" We talk about innovation in dining, and how partnering with a company that keeps things fresh sets you apart. We provide resources that you can use to gather feedback and strengthen your program. We discuss sustainability, how to pursue it well and why it's more important than ever for your bottom line.

So pull up a chair, dive into this guide, and be inspired about the possibilities an excellent dining program presents.



Jim
Jim Eickhoff
PRESIDENT & CEO



Meet Our Team



Jim Eickhoff
PRESIDENT & CEO

- 35 years of senior executive leadership experience at Fortune 200 companies including University of Phoenix, Sallie Mae, and ServiceMaster
- Creative Dining Services has experienced 25% growth and leapt to the 24th largest food service management company in America under Jim's leadership
- First non-founder serving as President & CEO, Jim is committed to excellent customer service, integrity, employee engagement, and growth



Kenneth N. Ivory
VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

- Oversees customer service, sustainability, menu integrity, and facility standards for operational excellence
- Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality and Certified Food and Beverage Executive
- Experience includes: Regional Manager of Food and Beverage Operations at Walt Disney World Parks and Resorts, VP of Operations at Acorn Food Services, COO of Perkins Management Services, and District Manager of Sodexo



Janine Oberstadt
DIRECTOR OF
CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

- LEED® Green Associate pursuing Accredited Professional status
- Creates programming around environmental sustainability initiatives: Food waste reduction and rescue, composting, water conservation, local food sourcing, and more
- Trained with the U.S. Green Building Council, Food Service Technology Center, ENERGY-STAR, Disney Institute, Ritz Carlton, and the Culinary Institute of America



Sheila Rolston
CORPORATE DIETITIAN

- Registered dietitian, passionate about health and wellness education
- 25+ years in operational oversight, state & federal food code and eldercare regulation, and senior dining
- Oversees Steritech food safety audits, allergen awareness, ingredient labeling
- Certified ServSafe Instructor & Proctor, Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics, LeadingAge Michigan, and Senior Dining Association member



Chuck Melchiori
VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT

- Founding member of Creative Dining Services with 40 years of hospitality industry experience
- Supervises the purchasing program and consults for businesses, colleges and universities, and senior living communities
- Previously Creative Dining Services' VP of Operations and Director of Hospitality Services at Hope College



Ian Ramirez
DIRECTOR OF CULINARY INNOVATION

- Provides our clients with creative, quality menuing informed by over 25 years experience in the culinary arts
- Leads Creative Dining Services Culinary Innovation Council to originate on-trend food concepts
- Serves on KitchenAid Commercial Board, Chefsroll Brand Ambassador, Member of American Culinary Federation and Foodstarz
- Contributing editor to Flavor and the Menu magazine and featured in Plate and Foodservice Director



Jeff Banaszak
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- Nationally-recognized leader in cloud technology; featured by Digital Enterprise and Nucleus ROI for the redesign of Creative Dining Services' finance system
- Develops financial dashboards that provide real-time analytics for managers and clients
- Leverages buying power with tier-one vendors to deliver optimal pricing for clients
- Held executive finance positions with Herman Miller and a large education system in New Mexico



Susan Golder
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

- Crafts and implements marketing strategies for Creative Dining Services and for clients' customer engagement
- Previously the Supervisor of Business Development for Cadillac's national advertising agency and Senior Sales Consultant for Targeted Media
- Before joining Creative Dining Services, founded Slingshot Growth Partners sales consultancy



Jane Newton
DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES

- Leads her team to attract, develop, and retain highly-engaged employees
- Continuously improves and implements Creative Dining Service's award-winning comprehensive corporate training program
- Has held positions in HR for General Mills and Amway



Valerie Vander Berg
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Works with prospective clients to develop customized solutions to their specific dining needs and vision
- Acts as a conduit between clients and operations during the introductory and transitional phases of our partnerships
- Has over 10 years of experience in the non-commercial foodservice industry

COOKING UP Community

**Great Dining Programs Create Connection.
Here's Why That Matters For Your Organization.**

I magine the best meal you've ever had.

Perhaps it was a birthday dinner shared with friends. Or maybe it was trying exotic cuisine while on a family vacation. It might even have been a low-key backyard barbeque on a perfect summer evening. Whatever the memory, chances are you were not eating alone. While food and atmosphere play a crucial role, it's the people who make a dining experience special.

Dining is a social hub; it fosters and celebrates culture, brings people together and allows them to share experiences as a community. Community directly impacts satisfaction. And we're not just talking about satisfaction with a dining program, but with an entire organization. Across types of businesses and across industries, if you can build community, you can increase overall satisfaction.

"At its heart, dining is about building community," said Chuck Melchiori, Vice President of Business Development at Creative Dining Services. "When someone is connected, when they have a sense of belonging, they are more likely to stay at their school, in their job, at their retirement center."

CONNECTED COLLEGE STUDENTS

Can community affect students enough to impact retention? And can a dining program really play a role in this?

Yes, according to researchers at the University of Iowa, who identified a link between dining meal swipes, social connectedness, and graduation rate. They collected data

on nearly half a million ID card swipes at the dining hall from about 4,000 students. They found a clear correlation between more meals spent with friends and higher retention and graduation rates. **(See "The Meal Index as a Graduation Indicator.")**

In an article about the study titled "University of Iowa Researchers Find a Link Between Meal Swipes and Social Connection," Von Stange, Assistant Vice President for Housing & Dining at the university, discussed this phenomenon. "When [students] move from their homes that they've spent 18 years in or longer to residence halls, that's a

The Meal Index as a Graduation Indicator

Researchers calculated a meal index, or m-index, based on how many meals a student had and with how many different people. This was measured based on how many times a student swiped his or her dining card within a minute of another student.

To score a high m-index, a student would have to have many meals with the same person. Students with an average m-index had a 74-percent graduation rate. Students whose m-index was a standard deviation higher than average had an 80-percent graduation rate.



“Many organizations have reported that having a good cafeteria is an important component in attracting and retaining talent.”

Sapience Analytics,
Food For Thought—The Office Cafeteria’s Key Role

“At its heart, dining is about building community.”

Chuck Melchiori,
Creative Dining Services



definite change. That sense of connectedness, that sense of belonging is critically important, and we can’t underestimate that.”

Of course, an excellent dining program can also play a role in attracting students to a school. Forty-three percent of students say dining programs and amenities are important in deciding which school to attend.

