

# ALI WORLD

NORTH AMERICA

THE ALI GROUP MAGAZINE

ISSUE 9 | JANUARY 2021

## ZIGGI'S COFFEE

**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IS KEY  
TO THIS CHAIN'S SUCCESS**

**LAGOMARCINO'S**  
SERVING UP  
FROZEN TREATS  
AND MORE  
SINCE 1908

**OPERATION  
BBQ RELIEF**  
STEPPING IN  
WHEN  
DISASTER  
STRIKES







Welcome to this, the ninth North America edition of *Aliworld*. Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us. Let me extend our deepest sympathies from all of us at the Ali Group to those of you who have suffered personal losses due to the pandemic.

It's no understatement to say that the pandemic has radically changed the foodservice and hospitality business over the past year. Like so many of you, we at the Ali Group are taking every possible precaution to keep our employees safe, in keeping with the mandates of local and national health authorities. This unprecedented situation has put great strains on our employees but I'm immensely proud of the way they have adapted, pulling together to keep our businesses strong and serve our clients during these difficult times.

Many of our companies have quickly pivoted as our clients have had to rethink their businesses. Whether that meant an increased emphasis on sanitization and food safety or assisting as restaurants switched to a takeout-based model, our companies have helped their clients survive — and hopefully even thrive — over the past year.

The articles in this issue of *Aliworld* show how our clients are adapting to these changing ways of doing business. We'll tell you about the latest trends in takeout and delivery. And to help you keep your eye on the road ahead, four prominent consultants share their views on the state of the industry now and after the pandemic. I know you'll find their comments insightful.

We have many success stories for you, such as the story of a young couple who had the dream of running a coffee shop — and who are now in charge of one of the fastest-growing coffee chains in the U.S. You'll see how another entrepreneur continues to capitalize on the CBD trend by making infused gelato. As an example of how to keep going in both good and bad times, we'll show you a family-owned business that has made ice cream for more than 90 years. Also, for a change of pace, we have the inspiring story of a group of volunteers who bring hope and food to the victims of natural disasters.

We at the Ali Group are following the current trend of using more digital and video communications, so I may be seeing you on a Zoom screen in the near future. Looking ahead, I'm hopeful that I'll be able to reconnect with many of you at the NRA Show, NAFEM Show or HostMilano this year.

These are, indeed, challenging times. But I have confidence that we, as an industry, are resilient and will bounce back even stronger than before. From all of us at the Ali Group, my best wishes for a happy, healthful and profitable 2021.

Enjoy *Aliworld*.

**Filippo Berti**  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Ali Group





4

# 01 Cover Story

**4 Building Relationships, One Cup at a Time**  
A Colorado couple are the drivers behind one of the country's fastest-growing coffee chains.

# 02 Trends

- 10 Accelerated and Amplified: Key Trends in the Wake of COVID-19**  
Consultants discuss how the pandemic will have an effect on foodservice in the future.
- 14 The Fast Track: Takeout and Delivery**  
Operators are finding success with expanded takeout and delivery services.
- 18 2021: The State of Drive-Thru**  
A panel of experts from Metro discuss key strategies for effective drive-thru programs.

# 03 People

- 22 American Dish Service Joins the Ali Group Family**  
The latest addition to the Ali Group is a company with a rich family history.
- 26 BBQ Nonprofit Bridges Gap**  
The inspiring story of Operation BBQ Relief and its efforts to help people in need.



30

# 04 Success Stories

- 30 Nashville Donut Spot Distills Sweets and Fun**  
Donuts and cocktails are an unusual but successful combination.
- 34 Hot Pot Hot Spot's Need for Precision Meets Victory**  
At Haidilao, the traditional Chinese hot pot is at the center of the table.
- 38 Landmark 60-Year-Old Restaurant Finds Modern Solutions**  
How the historic Dan'l Boone Inn keeps its dishware spotless.
- 42 Opening a Healthcare Facility in the Midst of a Pandemic**  
To deal with an influx of patients, a Louisiana hospital reopened an underused facility in a matter of weeks.
- 46 Timeless Hospitality, Modern Technology**  
Frozen treats star on the menu at this 113-year-old family business.
- 50 Where "Eats" Meets West**  
A Japanese-style fried chicken chain is making comfort food healthful.
- 54 CBD is on the Menu at Cloud Cups**  
CBD-infused gelato is a growing trend.
- 58 Cool Concepts at Orlando's Orange County Convention Center**  
Customers have a wide variety of foodservice options at Orlando's convention center.
- 62 Hot Pizza and Cool Gelato: A Perfect Pair**  
A Minnesota pizza chain finds gelato to be the perfect complement to its pizza menu.

# 05 Innovation



76

- 64 To B is to Do**  
Two Ali Group companies team up to produce an innovative new product.
- 68 YNOT Create More Storage Space**  
Creating storage efficiency for a growing Italian restaurant chain.
- 72 State-of-the-Art Products Receive Awards**  
Beverage-Air and Electro Freeze win 2020 Kitchen Innovations Awards.
- 74 Scotsman Brings Ice and Water to Almost Any Location**  
Ice and water dispensers gain popularity in nontraditional locations.
- 76 Efficient Food Prep Helps Position Chain for Growth**  
A casual chain is using a Moffat holding/warming cabinet to prepare food more efficiently.
- 78 Bringing Safety and Sustainability to the Forefront**  
Producing ice safely and with less environmental impact.
- 80 High-Speed Cooking Made Easy with XpressChef**  
ACP's high-speed ovens help foodservice operations trim their production time.

# 06 Ali Group

- 82 Our Companies**  
Ali Group global expertise
- 84 Your Global Partner**  
Ali Group contact information around the globe



58



22



# 01

Cover Story

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, ONE CUP AT A TIME



Ziggie's Coffee's Co-Founders  
Brandon and Camrin Knudsen

**T**he original career goal of Ziggie's Coffee's Co-Founders, the husband-and-wife team of Brandon and Camrin Knudsen, wasn't to own a coffee shop. While students at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Ore., Brandon studied to become a teacher and Camrin a nurse. "We decided very quickly that neither of us really wanted to do that and both of us disliked school," Brandon jokes.

The Knudsen's were avid basketball players and while Brandon was on the court, Camrin took a part-time job at a local coffee shop. She was "just crushing it," Brandon says, earning as much as \$100 in tips during an average morning shift. That success convinced them

Cultivating good relationships — with customers, employees and suppliers — is critical to operating a successful business, and that has been key to the success of Ziggie's Coffee.





**One of the things that differentiates Ziggi's from other coffee shops is a focus on customer service and really reading the customer's needs.**

that they should operate a coffee shop of their own.

The couple moved to Colorado in 2003, staying with Brandon's sister, "until we figured out what we wanted to do with ourselves," he says. Brandon took a night shift job at a Denver ice cream manufacturing plant while the couple spent their days looking for a coffee shop they could purchase. "We had no money, no credit, no assets and no clue as to what we were doing," Brandon says.

After months of looking, the Knudsens found a small coffee-and-sandwich shop for sale in Thornton, Colo., about 10 miles north of Denver. The shop's current owners "had been running it for seven or eight years and they were ready to be done [with] working 15 hours a day," he says. With a loan from Camrin's family, the couple purchased the shop, called the Hava Java, in early 2004. "We probably only sold 10 cups of coffee per day; the rest was panini sandwiches," he says.

The shop only brought in about \$200 in business on a typical day, not enough for the Knudsens to hire help. So they manned the shop during the day, but Brandon kept his night job at the ice cream plant. After his nightly shift, he'd drive back to a warehouse club store in Thornton and sit in the parking lot until it opened. "I'd go in and buy just enough sandwich meat and sides to get through the lunch rush," he says. Then it was back to Hava Java to work the breakfast and lunch shifts, catch a few hours of sleep and start the process all over again.

On top of everything else, Camrin had just given birth to the Knudsens' first child, and since they couldn't afford a sitter they brought him to the

shop with them. Fortunately, Brandon says, "we had the nicest group of elderly ladies who'd come in every morning and they would hold our baby. They'd say, 'Give me Elijah. You guys get through your rush.'"

Around this time, the Knudsens' coffee roaster presented the couple with what seemed like a crazy idea: partnering with them on a second coffee shop. "My wife is like, 'Are you kidding me?'" Brandon says. "I just felt like we could do it. I like the business, and I'm hopelessly optimistic."

Even though Hava Java was still losing money and Brandon was still working at the ice cream factory, they took the opportunity and opened Gizzi's Coffee in 2004 in Longmont, Colo. In late 2004, Gizzi's would become Ziggi's Coffee.

For a few months, the Knudsens operated both stores but sold Hava Java late in the year to concentrate solely on building the Ziggi's business. By 2010, the partners were doing well enough to open a second location — a double-sided drive-thru — in Longmont. Drive-thru has been an important part of the chain's design from the beginning: Most of Ziggi's units have a drive-thru lane and many of them have two.

Ziggi's opened a new unit in each of the next four years, and in 2016 it launched an ambitious franchise program. The chain's first franchise location opened in 2017 in Loveland, Colo. Ziggi's now has 26 units in operation, reaching from California to Iowa. Seven of the stores are corporate locations and franchisees own the remaining 19. Knudsen expects to have a total of 65 franchised units open by 2022.

**Knowing the Customer**

One of the things that differentiates Ziggi's from other coffee shops is a focus on customer service and really reading the customer's needs. The chain tasks employees with putting the company's slogan, "The best part of your day," into action. "We want to look at the person coming up to the counter and size them up," Brandon says. "One person wants me to shut up and give them their coffee. They look grumpy. Just give them their coffee and let them get out of there — that's the best part of their day. Then you get the person who walks in and wants to talk about everything you can think of. So we talk to them. That's the best part of their day."

According to Brandon, making that personal connection is as important behind the counter as in front. "I want to surround myself with people who are awesome at what they do," he says. The business relationship with the Thwaites brothers has become a friendship as well; their families go on vacation together. Various Knudsen family members work for Ziggi's, as do some of the students Brandon coached at basketball. "I need to have a personal connection with someone or they're not going to be part of our team," he says.

**Finding the Right Machine**

When customers come to Ziggi's, they know they're going to get a fresh,

**What's in a Name?**

On "Wheel of Fortune," buying a vowel can sometimes be the key to riches. But for Ziggi's Coffee, buying a consonant — specifically, the letter "G" — was the first step to success.

When the Knudsens and their original business partner (who was also their coffee roaster) opened their first café together in Longmont, Colo., in 2004, they named it Gizzi's. Six months into the partnership, there was a disagreement and "it got rocky," in Brandon Knudsen's words. His father stepped in to buy out the partner. But the partner decided that he wanted to keep the Gizzi's name. "We were totally broke," Knudsen says. "I was already in debt, and my dad had spent every penny he had." A protracted legal battle to secure the name was out of the question.

Brothers Tommy and Tim Thwaites and their fledgling Coda Coffee business came to the rescue. Knudsen told Tommy Thwaites about the problems he was having with his business partner — and that he was looking for a new coffee roaster. "You're in luck," Thwaites told him. "We'll be your roaster, and we'll pay for your signs." That was the start of the successful relationship between Ziggi's and Coda.

Even with outside help, "the only way we could afford to change the name was to rearrange the letters on each sign," Knudsen says. So the Thwaites brothers kicked in \$1,700 to buy an additional "G" for the sign, the letters were rearranged, Knudsen became the first customer for the brothers' coffee-roasting business, and Gizzi's became Ziggi's.



CODA COFFEE: THE PERFECT CUP FOR ZIGGI'S

It's impossible to tell the story of Ziggi's Coffee without discussing Coda Coffee as well. The two companies have more than just a traditional supplier-buyer relationship. Their histories are intertwined and the connections go back even before Ziggi's was established.

Coda Coffee Co-Presidents (and brothers) Tommy and Tim Thwaites got their start in the coffee business in the Pacific Northwest in the mid-1990s. They worked for a coffee roaster in Seattle for about 10 years before moving away and getting out of the coffee business. "In 2005, my brother and I were both off in some other directions," says Tommy Thwaites. "I was selling subprime mortgages; my brother was selling insurance." Both of them soon tired of what they were doing and got back into the coffee game, working for a roaster based in Denver that supplied Ziggi's (or as it was known then, Gizzi's) Coffee.

"We didn't like the ethics of that company," Thwaites says, and the brothers decided they'd start up a coffee roasting business of their own. Backed by some money from their parents, the brothers started Coda Coffee in Denver in 2005. Brandon Knudsen was also branching out on his own and happened to call the Thwaites brothers on their first official day of operation. "He became customer number one for Coda," says Thwaites. "He was invoice number one

Like Ziggi's, Coda Coffee believes in being a good corporate citizen. It has received commendations for its environmental practices from the Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment and is a Certified B Corporation. Coda also gives back by doing community service projects in their growers' home countries. "We've graded roads, built community centers, donated money for a cupping lab and donated money for a computer lab for the kids," Tommy says. That social responsibility aligns with the community-focused way Ziggi's does business. "There's so many cool things they do.



Coda Coffee Co-Presidents Tim Thwaites (left) and Tommy Thwaites (right)

They build schools, they take care of the farmers," Brandon Knudsen says. "Tommy and Tim are the best at what they do."

As with many coffee companies, Coda is organic-certified and Fair Trade Certified™. But its Farm2Cup certification may be the most meaningful. "It's our own made-up certification," Thwaites says. "We wanted a way to denote coffees where we really felt a strong relationship with the grower." This certification denotes coffees from areas, where Thwaites says, "we've walked the fields: Omar is the guy in Honduras, Emilio is the guy in El Salvador. When we know a farmer or a co-op we buy from, we like to build that relationship."



for Coda." From that point on, Coda has been an integral part of the Ziggi's Coffee success story, providing the chain with all its coffee. The Thwaites brothers would officially become partners in Ziggi's when its franchise program started in 2016.

delicious cup of coffee every time. And that only comes from coffee machines that are dependable, which Ziggi's previous machines weren't. "I knew we had a problem," Knudsen says.

The chain was "just dumping money into service," says Javier Palacio, Regional Service Manager for 9 Bar Tech Co. in Denver. "So I mentioned, 'Have you ever taken a look at Egro?'" Palacio did an in-house demo of the Egro ONE Pure Coffee fully automatic espresso machine for Ziggi's, and Knudsen was sold.

The Egro ONE Pure Coffee is a high-volume, fully automatic espresso machine with a touchscreen interface. The interface allows for programming of up to 48 drink selections. Its iSteam intelligent steam

wand automatically froths and steams milk, and a USB port facilitates software and programming updates. And it only requires 12 inches of counter space — perfect for small café designs.

The Egro ONE Pure solved a problem for Ziggi's, according to Knudsen, who says that "training a barista to adjust a grind is the worst thing ever." With the Egro ONE Pure, he says, "it's done." Palacio agrees, saying that "it's really hands-off so you don't have to do anything as far as the

user adjusting grinds."

The Egro ONE Pure produces consistent and delicious coffee so that Ziggi's can concentrate on what Brandon says they really specialize in: customer service. The Egro machine "is a huge factor in keeping our labor at less than 25% of sales and giving incredible service," he says. "It's hard to do both but the machine allows us to do it."

That emphasis on customer service is what Don Berquist, Regional Manager for Rancilio Group North America, says is integral to Ziggi's current and continued success. "They're doing it right," he says, "talking to customers, talking to employees and making sure they have a great product."



The Egro machine "is a huge factor in keeping our labor at less than 25% of sales and giving incredible service."



BRAND WATCH



Began production of coffee machines:

1934

Developed the first fully automatic espresso machine:

1972

USA office opened:

1999

Number of service providers:

600+

ranciliogroupna.com



# 02

## Trends

# ACCELERATED AND AMPLIFIED

## Key Trends in the Wake of COVID-19

**It's difficult to disentangle the COVID-19 pandemic from what's trending today in foodservice across various sectors, from senior living facilities to sports and entertainment venues. However, several trends seemingly tied to COVID-19 actually began to emerge before the coronavirus clobbered the United States. For instance, market research firm The NDP Group had already dubbed the U.S. "A Carry-Out Nation" in November 2019, months ahead of the pandemic.**

**Here, four foodservice consultants discuss takeout, touchless service points, open kitchen designs and other trends that COVID-19 either accelerated or ignited, and they weigh in on which trends will persist.**



**Chris Bigelow, FCSI, CFSP  
President  
The Bigelow Companies, Inc.  
Kansas City, Mo.**

### **What emerging trends in sports facility foodservice has the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated?**

The big one is the whole idea of cashless facilities, which was just starting to pick up momentum. The percentage of credit card sales versus cash sales was growing every year, all across the board with the various facilities — colleges, minor league, major league, you name it. With COVID, it's taken on a new emphasis. Everyone's coming out — you see it with restaurants, saying, "We're not going to take cash anymore; we're only going to take credit cards or some type of electronic payment." That whole movement toward cashless facilities is accelerating because of the perception that handling cash is less sanitary. Then, also, we have self-service (concession stand) kiosks, where you enter your order and go to the pickup spot to get it. That was a trend that was growing prior to COVID, and I think it will accelerate because it's contactless — you're not interacting with a cashier.

**Which trends did the pandemic spark that are here to stay?**

The idea didn't start with the pandemic but it's finally gaining traction with COVID and that's preordering food on your phone. In the sports world, we've had apps to order on your phone for at least 10 years but nobody used them. People like to get up, walk around the stadium, see what people are selling and buy on impulse. Now, we're seeing more sports teams that want to have a reliable app to encourage preordering. If you think about self-service, unless the kiosks are voice-activated, people are touching a screen so you still have safety issues. When customers use their own phones to place orders and they're not going to be touching any equipment — that seems like the safest option for the future. I think we're going to see the whole technology piece just continue to grow with touchless equipment. Everyone said condiment stands would be a thing of the past, but manufacturers have come out with touchless condiment dispensers with either a foot pump or an electric eye.

**What design elements or equipment are needed to accommodate pickups if stadium crowds start**

### **preordering by the hundreds?**

When you preorder from a restaurant, they have set up cubicles. In some cases, it's nothing but a shelf and they have your name on a ticket attached to a bag. That's the simplest way to do it, but half-time at a football game may call for different measures. There are electronic cabinets or lockers and you're given a code. When you get to the pickup spot, you punch in the code on your phone and it opens the locker. These can be installed fairly easily as a retrofit. The key is finding the space.

### **Let's talk more about the space requirements for newly designed sports facilities in a post-COVID world.**

We're working on some projects right now, and even though the buildings won't be open for, let's say, four years, we're told to design with another pandemic in mind as a possibility. That means more space. We used to make kitchen footprints as small as possible, with kitchen staff working shoulder to shoulder. Now, the question is how to redesign and move equipment to allow for more space and, possibly, social distancing. Interestingly, something that came up the other day is, do we need a cash room anymore? Normally, in the back-of-the-house space there'd be a pretty good-sized cash room for a major venue where all the foodservice people come and count their money. Well, if there's no cash, you don't need that cash room.



**Andrey Teleguz  
Principal  
SCOPUS Hospitality Group  
Ephrata, Penn.**

### **What are some major foodservice and hospitality trends that you see outliving the pandemic?**

Trends I'd highlight are open kitchens extending farther, perhaps even protruding into the dining room space, creating almost a 360-degree experience. We then need to think about the to-go and takeout trend because that factors into how our open display kitchen connects to the dining room and it raises the question of where the pickup area fits. We don't want people picking up orders to affect the dine-in experience when it comes to atmosphere and safety. The third trend is the dining room itself broken out into smaller, more intimate nooks to allow for spacing.

### **Let's address each of those trends one at a time, starting with open kitchens.**

We'd been doing a lot of open kitchens despite the debate around whether it's going to be too noisy, and do we really want people to see everything? Then, COVID



happened and that has driven a lot of demand for transparency. People want to see what you're doing to their plate and their meal. We call it visual reassurance. Definitely, there's still a back-of-the-house kitchen where all the bulk prep is happening. Open kitchens are not all open air, necessarily. Some are behind glass.

**What else is driving the open kitchen trend? Is it experiential? Do guests expect to see art in the making?**

The popularity of cooking shows and celebrity chefs has really driven that type of experience demand. People want to see the artistry, the culinary flair, and they may even pay a premium for that, to have a seat closer to the action. Ultimately, when the chef's out in front, it's a show.

**On the other end of the spectrum are people who are forgoing the dine-in experience and becoming increasingly reliant on takeout.**

That's huge. People are used to it, and moving forward, there will still be a percentage of the population that's not comfortable eating at a restaurant but they still want the experience of that restaurant's food. So we need to figure out how to alter the back of the house to handle that takeout volume. Maybe you have a more limited to-go menu and a specific, very efficient and streamlined area of the kitchen that's engineered to support that takeout menu and it's not impacting production for the restaurant. Location of takeout is critical in order to reduce cross traffic or

unnecessary congestion inside the restaurant. You'd want a dedicated to-go destination spot. Maybe it's even a street pickup window or some outside connection point so people aren't entering the restaurant and disrupting the diners and making them feel like there's traffic just constantly running back and forth. That's a critical element to creating that safe, enjoyable dining experience. Branding will play a big role. Takeout can now be branded separately, giving it its own identity and driving targeted marketing with a unique takeout menu and packaging.

**How will dining room design and configuration change?**

Things are going to be spaced out differently. Dining room spaces will be divided into smaller nooks with separators, creating an experience of safety and a sense of intimacy within a larger space. Areas will be sectioned off architecturally or by using design elements to create physical barriers other than [plastic glass] partitions, which have been the short-term solution. We're using a lot of green walls, or hydroponics, to create those partitions between tables, and they also bring in nature and that feeling of healthiness. You could do high banquettes or booths to separate people. Even using more lounge-style chairs that have higher backs helps instead of typical bistro-style chairs. Farmhouse tables had been trending, but we're seeing a move toward smaller tables you can group together to create that farm table experience for a larger group, while allowing for more flexibility.



