

Wood's concepts compete with the top names in QSR

By Paul King

ALLENTOWN, PA. — Wood Dining Services Inc. has completed its rollout of a variety of brands designed to compete with commercial foodservice concepts.

Damon Liever, senior vice president of marketing for Wood, said the company now is better prepared to offer clients service programs more customized to their customer bases.

"We wanted to design a package of foodservice concepts that would satisfy our clients and our customers, whether they were employees or students," Liever said. "Our concepts, designed to be similar to those in retail food courts, can compete with other quick-service and casual-dining alternatives."

The program, which included the creation of six new concepts and the upgrading of three existing brands, has taken more than a year to complete. Liever said the concepts were tested in 40 units, and "the initial acceptance [was] excellent."

Liever added that all brands are appropriate for virtually any of Wood's accounts.

The revamped brands are Pete's Arena pizza program, SubVersions salad and sandwich shop, and Stack's Deli.

"Pete's Arena is one of our oldest brands, having been rolled out in 1993," Liever said. "We've redone the menu to offer new fresh pizzas, stuffed pies, calzones and stromboli." At the same time Wood created Pandini's as an alternative. Pandini's specializes in upscale, personal pizzas and pasta dishes.

"Pete's Arena could be compared to Sbarro's, while Pandini's is more like California Pizza Kitchen," Liever explained.

Pandini's menu features such interesting variations as the pizza BLT — mayonnaise, cheddar, chopped bacon, tomato and shredded lettuce — roasted garlic scampi pizza, China chicken and greens pizza, and Thai cabbage shrimp pizza.

SubVersions and Stack's Deli have undergone slight menu revisions and have been given fresh, colorful graphics and new footprints.

The oldest of the new concepts is Jazzman's Café, which debuted in test markets in August 1999. Jazzman's is a Starbucks-style coffeehouse that offers specialty coffee, teas and juices, along with muffins and other baked goods, bagels, sandwiches and salads.



Wood Dining Services' Salsa Rico, designed to compete with other well-known Mexican-food concepts, serves "fresh Mexican grill"-type foods.

The other new brands are Salsa Rico, Sky Ranch Grill, Frøssen Flö and Mein Bowl.

Salsa Rico is billed as a "fresh Mexican grill," said Liever, meaning that no items are manufactured by outside vendors.

"Salsa Rico is designed to be quick-serve Mexican that is higher end than you would expect at a taco bell, say," he noted. "Items are made to order, and we use upscale dishes, such as steak, chicken and snapper. There's no ground beef on the Salsa Rico menu."

Sky Ranch Grill similarly emphasizes fresh ingredients. Three basic items are on the Sky Ranch menu: one-third-pound hamburgers, breast of chicken and grilled portobello mushroom cap. All are served on toasted buns with the customer's choice of toppings. Chicken tenders, onion strings and fries round out the offerings.

Frøssen Flö is a smoothies bar that offers a variety of fruit-based and dairy-based drinks with such names as Very Cocaberry, Tropicola, Frosty Novel, Mangolada, Bango Bash and Purple Potion.

Mein Bowl, the most recently designed concept, is patterned after Manchu Wok. Customers choose two entrées and an accompaniment of "low mein" noodles, rice or fried rice.

Location:

Georgia State University, Georgia;
College of New Jersey, NJ.;
Lockhaven University, Pennsylvania;
Kent State University, Ohio

Program:

Design of branded food concepts,
including Salsa Rico for several
university dining services.

Designer:

Connor Architecture

Client:

Wood Dining Services
Allentown PA