“More and more, college decisions are made on facilities: Housing, food, and parking,” said Melchiori. “Can the student see themselves living there? Can they see themselves making a residence hall their own? Enjoying a meal with friends at the dining hall? Those are the deciding factors.”

ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

Just like at secondary learning institutions, community in the workplace can improve engagement and retention.

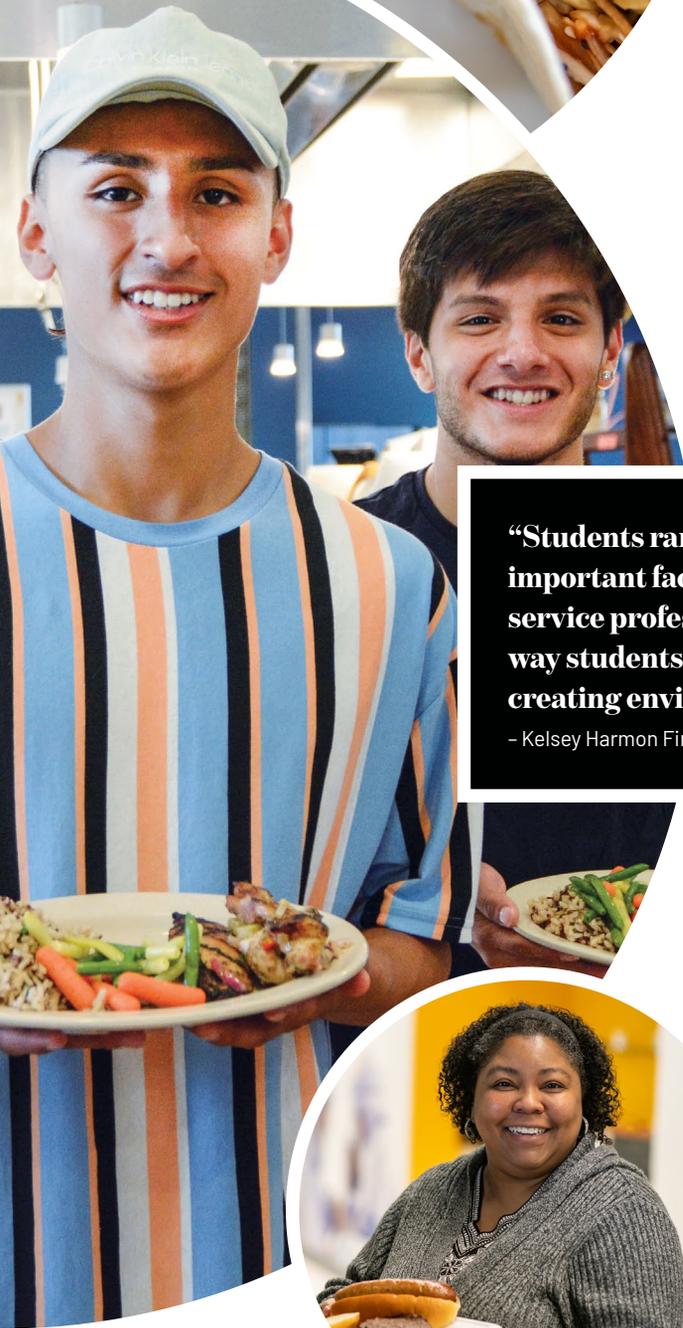
A great corporate dining program supports community and increases productivity, retention, and comradery along

with it. It encourages employees to eat lunch and hold meetings onsite, promoting interaction and setting the stage for collaboration and efficiencies.

In “Food For Thought—The Office Cafeteria’s Key Role,” Sapience Analytics discusses the impact of corporate cafeterias. “Many organizations have reported that having a good cafeteria is an important component in attracting and retaining talent. Clearly the cafeteria has an even more key role in helping the employees stay engaged while they are at work.”

“Think in terms of water cooler talk,” Melchiori explained. “Many teams may be working on many projects within an organization, but when they come together over lunch, that’s when new ideas arise.”

Now that millennials make up nearly fifty percent of the workforce, an exceptional corporate dining program



is more important than it's ever been. "There's less significance placed on dinner. Now lunch is more likely to be a social meal."

Community around the lunch table enhances engagement and the feeling of belonging among employees. This leads to better job satisfaction and higher employee retention. "You don't want to leave your friends," said Melchiori. "A job might pay more, be closer to home, or have other benefits, but when you work with people, have lunch with them, go to happy hour with them, you form connections that encourage you to stay."

SOCIAL SENIORS

For seniors, social isolation can be a significant concern. Community can have real health benefits and increase feelings of belonging. Here's where dining comes in yet again.

Eighty-five percent of seniors say that having someone to share their meals with makes mealtimes more satisfying. Eighty-eight percent say "stimulating conversation" is an important part of sharing a meal.

"Good senior living facilities encourage social interaction between residents by creating common areas where residents can spend time together," says Senior Living

"Students rank 'student community' as the number one most important factor in achieving success. [...] It is our job, as auxiliary service professionals and educators, to impact student success in the way students define it for themselves. We must ensure that we are creating environments that improve the quality of life for all students."

- Kelsey Harmon Finn, NACAS CEO

Link. A great dining program goes hand-in-hand. "Offering a high-quality dining experience" is a top factor in increasing resident satisfaction, the organization says.

We gather together for conversation, for connection, for fun over meals.

"Especially for independent living, it goes back to the idea of 'can I see myself living there?'" said Melchiori. "The community over dining, with fellow seniors and with servers, is crucial."

So how can you make sure that your dining program fosters community? You can offer a program that brings people back again and again.

Sources:

Harrell, Kelsey. "University of Iowa researchers find a link between meal swipes and social connection." *The Daily Iowan*. April 17, 2019.

"Consumer Trends Report: College & University." *Technomic*. 2017

"Food For Thought—The Office Cafeteria's Key Role." *Sapience Analytics*.

"Craving Companionship: Executive Summary, U.S. Study Results." *Home Instead Senior Care*. 2011.

Scheib, Donna Mae. "5 Tips for Improving Resident Retention at your Senior Living Facility." *Senior Living Link*. Last modified October 26, 2016.



Meet Chef Angela McIntosh

Dining Services Director at St. Ann's Home (Grand Rapids, MI) and member of the Creative Dining Services Culinary Innovation Council

Why did you pursue a career in food?