**Stephen Young, FCSI**  
**Managing Member/Executive Principal**  
**Young Caruso (formerly WC&P)**  
**Denver**

**What foodservice trends do you predict will emerge in a post-COVID world?**

We believe the world has embraced certain changes as a culture and one of these conditions is that patrons don't want to be touching surfaces and things that other guests have touched. I also think people more than ever want more visibility into the final preparation or finish of their meal assembly. Guests want to see that their meals are prepared in a safe way. Additionally, guests eat with their eyes so display cooking and prep environments will enhance sales.

**What's being done to minimize touchpoints and potential germ transference?**

For all of the sports entertainment venues as well as the food halls we currently have on the boards in terms of design, we're implementing touchless and frictionless service points and point-of-sale

technologies. And those are mobile app ordering, voice-activated kiosks and self-service scan-in/scan-out markets sort of like Amazon Go's grab-and-go model. This platform allows for fresh and packaged food and beverage products with self-checkout scanning.

With mobile app ordering, when a guest enters, their phones will be pinged and they'll have the option of downloading the app and accepting push notifications for specials, like a two-for-one deal. Furthermore, the mobile app has beacon technology, which tells the operator where the guest is. So, in a sports entertainment venue, you could order from your seat and the food could be delivered to you. If in-seat service isn't offered, you order from the app and it tells you when your food is ready and where to pick it up, and you pay for it through

Food halls present unique challenges in serving food safely.



the app. The concession stand or food outlet just becomes a fulfillment center, and there's no wait time since you're not summoned until your order has been fulfilled.

**Is the technology advanced enough to support a positive voice-activated kiosk experience?**

The technology is there, and the kiosks are just coming into play. A voice-activated kiosk allows you to interact with the screen without touching it, from tapping your card or scanning your phone for payment to ordering with voice commands. And it will upsell your order with, "Would you like fries with that?" or otherwise interact with you. Imagine you're at a Broncos game. The image on the screen could be John Elway talking to you and taking your order. In the next five years it may be a hologram standing there talking to you.

**As far as safety in the era of COVID, how are food halls perceived compared to restaurants?**

I would say food halls are equally as safe as restaurants, and I believe they have a sustainable place in the foodservice world. The key will be the ability to queue and seat guests in a way to satisfy social distancing and provide a sense of safety to its patrons. The ability to provide a display presentation of fresh and safe food handling and finishing will be a big plus moving forward. They may emerge on the other side of COVID looking a little bit different, but they have a place in our heart that excites our foodie spirit that will never go away.



**Amy E. Hegarty, CID, ASID, CFSP, FCSI**  
**Principal**  
**Foodservice Consultants Studio, Inc.**  
**Henrico, Va.**

**In a COVID-19 era, what is the fate of self-service in institutional settings?**

We were in the middle of a senior living redesign when COVID hit and the project stalled for four months. Now it's back on track, but gone are all the self-service elements — no salad bar, no self-serve soup, no self-serve dessert. In university dining halls, there's currently no self-service. Because they have existing self-serve counters, there's now a staff person behind that counter putting three cucumbers on your salad because that's what you asked for. They're even handing forks to the university students — you can't reach into an open container and pick out your flatware. Hiring labor on campus is generally not a problem because of the student workforce, but elsewhere, where staff is preparing food for people instead of doing self-serve, labor is going to be a challenge. My personal opinion about self-serve bulk food is it's not a great idea in an institutional setting because of the risk of cross-contamination; plus, it's harder to hold temperature. But as far as self-serve across all sectors, we're probably seeing just a temporary stop right now. Most facilities of different types will want to get back to offering it because it's an efficient way to get people through a line.

**What other changes were made to that project, and what do they signal about the future of design in institutional settings?**

What we had planned to do is create food stations where chefs would prepare food made to order at beautiful service counters with different concepts — a carvery, a grill, an action station where they might have a wok. The resident would make their choice and have the food prepared and plated right in front of them. Come August, they called the design team back together, and they wanted changes based on lessons learned from COVID. The residents will no longer walk up to a counter. It's all table service now, just like a traditional restaurant, but there will still be a visual connection with the cooking in the form of an open display kitchen. The ability to see food being prepared while maintaining some separation is an important factor in future design projects.

**What other responses to the coronavirus are driving lasting change?**

For senior living, they had to quickly figure out how to safely deliver meals to people's rooms. Universities started offering takeout and delivery to control the number of students in the dining halls. Students got used to these conveniences and ordering food from campus

instead of the pizza place down the street benefits the operator. Delivery and takeout will be more prevalent in the future. Things aren't ideally set up for delivery at this point, but they've figured it out as a short-term solution and I think it's here to stay, although I don't see it taking over. Senior living and higher ed are environments that attract people who want to be around other people. They won't want to be stuck in their rooms all the time eating out of a [polystyrene] box.

**What needs to happen so that senior living facilities and universities are properly set up to provide takeout and delivery in the long-term?**

You'll need staff to prepare takeout meals and do deliveries, and you may need more space and a redesigned kitchen flow. Kitchens need storage room for the to-go containers and maybe for insulated delivery carts. It would be beneficial to have a separate area of the kitchen to store meals once they are ready to be picked up or delivered — so heated or refrigerated cabinets in this area to house the food. You need to address the tradeoff that more takeout and delivery means more packaging. Just think of the enormity of trash being produced by this type of food service. I think the cost of compostable and biodegradable packaging will come down because sustainability is still important. I think things will develop pretty quickly in this area because we need packaging that doesn't fill up the landfills or make you feel like you're bringing home leftovers.





# The Fast Track: Takeout & Delivery

**P**ick it up. Grab it and go. Order it in. These options quickly came to define most consumers' engagement with restaurants and other foodservice venues when COVID-19 hit. And for many — those leery of heading back into dining rooms as well as those for whom takeout and delivery simply became new and comfortable norms — off-premises options continue to hold strong appeal.

To some degree, much of the industry was headed down this path anyway. Even before COVID-19, off-premises orders made up nearly 60% of foodservice occasions and 78% of operators said off-premises programs were a strategic priority, according to data released in October 2019 by the National Restaurant Association. Leading restaurant brands, on-site operators and emerging concepts were already thinking outside the box, tapping new technologies, shrinking

dining rooms, dedicating prep lines, expanding drive-thrus, testing ghost kitchens and making other moves to win with off-premises sales. But closure mandates and massive changes in consumer behavior sparked by the pandemic transformed takeout and delivery from steadily growing trends into critical lifelines almost overnight.

QSR and fast-casual chains with deep pockets and high-tech systems have led the charge into developing next-level off-premises business strategies. But the shift is broad and industrywide, encompassing colleges, healthcare operations, corporate campuses, fine dining and family-style restaurants, whose leaders are reimagining their businesses and accelerating the pace of change to meet the moment and prepare for the future.

The Ohio State University's dining program, for instance, was a pioneer when it brought mobile ordering for pickup and delivery to the college campus in Columbus, Ohio, five years ago. Initially implemented in retail foodservice operations, the system was expanded in summer 2020 to include residential dining halls before students returned to campus for the fall 2020 semester. As at other college campuses, OSU's dining program had rapidly shifted to takeout and delivery-only modes of operation during the pandemic. Having the technology already in place, through a partnership with Grubhub, was a boon, says Zia Ahmed, Senior Director for Dining Services.

"Almost everything we do is off-premises now," he notes. "The good news is that we'd been doing mobile ordering via app and kiosks for takeout for the past four years. Mobile ordering is now the primary option. At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, with nearly 12,000 students on campus, we had 98% of orders coming from mobile devices. Part of our strategic plan was to get to 100% of orders being placed via mobile app by 2025. We're five years ahead of schedule due to COVID-19."

Last summer, the OSU Dining Services team worked not just to expand the technology platform for placing mobile orders but also to expand delivery. Added early in the pandemic for students in quarantine, all meals are being delivered to the student rooms by dining staff. The program also includes a popular new menu of 20-plus refrigerated meals that students can purchase and reheat in their residences.

"Our culinary team did a lot of R&D to streamline our menus for takeout and delivery, and also to come up with a variety of really great meals that can be reheated easily," Ahmed says. "It makes it easy for

students to order a few meals ahead and avoid being around other students and staff at the dining venues."

Even for pickup, OSU's tech platform facilitates social distancing while maximizing convenience and efficiency. Algorithms generate estimated wait times when orders are placed, and notifications sent to students' phones alert them when they are ready.

"In 90% of the cases, our students are there to pickup the food within 30 seconds to a minute after we set the food on the staging shelf," Ahmed notes. "For takeout-based programs, timing is everything. It's really important to have technology that provides accurate wait times. If that's not in place, you're going to have a very hard time managing traffic, as well as holding food and maintaining quality."

At St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., a combination of tech tools and physical modifications is helping facilitate a newly expanded off-premises program. As OSU was in the campus-dining world, St. Jude was a pioneer among hospitals in adopting mobile app-based ordering just over two years ago. Its program enables customers to order ahead for takeout at the hospital's main dining facility, the Kay Kafe, or one of their two retail Starbucks outlets.

Within Kay Kafe, the St. Jude team repurposed an area formerly used as an express grab-and-go station to serve as its new mobile-order pickup area. "The express area was underutilized, so we decided to change it to our Grubhub area," says David Reeves. He formerly served as Director of Culinary Operations at St. Jude before taking a position as System Director of Food and Nutrition at Lee Health in Florida. "It now includes signage that shows the status of orders. If an order shows up there in green, it means it's ready to go and available for pickup in the staging area. It's simple and seamless, and something we'll be expanding on in the future."

St. Jude has already incorporated plans for more sophisticated, tech-enhanced mobile-order pickup areas in future facility designs, Reeves notes. One plan includes Amazon locker-style staging for mobile orders, with hot and cold holding cabinets that customers can unlock with a simple phone scan.

As for order pickup, Kay Kafe's production area also now includes one section dedicated to mobile-app orders. "It was challenging at first, because we'd have people ordering items from multiple stations within the café," Reeves says.



**"The good news is that we'd been doing mobile ordering via app and kiosks for takeout for the past four years."**

**Zia Ahmed**  
Senior Director for Dining Services,  
The Ohio State University



“So, we set up one station that almost exclusively prepares Grubhub orders. That’s worked well to improve efficiency and streamline the process.”

With the St. Jude mobile-app program well established, and with COVID-19 creating a need for greater social distancing on the hospital’s campus, the program was expanded last fall to include delivery. Now, instead of having to come to Kay Kafe or Starbucks to pick up their orders, staff members and others can have them delivered to a centralized pickup point in their building.

Reeves expects lessons learned during the first phase of mobile-app introduction, for order ahead and pickup, to help to ensure smooth implementation of the new delivery program.

“Packaging is critical and definitely a challenge,” Reeves says. “We were trying to utilize sustainable packaging as much as possible, but when we did our trials, we found that the products that held the best were not the sustainable products. It’s disappointing, but if you’re offering foods for takeout and delivery you need to be able to ensure a quality experience by the time someone gets back to their desk to eat.”

As for menu mix, the initial program at St. Jude started with a limited assortment of items available to order via mobile app. It catered to those customers in a hurry and wanting to avoid lines, while those with more time could still browse in person and choose from the entire menu for takeout. “We found that creating a different menu for mobile-app ordering was a good solution,” Reeves says. “It let us start out small and add items as we improved our systems versus debuting with the whole menu, which would have been too complex and time-consuming. Our next iteration, designed for the delivery program, makes almost the entire menu available. We know that



“People have developed new habits and this side of our business is going to continue to evolve and grow.”

**Stratos Lambos**  
CEO and Co-Founder,  
Xenia Hospitality Group

Food orders being packaged for delivery at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.



there’s demand, especially with social distancing regulations now in place.”

**Doing Business Differently**

For many independent operators for whom takeout and delivery had never been priorities, the sudden shift to an off-premises model has been survival-driven but also energizing. Such was the case for Charlotte, N.C.-based Xenia Hospitality Group, which runs two full-service Ilios Noche Greek restaurants; a new fast-casual spinoff called Ilios Crafted Greek; and Big View Diner, a contemporary take on ’70s-style diners serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. The company also has a catering arm, operates on-site cafes for B&I clients, and manages food and beverage operations for a golf course.

Prior to March 2020, takeout and delivery represented just 10% to 12% of overall sales. But when the order came through to close dining rooms, Xenia’s team began plotting an aggressive push toward off-premises sales. Menus were streamlined and reworked to focus on dishes that travel well, packaging options were tested, an app implemented for mobile ordering, multiple third-party delivery partners brought on and curbside pickup offered. And the group stretched further to begin offering a selection of fresh and frozen proteins, dry goods, meal kits, prepared foods, family-style meals, wines, signature cocktail mixes, and even added private-label hand sanitizer to its off-premises offerings.

“We refused to just sit and try to wait it out,” says Stratos Lambos, CEO and Co-Founder of Xenia Hospitality Group. “We knew that we had to go into survival mode. We promoted takeout and delivery heavily on social media and in signs near the restaurants. We ended up being profitable after the first full month of takeout and delivery-only operations. It just started growing incrementally.”

The company’s app has been particularly important to that effort, with 75% of mobile orders coming through it and another 25% coming through third-party platform providers. And many customers simply call in their orders, prompting Lambos to switch to a cloud-based phone system with unlimited lines.

As of early fall, when dining room capacity was back up to 50%, Xenia’s restaurants continued to do roughly 50% of sales in takeout and delivery. “This is something we’ll continue to focus on,” Lambos says. “People have developed new habits and this side of our business is going to continue to evolve and grow. What’s more, for any new operations that we develop in the future, one of the first things on the table is going to be how

we’ll implement off-premises. It’s such a viable and important aspect of our business now.”

James Lane, Owner of Angelo’s Pizzeria & Enoteca in Shallotte, N.C., and Maria’s Pizzeria in nearby Ocean Isle Beach, also has a new appreciation for takeout and delivery. Maria’s, which had been open just a few months when the pandemic hit, and 17-year-old Angelo’s were designed as full-service restaurants in which “hospitality is part of the cuisine,” according to Lane. Neither focused on takeout or delivery.

“We had to adapt and change.”

**James Lane**  
Owner,  
Angelo’s Pizzeria  
and Maria’s Pizzeria



“We were always dine-in, destination-type restaurants, but we suddenly lost our business model,” he says. “We had to adapt and change. We felt sorry for ourselves for about a week and a half but then started figuring out how to evolve so we could continue to serve our customers, just in a different way.”

Focusing especially on Maria’s, which wasn’t yet as entrenched in customers’ minds as a dine-in destination, Lane and General Manager Allison Szafarski studied their existing POS system to learn its integrated digital tools for handling online takeout and delivery orders. The restaurant’s phone system was expanded from four lines to eight. Menus were modified and recipes tweaked to help ensure product quality during transit. Staff members were redeployed to

**First Things First: 3 Keys to Off-Premises Success**

Well before posting takeout and delivery deals on Facebook or embracing the latest mobile-order app technology, foundational work needs to happen to help ensure off-premises sales success, says **Ken Schwartz, FSCI**, President of Tampa-based consulting and design firm SSA Inc. He shares three key moves to make early in the game.



**Streamline the Menu.** “If you have 30 or 40 items on your regular menu, that may be fine for dine-in business for which capacity is limited. But for off-premises, maybe it’s better to pare that down to 12 or 15 items that can be done very well and that hold up well in transit. If the beautiful, 4-inch-thick piece of lasagna that guests enjoy in the restaurant shifts to a half-inch mess by the time it’s taken home or delivered, that experience diminishes the brand.”

**Consider Cook Times.** “The quality of products at the time of consumption off-site versus on-site is often very different,” Schwartz says. “Steam builds up inside of the containers. Breads get soggy and hot foods continue to cook after they’re packaged. To optimize quality, cooking method and duration may ultimately need to be adjusted for the same menu item being prepared for delivery or takeout versus for dine-in.”

**Test and Retest Packaging.** “Sample several types of packaging and test extensively to determine what works best for your specific menu items,” Schwartz suggests. “Test both for each recipe and for duration to evaluate how menu items packaged for takeout or delivery hold up after 10, 15, 20 minutes or more, because that’s how long it can be before they’re actually consumed.”



“Everyone we worked with from Ali Group was so committed to helping us do this and do it well.”

**Allison Szafarski**  
General Manager,  
Maria’s Pizzeria

work phones and expedite inside and curbside pickup areas as well as to make deliveries. Vendors were tapped for packaging samples and storage areas reconfigured to accommodate takeout and delivery supplies. Szarfarski took to social media to promote takeout and delivery specials.

“We had to do a lot of testing and make a lot of quick decisions,” Lane notes. “We also bought some new equipment. With Maria’s being a new business, we weren’t sure the volume that we would need to produce. We quickly outgrew the dough mixer that we had bought.”

Working with Belshaw Adamatic, Lane upgraded Maria’s mixer to one that can produce double the amount of pizza dough in about half the time of the model it replaced. “If it weren’t for the pandemic, we probably wouldn’t have made that investment,” he says. “But it has really helped us be able to service delivery and takeout better.”

“Everyone we worked with from Ali Group was so committed to helping us do this and do it well,” Szafarski adds. “Their leadership, ideas and assistance kept us going and growing. We never realized the potential we could have for delivery and takeout, but now we plan to keep expanding and improving on it, even as dine-in business gets back to normal.”



# 2021

## THE STATE OF DRIVE-THRU

With the attention that's been paid to delivery recently, it's easy to overlook the importance of the drive-thru to QSRs. Here, a team of experts from Metro assesses the current (and future) state of the drive-thru.

**Do you think the increasing volume of drive-thru business that restaurants are seeing is a short-term necessity or is it a major rethinking of how restaurants do business?**

**Heath Taylor, National National Strategic Accounts Manager:** It's a little of both. In the chain world, dining rooms have been shrinking since way before the pandemic started. Some of that is due to customers ordering more via mobile apps, but I believe the pandemic has forced chains to rethink what their business model looks like and how they serve the customer.

**Lauren Noreika, National Strategic Accounts Manager:** Major fast-food chains see about 70% of their business at the drive-thru. Third-party delivery services are chipping away at that number a little, but delivery comes with its own challenges, such as price, food quality and customer handoff. Drive-thrus are still winning, and restaurants that didn't have drive-thrus are now certainly accelerating their strategies in order to add drive-thru.

**Gerry Kenlon, Director of Global Strategic Accounts:** The fact is we are and have been a mobile society. As such, drive-thru and to-go have always been dominant elements in QSRs. Pre-COVID-19, that was trending in fast casual as well. The pandemic has changed societal behavior. Out of pure survival, restaurants that didn't have drive-thru models have adapted to contactless pickup and to-go. And those that did have drive-thru have tried to improve their capacity.

Heath Taylor,  
National Strategic  
Accounts Manager

Lauren Noreika,  
National Strategic  
Accounts Manager

Gerry Kenlon,  
Director of Global  
Strategic Accounts





The Metro2Go™ Hot Station holds takeout food at the perfect temperature.

The increase in drive-thru has obviously affected front-of-house layout and workflow. Has it changed the back-of-house as well?

**Noreika:** We’ve always been trained to think about customer-to-employee safety, but restaurants now have to think about employee-to-employee safety as well. Crew members are being asked to work together within small footprints in a business that typically requires them to be in close contact with one another. Workflows have changed a bit to ensure fewer handoffs and touch points.

**Kenlon:** The most obvious impact on the back-of-house is having enough space and capacity for all the support materials needed to put a drive-thru or pickup order together and having them in proximity to the assembly and staging areas for those orders.

**Taylor:** The same amount of space operators have today is going to have be used for different tasks without interrupting the restaurant’s standard processes. Restaurants will need extra assembly stations, for example, but these must fit into the footprint they already have. It’s going to really get into space optimization.



What are some of the challenges you’ve seen with operations trying to increase their drive-thru traffic?

**Taylor:** Today, some of the business goes across the counter and some goes to drive-thru. When you change that model to just one outlet, you’re going to have some pain points in the staging and holding of product.

**Kenlon:** The biggest challenge is the volume. The drive-thru QSRs, when this pandemic hit, were in position to respond to the public. They could stay open; they could supply meals. They could feed first responders and consumers but they also picked up everybody else’s demand. How do you fit exponentially more demand into a smaller funnel? That’s the challenge.

**Noreika:** Long lines in the drive-thru can deter customers. You see that long line, and you might not want to get in line or wait for food. Speed is very important but it’s a struggle when also trying to maintain accuracy. Customers are willing to wait a little bit longer for accuracy but not too much longer. It’s definitely a balancing act and an art form.

On the flip side, what things have you seen that are working?

**Noreika:** Restaurants began streamlining their menu options so that they could service their customers faster. When you have too much stuff it’s going to take that much longer, so they streamlined to serve their customers a little bit faster.

**Taylor:** Operators are sending employees “upstream” to talk to the guest outside the building or before they get to the drive-thru speaker. They have an iPad or device in their hand, so not only are they taking your order but they can also swipe for payment. The increase in information has helped them keep food quality good and keep the line moving.

**Kenlon:** There are a number of QSRs I’ve been to where there’s an area off to the right of the drive-thru area, separate from the drive-thru lane and the thru-traffic lane. It’s a little staging area, and they tell you to go place your order over there. I’m seeing them use those areas to handle excess demand as well. If you’ve done a remote order, you park over there and we bring it to you. That’s where I see restaurant design fundamentally changing.



Workstations from Metro help keep busy back-of-house areas organized.



The Pull-Out Worksurface conveniently slides away when not in use.

What can Metro offer operators — both in terms of product and expertise — to more efficiently run their drive-thru?

**Noreika:** For years, Metro has offered a service that’s free of charge to our customers called ESP Pro™ — Enhanced Space Productivity. It differentiates us from the pack. We don’t just sell posts and shelves out of a catalog. Our team comes in, we ingrain ourselves into the customer’s workflows, and we design solutions based on what the operator actually needs.

