

FOODSERVICE DIRECTOR

DESIGN

Sizzle & Smells

Value Drivers

Perspective

Free-Flowing Fashionably

The servery in Hearst Corp.'s new café hits the mark on several levels.

Hearst Corp.'s much ballyhooed café at its New York City tower headquarters emphasizes organic food and sustainable farming, with a weekly 'farmers' market' at which upstate farmers sell their produce to the publishing company's more than 2,000 editors, stylists and fashionistas. It also boasts a servery that is, according to veteran consultant Arlene Spiegel, president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates Inc., "phenomenal, modern and sophisticated."

The design was developed by another high-profile consultant, Ira Beer of Beer Associates in Lynbrook, N.Y., working in concert with renowned British architect Lord Norman Foster. It is operated by Restaurant Associates.

The dining area sits on a long ledge in the building's atrium, overlooking the escalators and an indoor waterfall. Spiegel describes the servery as "free flowing, which means that people can go to many different stations or venues."

Spiegel's research, which she said ultimately shaped the design approach, identified a detailed list of value drivers among the Hearst employees, from time of day to price points and the desire for convenience. "They want lots of choices and they want those choices to rotate," she notes.

A primary feature of the design is flexibility. Says Spiegel, "It enables the operator to expand or shrink the stations depending on the season and the type of cuisine they want to serve." For example, the growing popularity of sushi convinced Restaurant Associates to expand its sushi station from one chef serving twice a week to two full-time chefs serving every day. "Because the original design was so flexible," says Spiegel, "they were able to laterally expand the station."



Hearst Corp.'s café boasts a dramatic location.

The menu has featured such items as Cajun-spiced fried chicken; Chinese-style salad with mangoes and shrimp; a sushi combo that includes a California roll and five pieces of sushi; and a variety of desserts. A grill station called La Plancha serves skirt steaks from cattle raised on the Hearst ranch in California.

The Hearst cafeteria's "huge" centrally located self-serve cold food bar is "organized and color coded in such a way that the population that eats there every day becomes familiar with the cuisine (and) the calorie counts," says Spiegel. "They also have wonderful displays and merchandising that tell you the food's points of origin. There are plasma

screens that tell you what the menu is. It's all connected on an intranet, so the guests are able to know what the soup of the day and special features are, and any events that may be going on." Condiments and utensils are positioned after the line in order to facilitate flow. —HR