I started in foodservice while I was in high school. I tried other things while in college but always came back to my love for food.

Do you have a philosophy that drives your work?

Food is love. A happy team is a productive and powerful team, so always remember your team is watching you. Always greet others with a smile. I guess that's more than one. Whoops!

What do you like most about working at Creative Dining Services?

I love working for Creative Dining. We invest in our employees and value hard work. We pride ourselves on pushing the boundaries and being innovative. Most importantly, we impact peoples' lives every day in a positive way, be it the people we serve or the people we work with.

What is your favorite meal to prepare or eat?

I love all things made with gluten. My favorite thing to make is homemade sourdough bread. And tacos— I love tacos!

Korean BBQ Chicken Wings

SERVES 6-10

Ingredients:

40 Chicken Wings
1/8 Cup Sesame Seeds
1/4 Cup Scallions, Bias Cut
Cornstarch (As Needed)

BBQ Sauce:

3/4 Cup Brown Sugar
3/4 Cup Tamari
1/4 Cup Water
1 Tbsp Seasoned Rice Vinegar
1 1/2 Tbsp Gochujang
1 1/2 Tbsp Sesame Oil
1/2 Tsp Black Pepper
1 1/2 Tsp Grated Fresh Ginger
5 Cloves Grated Fresh Garlic
1 Tbsp Cornstarch
1 Tbsp Water

Instructions

- Combine brown sugar, soy sauce, water, rice vinegar, sesame oil, gochujang, ginger, and garlic in a saucepan. Bring to a boil.
- Combine cornstarch and 1 Tbsp of water while you wait.
- When boiling, add cornstarch slurry (cornstarch and water) and whisk until thick.
- Dredge wings with cornstarch and shake off.
- Fry chicken wings until internal temperature reaches 165 degrees.
- Toss wings with sauce.
- Plate, garnish with sesame seeds and scallions.

Alder smoked salmon, dashi pickled baby cucumbers, shaved fennel/asparagus with toasted quinoa and broken buttermilk-nasturtium dressing.

Innovate to Differentiate

A Fresh Dining Program Stands Out

Across industries, the competitive landscape is fierce—maybe fiercer than ever.

- In higher education, the drastic drop in college enrollment means institutions have to work a lot harder to attract students.¹
- The rapid expansion of the senior population means more opportunity for senior living centers,² but they must find ways to stand out among an abundance of options.
- Businesses are facing an unprecedented talent shortage.³

These organizations have to get creative to show that they are a better option than their competitors. Those with innovative dining programs break away from the pack.

“Organizations everywhere are seeing that a high-quality dining program can be a selling point and a deciding factor,” said Ian Ramirez, Director of Culinary Innovation at Creative Dining Services. “It plays into organizational culture. One of our clients just built a beautiful new headquarters, and they added beer taps in the office! They know that being modern, forward-thinking, and fun makes them more attractive to prospective employees.”

No one wants to eat the same meals day-in, day-out. Your audience wants new, interesting, and creative dining options.

However, the level of innovation needed depends on who your organization serves. Plus, beloved favorites shouldn't be abandoned. “Younger generations typically want to see innovation, but that's not always true of seniors,” noted Ramirez. “Senior living centers need to find a good balance of beloved favorites and fresh new offerings to keep both the ‘old guard’ and younger seniors happy.”

What one organization needs in terms of innovation might be too much or too little for another.

“That's why we're flexible with menuing,” explained Ramirez. “Every location is as unique as a thumbprint. We design our menus and concepts to cater to each location, and we strive to include ingredients and flavor profiles that are highly creative and current.”

INNOVATION AT CREATIVE DINING

Our Culinary Innovation Council (CIC) develops comprehensive culinary programming that keeps us on the cutting edge of food industry trends.

Ramirez chairs the council, which is comprised of eight members. Members—who are termed—are heads of the market segments CDS serves, representing the following disciplines: Nutrition & Wellness, College Dining, Retail Dining, Senior Living Dining, and Culinary Training.

The CIC is also charged with making sure Creative Dining Services locations have the information and resources needed to embed innovative ideas.

“Other companies have menu and innovation committees, but the CIC is different because we look at high-level strategy and getting from point A to point B,” said Ramirez. “How do we actually incorporate this new idea? Implementation is imperative because we have clients across many segments and because locations and kitchen layouts are so different.”

1. <https://www.foxbusiness.com/features/college-enrollment-decline>
2. <https://www.seniorliving.org/research/>
3. <https://www.hrdiver.com/news/talent-shortage-emerging-as-a-top-risk-for-organizations/546612/>



Za'atar Hummus Bar

About the Concept: Guests choose from a selection of hummus varieties: Charred carrot and ras el hanout; spring pea and spinach; and beet. Then, choices of protein (chicken shawarma, falafel, pakora, tandoori chicken, za'atar tuna, or garlic-preserved lemon shrimp) are added, followed by toppings like turmeric-roasted cauliflower, baba ghanouj, pickled beets, and quinoa, along with sauces like yogurt-cucumber and garlic tahini. The bowl is accompanied by a warm pita.



Chef Lab

The Culinary Innovation Council developed a three-day, boot camp-style training event called Chef Lab to hone the skills of Creative Dining Services' culinarians and inspire innovative thinking. At Chef Lab, culinarians study topics such as:

- Culinary Trends
- Advanced Plating
- Brain Science
- Flavor Mapping
- Sustainability
- Food Costing
- Design Thinking
- And more!



Meet Ian Ramirez

Director of Culinary Innovation at Creative Dining Services

Why did you pursue a career in food?

When I was fifteen years old, my mom told me I'd better go get a job. I started out washing dishes, moved to peeling root vegetables, and the next thing you know, the chef took me under his wing and I was cooking on the line. I really enjoyed it and had a knack for it. It's all I've ever known, but I've never lost the passion for it.

Do you have a philosophy that drives your work?

I have a growth mindset; I'm always trying different things. One of the things I like to do is play with new flavors. Rather than always looking at recipes as a whole, I'll take one ingredient and start creating off of that.

What do you like most about working at Creative Dining Services?

The coolest thing about my position is that it's not a prescriptive role. It's extremely fun and extremely challenging at the same time. It keeps me constantly busy!

What is your favorite meal to prepare or eat?