**Taylor:** We were asked to create the Pull-Out Worksurface to get more efficiencies out of the kitchen, whether it be for the drive-thru or mobile app and catering orders. It’s a slide-out assembly station, but once you get through with it you slide it back in place so it’s not in the way as you’re doing other things. It’s a great space utilization tool that pays huge dividends, because it does not affect standard procedures already in place and it also promotes social distancing.

**Kenlon:** Metro has a long-established record of working with global, national and regional chains developing application-based solutions specifically for their unique requirements. We have developed an entire portfolio of modular and flexible drive-thru solutions that can adapt as business models adapt and grow. And now as we add our new line of Super Erecta® Hot Shelving and the Metro2Go™ Hot Stations to our application catalog, we are in a position to provide even more solutions for more customers in different types of environments. This is our wheelhouse. This is what we do.



BRAND WATCH



Founded: 1929  
Products: 30,000+  
metro.com



# 03

People



## American Dish Service Joins the Ali Group Family



Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Filippo Berti discusses the latest addition to the portfolio of Ali Group companies.

### Why the decision to purchase American Dish Service?

Historically, the Ali Group has had a strong portfolio of warewashing companies: Bi-Line, Champion, CMA and Moyer Diebel. ADS is a great addition to our company, as it brings some unique strengths to our group. It has a rich history of over 70 years in commercial warewashing that has today evolved into a company with such diverse products as low- and high-temperature dishwashers, boosters and dish tables and even low-level alarms. The company historically has had a strong management team and innovative products. Its entrepreneurial spirit directly aligns with the values of the Ali Group.

### What value do you expect ADS to bring to the Ali Group portfolio?

ADS offers a complete line of warewashing products and accessories. This will give our clients an even wider selection to choose from to find the perfect warewasher to fit their operation and budget. Their popular Quick Lease program puts quality equipment within the reach of almost every operator. ADS' unique Factory Training Program aligns with the Ali Group concepts of education and sharing our product knowledge.

### How does ADS benefit by being part of the Ali Group?

We have a strong reputation of delivering quality products and unparalleled service to our customers. With its long history of service to chemical distributors and foodservice operators, ADS will benefit by being able to tap into a wealth of knowledge and network of connections. This will allow them to share best practices our brands have carefully developed over the years. We believe it is fundamental to share ideas so that our companies can bring the best solutions and products to our clients quickly. By leveraging the global resources of the Ali Group, we look forward to bringing ADS to a new level of excellence.



Left: Quality control is an important part of the production process at ADS.

Below: Some of the ADS team (left to right): Nate Snyder, Purchasing Agent; Shanna Tibbetts, Human Resources Manager; James Andrews, President; and Ken Eber, Production & Safety Coordinator.



### Ali Group allows its companies to remain independent. How will this serve ADS customers?

From a customer point of view, it means business as usual but with the added benefit of being part of a global network of foodservice equipment companies. All current relationships will continue, and customers — both existing and new — will enjoy the same outstanding support for which ADS is renowned. From a company standpoint, it allows ADS (as with all Ali Group companies) to have the flexibility to do what they do best. This is very important for the Ali Group. It means that each manager is able to define his or her own strategy and retain an entrepreneurial spirit. That entrepreneurial attitude is universal in all of our companies.

### Do you have a message for ADS team members?

Much like the Ali Group, ADS is a family company. ADS was built on three generations of leadership from the Andrews family, and we share their values and dedication to excellence. From myself and all the other members of the Ali Group family, we welcome you and look forward to many years of working together.

### BRAND WATCH



Founded:

**1950**

Size of ADS' Edwardsville, Kan., manufacturing facility in sq. ft:

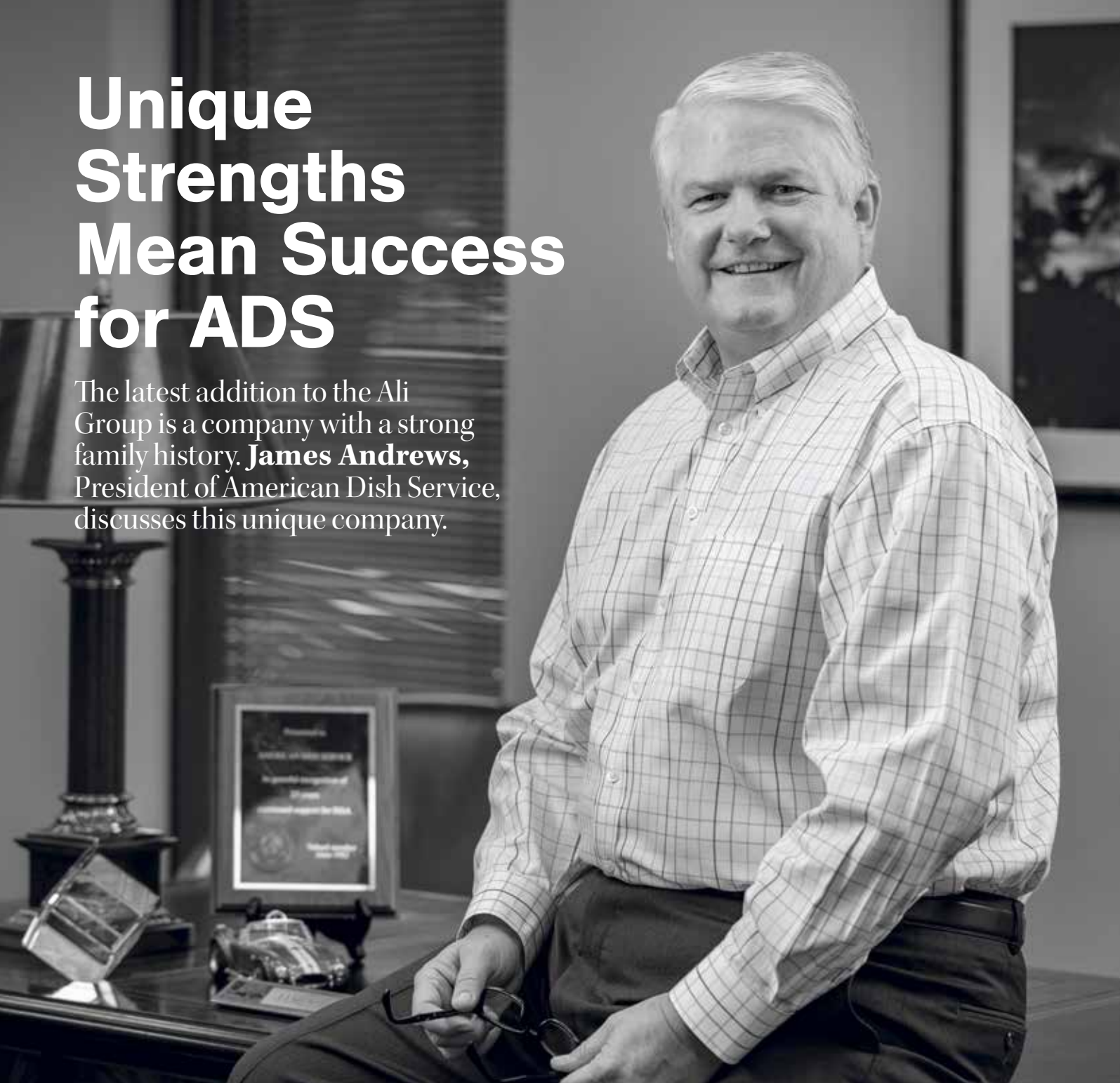
**208,000**

**[americandish.com](http://americandish.com)**



# Unique Strengths Mean Success for ADS

The latest addition to the Ali Group is a company with a strong family history. **James Andrews**, President of American Dish Service, discusses this unique company.



## What unique strengths does American Dish Service bring to the Ali Group?

The ADS brand name represents our values, our commitment to quality, and our ability to deliver consistent innovation to the commercial warewashing industry. We have a reputation in the industry for quality, ruggedness and service-friendly designs. ADS markets to more than 3,000 customers, both large and small, who are primarily focused on chemical manufacturing and distribution.

## Talk a little about your unique direct factory training program.

ADS has always believed that most of the issues encountered by our customer base with commercial warewashing equipment center around improper installation. When installation is completed to proper standards, the machine will operate successfully in the dishroom environment. Our unrivaled hands-on training is delivered in our factory by our designers and manufacturing team. This allows our personnel to evaluate real-world input from the customer base, which helps us manufacture a superior product. As our clients gain knowledge of how to market, maintain and repair our equipment, we gain their insight and knowledge.

## You manufacture a majority of your own components in-house. How does that let you maintain control over quality and the manufacturing process?

Designing and manufacturing in-house as opposed to outsourcing allows ADS to have the most flexibility when it comes to developing equipment. More importantly, manufacturing in-house assures a higher level of quality control and timeliness. Quality and consistency of manufacturing is also important in the assembly process for the production of equipment. If the parts have consistent quality and fit, the machine will be easier to manufacture, and product quality will remain constant and not fluctuate. This helps keep loyal customers.

## Are your products sold exclusively through chemical distributors?

We primarily focus on the chemical distribution and manufacturing side of the industry. We also market through other selected distributors including equipment dealers and broadliners. Our approved dealers have demonstrated the ability to either service or provide for service of the equipment that they have in the field. That support is important for our distributors, the end user and for us. It provides immediate feedback on how well we are doing our job. By choosing our distributors/dealers carefully, it allows ADS to improve our products and be a leading warewash supplier.

## How do you feel about being part of the Ali Group?

Over the past 20-plus years, I have been approached by many companies in the

industry with an interest in acquiring ADS. As a third-generation owner and manager, when I determined it was time to consider the sale of the company, it was important for me to pass the company to a new owner that had values and ideals similar to those we have had over the years. It was also important for the new owner to have the ability to take the company to the next level. What I found unique with the Ali Group was that they were a group of many of the finest brands in the foodservice equipment industry while also being a family-owned business. I felt reassured that the ADS brand would continue to be developed to its full potential, ensuring its continued success for our employees and customers.

## What's next for ADS?

American Dish Service has new designs and other innovations in the development pipeline. We will continue to assimilate into the Ali Group, and we look forward to the future not only as American Dish Service but also as a member of the Ali Group. We see continued success ahead.

ADS controls all aspects of its production processes.



## A HISTORY OF SERVICE

On November 21, 1950, in Miami, Okla., John B. Tuthill and W.L. Dumas received patents for the first commercial chemical sanitizing low-temperature dishwasher. The concept was crude: Chemicals were dispensed by gravity in inverted glass containers and the doors were cloth curtains. Tuthill and Dumas rented machines out, along with chemicals and free 24-hour service, and a new marketing concept was born.

In 1973, the Andrews family, who were the primary stockholders of Chem Mark International, in Orange, Calif., purchased American Dish Service to acquire a supply of low-energy warewashing machines for their chemical manufacturing company. After

Tuthill ultimately moved the firm to Kansas City, Mo., and called

it ADS (which meant Always Direct Sanitation). ADS remained strictly a rental firm until 1979, when it opened its line for public purchase and became the international manufacturing firm it is today.

From its basic machine design and marketing concept, ADS has expanded its line to include

the purchase, both ADS and Chem Mark manufactured warewashing equipment to distribute for their own use. The family sold Chem Mark in 1977 and by 1984, ADS had divested all rental and chemical blending operations to become solely a manufacturer of warewashing equipment. In 1991, James Andrews became Acting President of the company and continues as President today.

From its basic machine design and marketing concept, ADS has expanded its line to include

double tanks, undercounters, glasswashers, conveyors, high-temp dishwashers, tables, water softeners and low-level alarms. ADS products are sold not just in the U.S. but also in Canada, Mexico and South America. To this day, Andrews says, "We strive to update our products to continue the concepts of ease of service and dependability, and to keep up with our industry. The best new designs come from our loyal customer base — the guy in the field — who works with our equipment on a daily basis."





# BBQ Nonprofit Bridges Gap



From natural disasters to global pandemics, **Operation BBQ Relief** steps up with hot meals for first responders and those in need.

**O**peration BBQ Relief is proof that something good can come out of a catastrophe. When an EF5-rated multiple-vortex tornado — one of the most powerful on record — struck Joplin, Mo. in 2011, barbecue competitors Stan Hays and Will Cleaver stepped in to help doing what they do best.

For Cleaver, a graduate of Kansas' Pittsburg State University, about 30 minutes from Joplin, it was a 2-mph ride through an 8-mile stretch of the disaster zone that moved him to act.

"There was nothing above 5 feet high; everything was leveled to the foundations," he says.

When the opportunity came to help, Hays and Cleaver joined forces to convert a cargo trailer into a food trailer, planning to cook 3,000 to 4,000 meals for tornado victims; they ended up serving 120,000.

"The original idea was to take a skill or hobby we all had in common, competition barbecue, and go out and help people," says Cleaver. "The amount of meals going out was eye-opening in terms of a community's short-term needs during a disaster."

It was on day three or four, as both men were walking around the Joplin parking lot where they were serving food, that they began brainstorming how to get more competition barbecue teams involved with their project.

"We've been around since 2011, but we're really a two-year-old company in terms of being up and running and growing," says Hays.

Along with being Co-Founders, Hays serves as Operation BBQ Relief's CEO, while Cleaver serves as Chief People Officer and also oversees financial operations.

## Propelled by a Hurricane

There were a number of challenges in getting Operation BBQ Relief established as a national nonprofit.

"First, it was not having brand recognition, despite major deployments with over 100,000 meals, first in Joplin and then in Moore, Okla. after their 2013 tornado," says Hays. "Even though we thought we did big things and received national media attention, it wasn't until three years ago that people finally knew who we were."

That was when, after Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner invited Operation BBQ Relief to assist the city. The organization was initially tasked to feed first responders, then expanded their reach to help the entire community.

"It was a watershed moment," says Hays. "Before Houston, we were going and grinding and trying to find places where we should be. This literally fell into our laps."

Now, the organization has found its niche, which is to fill the gap from the time a disaster hits to when the local, county and state governments can step in and assist.

"We fill the gap between infrastructure and government services. When businesses open up, we back out," says David Marks. Marks joined Operation BBQ Relief in 2012 as a volunteer. He has held a number of positions in the organization, and is now Head of Sponsorships and Coventures, charged with finding funding opportunities. "I've been in the restaurant business my entire life, since my father is a foodservice veteran," Marks explains.

Operation BBQ Relief's average length of time in one location is two weeks, although after Florida's Hurricane Michael in 2018, the organization was on-site for an entire month.

As the organization continued to grow, Cleaver and Hays transitioned from



solely utilizing barbecue competition teams into building its volunteer base. "We have a huge volunteer database, and anyone can sign up," says Cleaver.

When the pandemic hit, Head of Volunteer Services Brian Polak created virtual volunteer opportunities for those unable to travel. "There is a lot of information that needs tracking in terms of where a meal is going and when it's going out," says Cleaver. "This virtual volunteer group can track remotely, letting those on the ground know what's coming in."

It's not easy putting together a manufacturing and distribution plant in a parking lot in 100-degree weather to produce 180,000 meals. "We push out thousands of meals per day for people who may have not had hot food in three to four days," Cleaver says.

It didn't take long for Cleaver and Hays to realize that scaling an operation from a bunch of barbecue pros cooking next to each other into a goliath footprint taking up two football fields and cranking out 50,000 meals a day would require significant financial backing.

## Rallying Despite Roadblocks

Early on, Operation BBQ Relief looked to local and national foundations for disaster relief grants without success.



“We spent more money in man-hours for those grants than we ever received,” says Hays. “The foundations wanted to know what the money would be used for if there wasn’t a disaster that year, and we told them we’d save it for when there *was* a disaster; they didn’t like that answer.”

Cleaver admits that, in the beginning, there weren’t funds to be had or the staff to help find donors.

“As we grew, the financial side became more intense. We wanted to be a nonprofit that others looked at to see how to do things the right way,” says Cleaver.

Operation BBQ Relief pivoted away from foundations as a funding source and instead sought out corporate sponsorships, which has become its financial backbone. “Big companies’ support, including Farmers Insurance Group, Lowe’s Cos., Butterball, YETI, Blue Rhino and Prairie Fresh, has been key to our growth,” says Hays. This funding was critical to adding much-needed production efficiencies.

With his restaurant background, Marks was familiar with Edlund products. “It starts off where you need a can opener, then an auto can puncher,” says Marks. “But you soon realize the large footprint being left behind by #10 cans. That’s where Operation BBQ Relief’s story starts with Edlund.”

Edlund Regional Sales Director Tom Victory discovered an article about the organization’s use of his company’s products. “We reached out and thanked them for using our products, then asked if there’s any way we could help out,” says Victory. “David was using our manual can openers but with hundreds of pallets of cans, he needed something more efficient.”

Even with the manpower of 150 to 200 volunteers, it was challenging opening cans to serve 25,000 to 50,000 meals in a day.

Operation BBQ Relief, which was using Edlund’s S-11 manual can openers, recently added about a half dozen of the company’s 700SS manual Crown Punch can openers that are portable, don’t require electricity and are easily operated by one person. They also have a heavy-duty

air-powered Crown Punch can opener that they use when dry air is available.

“In the past, it took three people to open enough #10 cans for 25 servings of food; today we can more easily open up to 200 cans a day with each puncher,” says Hays. “It’s also safer, with less repetitive motions.”

Operation BBQ Relief employs Edlund’s CM-1000SS manual can crusher. This has

greatly reduced dumpster needs, as crushed cans take up one-sixth of the space. “We were filling up large dumpsters with uncrushed #10 cans, so this not only cuts down the expense of having a large

number of dumpsters, but we can crush up to 1,000 cans a day for recycling,” says Hays. “It’s these types of innovations that have changed the way we do things and helped our volunteers. It makes a huge difference.”

Shifting Gears

In 2018, Operation BBQ Relief sought to expand its reach beyond disaster programs and hired Jarrod “Jay” Collins, a 23-year military vet who lost his leg as a Green Beret.

“After I ended my military career, I wanted to make a difference, so I came on as Operation BBQ Relief’s second full-time employee,” says Collins. Now Chief of Programs, Collins is tasked to fulfill their mission to connect, inspire, serve and educate.

“Barbecue is about family and community, not just food,” he says. “It reminds people what we have in common, where we came from and what we can do together.”

Their primary methodology for disasters is rolling out semis with smokers and tilt skillets. But when COVID-19 hit, the organization’s format and mission needed to pivot.

The result is Operation Restaurant Relief (ORR), a program that works with local restaurants that have closed or are on the brink of failure due to the pandemic. These restaurant operators are paid for the use of their facilities and can put their employees to work to prepare free meals for those in need.

“We worked with 28 restaurants, created 300 jobs and, so far, provided more than 4.6 million meals,” says Collins. “ORR provides communities with a solution to the problem, and the buy-in has been amazing.”

Not only does ORR provide employment for restaurant workers but it also solves the problem of assisting the supply chain in moving stagnant product.

“We didn’t realize how we were helping the secondary supply chain, which had a glut of food that wasn’t being delivered due to closed restaurants and hotels,” says Marks. “After we made a deal with a waffle supplier, he broke down and cried, saying that we saved his business from closing; all we were doing was moving product to where it needed to go.”

ORR staff worked 120 hours a week from March to early June.



Cans are opened quickly with an Edlund heavy-duty can opener.

“We served more meals in nine weeks than we served in nine years through Operation BBQ Relief. In Pennsylvania alone we served 3.96 million meals,” says Marks. “These restaurants were making 30,000 meals a week with 10 to 15 employees. If you were to scale that in a restaurant, it’s equivalent to doing \$225,000 a week in sales.”

With Operation Restaurant Relief, the organization has been able to benefit communities in different ways, augmenting its business model. “Our non-disaster programs are aimed at

veterans, first responders and active military personnel,” says Collins.

Another recently launched non-disaster program is Barbecue Basics, a two-day virtual event held eight to 10 times a year. Pit masters teach military and first responder communities the art of barbecue.

“We were initially planning 24 to 26 in-person events across the U.S. in an effort to build relationships in communities and seek out future volunteers,” says Hays. “As a virtual class, we can reach even more people.”

Operation BBQ Relief is in the process

of building a kitchen specifically for its Barbecue Basics training.

The Breaking Bread Tour was created as part of its Always Serving Project for hunger awareness. In 2019, participants ran, biked and handcycled from Los Angeles to Tampa, Fla., from the end of April to mid-June, serving hot barbecue meals in eight communities along the way. It marked the beginning of the 2019 DoD Warrior Games, a multisport event for wounded, injured or ill service personnel and veterans organized by the U.S. Department of Defense. The tour will resume in 2021.

“We welcome people to partner with us,” says Collins.

“We’re looking at how our products can help the organization,” says Edlund’s Victory. “We are fully behind their program and what Operation BBQ Relief is doing with national and economic disasters.”

Looking Ahead

After grinding it out for its first seven years, Operation BBQ Relief is finally able to rest on its laurels and reputation. “Now we have better brand recognition,” says Hays.

Funding is a continual challenge for this nontraditional nonprofit. It recently hired a new Head of Culinary, Bryan Mroczka, who has experience streamlining purchasing for a 100-plus site barbecue chain.

“Bryan knows barbecue, has a finance background and is from the competitive barbecue world, so he’ll take our efficiencies to the next level,” says Hays.

Operation BBQ Relief has not only helped many in their time of need but given a reality check to those who run the organization.

“You definitely become more grateful for what you have,” says Cleaver. “And on the flipside, you want to do more for others. We get 10 times more out of it than what we put into it. It’s incredible to slow down and see what Operation BBQ Relief has become.”



BRAND WATCH



Founded: 1925

Distributors and dealers worldwide: 850+

Products sold under Edlund, Edvantage and Bravo! brands: 280+

edlundco.com



## Success Stories



# Nashville Donut Spot Distills Sweets and Fun

A woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a red t-shirt with "DONUTS" printed on it, is smiling and leaning out of a window in a colorful mural. The mural is painted on a dark grey brick wall and depicts a food truck scene. To the left of the window is a blue vertical panel with illustrations of a burger, a taco, and another burger. Below the window is a white counter. To the right of the counter is a red vertical panel with white stars and a bottle of beer. Further right is a green panel with a park scene and a tree. At the bottom right is a white panel with the number "37206" and a small illustration of a food truck. A QR code is visible in the window.





