

NACUFS (2025)

Retail Sales: Multiple Concepts of the Year

Durrell - Retail Dining Center

Colorado State University

Introduction:

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In the Fall 2022 semester, Durrell Dining Center at Colorado State University (CSU) opened as a multi-venue retail operation as a direct response to trends and customer dining preferences exiting the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022-23, CSU Residential Dining administrative and Durrell Dining Staffs worked through the challenges of converting an all-you-care-to-eat (AYCTE) dining center to a retail facility. From proper staffing levels to implementing reusable containers and communicating the changes to students, staff, and faculty, the first year was a growth opportunity for our entire program.

Essay:

On a typical day of service at Durrell, students can order a hot or cold breakfast from the build-your-own yogurt and oatmeal bar to a meat or plant-based breakfast burrito for the walk to class. For lunch, typical grill items like burgers and nuggets are a staple for those looking for comfort foods, but soups, sandwiches, salads, sushi, and more can always also be found. Limited time only menu items pop up occasionally at each restaurant in Durrell to create more variety and on-trend dining options.

Durrell is also home to our widest variety of certified Halal meats on campus, including multiple beef and chicken options, to serve our Muslim students while also satisfying students with no dietary preferences at all.

Introduction:

We converted the Durrell Dining Center from an AYCTE facility to a retail concept, but there were some design features that couldn't be changed. The built environment was set, architectural and electrical limitations dictated where equipment lived, and there were no existing "pick up" locations that are necessary for retail.

So, we got creative!

Essay:

Where students used to peer through the glass to choose their pasta shape, sauce, and protein, they now watch staff create hand rolls and bento boxes.

A station with a commercial pizza oven became Baked, Fired, and Toasted, a concept that serves toasted sandwiches, baked pastas, and yes, oven-fired pizzas.

Our salad bar is shared among concepts so we can offer a side or entree salad. Our soup station doubles as an oatmeal bar in the morning.

Because Durrell dining center is a made-to-order operation, there is far less food waste from inaccurate forecasting, but when there is, the multi-concept facility also shares space with a marketplace and still-good items are packaged for sale.

All the seating remains from when Durrell was an all-you-care-to-eat facility, but it's no longer behind the meal swipe "pay wall". Having a free space to gather promotes student success and increases non-board and credit card sales. Mixed groups of students, faculty, and staff can use the space for study sessions, game nights, organization meetings, and more. Durrell provides games and outdoor seating, allowing customers to socialize and enjoy the 300 days of sunshine in Colorado.

Introduction:

Marketing for Durrell starts as soon as students arrive on campus. Because this space operates more like a food hall than our AYCTE spaces, but isn't just a marketplace, sometimes our customers need a bit more information on how to use their meal plan here.

During move-in, staff are here to help students set up their GrubHub account, connect to their meal plan, apply promotional discounts, and order their first meal. We also give out branded reusable silverware, bags, and stress balls to support sustainability and remind students to order from Durrell when the semester starts to get tough!

Essay:

Prominent signage is displayed throughout the facility to communicate hours of operation, pick up location, and nutrition information for each restaurant to provide customers with clear guidance through each concept.

Sandwich board signage just outside of the dining room that visualize the day's offerings promote rotating menu items for North Fork and LTOs from Plum Street Eatery. Point-of-decision-making signage is important for our customers, as young adults don't tend to plan their meals in advance but do pick a dining location based on time availability and proximity. The visuals get student's mouths watering and reduce the anxiety around ordering something new, especially when the item is outside of a customer's culture or comfort zone.

We collect immediate and ongoing feedback through the Text and Tell platform, promoted on tables throughout Durrell.

Introduction:

Navigating the dining operations with dietary allergies is a priority at Colorado State University. We utilize an online menu system and a labelling system for the Top 9 allergens, gluten, as well as preferences including vegan, vegetarian, and Halal options.

In Durrell, every station is accompanied by a digital screen listing the day's menu items and any applicable allergy labels.

Essay:

Our online menu system NetMenu houses nutritional information and full ingredients for all menu items, allowing customers with specific needs to consult the menu before ordering through GrubHub. On site, every station also includes a link to that online menu system to double check their meal upon pickup. We always offer plant-based and gluten-free personalization through the GubHub app – gluten free buns, gluten free chips, meat alternative burgers, nuggets, and sandwiches. Our menu also boasts many items that are inherently friendly to special diets: gluten-free oatmeal, vegan burritos, vegetarian curries, Halal beef and chicken daily, appetizing salad bars with plant-based proteins, dairy free cheeses, and more.

Introduction:

A February 2023 article in Food Service Director discussed the top trends shaping College and University dining, including the call for sustainability in retail operations. Colorado State University’s pioneering partnership with GrubHub and Topanga.io to provide students with the option for reusable to go containers was highlighted.

Essay:

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