My favorite food changes all of the time. Currently, I'm really into Middle Eastern, North African and Mediterranean foods—flavors like Sumac, preserved lemon, tahini, Labneh, and wonderful spices. So good and fresh. I also enjoy heirloom grains and roasted vegetables and street food from all over the world. A handmade from-scratch tortilla with grilled Oaxacan cheese, chorizo, and hatch chilis sounds great to me right now!





Take the Pulse of Your Dining Program

A QUICK GUIDE TO GATHERING FEEDBACK

Providing an interesting, healthy, fresh, high-touch dining experience comes with challenges.

You might like to see your customers eat all or several meals on campus every day, depending on your organization type and who your dining program serves. Keep in mind that most of us would tire of eating at our favorite restaurant that frequently!

Adopting a proven method for gathering likes and dislikes and incorporating these suggestions leads to more dining program participation, less dissatisfaction and a more positive impression of your program. Too often, organizations solely rely on comment cards to get these insights. Consider these options for gathering feedback:

CREATE CONVERSATION: TABLE TOUCHES

Ask a member of your foodservice team to visit tables and spend time asking key questions. This helps you get real-time feedback and often provides a higher level of clarity

than you can capture on a comment card. Choose a staff member who projects openness and genuine interest so that you can be sure to garner valuable information. Prompt them to ask questions like:

- Did you like today's special? Would you get it again if we offered it?
- What are you enjoying most about your meal today?
- We're so glad you're dining with us today. Was there a deciding factor that brought you here (e.g., a must-have dish, a special promotion, the ambience)?
- What is one way we can serve you even better?

DISH RETURN DUTY: WHAT'S LEFT?

The moment of truth is when you go to the dish return. Simply make it a point to check how much food and which food is left on plates and in bowls. For senior living centers or other organizations without a dish return, check in with your waitstaff regularly to get feedback on food waste. While there may be varying reasons for leftovers—maybe your servers are over-portioning—it can serve as a credible marker for gauging sentiment about your food offerings. Have a designated place to record your findings.

Grub Gratis: Focus Groups

Everyone loves free food, and they are usually willing to be part of a focus group if you offer to treat them.

TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK FOCUS GROUPS

Take a look at our proven conversation starters. When we facilitate focus groups, we find that the most helpful feedback typically happens with the follow-up questions—the ability to go deeper and get specificity on preferences.

- What's your favorite restaurant to go to when celebrating something special?
- When you're not eating here, where do you eat?
- How often do you go to a coffee shop?
- Do you have a "can't-miss meal" at (YOUR ORGANIZATION)? What is it?
- Do you have a "never-again meal" at (YOUR ORGANIZATION)? What was it?
- Is the dining program a highlight of (YOUR ORGANIZATION)? Why or why not?
- What is the most fun dining experience you've had at (YOUR ORGANIZATION)?
- Describe the best—other than (YOUR ORGANIZATION)'s—dining experience that you have ever had.
- How much do you usually spend when you eat at a restaurant?
- How do you like to pay? Credit card, cash, Apple Pay?

MANAGE THE VARIABLES

For your next focus group, keep these best practices in mind:

- Keep your focus group to 12-18 people. This group size keeps the discussion manageable and allows each participant to contribute.
- Ensure that the focus group is an accurate representation of your organization's clientele, with a good mix of genders and varying ages and backgrounds.
- Stick to mostly behavioral questions. They tend to be the most telling. It's not what the participants say or want. Rather, it's asking them what they do—where they eat, how often—that counts.
- Bring a scribe to take accurate, comprehensive notes.

There's no one "right way" to get feedback, but a good mix of tactics like those above will reveal the insights you need to keep your dining program relevant, interesting and in high demand. Just remember: If you decide to ask for feedback, be sure you're ready to listen and institute change!



AT A GLANCE

Interested in improving your dining program? Here are some of our proven methods for gathering actionable feedback.

Table Touches



- Ask a team member to visit tables and ask key questions
- E.g., Did you like today's special? Would you get it again if we offered it?
- Select a team member who is open and genuinely interested

Dish Return Duty



- Keep track of how much food and which food is left on plates
- Rule out other reasons for leftover food (like over-portioning)

Grub Gratis: Focus Groups



- Treat a group of 12-18 people to a free meal in exchange for their feedback
- Make sure the group is an accurate representation of your organization
- Stick to behavioral questions about what participants actually do



Throughout this guide, you'll see actual recipes served and loved at our locations.

Kimchi Cole Slaw

SERVES 6-10

Ingredients:

6 Cups Napa Cabbage, Fine Shred
 2 Cups Sweet Potato, Julienne
 2 Cups Daikon Radish, Julienne
 3 Red Globe Radish, Finely Sliced
 4 Cups Red Cabbage, Fine Shred
 6 Green Onion, Bias Cut
 3 Tbsp Toasted Sesame Seeds

Sauce:

½ Cup Gochujang Paste
 ½ Cup Seasoned Rice Vinegar
 ¼ Cup Fish Sauce
 1 Tbsp Fresh Grated Ginger
 1 Tbsp Fresh Garlic
 ¼ Cup Lime Juice
 ½ Cup Sesame Oil

Instructions

1. Place all sauce ingredients into a blender. Puree at low speed until emulsified, about one minute.
2. Prepare all vegetables needed, reserving napa cabbage separate.
3. Toss sauce with the napa cabbage until well coated but not wet.
4. Mix in sweet potato, red cabbage, daikon red radish, and most of the green onion.
5. Plate up cabbage and garnish with toasted sesame seeds and remaining green onions.



Brown Banana Nut Butter

Ingredients:

- 10 Overripe Bananas
- 4 Cups Brown Sugar
- ¼ Cup Molasses
- 3 Tbsp Lemon Juice
- 1 Tbsp Cinnamon
- 2 Tbsp Vanilla Extract
- ½ Pound Unsalted Butter
- 4 Cups Walnuts or Pecans
- 1 Tbsp Kosher Salt

Instructions

1. Toast nuts till very dark but not burned.
2. Puree nuts with salt and set aside.
3. Combine all other ingredients in large non-aluminum pot and simmer for 10 minutes.
4. Remove from heat and add nut puree.
5. Chill for service.