The Belshaw Donut Robot produces delicious donuts quickly.

Right: McCoy takes a fresh batch of donuts out of the Donut Robot.



was no way we could have someone stand there babysitting [the machine] and frost donuts, and wait on people and do all the other things we wanted to do.”

That ease of use, says Belshaw Customer Service Manager Stephanie McDowell, is one of the most significant benefits of Belshaw machines. In fact, it’s one of the biggest reasons operators choose Belshaw. “We have a lot of customers that use and recommend our Donut Robots just because of that. They can have an employee ringing customers up while donuts are being made. They don’t require a lot of labor.”

After the purchase, the Belshaw Adamatic team was helpful in getting the trailer up and running. There were some natural hiccups before McCoy could get the machine working perfectly. To solve them, she simply called the factory’s customer service line. After sending along pics and videos to help with troubleshooting, these issues were worked out and the machine started working as intended. “When I first started, I had some

questions. They were easy to work with and very nice,” she says.

This kind of customer service is a hallmark of Belshaw, says McDowell. “We provide a high level of service all across the board. For the smaller shops we offer the same level of service that we provide to the big chains,” she says.

The flexibility of the Belshaw combined with the Donut Distillery’s fun, high-quality donuts made the trailer a hit. Soon after its opening in 2016, success became a family affair.

“It was going well, and people were constantly asking, ‘Where can we find you? Where can we get this more often?’” McCoy says.

To satisfy demand, the Donut Distillery used social media to announce deliveries to different neighborhoods. McCoy would take orders over the phone and set a time and place for donut distribution, such as Saturday morning at a community pool parking lot. Deliveries would often be handled by her teenage

daughters, who would hand out donuts in 10-inch-square pizza boxes — the perfect size for 25 mini donuts.

The operation also began catering. Weddings, says McCoy, have proven surprisingly popular. While couples might order a small cake for the ceremonial cutting, they can then offer guests an array of donut flavors. Unlike cake, the leftovers are easy to pack up and enjoy later, she adds.

Serving these new markets successfully, though, required more capacity than the trailer could offer. In response, McCoy purchased a second Belshaw machine, this one a Donut Robot Mark II GP electric unit she placed in her family dining room.

“We cut a hole in our dining room to the laundry room so we could plug it into the dryer’s electrical outlet. If I was doing laundry I couldn’t make donuts and if I was making donuts I couldn’t do laundry. We did that for probably close to a year,” she says.

That drive really defined Donut Distillery to Clayton Galindo, President of Mobile Restaurant Supply, which distributes Belshaw products through much of the Southeastern United States. After selling McCoy this machine he helped her get it up and running. “I walked her through how to check her power and make sure she had what she needed. That’s one of the things that stood out for me on this job: She’s just an extremely nice woman who was willing to do whatever it took to make sure she had what she needed.”

Eventually, the Donut Distillery’s trailer and catering/delivery operations proved successful enough to justify opening a brick-and-mortar location. McCoy’s husband, though, wasn’t completely sold on taking the leap until she presented a twist on the concept.

“I said, ‘What if we opened a shop and sold beer?’ Then he was 100% in,” says McCoy.

The Donut Distillery opened its brick-and-mortar location on Nashville’s east side, about a mile from downtown, in April 2019. McCoy says she never considered moving away from Belshaw products for her permanent location. During the buildout, she also chose a direct draw beverage dispenser from Ali Group company Beverage-Air to cool and dispense beer and prosecco, along with a few small items occasionally held in the unit.

As expected, some of the Donut Distillery’s brick-and-mortar business declined during the pandemic. In response to the downturn, McCoy reduced the store’s hours and leaned on its convenient drive-thru. The company saw an uptick in online ordering, with both pickup and third-party delivery available. Alcohol can also be served curbside in sealed cups. Though it’s not ordered often, it’s a nice option for those who want it, McCoy says.

Prepandemic, though, the Donut Distillery was building a following as a spot not just for donuts but for fun experiences.

The restaurant itself, says McCoy, has a relaxed, hip vibe. It boasts a social media-ready mural and a stage where

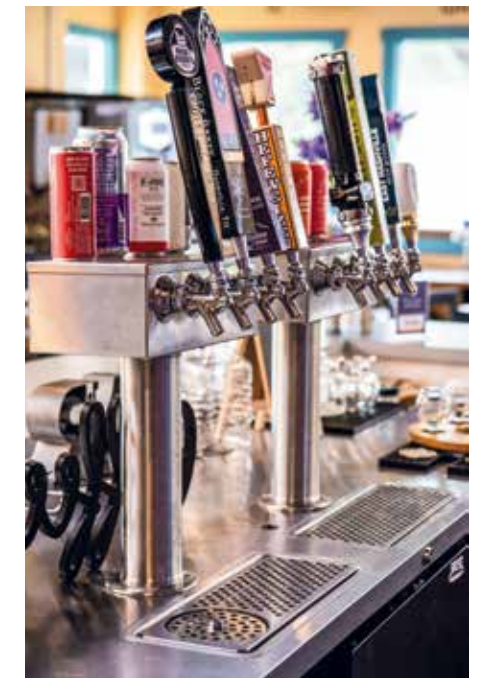
bands played live on Friday nights. One time, McCoy recalls, a church group — just paying a visit as customers — got on stage and gave an impromptu Christmas Carol concert.

On top of music and murals, the alcohol/donut combination also makes the Donut Distillery a popular stop. The restaurant has fun offerings like donut-and-beer pairings and even a mimosa flight with donut pairings. The latter is popular with bachelorette parties, McCoy says.

“They’ll get their day started with a flight of mimosas and a couple of donuts before they head downtown to the real craziness,” she says.

With a bit of luck, Donut Distillery will soon host parties and live music as business and life in general normalizes. Until then, McCoy will continue in her work as Chief Donut Officer, doing what it takes to succeed and continuing to bring smiles to faces with some of the best mini donuts around.

The unique pairing of alcoholic beverages and donuts sets Donut Distillery apart from the competition.



**BRAND WATCH**

**Belshaw Adamatic**

Founded:  
**1923**

Distributors worldwide:  
**20**

Number of countries with Belshaw donut-making equipment installed:  
**123**

**belshaw-adamatic.com**





Refrigeration by Victory helps Haidilao keep its ingredients fresh-tasting.



# Hot Pot Hot Spot’s Need for Precision Meets Victory

**R**estaurant professionals understand the importance of consistent serving sizes and keeping food at safe temperatures. But when it comes to the growing global hot pot concept Haidilao, precision is everything. “Haidilao has a higher requirement for their refrigeration needs than a lot of restaurants out there, very challenging,” explains Alvin Wang, Sales Supervisor at Action Sales Food Service Equipment & Supplies in Irvine, Calif.

Haidilao’s very specific needs stem from its core product, the hot pot, a style of cooking with roots that trace back more than 2,000 years, all the way to Mongolia. Hot pot is often referred to as a dining style rather than a type of cooking. That’s because it naturally provides a communal dining experience.

It starts with a pot of boiling broth — or more than one — that rests in the center of the dining table. Diners choose from a variety of ingredients, from proteins to vegetables, from dumplings to noodles and more. To eat, guests simply place the food items they want into the boiling pot. When it’s ready, guests remove the food items and eat. The self-directed pace can create a leisurely atmosphere. And everyone cooking in the same pot adds a communal element to the meal.



To ensure consistency, Haidilao serves very thinly sliced meats, which allows the proteins to cook quickly. The chain also chills the meats to a specific temperature.

“To ensure the best taste, typically when we put our meat product into the boiling soup base, the slices of meat will stay in the soup base for roughly 15 seconds,” says a company spokesperson. “To achieve this, we need two things: The professional meat slicer has to slice the meat into precise 2-millimeter-thick slices, and the meat has to be at a precise temperature when slicing.”

A Growing Company’s Challenges

Haidilao was founded in 1994 by Zhang Yong in Jianyang, in the Sichuan province of China. “[Hot pot] is easy to make with the right ingredients in the soup base; no need for a head chef,” explains a Haidilao spokesperson. “Also, because the weather in Sichuan province is always humid, the spicy soup base helps to drive out that humidity and people feel better. Believe it or not, people in Sichuan tend to eat hot pot more during summer than winter. As the restaurant business [grew], we just kept that core tradition and improvised from there.”

After a few years of developing the concept domestically, Haidilao began to branch out across Asia and into the western hemisphere. As of summer 2020 the company had 935 restaurants around the world, including 868 spread across 164 cities in China. The rest of the units are mainly in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan but the company has a growing presence in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia.

No stranger to technology, Haidilao rolled out its first “smart” restaurant in Beijing in 2018. The restaurant features a proprietary Intelligent Kitchen Management system that monitors all aspects of the kitchen from product to stock levels and even food expiration dates. It has an automatic serving machine and a customized broth-mixing machine. The restaurant even has the capacity to create a “broth file” for frequent customers to better allow them to customize their orders.

As Haidilao moved into the U.S. market it was looking for a refrigeration company that could meet its specific, unique needs.

Victory Refrigeration was not Haidilao’s first choice, according to Harry Carter, Sales Representative for manufacturers’ rep firm Lund-Iorio. But products from the chain’s initial refrigeration company didn’t meet Haidilao’s exacting specifications.

When Haidilao decided it needed to change refrigeration products, it turned to Action Sales

“Haidilao needs the thawing process under a controlled environment, so they need a freezer that can reliably hold at a specific temperature. Victory [ULTRASPEC™ Series] was the perfect solution for this.”

Alvin Wang  
Sales Supervisor at  
Action Sales Food  
Service Equipment  
& Supplies

for advice. “Haidilao initially reached out because some of their units were hard to get serviced,” says Wang. “There were also long lead times due to the [previous units having] massive glass doors. Haidilao wanted to see if we could provide a different brand for them to test out. I was searching to see which manufacturers have the specs they are looking for — pass-through glass door refrigerators and flexible temperatures for their freezers. I found only Victory has such models.”

Wang spoke with Carter and explained his needs. “The freezer, for instance: Normally, restaurants would just use refrigerators to thaw meat product overnight and cut them the second day; Haidilao needs the thawing process under a controlled environment, so they need a freezer that can reliably hold at a specific temperature. Victory [ULTRASPEC™ Series] was the perfect solution for this,” Wang says.

Working together, the duo convinced Haidilao to try out two Victory models in Haidilao’s Rowland Heights, Calif., store in January 2019. “We performed well at our first test location,” says Carter, “and as we’ve placed Victory units into more restaurants the entire Victory team has been responsive and done an outstanding job with their after-sales support.”

Adds Wang, “Victory took on the challenge and was willing to make modifications to meet the requirement.”

From Victory’s perspective, the issue was simply a matter of listening to the customer and accommodating its desires. “Haidilao wanted that precise temperature, so we put a special feature in [their] units called the FLEXTMP, so they can get to that desired set point,” explains Erica J. Motes, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Ali Group North America – Refrigeration Division. “And when you look at the display merchandisers, the pass-through sliding doors are unique in the marketplace for back-of-the-house operation. That piece itself is a pretty custom, unique offering to Victory.”

Other features of this equipment, such as the variable speed compressor and the adapted defrost, “make the unit so technically sound that it can stand up in this very demanding environment,” Motes adds.

The process went very smoothly, in part because the restaurant chain understood and was able to communicate exactly what it needed, Carter notes. “Working with Haidilao has not been challenging at all. In several respects, I wish I could work with more companies like this one. They know which products work best for their operations, they are detail oriented, and they plan

BRAND WATCH

VICTORY

Established:  
1945  
Products:  
800+  
Product series:  
22  
Product categories:  
9  
victoryrefrigeration.com



Chilled meats ready for dipping in the hot pot.



See-through glass doors on the Victory refrigerators make it easy to locate ingredients.

out their new restaurants with enough time to ensure that they get things right.”

According to Haidilao executives, the hot pot concept has been received warmly by customers in their California locations. “Our attentive service, the variety of soup bases and food selections have won so many high praises from our audiences in the U.S.,” says the spokesperson. “They seem to like

the way we serve our customers, the amenities we provide with all of our stores and the level of food quality and safety. These are things no one has done before in the hot pot territory.”

However, the pandemic harmed restaurants like this even more than other segments because the success of any communal concept like Haidilao lies in a diner’s ability to share a meal. Haidilao has successfully managed to make the best of things by adapting to takeout service.

“We have been serving takeout during the pandemic,” says the chain’s spokesperson. “[We do] the full version of hot pot with soup base separated with all the ingredients, so that customers can go home and boil their own hot pot experiences. We also serve precooked hot pot, where customers order what is in their soup base, we have everything cooked and packed. These are ready to eat, or customers can heat them up and eat later.”

Haidilao has also followed all state-mandated protocols, such as checking employees’ temperatures daily and performing all required cleaning and sanitizing throughout the kitchens and storefronts.

Once the pandemic ebbs, however, Haidilao is positioned to resume its aggressive growth.

“The Haidilao team in the U.S. region is a big team and is getting bigger,” says Wang. “They have several key people that are very understanding in regard to the nature of our industry as well as how our company operates and what to expect. They are very respectful people and professional. I like their corporate culture in that they highly respect their employees as well as their opinions. Their dining concept is highly focused on customers’ satisfaction, so their customer service is one of the best.”





# Landmark 60-Year-Old Restaurant Finds Modern Solutions

**A**

mountain town with a population of 19,000, Boone, N.C., is rich in scenery, recreational opportunities and history. Nestled at the southern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it is an essential stop along the famous Blue Ridge Parkway.

In recent years, the community has become a popular hub for many outdoor activities. At 3,300 feet, Boone has the highest elevation of a town with a population of over 10,000 east of the Mississippi River. In summer, busloads of tourists ascend to escape the heat. In fall, buses transport

waves of leaf peepers taking in the autumn splendor.

Home of Appalachian State University, Boone boasts art galleries, quirky independent shops, and numerous arts and music festivals throughout the year. Named for Daniel Boone, who first explored and hunted in the region in the 1760s, the town embraces its pioneer heritage with an outdoor drama portraying British settlement in the 18th century, the Appalachian Heritage Museum, the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail, a nearby heritage railroad and Wild West theme park.

No trip to Boone is complete without a stop at the Dan'l Boone Inn. It has been a community landmark for 60 years — making it the community's oldest restaurant. The family-style, casual establishment features Southern comfort food such as fried chicken, country ham biscuits with gravy, green beans

and grits. Its reputation for authentic regional fare draws scores of tourists for much of the year. At peak capacity, as many as 300 guests may fill the two-story building. More commonly, the restaurant hosts an average of 80 to 90 diners at any given time.

The Inn has been featured in numerous national and regional publications including *Southern Living*, *Our State*, and *Blue Ridge Country* magazines. This building, originally the home for Dr. R.K. Bingham and family, later served as Boone's first hospital. After a new hospital was constructed in a different location, the building was converted into a rooming house for students attending the nearby Appalachian State Teachers College (today known as Appalachian State University). In 1959, the building assumed its present purpose, and over the years the owners added more dining space.

After satisfying their appetites, visitors can peruse the offerings of the Inn's gift shop including coonskin caps, small craft items, T-shirts, and locally made jams, jellies and preserves. Owner and General Manager Jeff Shellman maintains the tried-and-true menu and atmosphere that has graced the community for six decades. Research shows that 70% of customers choose the Inn through word-of-mouth recommendations.

The establishment features a family-style breakfast on weekends, and a standard lunch/dinner menu each day. Patrons satisfy big appetites with generous portions of scrambled eggs, country ham, pancakes, sausage, fresh stewed apples, and more in the morning. Later in the day, customers choose their own drinks and dessert to go with fried chicken, country-style steak, ham, biscuits and sides.

Interior decor includes antique tools and guns reflecting the pioneer period as well as photos depicting the building in its earlier incarnations. The historic building and well kempt, picturesque landscaped grounds (the Inn has a full-time groundskeeper) are beacons for visitors. Numerous flowers and flowering shrubs compose a colorful, ornamental frame for the white building. "Our front yard is one of our best ads," Shellman says.

Inside, natural wood is in abundance on the floors and ceilings. Simple wood tables and chairs fill out the dining spaces. Two private dining rooms and a porch can accommodate wedding rehearsal dinners, parties and the occasional business meeting.

The consistent bill of fare simplifies operations for the high-volume establishment. With about 80% of its clientele made up of tourists, the key variable is seasonality. Business peaks in the

**The historic building and well kempt, picturesque landscaped grounds are beacons for visitors.**





summer and fall. Fortunately, most tour buses make advance reservations, enabling better staff planning. For the back of the house, the big question each day is: “Are you cooking for 80 today or 500?” Shellman says.

Servers deliver all food and drinks to each table. The Inn’s generous portions and numerous sides are delivered on individual plates. Each table for two receives a minimum of 17 dishes — larger parties generate much more dish use. That’s a lot of dishware to wash in a hurry, especially during peak hours in tourist seasons.

To keep up with high demand, the Inn purchased a high-volume, 86-inch rack-style machine from Champion for the main dining floor. The model is outfitted with a special conveyor attached that circulates dish racks in and out of the dishwasher, washing as many as 277 racks per hour — over 4,400 dishes per hour. The machine operates continuously as necessary, washing rack after rack. A built-in booster delivers a sanitizing rinse of more than 180 degrees F. The custom-designed prewash cabinet automates the prerinse function previously performed by an employee. It’s one less task for the hard-working staff — largely composed of Appalachian State students — to perform.

The Inn’s generous portions and numerous sides are delivered on individual plates. Each table for two receives a minimum of 17 dishes — larger parties generate much more dish use.



The high-volume Champion dishmachine at the Dan'l Boone Inn can wash more than 4,400 dishes an hour.



The state-of-the-art ENERGY STAR® certified commercial dishwasher replaced a smaller, old machine. This highly efficient upgrade has resulted in considerable savings in water and energy. Shellman reports average savings of \$1,800 in detergent, natural gas and water per month.

A Champion high-temperature door-style dishwasher fulfills demand for clean dishes and tableware in the upstairs dining area. This machine has a built-in booster with a special feature called “rinse sentry” that prevents the machine from rinsing if the rinse booster’s water temperature falls below 180 degrees F. “This feature helps ensure food safety,” says Will Means, President, Champion Industries. “High-temperature dishwashing is particularly essential during a pandemic, as it kills more than 99.999% of viruses, bacteria and other pathogens.”

As a high-volume facility, the Inn must dispose of a lot of food waste. In the past, the restaurant scraped all of this waste from plates directly into garbage containers. “Champion recommended that the Inn install the Champion Food Waste Reduction System to better manage waste,” Means says. The waste system conveys food scraps via water through a trough to an auger component that squeezes out the water and grinds the solids. It can process up to 1,250 pounds of commercial food waste per hour.

“It comes out like moist sawdust,” Shellman says. This process reduces total waste volume by about 70%, so there are fewer bags of waste and fewer trips to the dumpster. “Before we installed the waste reduction system, we were emptying the trash three or four times per shift,” Shellman says. “Now, the trash is only half full when a shift ends.”

The system controls odors while reducing ventilation requirements. It ensures that no pathogen, biohazard or harmful emissions are released, keeping the facility, staff and environment safe. The Inn does not compost the food waste, but the machine processes waste well enough to do so.

Before Shellman bought the equipment, Champion personnel visited the Inn and analyzed its operations. This consultation yielded equipment recommendations and a more efficient layout. “By having Champion visit, Jeff (Shellman) was able to maximize the space he had available and improve workflow, save water and energy, and most importantly provide safe and sanitized ware for his customers,” Means says.

The speedier washing capability would allow the Inn to reduce the amount of dishware it needs on hand, though Shellman says it will retain its current volume of stock. After all, the last thing he wants is to be short of clean dishes when a tour bus rolls in.

Shellman has been impressed by how Champion stands by its products. “Tech support service on any issues we’ve had has been remarkable,” he says. For instance, Champion was very willing to modify the main washer to get the best result. “They helped us develop and manufactured a prewash system for our machine using water from our grinder system,” Shellman adds. This improved water efficiency.

Shellman’s investment in new Champion equipment demonstrates his commitment to the Inn, and to preserving the iconic community landmark as a thriving business. Hundreds of Appalachian State students have worked in the restaurant over the years, including Shellman himself. A native of Gastonia, N.C., Shellman worked his way up the ranks to become general manager when he was just 26. He joined two existing partners as an owner in 2009, and he subsequently bought out his partners.

“I came to Boone to go to Appalachian State and never left,” Shellman says. Indeed, there’s something about Boone that keeps drawing fans from all around the South and beyond. The Dan’l Boone Inn will surely continue to be an iconic presence and contribute to the flavor of the picturesque mountain town.

An insulated holding cabinet from Metro, another Ali Group company, helps the Inn keep food warm.



Signage lets customers know their dishware, glasses and cutlery are clean and sanitized.



BRAND WATCH  
Champion

Founded: 1890

Distribution warehouses across North America: 5

championindustries.com



*Ochsner LSU Health Shreveport overcame daunting challenges to quickly open a new hospital, making room for the anticipated COVID-19 patient surge.*

# Opening a Healthcare Facility in the Midst of a Pandemic

**T**he stresses that have been put on the North American healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic have been well documented: overworked staffs, insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) and finding space for a massive influx of patients, to name just a few. Ochsner LSU Health Shreveport is a full-service health system with a 452-bed hospital in Shreveport and a 244-bed hospital in Monroe, La., both of which faced many of those challenges. Ochsner LSU Health's St. Mary Medical Center (SMMC) in Shreveport was under renovation to provide 330 additional patient beds in a third location in the coming years. However, when the pandemic hit, the Louisiana state government issued guidance to healthcare institutions to improve their surge capacity to handle the influx of COVID patients. At that time, New Orleans was a COVID hot spot, driving the sense of urgency to increase beds in other Louisiana areas. In March of 2020, Ochsner LSU Health Shreveport announced plans to increase the ICU capacity at its main Shreveport facility by repurposing the SMMC location for use by its labor, delivery and neonatal and pediatric intensive care units.

The timeline for getting the St. Mary Medical Center operation up and running was tight and getting a patient foodservice operation in place was of critical importance. Since there was no operating kitchen and meal delivery system in place at SMMC, Ochsner LSU Health made the decision to prepare the meals at their Academic Medical Center and truck the food to SMMC for patient meal service. Eric Lyons,

Corporate Director of Standards and Innovation for ABM Healthcare, the hospital's foodservice contractor, describes the timing for the project as, "incredibly compressed. Normally we go into an existing hospital and we typically have 90 days. Here we only had five weeks."

Tasked with getting the foodservice operation up and running quickly, ABM's first call was to Aladdin. Aladdin has been a major part of ABM's expansion in healthcare.

ABM explained the urgency of the situation and the Aladdin team quickly swung into action. "We needed equipment with the ability to keep hot food hot and cold food cold," says Eric Kotheimer, CFSP, Director of Culinary Projects for ABM.

Michael Hils, North American AMS Manager for Aladdin, developed a proposal for the SMMC location. Traditionally, the Aladdin team would have presented the proposal face-to-face, but in true COVID lockdown style, "we did the bulk of it over the phone and in conference calls," Hils says. "We walked them through a day in the life of their operation. How [the food] would be received, how it would be prepared, pickup, transportation...we went through the whole timeline."

To keep the food at the proper temperature during its 3-mile ride from the main facility in Shreveport to St. Mary Medical Center, Hils suggested an Aladdin Convect-Rite® Select system. Convect-Rite Select carts are lightweight yet extremely durable — an important consideration given the fact that they'd be shuttled between the two campuses. Since the carts contain no electrical components, staff can easily clean and sanitize the units. For active heat and refrigeration, the carts are paired with the Aladdin



Convect-Rite 3 INSIGHT docking station. Fully insulated, the carts are suitable for transporting both hot and cold food items. Patented airflow technology helps maintain proper temperature, providing an important solution to hospital meal delivery. The docking station remains stationary, which helps eliminate the risk of damage from it being moved on a truck or through hallways. And the station's motorized cart docking and touch screen controller make operation easy.

Once the system was decided upon, the next hurdle to overcome was delivery. Since Aladdin is focused solely on providing meal delivery systems to healthcare operations, its manufacturing facilities were operating consistently through the pandemic to assist healthcare facilities in their essential task of feeding patients. Hils immediately contacted Aladdin's manufacturing team and they found a Convect-Rite Select unit available for shipment. "We literally shipped it on a Monday and it arrived in Shreveport on Tuesday," Hils says. The quick delivery ensured the SMMC team had sufficient time to determine the best configuration of the utilities for the unit.

The kitchen at the Ochsner LSU Health Shreveport – Academic Medical Center facility prepares food to be delivered to its St. Mary Medical Center.



The prepared food is then loaded into the Aladdin Convect-Rite Cart.

"Essential provider" letter in hand, Hils and Aladdin Project Manager Jeff Withers made the trip to Shreveport a few days later to complete the installation and once again had to deal with the realities of the pandemic. "There were temperature tests to get across the [state] borders and through the door," he says.

Normally, Hils says, an installation like this is a fairly casual affair. "You'll usually find me in a suit and tie; I hang up the suit coat and begin," he says. But for this installation, Hils and Withers were garbed in full protective attire: hazmat suits, goggles and masks. "All the PPE was provided to us so we were safe going in," he says, noting the team practiced social distancing as well during the install.

Another factor that worked in SMMC's favor was the unexpected availability of state health inspectors to give on-site project approval. The inspectors can normally be booked up months in advance but, with the pandemic, that wasn't the case. The inspectors gave their approval, and the system was ready to go in time for the first patients to arrive at the end of April.

Unlike many foodservice operations, which use Convect-Rite Carts to hold food on trays, SMMC uses them to hold bulk food. Foodservice workers put bulk hot and cold food into the cart, where it is held at the proper temperatures for an hour before it gets transported to SMMC. Food temperatures are safely maintained during transport because the cart is fully insulated, divided into hot and cold sections. Once at SMMC, workers assemble trays for transport to patients, using disposables because there is currently no dishmachine at SMMC.

The Convect-Rite system makes meal service easier for the staff at SMMC and helps contain costs as well. Since the system keeps food at the proper temperature, the medical center does not need a full kitchen. Plus, the system requires only a few staff members to assemble the trays for the patient meals. Stephanie Fedd, Food & Nutrition Services Manager at the hospital, oversees the transportation of food between the two facilities. Her biggest challenge working at a facility where the food is prepared off-site, she says, "is last-minute changes and ensuring safety of the food in transit. The Aladdin system helps to ensure the food is transported within safe holding temperatures for our patients. It is easy to use and perfect for off-site deliveries."

"We are proud to be able to aid partners like Ochsner LSU Health in the treatment of those who are in need," says Nate Jackson, President of Aladdin Temp-Rite. "We remain committed to supporting the noble purpose of caring for those who are currently in a compromised state of health."

Thanks to a team effort all the way around, SMMC got its food transportation system set up in a relatively short amount of time under the most stressful conditions imaginable. Kotheimer of ABM Healthcare says that the Aladdin "sales rep and install team provided us with excellent support." Lyons says he got a call from the medical center, saying, "Honestly, I don't know how you guys did it. I don't know how you put this all together." He adds that "our client was extremely happy. Even with such a short time frame, it was perfect from day one."

BRAND WATCH



Years of focused experience as healthcare meal delivery solution provider:

50+

The first pellet-based induction system, Heat on Demand®, introduced:

1995

Developed Convect-Rite® III convection system with patented air-flow technology:

2003

Size of Aladdin's U.S. manufacturing facility in square feet:

350,000

aladdintemprite.com

Piping hot meals for patients are plated and served at St. Mary Medical Center.

"The Aladdin system helps to ensure the food is transported within safe holding temperatures for our patients. It is easy to use and perfect for off-site deliveries."

Stephanie Fedd,  
Food & Nutrition Services Manager







Stepping into Lagomarcino's in Moline, Ill., is like stepping back in time. From the dark mahogany booths with real marble tabletops to its elegant Tiffany lighting, not much has changed since the business moved into its current Quad City location back in 1921.

But its story starts many years before, when Angelo Lagomarcino journeyed from northern Italy to New York City in 1896. After briefly returning to his homeland to marry Luigia Schenone in 1902, he settled in Burlington, Iowa. It was there that he put down roots and started a business selling fruits and vegetables out of a horse-drawn wagon.

"He then became head banana man for his cousins' wholesale fruit company, making sure the fruit was sent to the right destination," says his grandson and current Co-Owner of the business, Tom Lagomarcino Jr. "In those days, tarantulas came in with the bananas, and he didn't like that much, so he decided to open his own business."

In 1908, rather than competing with his brother's confectionery shop in Burlington, Iowa, Angelo opened his own candy shop in bustling downtown Moline. The Lagomarcino family, which then included Angelo and Luigia's children Charlie and Mary, lived above the store, which was open from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. daily.

"At that time, the area boasted three dance halls, seven movie theaters and five soda fountains," says Lagomarcino. "This was during Prohibition, so customers were bringing in hooch to spike their nonalcoholic beverages. The menu at that time







Tom Lagomarcino Jr. (above) is making delicious frozen treats, carrying on the tradition of his parents Betsy and Tom Sr. (above right).

specifically had to state, 'Please refrain from putting alcohol in your beverages.' However, Lagomarcino admits that his grandfather didn't necessarily practice what he preached. With cousins in the fruit business, he benefitted from ripe zinfandel grape deliveries in October. "Back in the '70s during a construction project, they removed a wall in our basement and discovered seven bottles of homemade wine from this time period," says Lagomarcino. "You can't tell Italians they can't have their wine!" Business was bustling from the start, with the Lagomarcinos and their cousin Joe Schenone working

around the clock. By 1925, Angelo and Luigia's children Charlie, Mary and Tom took over the business. As Moline's downtown evolved in the 1930s to include department stores, Lagomarcino's added lunch to its menu and brought its ice cream production in-house. Lagomarcino fondly recalls a childhood centered around ice cream, which started with him working alongside his father, Tom Sr., attaching lids to ice cream containers in grade school. In 1965, they purchased their first machine from Electro Freeze, a model BB-100. Their previous unit had vertical blades and was visible to customers on the main floor. "We had this machine for over 30 years, then replaced it with a new model," says Lagomarcino. "My dad always promised my mom he'd take her to Paris, but she didn't realize she'd be going to Paris, Ill., [where Electro Freeze was then based] to buy the ice cream machine!" Today, Electro Freeze (DBA H.C. Duke & Son, LLC), based in East Moline, Ill., is an Ali Group company. John Sacco, Electro Freeze's Director of Administration — he's been with the company for more than 45 years — recalls Lagomarcino purchasing the larger-volume batch machine. "At the time, Tom wanted to buy an Electro Freeze machine, and took it back to the shop in his car," says Sacco. "He used it for almost 50 years." Lagomarcino purchased his current Electro Freeze model about eight years ago, around the same time its ice cream production was moved to the shop's lower level. "Tom bought one of our batch machines," says Sacco. "At first, he was skeptical, so we had him bring his mix to our place and try it out. Instead of taking 30 minutes to make a batch of ice cream, it took just 10 minutes to produce the first batch and only eight minutes for batches after that. He was sold."

"The quality of this equipment is exceptional; obviously, it lasts a long time, but Electro Freeze's service is second to none," says Lagomarcino. "John Sacco, who I've been working with for 35 years, always would find parts for our older machines. If we needed new blades, he'd find them. When we were looking for a new piece of equipment, we went to the plant and he found the perfect unit for us. I give that machine a hug every day." Electro Freeze's model B24 high-capacity batch freezer's auger and dispensing head is designed for superior product extraction with less flavor overlap. Lagomarcino's ice cream quality and consistency is enhanced throughout the production process by the equipment's gentle blending with reduced agitation. "Tom's father was a firm believer in Electro Freeze equipment, and passed that appreciation on to his kids," says Sacco. "He always says, 'by never changing, we will always remain different.'" About 20 years ago, Electro Freeze put together a promotional article titled, "This is Not Your Grandfather's Ice Cream Machine...Yes It Is," right around the time Lagomarcino's put their new machine in. "For the article, we asked Tom if we could do a photo shoot and bring in a family having ice cream at their shop," says Sacco. "He said, 'our shop is your shop.' When it comes to Electro Freeze's equipment, the Lagomarcino family has been very loyal."

The photos are still featured on Electro Freeze's website. In 1997, Lagomarcino's opened a second location in Davenport, Iowa, which allowed them to expand their ice cream production at the Moline location for both stores. This enabled the business to start selling pints. In 2019, Lagomarcino's began offering signature ice cream sandwiches with homemade chocolate and toffee cookies made in-house. In addition to malts, ice cream sodas, egg creams and sundaes, Lagomarcino's menu includes soups, salads and sandwiches, such as its popular baked ham and swiss or egg salad sandwich served on light Swedish rye bread from a friend's recipe. The shops still serve Lago, a beverage similar to Dr. Pepper that Charlie Lagomarcino created in the 1920s. Along with its homemade ice cream, Lagomarcino's is known for its Easter candy, including a 4-pound chocolate egg filled with candy. Lagomarcino recalled a customer in Florida who requested they insert an engagement ring into one of the chocolate eggs to propose to his girlfriend. The proposal went off without a hitch. Even with the updates, Lagomarcino's remains true to its roots. Shakes are still mixed in metal cups and served in a glass. Its hot fudge recipe that Angelo paid a traveling salesman \$25 for in 1918 — to his grandmother's dismay — remains the same. In Lagomarcino's time-honored tradition, the syrup is served

in a glass pitcher beside each sundae. And the business remains family-owned, with the fourth generation of Lagomarcinos now on board. Over the years, the shop has received national attention and recognition, a testament to its quality. In 2006, Lagomarcino's was honored with the prestigious James Beard Foundation's America's Classics Award in recognition of its timeless appeal and quality food that reflects its community's character. When President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama visited Lagomarcino's Davenport location in 2012 with Secret Service in tow, photographer Scout Tufankjian took a photo of the couple enjoying their sundaes. The shot became one of only 21 finalists out of 122,000 entries in the 2013 Sony World Photography Awards. "There is a fascinating part of being in business this long," says Lagomarcino. "We have lived through different moments in history and got to see the impact on our business."

**"The quality of this equipment is exceptional; obviously, it lasts a long time, but Electro Freeze's service is second to none."**  
Tom Lagomarcino Jr.

BRAND WATCH



Established:  
**1929**  
Sold the first soft-serve ice cream machine:  
**1946**  
Current number of models:  
**40+**  
[electrofreeze.com](http://electrofreeze.com)



Electro Freeze has been a valuable partner with Lagomarcino's for more than 55 years.



# Where “Eats” Meets West

A burgeoning Japanese-American fried chicken chain finds a combi steamer solution.



Many consumers find it hard to resist fried chicken. That rich and crispy shell, juicy bite and soul-satisfying feel when finished eating never fails to comfort, especially during stressful times. PONKO Chicken Chairman and CEO Dr. Patrick Sallarulo knows this, but as a chiropractor and supporter of whole, natural foods, it was challenging to reconcile his passions.

Enter PONKO Chicken. Sallarulo invested in sisters and food enthusiasts Maggie Antoine and Reiko Clark’s Japanese-American fried chicken concept, which aims to bring what they describe as an “eats-meets-west” experience to the Atlanta area (and possibly beyond). The chain prepares its signature Japanese-American fried chicken tenders with all-natural ingredients, including locally sourced, antibiotic-free chicken and house-made breading. PONKO fries the chicken in non-GMO rice bran oil, which many nutritionists describe as heart-healthy, cholesterol-lowering, less processed and less greasy than some other types of shortening thanks to its balance of unsaturated fats and natural antioxidants.

Sallarulo’s investment paid off: In 2018, a year after inception, PONKO’S chicken tenders were three-peat winners at Taste of Atlanta and were crowned “Best Fried Chicken” at the

ATL Cluck Fest. In 2019, PONKO was awarded Top Selling Vendor at Verizon’s Super Bowl LIVE LIII. In addition, thanks to what consumers call its high “cravability” factor, the chain continues to earn top ratings on Yelp, Google and Facebook review platforms.

PONKO’s founders brought Ekow Wilmot, a veteran in franchising, on board in 2019 to ramp up franchise efforts and deliver the delectable chicken to a wider audience. “The owners opened the corporate store in Chamblee, Ga., essentially as a proof of concept, thinking that if it worked in that subprime location, it could work anywhere,” Wilmot says. Seeing as it has, the chain now continues to operate that original location as well as a company-owned store at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, official home of the NFL Atlanta Falcons and MLS Atlanta United FC, and has five franchised locations in Georgia, the first of which opened in Midtown Atlanta in 2019, followed by Buckhead, Decatur, Marietta and Lenox Square.

Sallarulo’s daughter, Kaitlyn, heads up the Marietta location, which is in the Marietta Square Market food hall. While the design of PONKO’s locations vary slightly depending on size, the cooking process and back of the house share many commonalities, she notes. At its core, the kitchen line includes a hand-breading station, fryer and hot well holding the various







dipping sauces. Staff prepare the sauces from scratch daily at the Chamblee location and truck them to various locations. PONKO's kitchens also include a two- or four-burner range, depending on size, and a small grill for a grilled chicken option.

"The most popular menu item is the PONKO chicken plate, which comes with a choice of two sides and one of our three sauces: OG, spicy or barbecue," Kaitlyn Sallarulo says. "The OG sauce is our most popular — it's a soy-teriyaki glaze with a bit of sweetness that the chicken is dipped in before serving, and we also offer a spicier version of that."

The barbecue sauce resembles an American-style sweet version but with a touch of umami. Sides include a choice of white rice, brown rice, salad, fries, sweet potato fries, coleslaw, steamed green beans and potato salad, all made in-house. The menu also includes vegetarian options, such as tofu tenders and vegan patties, served as a plate or in sandwich and taco form.

Most recently, the chain introduced an Eloma GENIUS<sup>MT</sup> 6-11 combi steamer in Kaitlyn Sallarulo's Marietta store and in the Lenox Square and Decatur locations to test-run a grilled chicken option that would not require a separate charbroiler.

"The owners came to us looking to maximize their kitchen space using equipment, especially as they were beginning to open smaller spaces in malls and food halls," says Davy Phillips, Sales Rep for Cutting Edge Marketing Agents. After installing a combi oven, what started with a grilled chicken option quickly led to other menu items being cooked in the unit including rice, green beans, potatoes, and even cookies.

"We were able to remove four pieces of equipment with the

The Eloma GENIUS<sup>MT</sup> combi steamer helps PONKO maximize its kitchen space.



**"We were able to remove four pieces of equipment with the combi, which is a huge space and cost savings for the owners."**

**Davy Phillips**  
Sales Rep, Cutting Edge Marketing Agents



combi, which is a huge space and cost savings for the owners," says Phillips, who brought in a consulting chef to do the menu development and testing at Georgia Power's Customer Resource Center Kitchen. "They can now make most of the menu using just the fryers and the combi, and there's less food waste because they are able to cool down and retherm extra rice the next day. We also tested some additional menu items for the next install as the chain grows — menu items that the owners never thought they would be capable of offering before."

Kaitlyn Sallarulo says she loves the versatility of the Eloma combi.

"I was surprised by how well the rice and grilled chicken turned out," says Kaitlyn Sallarulo, who notes that the chicken is first marked on the grill and then finished in the combi for a juicy and tender result. Even the green beans and potatoes for the potato salad are cooked in the combi, without the need for hot plates and extra pots, pans and boiling water, which reduces both space and labor.

"The combi instantly cut down on the time it takes to cook all of our rice, and it's nice because you can cook white and brown rice at the same time in different hotel pans, and the alerts tell you when one or the other is ready without having to worry about it," she says, noting that she also likes the "set-it-and-forget-it" functionality, especially when it comes to cooking proteins to their proper temperature. "One combi oven has saved me the space of having four rice cookers in my tiny kitchen. This way, if we need to quickly make a batch of fresh rice during a rush we can do so, and it only takes about 20 minutes versus at least an hour."

In addition to being an "extremely versatile piece," the combi contributes to consistency and quality control, especially helpful during a labor crisis. "The cookies we make in it come out the same every time; it's a perfect bake, not like my regular oven, which depending on the heat or humidity that day, can make the cookies come out flatter," she says.

Kaitlyn Sallarulo has preprogrammed all of the recipes,

so "anyone can just click on the picture of potatoes and it preheats, cooks and sends out an alert when done so they never have to look after it. It's extremely easy for all my employees to use, and it frees up their time to do something else."

It's also easy to clean with its own self-cleaning hose and chemicals. "We wipe it down daily, and at the end of the week, I can turn on the deep clean setting and it runs automatically overnight and shuts down on its own," she says.

Wilmot notes the combi is part of the new kitchen line and will be installed in all new locations going forward. PONKO has not rolled out any new menu items, at least not yet. "We just hired a new corporate chef, so I imagine we will be experimenting," he says. "Our goal is to get to 2,025 stores, depending on how quickly things come back." Pandemic or not, people still want fried chicken, especially if they can have less guilt when enjoying it.



Many of PONKO Chicken's menu items — even treats like cookies (below) — are prepared in the Eloma GENIUS<sup>MT</sup> combi steamer.

## BRAND WATCH



Established:

**1975**

Eloma USA launched:

**2007**

[eloma.com](http://eloma.com)



# CBD IS ON THE MENU AT CLOUD CUPS

**T**outed for its anti-inflammatory and anxiety-reducing properties, cannabidiol (CBD) is a chemical derived from cannabis that does not have a psychoactive component (and thus doesn't act as an intoxicant). CBD has exploded in the wellness market over the last few years, popping up in all types of products, from supplements and topicals to food and beverage items and more, including coffee shops and foodservice outlets (local government regulations permitting). CBD shops selling the hemp-based product in tincture, pill and balm form have also grown around the country alongside the growth of traditional cannabis dispensaries in states where they are allowed. According to market research firm The NPD Group, at least 20% of Americans have tried CBD in states where it's legal, and 40% of these consumers seek it out in food and beverage form where available.

Savvy entrepreneur Galen Thomas knows all about this hot commodity. That's why he added the hot ingredient to gelato, so customers could chill out to the max. It's proved to be more than just a trend; Thomas has seen Cloud Cups, his CBD-infused desserts business, grow rapidly since launching in 2018.

"We saw CBD as a segue to get into the booming cannabis industry and noticed there were no frozen desserts with CBD on the market," says Thomas. "We put the two together, and I did some guinea pig testing on my aunt and stepdad. They loved the gelato and use CBD as a wellness product." Cloud Cups gelato is also 100% organic and comes in 32 flavors (and counting), with banana pudding, Nutella® and dairy-free (vegan-friendly) mango sorbet as the top sellers. Other flavors have included white coffee, passion fruit, Cinnamon Toast Crunch™ and Brown Sugar Pop-Tarts®.

Thomas manufactures his CBD-infused gelato flavors in a central kitchen facility in Philadelphia, selling the product

wholesale to interested buyers who then sell the product. Though there's no licensing or corporate ownership involved — he's not a franchisor — Thomas says he makes regular visits to his customers to help with marketing, inventory, product display and other needs. In the fall of 2020, Cloud Cups was being sold at eight stores in Philadelphia and one each in Atlanta, Los Angeles and Austin, Texas. Thomas says he had expectations of that number growing to 20 stores by the end of 2020. He also rolled out new gelato products that didn't include CBD in the fall of 2020 and was working to get those into local stores and shops.