Cinnamon Vanilla Pecan Butter

Ingredients:

- 8 Cups Chopped Pecans
- ¼ Cup Light Brown Sugar
- 1 Tbsp Vanilla Extract
- 2 Tsp Ground Cinnamon

Instructions

1. Roast pecans at 325°F until dark brown and fragrant (about 15 minutes).
2. Cool pecans.
3. Pulse all ingredients in food processor until smooth. Do not allow the mixture to get hot while processing, or it will break.

Smoked Cashew Butter

Ingredients:

- 8 Cups Raw Cashews
- Water To Cover
- 1 Tbsp Kosher Salt
- ¼ Cup Olive Oil

Instructions

1. Soak cashews in water for 2 hours.
2. Drain cashews.
3. Smoke at 200°F for 1 hour.
4. Cool cashews.
5. Puree cashews, salt and olive oil in food processor until creamy.

Turkey Stuffed Acorn Squash

SERVES 12

Ingredients:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6 Small Acorn Squashes | 1½ Cup Apples, Peeled & Chopped | 1 Tbsp Chicken Base |
| 3 Lb Ground Turkey | 1½ Tsp Dried Thyme | ¾ Tsp Garlic Salt |
| 1 Large Yellow Onion, Chopped | ¼ Cup Plain Breadcrumbs | ½ Cup Olive Oil |
| 3 Celery Stalks, Chopped | ½ Cup Parmesan Cheese, Grated | Salt & Pepper (to taste) |
| 1 Cup Dried Cranberries | | Salted Caramel Seasoning (to taste) |

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Cut the squash in half and spoon scoop out the seeds.
3. Brush both halves of the squash with olive oil and season with garlic salt and pepper.
4. Place the squash in the oven and roast for 50 minutes to 1 hour.
5. Put one tablespoon of olive oil in a skillet and brown the ground turkey. Season with salt and pepper and cook until the turkey is cooked through.
6. Remove the meat from the pan. Add more olive oil to that pan and sauté the chopped onions and dried thyme for about 5 minutes.
7. Add celery, apples and cranberries and cook for 5 minutes.
8. Return the cooked turkey to the pan.
9. Add the chicken base, mix together, and cook for 4 minutes.
10. Add the breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese. Stir everything well.
11. Evenly distribute the meat stuffing into the acorn squash.
12. Place in the oven and bake for 15 minutes.
13. Sprinkle with salted caramel seasoning.



**Mouth-watering
menus (which are
enjoyed at our
locations!)**

Here we show common offerings by segment, but menu items often cross segments as we work with our clients to build custom menus.



College & University

SAMPLE MENUS

The Grille

- Mediterranean Turkey Burger Blended with Feta, Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Garlic, and Parsley
- Escabeche Grilled Eggplant
- Beer-Battered Atlantic Cod
- BBQ Spiced Sweet Potato Tots
- Brioche Bun

Globally Inspired

- Chicken Tagine with Olives, Preserved Lemon, and Fennel
- Turmeric and Bone Broth Couscous
- Caramelized Parsnips
- R'ghayef—Cumin-, Coriander-, and Onion-Stuffed Flatbread

Mexican-Korean Fusion Bowl

- Jasmine Rice, Local Leaf Greens Medley
- Pork Carnitas, Sesame Fried Eggs
- Pico De Gallo, Avocado, Kimchi
- Cilantro and Green Onions
- Gochujang Mayonnaise

Allergen Friendly

- Honey and Whole Grain Mustard Glazed Pork Roast
- Olive Oil, Parmesan, and Paprika Baked Baby Yukon Potatoes
- Victory Acres Grilled Asparagus with Sea Salt and Lemon

Portabella Muffuletta

- House-Baked French Bread
- Cajun Olive Salad, Roasted Red Peppers, and Grilled Portabella Mushrooms
- Fresh Herb Vinaigrette
- Spicy House-Fried Cajun Chips

Za'atar

- Toasted Cumin and Cilantro Lime Hummus
- Lamb Kofta Kebab
- Chicken Shawarma
- Sesame-Spiced Green Beans
- Crispy Tandoori Chickpeas
- Orange Zest Kalamata Olives
- Cucumber Yogurt Sauce

Build Your Own Mac 'n' Cheese

- Egg Macaroni and Cavatappi Pastas
- Béchamel Sauce
- Fresh Grated Smoked Gouda, Aged White Cheddar, or Sharp Yellow Cheddar
- Smoked Pulled Chicken, Hot Andouille Sausage, Cornmeal-Battered Catfish Nuggets
- Griddled Sweet Peppers and Onions
- Spring Peas and Caramelized Shallots
- Brazilian Vinaigrette Salsa, Olive Tapenade, Fresh Chopped Spring Onions
- Fresh Chopped Parsley, Oven-Roasted Grape Tomatoes, Grated Parmesan, and Sour Cream
- Crumbled Cheese Puffs and Pretzels
- Ranch Seasoning Blend, Assorted Hot Sauces

Business & Industry

SAMPLE MENUS

Mexican Street Nachos

Lime-Marinated Chicken served over Blue Tortilla Chips and covered with a Street Corn Cheese Sauce

Add your choice of Cilantro, Diced Tomatoes, Fresh Jalapeños, Queso Fresco, and a Dollop of Sour Cream

Cardamom Chicken Tabbouleh

Millet Tabbouleh with Parsley, Red Onions, Cucumbers, and Tomatoes, tossed to order and topped with Cardamom and Orange-Marinated Chicken Breast

Finished with a Lemon and Extra Virgin Olive Oil Vinaigrette

Pork Belly Cobb

Mesclun Blend Lettuce, Braised Allegan Farms Pork Belly, Cage-Free Boiled Eggs, Smoked Bleu Cheese, Marinated Heirloom Tomatoes, Bleu Cheese Dressing

Ancient Grain Salad with Grilled Halloumi

Farmed Baby Kale, Arugula, Marinated and Grilled Halloumi Cheese, Pickled Red Onions, Farm Honey Mustard Dressing

Maui Poke Bowl

Cubed Ahi Tuna, marinated in our signature Poke Sauce with Maui Onions, Toasted Sesame Seeds, and Green Onions

Comes with Kimchi Pickled Cucumbers, Fresh Avocado Slices, Sesame-Roasted Shredded Carrots, Thinly-Sliced Radishes, and Edamame

Served on your choice of Seasoned Short Grain White Rice or Brown Rice

Tikka Masala Curried Chicken Satay

Spicy Yogurt Marinated Chicken Skewers, seared and served with a Cilantro Mint Dipping Sauce on Fresh House Naan Bread