The pandemic did not slow down people's desire for comforting desserts. "Not only do people still want ice cream, people are using CBD as a calming mechanism and way to relax to cope with changes in the world right now and being stuck in the house," says Thomas, who is quick to add that he is not pushing any medical claims for his CBD product, but rather

**Cloud Cups gelato is 100% organic and comes in 32 flavors (and counting).**





Galen Thomas is making unique CBD-infused gelato at Cloud Cups.

BRAND WATCH



Commercial branches:  
**8**  
Service centers worldwide:  
**500**  
Distributors worldwide:  
**180**  
[carpigiani.com](http://carpigiani.com)

**“We maintain regular contact with all of our students and help them get in touch with local distributors, so they have support when it comes to equipment needs.”**

**Chef Baron Gottsacker**

notes it’s “a good product to add to any daily wellness regimen.”

Thomas has a tech and music background, working on cell phone towers and DJ’ing on the side, so he credits Carpigiani’s Gelato University program for helping him get his start in the frozen dessert business. The educational program launched in 2003 in Bologna, Italy, as the first-ever artisan gelato school. It has regular sessions throughout the year in Bologna as well as in North Carolina and Illinois. Carpigiani’s Frozen Dessert University and Gelato University feature a team of master gelato instructors, each with a strong culinary background. More than 4,000 students have participated in the programs, which offers hands-on training using top-of-the-line equipment.

Thomas attended both the Frozen Dessert University program in North Carolina as well as Gelato University in Illinois in 2019. “My instructor, Chef Baron

Master of Infusion

Galen Thomas, Owner of Cloud Cups, won’t say how he infuses CBD into his gelato for obvious proprietary reasons, but did call it a unique process that he developed himself. In products infused with CBD, the hemp-driven extraction is often blended with MCT oil (medium-chain triglycerides) or another neutral oil to create a tincture that the body can readily absorb through the bloodstream or digest in food; bartenders and beverage makers, however, have complained that it can be difficult to add to drinks because oil and water don’t naturally mix and needs an emulsifier or binding agent to fully blend. Most recently, the market has seen a growth of water-soluble CBD products that can be more easily added to liquids. Thomas has figured out the technology and solutions to infuse the CBD on his own, without having to rely on outside vendors (there has been some controversy recently about vendors misstating the dosage of CBD in their products as well as products laced with pesticides and/or other chemicals). In staying with the pure, all-natural theme, Thomas also uses no artificial ingredients in his 32 all-organic gelato flavors.

Gottsacker, has been a great resource for me, always offering advice when it comes to recipes, methods and equipment,” he says.

Most recently, thanks to Gottsacker’s guidance, Thomas launched a new product, a gelato “panini,” almost like an Italian ice cream sandwich, and he’s in the process of upgrading his equipment at his headquarters. Thomas uses Carpigiani’s Ready 302 G TRU-2 ice cream and gelato batch freezer to more efficiently ramp up production and throughput. The Ready 302 G TRU-2 mixes, heats and freezes in the same cylinder and uses Hard-O-Tronic technology to maintain consistency control automatically. He also hopes to bring in one or two Carpigiani Mister Art machines to develop and produce gelato and sorbet pops. The Mister Art machine is a soft-serve machine that’s used to make ice cream cakes, pastry and premium ice cream pop molds. The machine can accommodate

and heat-treat most mixtures including dairy, fruit, powdered and water-based. To develop his recipes, Thomas relies on a compact Carpigiani Freeze&Go, which allows him to create high-quality frozen desserts in a small footprint.

Gottsacker, in addition to working with about 10 to 16 Gelato University students every few months, also produces his own gelato product in Sheboygan, Wis., called Baron’s Gelato. He says the machine is a truly “set it and forget it” item that’s great for ease of use and training purposes.

The relationship between Thomas and Gottsacker showcases the main mission of Carpigiani’s Gelato University: to be a resource for those looking to get into the frozen dessert business and do it successfully. “I have talked to Galen just about every couple of weeks since he went through the program,” says Gottsacker. “We maintain

regular contact with all of our students and help them get in touch with local distributors, so they have support when it comes to equipment needs.” In Thomas’ case, that distributor was Rosito Bisani East in King of Prussia, Pa. It played a key role in the start-up of Cloud Cups by opening up its test kitchen to Thomas in order to test his product in the Carpigiani batch freezer before purchasing it.

“We also offer consulting, recipe development and testing at our students’ places of business, or if they want to come to Carpigiani’s locations,” says Gottsacker. “We work with anyone from someone wanting to open a small, mom-and-pop gelato store to executives from large chains looking to efficiently build a new frozen dessert program.”

As Cloud Cups’ tagline reads, that means helping consumers live “life in the clouds,” or at least when enjoying gelato.

Below left: Thomas pours ingredients into his Carpigiani batch freezer.

Below right: The finished product.





**“These new styles of food preparation in our food courts and retail concessions provide guests a unique, fresh guarantee that their food is prepared and assembled à la minute while they wait.”**

**Molly Crouch**  
Centerplate's Director  
of Sustainability

# Cool Concepts at Orlando's Orange County Convention Center

**A**s one of the largest convention facilities in North America, the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) spans 7.1 million square feet. In recent years, the convention center averaged nearly 200 events annually, including 115 conventions and trade shows that attracted more than 1.5 million attendees to the area. The OCCC contributes approximately \$3 billion annually to Central Florida's economy.

The campus divides into two buildings: the 3 million-square-foot North-South Building and the 4 million-square-foot West Building.

During the past 30 years, the West Building's food courts received only minor modifications. The OCCC and its foodservice contractor, Centerplate, a Sodexo company, decided the time had come to elevate the level of hospitality offered to guests and attendees by developing new, contemporary dining experiences. The food courts provide foodservice during convention hours as well as before and after hours for special events.

“The renovation project was not created with a reliance on peak numbers or benchmarks but rather to fulfill the OCCC's and Centerplate's needs for production and service,” says Crystal Mudd, OCCC Capital Planning Manager.

The OCCC's dining facilities compete with hundreds of Orlando eating establishments within a 10-minute drive, so the offerings must appeal to conventioners' desires for contemporary menu items coupled with fast service. Centerplate's plan for the food courts is to be as flexible as possible and adapt menus to match the events. “By tailoring the concepts that would work best for each event, we are able to maximize our sales while providing our attendees with the choice and selection they expect from the OCCC,” says Peter Minervini, Centerplate's General Manager for OCCC.

The \$13-million renovation of four food courts, including design and equipment purchases, replaces the traditional cafeteria style of the original food courts with a more dynamic and inviting atmosphere and style of service. “We wanted each space to be unique, so each food court embraces its own identity,” Mudd says.

The food courts operate under the names Key Lime Café, Blue Sky Café, Citrus Café and one yet to be named, called EF. All the food courts received a makeover of the preparation and serving areas, seating where applicable, menu displays and concession areas including condiments and drink service areas.

The renovated Key Lime Café and Blue Sky Café opened to guests in December 2019. The remaining two opened about a year later.

Food courts typically do not operate unless a convention or event group is on-premises. “The hours of each food

Equipment from Victory and Beverage-Air helps OCCC produce food.



court vary per event, and locations are only open for the duration of a show,” says Minervini. While the convention center never closed explicitly due to the pandemic, numerous conferences and trade shows were canceled or delayed since mid-March 2020. The OCCC has been in operation with a limited number of bookings since.

“The biggest distinguishing factors between convention center foodservice operations and other types are the diversity of the businesses, the clients and their associated events, the magnitude and demographics of the guests/ attendees, and the diverse food types offered,” says James “Chef K” Katurakes, Centerplate’s Executive Chef.

“For convention centers, these new styles of food preparation in our food courts and retail concessions provide guests a unique, fresh guarantee that their food is prepared and assembled à la minute while they wait versus how it’s always been done in the past — where the prematurely prepared food waits for the guest instead,” says Molly Crouch, Centerplate’s Director of Sustainability.

Managing the ordering and flow of food product at a convention center is a massive undertaking on its own. All food and beverage menu items for the West Building arrive at the OCCC warehouse where a purchasing team verifies the accuracy of the orders. After verification, the warehouse team sorts the items. The

Undercounter refrigeration by Beverage-Air makes efficient use of tight space.



“The glass-front refrigerators behind each POS location allow customers to see fresh food and available beverages that staff can easily reach as needed.”

Tom Galvin, FCSI  
President, Galvin Design Group



FOOD COURTS

Total size of entire project across all food court areas: 26,182 sq. ft.

Key Lime Café

BOH: 2,630 sq. ft.  
Servery: 1,624 sq. ft.  
Seating: 5,789 sq. ft.  
Total: 10,043 sq. ft.

Blue Sky Café

BOH: 1,936 sq. ft.  
Servery: 1,574 sq. ft.  
Seating: 6,155 sq. ft.  
Total: 9,665 sq. ft.

Citrus Café

BOH: 2,641 sq. ft.  
Servery: 1,520 sq. ft.  
Total: 4,161 sq. ft.

EF Café

BOH: 1,522 sq. ft.  
Servery: 791 sq. ft.  
Total: 2,313 sq. ft.

various departments including banquet catering, culinary and retail concessions place orders for food and other items stored in the warehouse. “Depending on the type of product, we have designated areas for distribution and staging where the food gets prepared in the main kitchen and finished at the location,” Katurakes says.

The warehouse team separates dry goods that need no preparation such as impulse items, condiments and beverages and delivers them to the designated distribution/staging locations.

All other food items generally require culinary preparation prior to service. Upon completing culinary production, staff delivers all cold food items the day before scheduled service to the appropriate location for finishing the following day. Staff delivers hot food items in temperature-controlled hotboxes on the day of service to the appropriate location for distribution.

Refrigeration and Energy Savings

Each food court contains enough back-of-house cold storage for at least one full day’s service. Refrigerators and freezers near front-of-house preparation and service areas provide staff easy access to ingredients and menu items throughout production.

“OCCC and Centerplate needed refrigerators that allow staff to handle and excel in the most demanding foodservice environments during peak and slow periods,” says Erica J. Motes, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Ali Group North America – Refrigeration Division. “They also wanted this equipment to contribute to operational cost savings.”

The food courts also contain a variety of pass-through, reach-in and roll-in refrigerators and reach-in freezers by Victory Refrigeration and pizza prep tables, sandwich prep tables, worktop refrigerators and undercounter refrigerators by Beverage-Air. The single-door and double-door reach-in refrigerators and freezers are built with a stainless-steel beveled exterior and sturdy hinges and handles that give the preparation environment an “elegant aesthetic,” says Motes.

“The glass-front refrigerators behind each POS location allow customers to see fresh food and available beverages



that staff can easily reach as needed,” says Tom Galvin, FCSI, President, Galvin Design Group, Inc., in Winter Garden, Fla. “Refrigeration here also contributes to significant energy savings, which was a priority in every facet of the project.”

The combination of features among the Victory refrigerators — including variable-speed compressors, R290 hydrocarbon refrigerant, expansion valve and coil-sensing adaptive defrost technologies — allow the Centerplate culinary team to work efficiently and safely even during the busiest traffic rushes, because temperatures remain consistent throughout the refrigerator and throughout a day’s production cycle.

The Beverage-Air undercounter refrigerators also contain environmentally friendly R290 hydrocarbon refrigerant and provide a consistent temperature throughout the day.

The pizza and sandwich prep tables perform well in hot and tightly packed environments. “These advanced technologies increase energy savings and reduce the overall cost to the operator,” Motes says. In addition, front and back counters each contain their own electricity load centers.

From the onset, menu flexibility also remained an essential component of the project. “The food courts do not have

OCCC’s seating areas have a spacious, modern appearance.

designated concepts that are always offered,” Minervini says. “Instead, each location is set up to be able to produce a wide range of menus, which allows us to select the food concepts for each show.” Despite the ever-changing menu options, the new food courts contain mostly similar equipment with a few exceptions.

“Centerplate staff members can mix and match equipment as needed for the type of food they want to serve,” Galvin says. “The placement of digital menu boards in this scramble-style food court helps keep queue lines low because customers can read the boards and decide what they want to order before getting in line. Customers can come into the food court and line up at a particular station, place an order, receive their food, pay and leave easily. We also vary the flow for customers coming up to the stations and moving from right to left or left to right, so they don’t bump into each other.”

Thoughtful placement of refrigeration throughout the OCCC’s newly renovated food courts will help these foodservice operations remain effective, efficient and flexible for years to come.





# Hot Pizza and Cool Gelato: A Perfect Pair

Authentic gelato made from scratch in-house is proving to be a big hit with Pizzeria Pezzo's customers.

**T**he pizza business is ultra-competitive these days, so traditional pizza places have had to up their game to keep their customers satisfied (and ordering). For one small pizza chain in Minnesota, gelato has been the key to keeping their menu exciting — and profitable.

Pizzeria Pezzo has units in White Bear Lake and Woodbury, Minn., suburbs of Minneapolis-St. Paul. It specializes in coal-fired pizzas made with fresh ingredients and also offers a range of Chicago-style deep-dish pizza (named after Chicago neighborhoods like Lincoln Park and the Gold Coast). Appetizers, pasta and sandwiches toasted in the 850-degree F oven are also on the menu.

But Pizzeria Pezzo is not like many other pizza joints. "What differentiates us from other restaurants is that we're truly making everything from scratch," says Mac Morrison, Director of BOH Operations for Pizzeria Pezzo. "We're grinding our own sausage and making our own fresh

mozzarella. All of our salad dressings are made from scratch. I think that really is what separates us from everybody else."

That emphasis on fresh, house-made ingredients has earned Pizzeria Pezzo loyal customers and won them awards as well. A pizza industry magazine named Pezzo one of the 100 hottest independent pizzerias in the country in 2018 and 2019. *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine* wrote that the pizzeria makes "the best deep-dish pizza in the Twin Cities."

## Going Authentic

While Pizzeria Pezzo had offered traditional Italian desserts such as tiramisu and cannoli made from scratch, it had not been making its gelato in house. The decision to change that came from the top down, because "Keri Bougie, the owner of the company, is an avid sweets connoisseur," Morrison says. That might be a bit of an understatement, as Bougie calls herself "a dessert fiend." During her college years, she spent two summers in Italy, where she fell in love with gelato. "I would literally go from gelateria to gelateria, one after the other, to try them and compare them," Bougie says. When she became one of the owners of Pizzeria Pezzo, she couldn't understand why they weren't making gelato from scratch. So, she started teaching herself about frozen dessert making at home, buying books and home ice cream makers. Bougie eventually upgraded to a gelato machine, and, over the course of a year, she developed a number of gelato recipes and established the restaurant's own Gevali gelato brand.

Like Pezzo's main menu, the Gevali gelato is made from real ingredients, "organic and locally sourced whenever possible," says Morrison. "We use no artificial flavors, sweeteners, stabilizers or emulsifiers." A typical selection of flavors includes vanilla maple, chocolate with peppermint, mixed berry and strawberry basil. Pezzo sells the gelato in individual scoops, waffle cones, pints and even a four-scoop gelato flight. The gelato is available to pickup and delivery customers as well.

Justin Thompson, President of The YES Group in Mendota Heights, Minn., helped the Pizzeria Pezzo team find the perfect gelato machine for the Gevali launch. "I spent an afternoon with Mac and Keri. Besides making the product all day, we talked about their success in pizza and how they utilize the best, freshest, ingredients and don't cut corners in any step," he says. "We wanted to make sure they got a machine that would allow them to do that with their new gelato product."

The Carpigiani Ready Batch Freezer was the right machine for Pizzeria Pezzo. "We tested several

machines when we were on our search and were just getting into the brand," Morrison says. "We fell in love with the way the Carpigiani machine produced our gelato."

The Ready Batch Freezer lets you mix, heat and freeze in the same cylinder. Its Hard-O-Tronic technology provides an automatic consistency control to determine when the product is complete, and an intuitive control panel is accessible even when mix is being added. Not only does the Ready Batch Freezer make great gelato, but it's also simple to operate, Morrison says. "It's easy to train people on it. It's very user-friendly," he says.

## A Popular Menu Addition

More and more pizza operations are adding gelato to their menus, according to Kami Poppen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Carpigiani North America. Besides the fact that pizza and gelato go so well together, she notes that, "gelato is a very versatile dessert that can satisfy a variety of dietary restrictions. Restaurants can use local, in-season fruit to produce a gourmet dessert that meets the needs of a broad range of customers. For example, a delicious fruit sorbet is gluten-free, dairy-free, fat-free and vegan."

Making gelato in-house also provides menu versatility, according to Poppen. "It can be served a variety of ways beyond a traditional bowl. It can be served as a cookie sandwich or gelato cake. It can be served with a variety of mix-ins or toppings as well, and it gives the flexibility to create flavors unique to the restaurant, as well as seasonal flavors," she says.

Besides this creative flexibility, making gelato in-house can be profitable, says Poppen. "It provides the obvious benefits of a fresher, higher-quality product with a clean label and lifts profits by an additional 35% or more versus purchasing already-made products. Also, packaging pints is a quick and portable to-go dessert that customers can carry out or get delivered."

Adding gelato to the menu has been a win for everyone connected with Pizzeria Pezzo. Thompson says he knew the Gevali program would be successful "because of [Keri's] story and her passion for wanting to make a true, authentic gelato product and offer it at their shop. Working with somebody who was that passionate about it was a lot of fun."

And the Carpigiani machine is proving itself to be a valued part of the Pizzeria Pezzo operation. "We love the machine," Morrison says. "It produces very consistent results, and we're very satisfied with it. Our customers love our gelato, being that it's truly Italian. Its creaminess and its flavors are unmatched."

**[carpigiani.com](http://carpigiani.com)**

Pizzeria Pezzo's own Gevali gelato is made on-premises with a Carpigiani batch freezer.





# 05

## Innovations

The **B-Lean system** equips  
foodservice operations in multiple ways

# TO B IS TO DO

If ever there were a saying that at once frustrates and motivates innovators, “That’s how we’ve always done it” would be it. It presumes change is unnecessary and questioning established norms futile. It says “I give up” without giving anything.

Take that as a jumping-off point for how Burlodge’s B-Lean system established itself in 2008 as an alternative tray assembly equipment system for healthcare foodservice. This small, highly adaptable assembly process/pod system provided an answer for space-challenged operations looking for improved performance.

The B-Lean system uses a flexible work cell design that can be quickly configured into a variety of formats. Customization gives users the liberty to arrange workflows based on the particular needs of each meal each day.

B-Lean has helped healthcare foodservice operators reimagine traditional tray assembly. It also brought lean manufacturing principles to healthcare food operations. While hardware can significantly transform operations, B-Lean’s enduring legacy may be how this thinking continues to improve performance.

### A Lean Primer

Lean as a concept became widely known during the ’80s and ’90s. It advocates eliminating waste in

terms of time, inventory and flow, and it intends to bring greater value and efficiency to production. For foodservice operations that work under relentless time constraints, its ideals are a natural fit.

For Burlodge, B-Lean thinking extends beyond the adaptable, compact and ergonomic design of the equipment to something more comprehensive. It includes streamlining menus, organizing inventory and boosting the efficiency of operations. Lean thinking strongly aligns with how Burlodge has always advanced ideas of continuous improvement with equipment and processes.

### The Trouble with Traylines

Paul Gauntley, President of Burlodge Canada & USA, says the B-Lean system emerged in response to the aggravation of outmoded traylines. In the early 2000s, the company conducted a study of these systems, which revealed inefficiencies everywhere. The main issue was wasted time.

Task duration along traylines tends to vary. Some tasks take five seconds, others 15. This means an inordinate amount of waiting for some staff, and those times add up. Burlodge’s study found that for a tray that required 100 seconds to complete, 55 seconds was spent on activities that added no value.

The poor ergonomics of beltlines also proved problematic. Unnecessary reaching, crouching and bending meant that repetitive strain disorders were





commonplace. Minimizing movement, improving the natural flow of production and making the workable space easier on staff was essential to the solution.

First Impressions

It was Burlodge’s work with a longtime client that first revealed the effectiveness of lean thinking. Phase one of developing B-Lean reduced the time of tray completion times by 35% while phase two sharpened the focus on improving ergonomics.

“We originally referred to B-Lean as ‘bent metal,’” says Gauntley. “This was simply a structure on wheels. No mechanics or compressors, but a different approach all the same. As time went on, we started to understand the importance of refrigeration.”

That’s when Burlodge revamped some 20-year-old equipment and created a mobile, double-door refrigerator with gravity-fed shelving. Though demand for the product grew, the availability of used equipment dwindled. The idea stuck, however, and a new refrigerated component for the system was created and called B-Cool.

Bring on the Victory

This led to a unique collaboration between Burlodge and Victory Refrigeration, two companies operating under the Ali Group banner.

The connection with Victory helped to accelerate the development of B-Cool equipment, starting with air curtain technology, a system that circulated a consistent stream of cool air across the B-Cool’s door opening.

Matt Kampert, Vice President of Manufacturing,

Ali Group North America – Refrigeration Division, found himself on the leading edge of this effort. He visited different Burlodge client sites to see the equipment in use — an eye-opening exercise that helped him better direct his engineers.

The shared knowledge was beneficial to both operations. Victory’s engineering helped to refine the details of B-Cool’s functionality and performance while Burlodge’s extensive client network provided feedback to generate the hands-on need for those improvements.

Oscar Villa, President, Ali Group North America – Refrigeration Division, says, “Burlodge challenged us to improve our product and we made it better by enhancing the performance and ergonomics.” He also points out that the unexpected benefit of the collaboration has helped Victory refine other products.

The Idea Evolves

Gauntley recalls how a number of different iterations followed that initial collaboration. After the air curtain, the development team placed a door on the back of the unit for uninterrupted restocking of goods, which resulted in the B-Cool Double Door Air Curtain. From there, lean thinking shortened the height of the server-side door and introduced interior gravity shelves, which became the B-Cool Lean.

“No matter how good the product is, there are aspects that the end users evaluate and that we won’t think of



“At the end of the day, the user drives the demand.”