Okonomiyaki

Cabbage-, Carrot- and Bacon-Filled Japanese-Style Savory Pancake drizzled with Kewpie Mayo, Gochujang, and Sliced Green Onions

Topped with your choice of Fried Shrimp or Chicken

Craft-Blended Cheeseburger

Smashed Chuck Burger blended with Diced Mushrooms, American Cheese, Crispy Applewood-Smoked Bacon, Fresh Tomato, and Bibb Lettuce, with our Signature Sauce

Za'atar Hummus Bowl

Red Pepper Hummus, Za'atar Roasted Organic Carrots, Orange Zest Kalamata Olives, Crispy Tandoori Spiced Chickpeas, Roasted Garlic and Lemon Tahini Dressing, and a Shredded Kale-Brussels Sprouts Greens Blend

Sided with your choice of Za'atar Chicken Skewers or Spicy Vegetable Pakoras and served with Za'atar Grilled Pita Bread

Taqueria Carnitas Tacos

Spiced House Braised Pork Shoulder, House-Made Salsa Roja, White Onion, Fresh Cilantro on Charred Corn Tortilla with Avocado Crema





Senior Living Community

SAMPLE 6-COURSE MEAL MENU

Pan-Roasted Bacon-Wrapped Dates

Medjool Dates stuffed with a Marcona Almond, wrapped in Bacon and glazed with Pimento Honey

Pumpkin & Apple Bisque

A rich and smooth creamy soup made with Pumpkins and Apples, Fresh Cream, and topped with Spicy Toasted Pepitas

Fresh Radicchio Salad with a Crostini Olive & Anchovy Tapenade

Shaved Fresh Radicchio tossed with a Sherry-Balsamic Vinaigrette, topped with a Tapenade of Manzanilla Olives, Anchovies, Chives, Tarragon, and Extra Virgin Olive Oil

House-Made Honeynut Squash Ravioli with Brown Butter & Sage

House-made Ravioli stuffed with Honeynut Squash Puree, drizzled with Brown Butter, and topped with Crispy Sage Leaves

Fig-Glazed Roasted Quail with Rainbow Chard & Delicata Squash

Roasted Quail glazed with a Fig & Port Demi-Glace and served on a bed of Swiss Chard, accompanied by a Roasted Delicata Squash Puree

Roasted Saffron Pear Tarte Tatin

A twist on the Classic Apple Tarte Tatin, this Tarte Tatin is made with Fresh Pears, Caramel-Butter Sauce with a Touch of Saffron, and topped with a Crisp Pastry Crust and Fresh Maple-Saffron Whipped Cream

Meet Nathaniel Malone

Associate Dining Services Director/Executive Chef at Taylor University (Upland, IN)

Why did you pursue a career in food? When I was 19, I took a job as a deckhand on a tug boat out of Charleston, South Carolina. I had cooked at chain restaurants in high school but hadn't developed a love for food. My captain was a great cook and exposed me to fresh seafood, fishing, crabbing, clamming, and so many other amazing food experiences. The boat traveled all along the east coast, where I was exposed to many different food cultures. The excitement of the experience is what drove me to start down the path of becoming a chef. I worked on that boat for four years before moving back to Indiana to take a job with James Beard-awarded Chef Steven Oakley.

Do you have a philosophy that drives your work? One night, I was working as a sous chef at a fine dining restaurant that closed at 10 p.m. It was just me and the chef left in the kitchen. Two minutes before close, a couple walked in to eat. I had already finished cleaning the kitchen and was ready to head out for the night. Needless to say, I was frustrated that my night had just gotten longer. The couple ordered several dishes, including lamb chops that had to be cleaned and frenched. I did a terrible job, and the plates were getting ready to go out to the customer when the chef came out of the office and saw my work. He calmly told me that I would have to re-make the lamb dish. He said to me, "It doesn't matter how tired you are. It doesn't matter how hard you've worked. It doesn't matter if you are frustrated. The food quality must not suffer. The most important thing you can do in your career is to finish strong." I've carried those words for the last 20 years, and I always finish strong.

What do you like most about working at Creative Dining Services? The creative freedom. I know it's in the name, but being able to have complete control over my guest's experience from menu offerings to special events is not something a lot of foodservice companies still offer.

What is your favorite meal to prepare or eat? My wife is from Argentina and introduced me to some amazing dishes from her home country. One of my absolute favorite foods to make is "Berenjenas En Escabeche." This is a grilled eggplant dish that is marinated in red wine vinegar, olive oil, red chili flake, and oregano. It is served warm with roasted garlic and grilled crusty bread. It's so satisfyingly earthy and rich and always pleases at an event.



“The most important thing you can do is to finish strong.”



Happy Employees = Happy Customers

Experts write books and give keynote speeches on the importance of knowing your customer. What are their buying behaviors? How can you best serve them and differentiate yourself from your competitors?

Simply put, we agree with the experts. Your customers are important to you and to us. We are an extension of community for the student who is away from home for the first time, the employee who spends hours at work away from their family, or the older adult who just moved from her home to your senior living community.

Every interaction we have with your customers matters. We invest in our employees in key ways because happy employees equal happy customers.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: THE POWER OF HUMILITY

Food service directors, general managers and other Creative Dining Services leaders don't just work from their offices. They are directly involved with the day-to-day, spending time dishwashing, prepping food, serving, and more. They roll up their sleeves and build empathy and appreciation for the challenges of each role. Creative Dining Services leaders refer to these hands-on experiences to understand best practices for the back of the house (food prep, inventory) and front of the house (cashiering, serving, merchandising), administration (budgeting, financials, scheduling), and leadership.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH, PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

The Creative Dining Culinary School is an online training curriculum that equips our employees with not only fundamental cooking skills but also the expertise needed to become professional culinarians. High-potential employees learn techniques and concepts through engaging instructional videos from experienced chefs and are evaluated through real-life, proctored demonstrations. These professional development experiences enhance Creative Dining Services' ability to attract, develop, and retain top talent while improving consistency, efficiency, food preparation, and services.

“Every interaction we have with your customers matters. We invest in our employees in key ways because happy employees equal happy customers.”

CULTURE OF CANDOR

All companies say they have excellent employees who are highly engaged, but few can prove it. In our most recent employee engagement survey, 94% of Creative Dining Services employees said they want to do their best each and every day when they come to work. 97% of employees took the survey.