Burlodge’s B-Lean system incorporates lean thinking to help facilitate tray assembly.

sitting at a desk,” says Villa. “At the end of the day, the user drives the demand.”

The B-Cool family of equipment joined the other specialized equipment in the efficient B-Lean system. From the Burlodge team’s perspective, the end user needed to understand the thinking that drives the B-Lean approach.

Leaning into the Operation

“We realized lean wasn’t useful if the staff weren’t educated,” says Gauntley.

Burlodge took clients to other facilities for a firsthand look. They set up dummy lines for practice and introduced small groups of frontline staff to the system. Staff could ask questions of on-site Burlodge personnel, pose problems, explore solutions and even help make decisions about the production workflow.

“As soon as someone expressed interest, a full-blown cascade of analysis and assessments follows,” says Gauntley.

That included menu reviews, site assessments, planning, equipment needs, staff job descriptions, rotations, metric planning and much more. The effort to invoke a lean mindset helped clients better appreciate the impact of the proposed improvements.

A series of testimonials let the Burlodge team know they were on the right track.

As one healthcare foodservice manager noted, “I can’t emphasize enough the importance of engaging staff from the outset. People resist change and you can’t fast track this sort of thing. Give the staff the time to do it. Invest in it.”

A director of foodservice operations said, “These are the people who are using it day-to-day. We let them play with the equipment from early on and decide how best to arrange it.”

B-Lean customers also stressed that engaging employees with the new system early on improved team dynamics in addition to workflow.

Ease of Movement and Adaptability

Ergonomics also had an immediate impact. One testimonial appreciated the fact the B-Lean system can be reorganized to accommodate peoples’ heights and arm lengths. Further, with its angled arrangement, gravity shelves place items within easy reach and maintain natural body movement so there is no need to strain.

Paul Sico, EVP, Sales and Marketing for Burlodge USA, believes one of the most persuasive points revolves around B-Lean’s adaptability.

“I think clients respond to the fact that it can fit into any operational model, from cold plating, hot plating — whether hot line or room service — or even a hybrid model,” he says. “Whether layouts are centralized or decentralized, the system can change with the operational model, staffing and even the facility.”

Staff Support and Patient Satisfaction

Another foodservice director said that her operation had been assessing more flexible assembly stations, both for the diverse patient needs as well as a self-paced system that would accommodate staff. She noted that many of

her staff who have English as a second language had time to read the tray ticket and ensure accuracy. “The staff find it much easier,” she noted. “We have three traylines and we do 700 trays per meal in 90 minutes. Our numbers meet the staff minutes-per-tray standard, they’re accurate and it’s easy to clean.”

Operators agree that staffing numbers don’t necessarily change, but resources are better used and reallocated in some cases. In most cases, a person is assigned as a floater who restocks and feeds the items, while handling any late changes to trays.

Another client noted, “If you have 15 people on a trayline, you can definitely have reductions with B-Lean.” She also said that lean thinking has led to reassessing operational priorities. “I think it focuses you on what is driving patient satisfaction. You may have too many things on your menu and this is definitely an opportunity to simplify things.”

“I think the breakthrough moment is when clients understand the lean principles and the cost savings that can result,” Sico says.

Look Forward, Lean Ahead

Naturally, the improvements to the B-Lean system are ongoing. It’s an inherent part of the system’s mandate, whether it comes from Burlodge staff, Victory engineers or suggestions from clients who work with it every day.

Currently, over 120 installations are in operation and a tide of foodservice operators are now abandoning the ways they’d always done it in favor of a lean operation.

BRAND WATCH



Countries in Burlodge’s network:

50

Exclusive partners:

14

Distributors:

25

Meals served per day on Burlodge equipment:

3.5 million

**burlodgeusa.com (USA)**

**burlodgeca.com (Canada)**



Metro carves out an improved delivery zone and more in the small BOH footprint of a growing Italian restaurant chain.

YNOT owners Tony and Cyndi DiSilvestro in the back of the house, which received more than \$50,000 in Metro product as part of the Kitchen Storage Makeover Contest.



The story of YNOT Italian starts with a Jersey boy going out on his own in 1993 to open his first Italian restaurant

in a strip mall in Virginia Beach, Va. Husband-and-wife team Tony and Cyndi DiSilvestro along with Harry DiSilvestro (Tony's brother) have grown their business to seven locations. Pizza dominates at this casual-dining chain, which offers a full Italian menu that includes chicken marsala, pasta creations and homemade gelato.

Over the course of 27 years, the original location grew to cover three different leased spaces in the strip mall location, added on in piecemeal fashion. That restaurant now totals 5,000 square feet.

The 1,000 square feet dedicated to the back of the house, however, never expanded. "Things have always been a little cramped," says Tony DiSilvestro of the 150-seat restaurant. "When you open a restaurant, you do it on a fixed budget — almost no budget. You just keep going from there and don't always have the time to go back and reorganize or reset the mismatched components you add as you go."

The constricted space provided a unique opportunity for the annual Kitchen Storage Makeover Contest

that Metro sponsors in partnership with *Foodservice Equipment & Supplies* magazine. "The tight space gave us a chance to do what we do best: create unique, essentially custom solutions with time-tested standard components," says AJ Zambetti, Metro's Director of Creative & Brand Communications. The storage spaces at YNOT received a makeover in October 2020.

Dough Starter

The tight spaces came with a tight timeframe to perform an on-site assessment, create the design, order the components and come back to complete the installation. And before any of the real work came into play, a foundation of trust with the owners had to be established. "When we work with large brands with multiple stores, we build trust over time," explains Lori Morrone, National Strategic Accounts Manager at Metro. "That was not the case here. It was a small window. We had to build trust fast." That started with the initial assessment that included an on-site visit with the Metro team and the owners. With a complete start-to-finish timeframe condensed down to three months, a quick decision-making process was in order regarding the specific focus areas.

The owners were, naturally, very involved in every aspect. As a family-owned business, the success of the operation directly correlates to their livelihood: It's personal. The owners floated out the ideas they wanted to see happen; at the same time, the Metro team shared workable solutions from their varied experience with multiple clients. "It was really neat to watch that early stage of 800 ideas filter down to five workable solutions," Morrone says.

One of those solutions paved the way to smooth collaboration throughout the entire project. It was the stepping stone to building trust and confidence from the owners, a kind of proof that the Metro team understood the needs and issues of this particular restaurant — proof



Custom dough carts in the walk-in cooler nest efficiently into the shelving and help prevent mishaps as the dough rises overnight.

YNOT  
CREATE MORE  
STORAGE SPACE



that involved actual proofing. The Metro team created a solution to a problem YNOT had yet to solve, which stemmed around how staff proof the pizza dough. The owners were on board with everything after that problem was solved, Morrone says. “They embraced the ideas faster once they trusted that we knew what we were doing.”

YNOT staff who handle dough prep routinely fill no less than 400 bins for proofing, roughly enough to support this one location for a week; the restaurant makes an average of 90 pizzas a day. Prior to the makeover, the process involved staff carrying the bins to the cooler to proof. During that overnight process, the dough would rise and often bump into the bin above, tipping the stack and often knocking a few on the floor. It was a balancing act to have the bins perfectly align so that all dough bins survived the night. In fact, it was such a predictable fate to find dough on the floor upon entering the cooler in the morning, Tony accepted that product waste as part of the cost of doing business.

In addition to the tipping issue, staff were also hauling the bins by armful from the cooler to the designated pizza-making spot, which created additional obstacles in traversing through the space while keeping dough bins intact. Metro resolved the problem by creating a custom cart solution that succinctly incorporates the bins more efficiently and also establishes a better first-in-first-out approach for product. The cart system was created with Metro Super Erecta Pro® shelving components with the height equal to a stack of 10 dough tins; the top three shelf mats were removed to provide chambers for the dough bins to remain upright during the proofing process. The carts nest under the new Metro shelves in

## View from the Back

**It can be a bit like watching clowns exit a tiny car when you realize the extent of items that a restaurant can house within a 1,000-square-foot back-of-the-house space. Here’s what squeezes into the BOH at YNOT Italian:**

- a delivery and takeout expo area
- a dry storage area
- a walk-in cooler
- a walk-in freezer
- a prep space
- gelato equipment; staff make gelato here for all seven of the chain’s stores
- a back office that shares space with a secure liquor cabinet
- a warewashing area



the walk-in cooler. Each cart holds 60 bins of dough and YNOT now has 10 total carts in their arsenal, allowing for a total of 600 bins.

The flow from prep to cooler to front of the house now maximizes efficiency and ergonomics as carts flow seamlessly to each station. Staff can now also easily transport a cart of dough to the front instead of carrying them three at time. The new setup saves trips to the cooler and keeps the product steadier while it proofs. The new system helps eliminate

lost yield. Yes, the dough does still rise and hit the bins above but is far less likely to cause a tip-over problem in the cooler.

### Delivery Staging

“Controlled chaos” is how DiSilvestro aptly describes the back-of-the-house staging area for takeout and delivery prior to the makeover. He knew that space in particular was in dire need of a refresh to reflow the traffic pattern for delivery drivers, who were walking through the main cookline to access the

Shelving extends to 86 inches high in the delivery staging area; the install team used S-hooks to eliminate corner posts for ease of access to items. The delivery staging area was created with Metro SmartStations with integrated Metro Super Erecta Hot™ Heated Shelving to keep food hot.



A fully functional prep area now specifies workstations where staff can chop vegetables and more. The space was created with Metro SmartLever™ Multi-functional Workstations with integrated Super Erecta Pro shelving and stainless work surfaces, and the Metro SmartWall® Wall Mount Shelving System.

staging happens there now, which alleviated the stress points of personnel bumping into each other in the main kitchen traffic area. Heated shelves provide a base for employees to stage and hold delivery and takeout items.

The new space not only changed the way takeout and delivery happens from a traffic-flow standpoint but it also changed how employees access dry storage items including pizza boxes and takeout containers.

What may have been haphazardly placed before is now 100% clearly labeled, accessible and easy to find.

“It’s very streamlined,” Tony DiSilvestro says of the newly improved space. “We’ll take elements here to every new store we build.” This new back-of-the-house delivery staging expo area will become the baseline as the chain pursues franchising its first location in Richmond,

Va., in 2021. The intent is to then branch out into the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina.

“Overall, it’s just an amazing transformation,” Tony says. The mobile carts for dough proofing, he noted, were another big win and have saved the company money in what was once lost product.

“Looking at the back of the house after the makeover, it proves that you can make a small space efficient,” says Zambetti. “When I look at some of the shelving in the finished space, it almost looks like a library. The shelves are certainly optimized for what’s stored on them. Actually, there was even space for more product as the optimized storage left extra room.”



The focus in the warewashing area was to make items more accessible and relocate heavy pots and pans so they were no longer stored in hard-to-reach spots overhead.



The storage area for beer, wine and liquor received a major transformation as the owners took the time to install new flooring and refresh old paint to complement the Metro products that helped overhaul this space, which also functions as a small workspace.

delivery hub. With 75 employees at the restaurant, fluidly moving around each other in a tight space was not easy.

COVID-19 only added to the need for an improved space for takeout and delivery and YNOT was building on its already robust takeout and delivery program. YNOT supports delivery with its own drivers but also works with third-party delivery companies. Tony sees delivery becoming even more important to the success of his business and even has a

to-go-only store in development. “It’s been in the planning stage for a couple years,” he says. “We just never pulled the trigger.” The pandemic expedited the delivery and to-go-only store, which will also serve as a test concept for growth as a way to fill in gap areas and create a broader service area as the franchise system expands. So, that makes mastering the efficiency around staging delivery and takeout all the more important for YNOT.

The newly reconfigured space also benefits the restaurant’s flow by keeping delivery drivers in the back of the house after they enter through a back door. Hot food



# STATE-OF-THE-ART PRODUCTS RECEIVE AWARDS



## Beverage-Air Cross Temp



Beverage-Air’s unique Cross Temp® technology provides operators with unmatched versatility for their cold and frozen storage needs. Operators can manually adjust Cross Temp cooler/freezer models to any point between 40 degrees F and -15 degrees F. These flexible units can function as standard coolers or freezers for specialty items, ice cream storage or many other purposes. Even during service times, the temperature can easily convert from refrigerator to freezer or vice versa, to accommodate changing refrigeration needs. On average, a Cross Temp unit can convert in less than an hour.

“The Cross Temp series gives you a lot of range and flexibility in

the kitchen,” says Erica J. Motes, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Ali Group North America—Refrigeration Division. That flexibility can be especially helpful for operations that may be changing their menus frequently or offering seasonal or LTO items.

The exclusive Beverage-Air Cross Temp technology uses a variable-speed compressor that intuitively adjusts for optimal efficiency based on the set temperature and environmental conditions. “It’s the first unit in commercial refrigeration that uses variable-speed compressor technology,” says Motes. That technology means greater temperature

stability and can save users up to 30% in energy costs compared with a single-speed compressor.

The Cross Temp series features an easy-to-use digital controller for adjusting set points. The unit also has a smart defrost feature and recovers its temperature quickly after defrosting. Cross Temp models are available in a range of door configurations, including one full door or two half doors, in either glass or solid.

“At Beverage-Air, we spend a lot of time building value and innovation into our products,” says Motes. “We feel very honored to win the Kitchen Innovations Award.”

[beverage-air.com](http://beverage-air.com)

Though the 2020 National Restaurant Association Show® was cancelled, event organizers still recognized innovative products with the annual Kitchen Innovations® Awards. We’re proud to announce that **two products** from Ali Group companies received **KI Awards**.



## Electro Freeze Fuzionate



With the Electro Freeze Fuzionate™, operators can now offer a wide range of delicious soft-serve flavors from just one machine. It’s the first fully integrated frozen dessert machine that produces nine soft-serve flavors in one space-saving footprint. The Fuzionate incorporates the flavor throughout the soft-serve base, producing a deliciously consistent and profitable product.

The machine holds eight 32-ounce syrup containers and can produce a variety of frozen product, including custard, ice cream, gelato, sorbet and yogurt. Patented mix-chamber geometries and blade design blend the flavors in at the point of dispensing. It takes

just seconds to connect syrup bottles or adjust flavors, and there are no complicated attachments. That gives operators the opportunity to offer seasonal flavors or regional favorites.

Operating the Fuzionate is simple, says Mark Holden, Inside Sales and Marketing Manager for Electro Freeze. “The restaurant crew member or convenience store customer simply walks up to the machine, selects one of eight flavors or vanilla, pulls down the lever and the Fuzionate technology dispenses smooth and creamy frozen yogurt, ice cream or gelato,” Holden says. The Fuzionate machine is available in either

crew-operated or self-serve options.

Cleaning the machine is also easy. Self-closing spigots help prevent mess and eliminate waste.

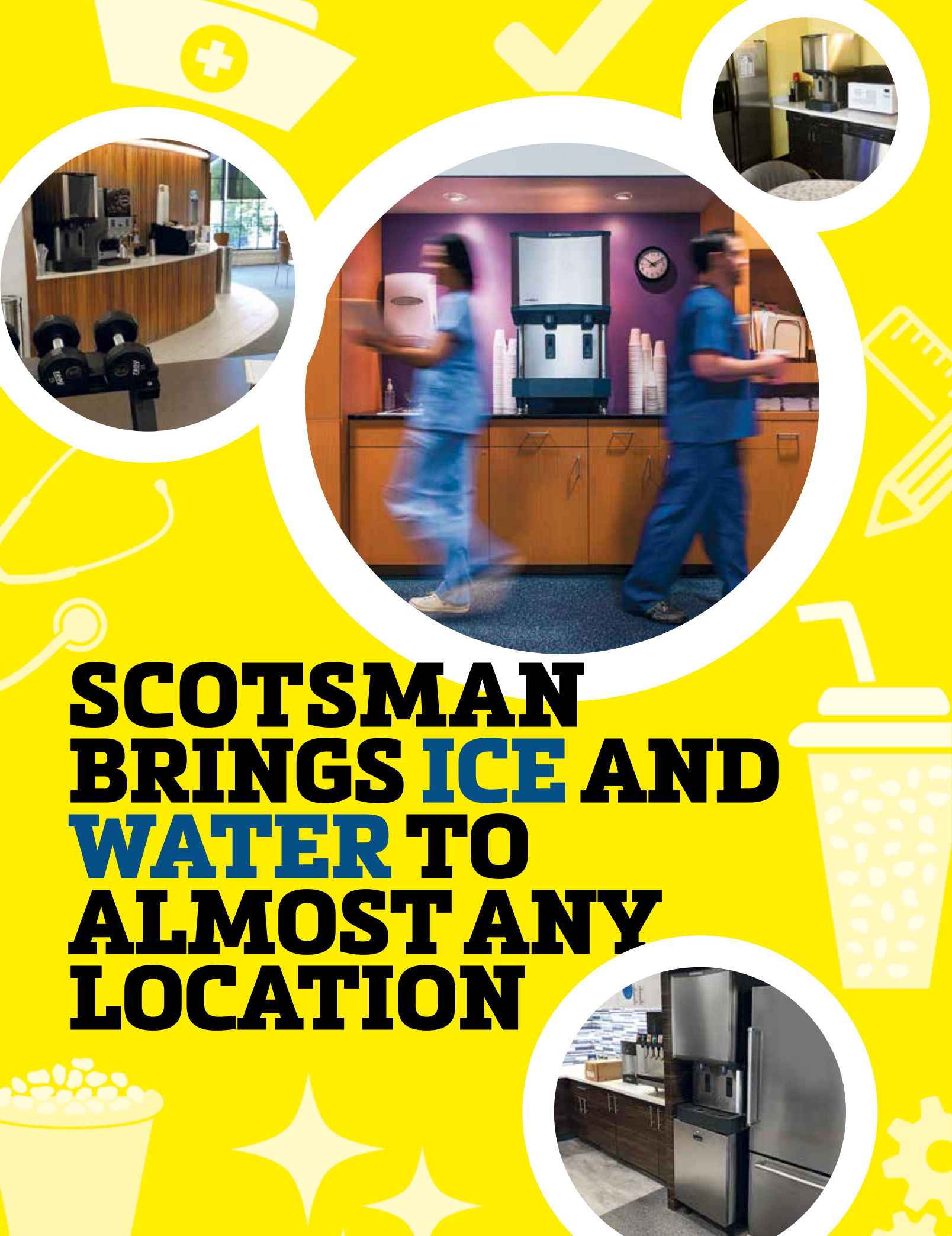
With its sleek design and small footprint, almost any type of operation — convenience store, ice cream/gelato shop or cafeteria — can profitably expand its frozen treat selections with the Fuzionate.

“Thank you to the selection committee members,” says Holden. “It is indeed an honor to be mentioned in the company of the other award winners. We always strive to meet the demands of our customers for new, profitable ideas and to enhance speed of service.”



[electrofreeze.com](http://electrofreeze.com)





# SCOTSMAN BRINGS ICE AND WATER TO ALMOST ANY LOCATION

If you think foodservice equipment is strictly for commercial kitchens, think again. “Offices, warehouses and breakrooms all typically have some limited foodservice equipment,” notes Jeff Biel, Vice

President of Marketing and Product Development for Scotsman Ice Systems. “And this equipment needs to be placed to allow for functionality while not creating health or sanitation concerns.”

The machines most commonly seen in those operations include water and ice dispensers, says Biel. “We increasingly see ice and water being used in offices, health clubs, warehouses and factories,” he says.

A variety of factors have contributed to that increase. First, many people have replaced sodas or coffee with water as their primary drink of choice, especially when exercising. “Hydration and water have been promoted as a healthy choice. Ice and water on location provides a convenience, so people don’t have to buy water bottles that need to be disposed of,” Biel says. Second, in some locations having fresh water on hand may be a health necessity or municipal requirement. “In the case of factory workers or utility/construction providers, it’s necessary for hydration in hot or humid conditions,” he says.

But, just as with commercial restaurants, finding the right space — and finding enough of it — to place this equipment can be difficult. “Restaurants are always challenged with doing more in tighter spaces and this is a challenge in other commercial environments as well,” Biel says.

## Small Footprint, Big Output

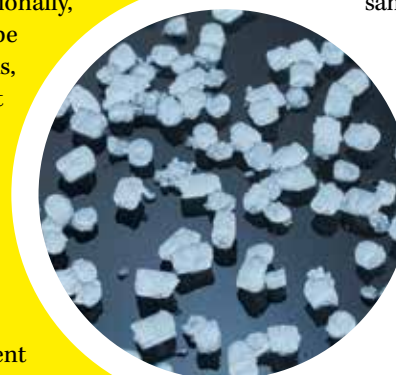
Equipment manufacturers have responded to this challenge by creating equipment with smaller footprints or ones that can perform multiple functions. The HID Meridian® Series of ice and water dispensers is Scotsman’s answer to that challenge. The HID unit makes ice, stores ice and dispenses water — all in one convenient unit with a small footprint.

HID machines produce Scotsman’s famous nugget ice. It’s the ice that people love to chew, and it’s also great for cooling beverages. Additionally, “Nugget ice can be used for ice packs, making it perfect for athletic facilities, health clubs and nursing homes,” Biel says. The HID line is available with three different storage capacities (12 lb., 25 lb. and 40 lb.) and with 300-lb. and 500-lb. ice-making capacities. Even the largest HID machine only takes up a 22-inch-by-25-inch footprint, which means it won’t use up a lot of valuable counter space.

The HID machines feature touch-free dispensing, which provides “very sanitary operation and eliminates surfaces that need to be constantly wiped down,” Biel says. That’s a plus with today’s increased emphasis on sanitation, because it gives customers or employees the ice and water they want “while also providing peace of mind by eliminating surfaces that

could be contaminated,” says Biel. Having ice storage inside the machine serves as another advantage in terms of sanitation, because it eliminates the need for a separate storage bin where the ice needs to be scooped out. “Those separate units are much less sanitary since the ice is much more open to the environment and prone to contamination through human contact.”