We attribute this feedback to our work environment, in which employees are encouraged to speak candidly, share ideas, and talk with their managers about the challenges they face professionally or personally. Leaders who are successful in our organization show genuine appreciation and are in tune with each of their employees. They connect them with the resources they need to be successful and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

We reward eligible employees for their success through a quarterly Employee Incentive Program. The bonus criteria are in areas over which employees have individual influence and impact.

Our founding philosophy statement is, “Our clients and employees are our greatest assets; without either, we would not exist as a company. We will strive to listen, respond to their needs, and provide growth opportunities for both.”



Conquering the Culinarian Crisis

The Culinarian Shortage is Hitting the Foodservice Industry Hard

Creative Dining Services attracts, develops and retains employees through its award-winning professional development program: Creative University.

In years past, college food was compared to other college food, food from corporate kitchens was stacked up against food served at other corporate kitchens.

But today, hospitality management companies who operate dining programs in colleges and universities, senior living communities, and corporations are catering to students, seniors, and employees who are more educated about food than past generations. They compare their dining experience to their favorite restaurant. They are setting the bar higher than ever before, seeking dining experiences that include the highest-quality food; farm-to-fork dining and cooking; vegan, vegetarian, and plant-forward menus; international cuisine and trending food concepts; and exceptional service.

This new reality has led to a growing and immediate need for highly-trained, on-trend culinarians. They are critical for success in the hospitality industry. Creative Dining Services continuously cultivates innovation and uplevels our culinary chops by investing in and developing our dining teams.

And now we have expanded our educational offerings by launching Creative Dining Culinary School, an online cooking curriculum powered by the highly-acclaimed institution Rouxbe. Why? Because while the pressure increases to serve high-quality restaurant-like food, the hospitality world is feeling the pain of a

chef shortage that has escalated in the last several years.

Potential professional culinarians are deciding that the chef salary ranges are not worth the cost of expensive culinary schools. Now Creative Dining Services can turn employees who start as sandwich makers into full-fledged culinary professionals. Those who work for Creative Dining Services and aspire to be educated culinarians and master their craft can do so—without the debt that can come along with an expensive degree.

With a focus on foundational training, Creative Dining Services offers its team a scalable, affordable, and flexible solution to attract, develop, and retain employees. The training is complete with a variety of automated assessments, and hands-on demonstrations. Creative Dining Services culinarians take weekly lessons to learn the latest cooking techniques. They are also given access to an expansive recipe library and hours of video content.

The Creative Dining Culinary School is part of Creative University, a comprehensive corporate employee training and development program that won the National Restaurant Association's Winning Workforce Award. Creative Dining Services' Creative U curriculums are delivered during a tri-semester calendar of courses focused in three disciplines: leadership, hospitality operations, and the culinary arts.

Balancing



There is increasing pressure for businesses to be more environmentally and socially responsible, and it has become a significant differentiator.

Sustainability-minded millennials are the largest generation in the workforce. Replacing them on college campuses are Generation Z'ers, who take social and environmental responsibility to a new level. These generations want to be part of sustainable organizations—and they want to know what's in their food and where it comes from.

SUSTAINABILITY AT CREATIVE DINING SERVICES

At Creative Dining Services, we embrace triple bottom line decision-making. We are a growth-oriented, profitable company that understands that true sustainability means caring for people and the planet.

Through a balanced approach and responsible programming, we create lasting value for all of our stakeholders: Customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the environment. We also provide a portfolio of customizable sustainability options, under the umbrella of our Grow™ program, for our clients.

By 2030,
Millennials will make up

75%

of the U.S. workforce.¹

87%
believe companies
should address social and
environmental issues.²

70%
said they were more likely to
work at a company with a strong
environmental agenda.³

89%
of Gen Z'ers worry about
the health of the planet.

64%
of college applicants in a 2019 Princeton
Review survey considered a school's
environmental commitment when
deciding where to attend.²

1. Mitchell, Alastair. "The Rise of the Millennial Workforce." *Wired*.
2. "2018 Cone Gen Z CSR Study: How to Speak Z." *Cone Communications*. 2017.
3. Peters, Adele. "Most millennials would take a pay cut to work at an environmentally responsible company." *Fast Company*. February 14, 2019.
4. "The Princeton Review 2019 College Hopes & Worries Survey Report." *The Princeton Review*. 2019.
5. Baker, Beth. "Green Retirement Communities Are Sprouting." *Forbes*. August 11, 2015.



94%
believe companies
should address social and
environmental issues.²



Let's not forget
today's seniors,
who are more affluent and educated
and are increasingly interested in
green retirement facilities.⁵



Grow™ Sustainability Programs & Initiatives:



Local Purchasing

Our farmSTEAD™ program engages Creative Dining Services' accounts with local and regional growers, producers, foodhubs, and markets. farmSTEAD provides a safe, vetted supply chain, allowing our dining programs to augment traditional purchasing with locally- and regionally-produced products.



Plant-Forward

Vegetable-forward menus support health, wellness, and environmental sustainability. Our plant-forward culinary programming is inspired and guided by industry best practices, such as Menus of Change, an initiative from The Culinary Institute of American and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.



Waste Stream

We fully participate in clients' existing waste, recycling, and composting programming. We also provide product selection and pricing analysis for eco-friendly tableware. Staff are trained in Creative Dining Services' proprietary Trashed™ program to minimize food waste and in energy & water conservation best practices.



Consulting

Creative Dining Services provides customized sustainability project management and consulting for additional skilled support in advancing sustainability programming.

Sustainability Spotlight

We source delicious direct-trade coffee from Thrive Farmers. Thrive Farmers' innovative revenue-sharing model emphasizes economic sustainability. It offers higher, more predictable and stable pricing to its farmer-partners across the globe, empowering their businesses, families, and futures to flourish. Learn more by going to www.thrivefarmers.com.



Meet Thrive Farmer Vinicio Gonzalez

Gonzalez is a second-generation coffee farmer located in Concepción Pinula, Guatemala. "Great coffee is about a good plantation—but it's also about the heart you put into harvesting the coffee," he said. Gonzalez strives to only go to the plantation when he's happy because he believes that translates into an incredible cup of coffee!