The HID ice and water dispenser fits both traditional foodservice and non-foodservice areas, Biel says, because it’s a “small, versatile machine that provides sanitary, touch-free dispensing of water along with the chewy nugget ice that is very popular.”



## BRAND WATCH

Scotsman

Machines installed worldwide:

**1,000,000+**

Tons of Scotsman flake and nugget ice produced daily worldwide:

**12,500**

Scotsman ice cubes produced daily worldwide:

**6 billion**

Crystal-clear ice cubes introduced:

**1950**

The Original Chewable Ice® nugget ice introduced:

**1981**

[scotsman-ice.com](http://scotsman-ice.com)

meridian





How one chain found a better, quicker way to prepare its menu items.

# Efficient Food Prep Helps Position Chain for Growth

**B**y streamlining food preparation and increasing holding time, kitchens can operate more efficiently and save money on product. That was the goal of a mid-size fast-casual Mediterranean chain recently and, to find the right solution, they went through a rigorous testing process.

With a traditional menu of such Mediterranean favorites as kebabs, wraps and falafel, the chain had been preparing its menu items in the usual manner: storing ingredients in the cooler, then assembling and cooking to order. That entailed going from a 38-degree F refrigerator to an 800-degree F open-flame kabob grill, which meant 12 minutes of cooking time on the grill and correspondingly long ticket times.

But the chain wanted to find out if there was a more efficient way to produce its food faster without sacrificing the quality or the flavor that its customers craved. The restaurant's team did research on a number of cooking and holding options and went to its local gas utility to investigate its options. After preliminary tests on several cooking and holding methods, the chain's culinary team narrowed the search down to two finalists: a moisture-controlled Turbofan® P8 proofer/holding cabinet from Moffat and a low, dry heat holding cabinet from another manufacturer.

### Testing, Testing

The chain's corporate and culinary staff did multiple product tests using the two cabinets and the results proved to be dramatic. "When they used the competitor, they said it dried out the product," says Kathy Blundell, Sales Representative for Foodservice

Equipment Agents in Anaheim, Calif. "It didn't do as well as the Moffat." The moisture control of the Moffat unit provided better product texture, says Jesse Gonzalez, Senior Account Executive for Avanti Restaurant Solutions in Costa Mesa, Calif. "When [food] goes from the Moffat to the griddle or kebab broiler, it's still moist on the inside. When you take it from the refrigerator and put it into the kebab broiler, it dries out the product."

The next step for the chain was to take the holding cabinet and give it a test run in one of its stores. That real-world testing showed the chain ways to streamline its cooking process. With the exception of a few quick-cooking items, the chain is now precooking ingredients in a combi oven and then moving them to the Moffat cabinet to hold for up to an hour. After a quick sear on the grill, the items are ready for service. "The Moffat holding cabinet has lessened their cook times from 12 minutes to four or five minutes," says Kyle Rinker, Regional Sales Manager for Moffat.

An auto-fill humidity generator on the Turbofan P8 ensures that food stays moist and flavorful. It can hold eight full-size or 16 half-size trays, and installs easily with a simple plug-in connection.

The shortened cook times mean that the restaurant staff can spend less time over the grill and fill orders faster. "It has decreased ticket turnaround time, which means more customers can be served and thus increases profits for the brand," says Rinker. For an expanding chain such as this one, he says, "getting the growing pains out of the way now will benefit them in future expansion."



Moffat's Turbofan P8 proofer/holding cabinet keeps food moist and can help reduce final prep time.

**BRAND WATCH**

---

**MOFFAT**

Countries in Moffat's network:  
**193**  
Number of U.S. states currently using Moffat products:  
**50**  
[moffatusa.com](http://moffatusa.com)



Ice-O-Matic addresses challenges in food safety and sustainability in developing its next-generation ice machines.

# Bringing Safety and Sustainability to the Forefront

According to a study from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, a single foodborne illness outbreak at a fast-casual establishment could cost a quick-service restaurant between \$6,330 to \$2.1 million, casual-dining operations between \$8,030 to \$2.2 million and fine-dining establishments between \$8,273 and \$2.6 million per incident. The total amount depends on several factors, such as the outbreak's severity, number of lawsuits, fines and legal fees, in addition to the number of employees and guests impacted.

Due to the potential of this devastating impact, food safety has been at the forefront of equipment technology and in the ice machine segment in particular.

"Antiviral and antibacterial technology have been available for several years, but many operators have not taken advantage of this due to the cost of an ice machine," says Alex Tappé, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Ice-O-Matic. "However, this technology will be the focus of foodservice equipment and ice machines moving forward."

Widespread adoption of hydrocarbon refrigerants like R290 began in 2012, and this environmentally friendly technology has become more commonly used in commercial refrigeration. Not only is there significantly less refrigerant charge and environmental impact with hydrocarbons, but these also have lower discharge temperatures in general.

"We're consistently moving toward more sustainable products using R290 refrigerant," says Tappé. "It has been used by refrigeration equipment manufacturers but has not been commonplace for ice machines, as we are dealing with limitations in terms of performance."

Fortunately, when it comes to ice makers, there have been great strides made in recent years to enhance both food safety and sustainability.

## Meeting Sustainability Goals

R290 is a refrigerant-grade propane used as an alternative to R404A and R407 series refrigerants. This hydrocarbon is a more efficient refrigerant with a low GWP (Global Warming Potential).

"When purchasing an icemaker, operators want to look at the price as well as the long-term cost of ownership implications of the equipment they're purchasing," says Tappé.

The Gourmet Series, four Ice-O-Matic ice machine models featuring environmentally friendly R290 refrigerants, has recently been launched.

"We are offering more R290 ice machines to the marketplace than anyone else in the industry," says Tappé. "We're introducing a product that has a much more sustainable platform and, therefore, provides a way this equipment can support an operation's sustainability goals."

Its use of R290 refrigerant takes sustainability to the highest level for this equipment category.

"The ice machine industry has undergone tremendous changes in manufacturing equipment and converting to much more friendly products with better GWP," says Tappé.

This wasn't an easy shift, as R290 can't be used with compressors of a certain output. For this reason, the refrigeration industry was able to adopt the more sustainable refrigerant, whereas the ice machine segment was faced with more challenges.

"Refrigerators have lower horsepower compressors than ice machines," says Tappé. "The refrigerant charge required for 1 hp compressors and higher can be an issue with R290 because of the flammability potential."



Currently, only ice machines producing 800 pounds or less of ice per day can utilize R290 refrigerant. It's not an option for larger production machines at the present time.

Ice-O-Matic's Gourmet Series Undercounter icemaker, which utilizes R290 refrigerant, produces up to 80 pounds of clear, long-lasting gourmet cubes per day in a space-saving 18¼-inch-wide unit. Constructed of durable, corrosion-resistant stainless steel, the icemakers' built-in storage bin accommodates up to 33 pounds of ice.

The line is not only energy efficient but also designed for easier cleaning. This results in a longer service life. Also, since a cleaner icemaker utilizes less energy, it is not as costly to run.

"How much water and energy an ice machine consumes is related to how well it's running," says Tappé. "And an ice machine runs well as long as it's clean and preventative maintenance is part of the equation."

"If an icemaker's filters are changed frequently, evaporator plates and other main components are consistently and properly cleaned, the unit will be more sustainable, and energy consumption alone will make a huge difference," says Tappé.

Ice-O-Matic focuses on simplifying preventative maintenance for operators and, in the process, ensures the equipment operates more sustainably.

"The Gourmet Series comes with an electronic board, which makes units easier to service and extremely energy efficient," says Tappé. "The air filter also is removable for easier cleaning and maintenance."

Sizing flexibility also ensures the proper ice machine is purchased to meet the production needs as well as the available space.

The Gourmet Series not only has a space-saving profile for undercounter use but also has front air discharge, which is preferable in smaller footprints.

"With these front-breathing units, intake and outtake are all in the front, so units can run efficiently in tight spots," says Tappé. "This is what operators are always looking for with ice machine placement. Our broad lineup with slim dimensions provides flexibility with location, which is an important aspect of the machine."



## Food Safety Enhancements

Many types of bacteria can survive in cold environments, making ice bins susceptible.

To address this issue, Ice-O-Matic has invested in ice bin sanitation technology, which kills viruses and other bacteria.

"Safety is definitely paramount with ice machines," says Tappé. "What many people have not taken into consideration over the years is that ice is food. And

the environment ice machines run in is complicated as far as the air intake goes, because yeast, bacteria, and other external components can impact a unit's ice quality."

Because viruses and bacteria can also work their way into an ice machine and impact food safety, Ice-O-Matic has created units that can be safely cleaned without disrupting production. "This is available with our Elevation Series, which we launched two years ago," says Tappé.

Elevation's one-touch descaling and sanitizing accentuate food safety. The Food Zone allows for quick wipe downs for everyday cleaning, and dishwasher-safe components snap off and on.

"Now what we're implementing is an

antibacterial/antiviral technology that has been available, but the way we're applying it to our products is different and new," says Tappé. This new ice bin feature utilizes a built-in, concentrated ozone-produced gas application.

"It is focused on ice in the bin, not so much on the machine itself," says Tappé. "With this treatment, operators have the option to be even more focused on ice safety."

The antiviral/antibacterial technology is an option built into Ice-O-Matic machines or can be used as an after-market product.

"What it comes down to is an operator's needs and offering the best features on ice machines as far as cleanliness, sustainability and flexibility," says Tappé. "Our industry has come so far in terms of the quality of ice machines being produced today; it's raised everyone's level of quality."



Gourmet ice cubes make any drink refreshing.

**BRAND WATCH**

**Ice-O-Matic**  
Ice. Pure and Simple

Established:  
**1952**

Machines shipped annually to more than  
**45 countries:**

**40,000+**

Product SKUs:  
**250+**

**iceomatic.com**



# High-Speed Cooking Made Easy with XpressChef



A Q&A with Greg Stak, CFSP,  
Vice President of Sales, ACP Inc.



**With the increased emphasis on delivery and takeout across all foodservice segments, how important is speed of production?**

**Greg Stak:** Today, speed of production is more important than ever. If customers are dining on-premises, the days of leisurely dining are gone. They want to get their food delivered as quickly as possible. In terms of delivery and takeout, there's lots of competition, and it's vitally important to the operator to get food plated and presented as quickly as possible so no delivery or takeout time is wasted.

Speed of service is as important as ever but you have to combine that with the quality of product that's being produced. Getting a bad pizza in 10 minutes is not better than getting a great pizza in 15 minutes. It's really important that while speed of service is emphasized, the quality of the product does not suffer.

**At the same time, kitchen space is tightening up.**

**GS:** It is. Space is always at a premium in a commercial kitchen. Whether it's a QSR, fast-casual or fine-dining operation, kitchen space is expensive and hard to come by. When operators can purchase a piece of equipment with a small footprint that easily and economically produces consistently high-quality menu items, that checks a lot of the boxes off their wish lists.

Specialty equipment can be a great thing for an operator. But devoting square footage to a piece of equipment that has limited applications at the expense of an item that can produce multiple menu items may not be the best use of kitchen space.

Another way operators can maximize their kitchen space is with ventless equipment, which saves overhead space by eliminating the need for a vent or hood.

**Many operators are turning to high-speed ovens. Do most operators understand all the things a high-speed oven can do?**

**GS:** Operators are getting educated and are more understanding of high-speed oven capabilities, but I think there's still a lot to learn. They may not understand the technology, the inner workings, the different cooking platforms and how they all interact with each other to produce a quality product. They may also need some culinary expertise to understand how to produce their menus in a high-speed oven because you can do so many things: baking, roasting, breakfast items, lunch, snacks, dinner — the options are almost limitless. Because you can do so many things in a small footprint, once they understand the technology operators come to see that this is an investment that can save them money. They can perhaps eliminate some pieces of equipment and free up a whole lot of space in their kitchen.



**When people hear ACP, they think of microwave ovens. But you also have expertise in high-speed ovens.**

**GS:** The ACP name stands for Accelerated Cooking Products. While our Amana brand was at the forefront of microwave technology, we're also at the forefront of high-speed oven technology. Taking the knowledge we've learned from decades of producing top-quality microwaves and combining that with other proven cooking technologies was a natural transition for us.

We offer XpressChef™ high-speed oven technology in different size footprints. The 2c has convection and microwave assist technology; the 3i adds impingement. The 4i

oven has convection, impingement, infrared radiant and microwave assist. Our products are assembled and fabricated right here in the USA and are backed by our ComServ™ service network. If for any reason the unit requires service, a fully trained and qualified professional is going to take care of it.

Some of these ovens are compact and attractive enough to be front-of-house items as well. We also offer models that are ventless, so there's no need for any kind of overhead or external ventilation.

XpressChef high-speed ovens are versatile enough to do thousands of menu items, so they're perfect for today's shrinking kitchens.

## AS SEEN ON TV

If you turned on your TV recently and thought you saw an XpressChef high-speed oven...you probably did. ACP was featured on the "In Depth Series" with Laurence Fishburne in the fall of 2020. The program, which airs on public television stations, features reports on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from technology to medicine to business.



According to Greg Stak of ACP, the show's producers were interested in the technology that ACP has brought to cooking methods. "Here's a manufacturer with a lot of history that's at the forefront of quick-cooking technology with the microwave and now is on to the next generation of accelerated cooking," he says. The ease of the user interface was also a selling point, Stak says, "because almost anyone can use it. Whether they're a highly trained chef or a new hire fresh in the kitchen, as long as they can follow pictures, they can use this product."



XpressChef 2c



XpressChef 3i



XpressChef 4i

**BRAND  
WATCH**

**Amana**  
Commercial  
MENUMASTER  
Commercial  
XpressChef

Established:  
**1947**

First affordable  
microwave  
oven, the Amana  
Radarange®, sold:  
**1967**

Manufacturing:  
**ONLY**  
manufacturer of  
commercial microwave  
ovens fabricated and  
assembled in the USA

[acpsolutions.com](http://acpsolutions.com)



# Our Companies



COOKING

ALPHATECH

**Amana**  
Commercial  
MENUMASTER  
Commercial  
XpressChef

ambach

**b**  
baron  
**eloma**



**LAINOX**  
DEVICE FOR COOKING

**MARENO**  
ENJOY YOUR KITCHEN

metos

MOFFAT

oem

**OLIS**  
weinnovate cooking

**ROSINOX**  
Grandes Cuisines

**SILCO**  
IDEAS. WELL DONE



BAKERY

**Belshaw**  
**Adamatic**  
Bakery Center

**BERTRAND**  
PUMA  
La grille boulangère

**BONGARD**

**KFI**  
Le froid maîtrisé

**ESMACH**

**MONO**

**Poviller**



MEAL DELIVERY,  
PREPARATION &  
STORAGE SOLUTIONS

**Aladdin Temp-Rite**  
Better by degrees

**AUREA**  
advanced food preparation equipment

**burledge**  
TOGETHER, WE WORK

**Edlund**  
Innovation Redefined

**Krefft**

**METRO**

**Stierlen**

temp-rite



REFRIGERATION

**BEVERAGE-AIR**

**FRIGINOX**  
LE FROID PROFESSIONNEL

**friulinox**  
refrigeration excellence

**hiber**  
THE FUTURE OF CHILLING

**POLARIS**  
BEHIND THE FRESHNESS

**Tecnomac**

**VICTORY**

**williams**



WASHING  
& WASTE  
MANAGEMENT

**ADs**  
American Dish Service

**Champion**

**CMA**

**COMENDA**

**DIHR**

**grandimpianti**  
intelligent laundry equipment

**HOONVED**  
PEOPLE · PASSION · INNOVATION

**KROMO**  
EXCELLENCE IN DISHWASHING

**MOYER**  
**DIEBEL**

**NORDIEN-SYSTEM**

**RENDISK**

**WASHTECH**  
**STARLINE**  
PROFESSIONAL WASH SYSTEMS

**Wexiödisk**



ICE CREAM  
& BEVERAGE  
DISPENSE

**BGI**  
CONTINUOUS  
CHURNING  
ICE-MAKING  
MACHINES

**CARPIGANI**

**Electro Freeze**

**GBG**

**ICETEAM**  
1927 **BIB**

**ICETEAM**  
1927 **cattabriga**

**ICETEAM**  
1927 **COLOREUTE**

**ICETEAM**  
1927 **ON**

**ICETEAM**  
1927 **PROMAG**

**Gencotel**



ICE MAKERS

**BAR LINE**  
ICE - MACHINES

**Icematic**

**Ice-O-Matic**  
Ice. Pure and Simple

**Scotsman**

**SIMAG**



COFFEE  
MACHINES

**EGRO**  
SWISS COFFEE TECHNOLOGY

**PROMAC**  
Qualité professionnelle

**RANCILIO**

**RANCILIO**  
SPECIALTY



CONTRACT,  
DISTRIBUTION  
& SERVICE

**Ali**  
GROUP  
意立立餐饮设备(上海)有限公司  
CHINA

**AliCOMENDA**

**AliCONTRACT**

**GRANDIMPIANTI**  
ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING

**metos**  
marine

**metos**  
kitchen intelligence

**MILLER'S**  
VANGUARD

**SERVICELINE**



# YOUR GLOBAL PARTNER

**Ali Group Global Headquarters**

Via Gobetti, 2a | Villa Fiorita  
20063 Cernusco sul Naviglio  
Milan | Italy  
Phone +39 02 921991  
italy@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Australia**

740 Springvale Road | Mulgrave  
Melbourne Vic. 3170  
Australia  
Phone +61 3 95183888  
australia@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Brazil**

Alameda Franca, 447  
Jardim Paulista  
São Paulo - SP, 01422-000, Brazil  
Phone +55 11 20618207  
brazil@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Canada**

2674 North Service Rd.  
Jordan Station | Ontario  
L0R 1S0 Canada  
Phone +1 905-562-4195  
canada@aligroup.com

**Ali Group China**

MTR Cloud Center, 3rd Floor, Suite A  
619 Caoyang Road Putuo District  
Shanghai 200063 | China  
Phone +86 21 6285 5858  
china@aligroup.com

**Ali Group France**

17-19 Avenue Gaston Monmousseau  
93240 Stains  
France  
Phone +33 1 48216325  
france@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Germany**

Lochfeldstraße 30  
D-76437 Rastatt  
Germany  
Phone +49 7222 90470  
germany@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Hong Kong**

Unit C, 12/F. | Roxy Industrial Centre  
58-66 Tai Lin Pai Road  
Kwai Chung, N.T. | Hong Kong  
Phone: +86 852 2407 5422  
hongkong@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Japan**

Toei Mishuku Building  
5F 1-13-1 Mishuku | Setagaya-ku  
1540005 Tokyo, Japan  
Phone +81 3 5779 8850  
japan@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Middle East & Africa**

Unit 603 & 604, Building 1B  
Dubai Design District  
Dubai, UAE  
Phone +971 4510 8200  
middleeast@aligroup.com

**Ali Group New Zealand**

45 Illinois Drive  
Izone Business Hub | Rolleston, 7675  
New Zealand  
Phone +64 3 9836600  
newzealand@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Russia**

Novodmitrovskaya St. 2, Building 1, Floor 8,  
Office LI, Room 1D  
127015 Moscow  
Russia  
Phone +7 495 481 6033  
russia@aligroup.com

**Ali Group Singapore**

140 Paya Lebar Road  
#08-09 AZ @ Paya Lebar  
Singapore 409015  
Phone +65 6738 5393  
singapore@aligroup.com

**Ali Group South Africa**

P.O. Box 30072 Jetpark 1467  
Unit 4 Lakeview Business Park  
8-10 Yaldwyn Road | Jetpark | Boksburg, RSA  
Phone + 27 11 826 6742/1  
southafrica@aligroup.com

**Ali Group UK**

Bryggen Road | North Lynn Industrial Estate  
Kings Lynn, Norfolk  
PE30 2HZ | United Kingdom  
Phone +44 1553 817 000  
uk@aligroup.com

**Ali Group USA**

101 Corporate Woods Parkway  
Vernon Hills, IL 60061 USA  
Phone: +1 847-215-6565  
usa@aligroup.com



**Ryan Blackman  
Managing Editor**

Ali Group North America  
101 Corporate Woods Parkway  
Vernon Hills, IL 60061 USA  
Phone: (847) 215-5090  
Email: rblackman@aligroup.com

This edition of *Aliworld* Magazine  
is produced with pride by Zoomba Group  
Custom Publishing Division  
(190 N. York Street,  
Elmhurst, IL 60126 USA)  
under the authority of the Ali Group.

Inclusion of a particular company or  
organization in this magazine does not necessarily  
imply endorsement by that company or organization.

**Pictures**

Glenn Bashaw, p68-71;  
Paul Brokering, p5-6;  
Reed Brown, p30-33, p42-45;  
Geoff Fitzgerald Photography, 64-67;  
Carroll Foster @hoteyephoto.com, p38-41;  
Tom Galvin, p58-61;  
Bob Greenspan, p22-25;  
Lindsey Janies Photography, p28-29;  
KarenImages.com, p50-53;  
Photographs courtesy of the OCCC, p58-61;  
Matt Stanley, p54-57

**Printing**

Royle Printing  
745 South Bird Street  
Sun Prairie, WI 53590 USA

**Editorial Office**

101 Corporate Woods Parkway  
Vernon Hills, IL 60061 USA  
(847) 215-6565

[www.aligroup.com](http://www.aligroup.com)



## A GLOBAL LEADER

Ali Group is the largest, most diversified global leader in the foodservice equipment industry. An Italian corporation founded 57 years ago, the engineering heritage and traditions of several of its companies stretch back more than 100 years and include some of the most respected names in the industry.

Through its subsidiaries, the Ali Group designs, manufactures, markets and services a broad line of equipment used for commercial food cooking, preparation and processing. With 58 manufacturing sites, over 10,000 employees in 30 countries and 79 brands, it gives life to the most extensive product portfolio in the industry, operating in almost every hospitality and catering sector.

**[www.aligroup.com](http://www.aligroup.com)**