Creative Dining at a Glance

COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY DINING
SENIOR LIVING DINING
BUSINESS & INDUSTRY DINING

CONFERENCE CENTER OPERATIONS
CONSULTING
CREATIVEDINING.COM



Expertise

Creative Dining has built customer-centric dining programs that deliver outstanding service for over 30 years. We employ a nationally-accredited team of culinary professionals, registered dietitians, and operational leaders who bring passion, ideas, excellence, and (of course) delicious cuisine to your table.



Creativity

Innovative. Inspired. Highly skilled. Our culinarians are always forming flavorful, nutritious, and fun menu offerings. Our Culinary Innovation Council (CIC) develops comprehensive programming that keeps us on the cutting edge of the food industry, ensuring menus are never static. Our dishes and concepts are regularly recognized in industry publications—but our number one priority is always wowing your customers.



Attentiveness

Greater oversight means better programming. Our account managers oversee half the number of accounts than those of our competitors, giving us double the time to listen to your goals, bring fresh ideas to your table, and continually assess and improve our effectiveness. Our three decades of experience gives us tried-and-true solutions, but we constantly evolve to exceed expectations and stay current with dining trends.



Integrity

Our vision is to “be the most trustworthy, flexible, and attentive hospitality partner.” It would be impossible to deliver on this without complete financial transparency with our clients. We go beyond the industry standard of sharing only profit and loss reports by providing a real-time dashboard on costs, revenues, profits, invoices, and other valuable data (including the ability to drill into specific financial details) so you can make decisions in your best interest.

Our Process

1

Assess Your Needs

We'll work closely with you to understand your needs and goals in order to assess how dining services can be best utilized to enhance your community.

2

Develop a Dining Plan

We'll leverage our extensive knowledge of the hospitality field to develop a program specifically designed for your organization, addressing the needs and priorities determined in the previous step.

Professional Development

Our employees are our greatest assets. We work hard to ensure they are highly-engaged and rewarded for results through our quarterly incentive program. We connect our people with resources to be successful and give plentiful opportunities for personal and professional growth. Creative University, our award-winning comprehensive corporate training program, empowers us to attract, develop, and retain employees. Our online Creative Dining Culinary School provides the education to become a professional culinarian.



Flexibility

Each location we serve is as unique as a thumbprint. We adapt our menus, processes, and dining environments based on your specific desires, consulting with you to design and deliver a program that gets your people to the table and keeps them coming back for more. Our creative and ever-evolving menus are based on your diners' preferences. From halal, plant-based, and gluten-free options to mouthwatering favorites like burgers and flatbread pizzas, there's something for everyone!



Sustainability

The triple bottom line approach is the basis of our operational decision making every day. Our Grow™ program is a menu of environmentally sustainable industry best practices that go well beyond recycling, composting and buying locally-grown food to include options like energy and water conservation, waste stream management, food waste source reduction and rescue, responsible purchasing, and on-site gardens. Continually learning and growing, we work with you to implement sustainability initiatives that align with and enhance your organizational values.



Safety

Our managers and key production staff carry ServSafe certifications from the National Restaurant Association. Third-party sanitation audits are instituted at every one of our locations, bringing an extra layer of quality control. Through our Allergen Awareness program, we identify the presence of the eight major food allergens in the items that we serve through the use of icons and labels. Our concept "The Zone" provides an allergen-sensitive station at which guests can receive a complete meal prepared free of the eight major allergens.



Nutrition

Because eating "healthy" means different things to different people, we integrate nutritious options at each dining station in our locations. We offer sensible portions, well-rounded meals, and nutrition education to equip diners to make wise choices. Our registered dietitians are available to address specific dietary needs. We offer a variety of vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options and align our menus with the National "Menus of Change" program that promotes healthy, sustainable, flavorful food choices.



3

Implement a Partnership

We'll work with you to fully implement your program through marketing strategy, in-house promotions, and exciting offerings.

4

Ensure Ongoing Success

We'll provide measurements and metrics to help you benchmark the success of your dining program moving forward.

Why Choose Us?

Here are some of the many ways in which Creative Dining Services' "untraditional" approach keeps your customers coming back for more.

TRADITIONAL DINING PROGRAMS

LACK OF OVERSIGHT

Account managers oversee many accounts, leading to less oversight.

NO FLEXIBLE PURCHASING

A strict list of options for a particular product from a set list of vendors and distributors decreases flexibility.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

Industry-standard profit-and-loss financial models give little insight into what's happening behind the scenes.

INFLEXIBILITY

Set options are offered to every client, with little to no flexibility based on the specific needs of your account.

REPETITIVE MENUING

Lack of variety in meals and experiences leads to boredom with your dining program.

LACK OF CREATIVITY

Innovation and creativity are not emphasized, making other dining options more appealing.

LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS

Halfhearted gathering of feedback—typically through comment cards—does not lead to change.

MINIMAL EMPLOYEE INVESTMENT

Baseline employee training means disengaged employees and high turnover.

Creative Dining Services

Greater Oversight

Our account managers oversee half the number of accounts than those of our competitors. Greater oversight and accountability means better programming.

Flexible Purchasing

We enable you to choose the options that your customers want. Creative Dining Services uses primary vendors and offers specialty vendors and local purchasing.

Transparency

Operating on a management fee model, Creative Dining Services charges an upfront fee. Monthly reports detail exact costs. Any extra revenue is kept by the account. This allows you to make decisions in your best interest.

Consultative Approach

One size doesn't fit all. Our expertise and flexible approach allow us to consult with you and deliver a program that suits your specific needs. We adapt our models, menu cycles, systems, processes, and dining environments based on each client.

Freshness

Our menus are never static. They are always changing to keep your customers engaged and satisfied.

Creativity

Our Culinary Innovation Council, Chef Lab program, and innovative and passionate culinarians ensure that we are always on top of trends.

Responsiveness

We actively seek input from your customers and actually implement changes in response. We don't just rely on comment cards, instead gathering feedback through a variety of proven methods. (See pp. 10-11)

Award-Winning Professional Development

We know that our happy employees equal your happy customers. We invest in our employees in key ways, including through our award-winning comprehensive employee training and development program, Creative University.



Let's Get Cooking!

Interested in learning how Creative Dining Services can help you provide high-quality, creative, and sustainable dining experiences that are customized to your community?

Visit www.creativedining.com or contact us!

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Complete Hospitality Management

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