

NACUFS (2025)

Retail Sales: Multiple Concepts of the Year

Beach Cafe

UNC Chapel Hill

Introduction:

Unique, local, authentic—at Carolina Dining Services, these values guide everything we do. At the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, we strive to create a seamless and sensational dining experience for our Tar Heels. Located in the heart of the medical campus, the Beach Cafe serves over 1,200 medical students, faculty, and staff daily, continuously evolving based on student feedback. Featuring beloved local restaurants, it offers a diverse range of cuisines—from Mediterranean and Peruvian to Indian, Argentinian, and classic American. By listening to our students, we ensure the Beach Cafe remains an ever-changing, student-driven dining destination.

Essay:

At the Beach Cafe, student voices shape the advancement of our program. Guided by feedback from surveys, including our annual NACUFS survey, we expanded our offerings to better serve their needs—launching two new permanent locations and converting a popular rotation into a full-time fixture. Students expressed a desire for healthier, flavorful chicken options, leading us to introduce Alpaca Peruvian Chicken, a beloved local favorite. Its daily specials continue to nourish and entice students, with the Wednesday “Chop- Chop” special—featuring sauteed rotisserie chicken, corn, Jasmine rice, black beans, and house-made pico—standing out as a top choice.

Recognizing a demand for fresh, vegetarian-friendly options, we also made Mediterranean Deli a permanent staple. Its Armenian cranberry pecan salad and savory chicken shawarma offer light yet satisfying meal that appeal to a broad range of

tastes.

Designed for the fast-paced medical campus, the Beach Cafe balances efficiency with ambiance, providing a welcoming space where students can take a break and refuel. By listening, adapting, and delivering high-quality, in-demand options, we ensure that the Beach Cafe remains not just a dining destination but an integral part of the student experience.

Introduction:

The Beach Cafe is designed to make navigation easy and effortless. Vibrant, distinct wayfinding ensures a seamless dining experience. Upon entering, the restaurant concepts and a micro market—perfect for a quick snack—are conveniently located to the left. At the heart of the space is Mad Hatter's Coffee, an eclectic cafe and bakeshop where the rich aroma of ground coffee and freshly made Nutella crepes fills the air. To the right, the dining area, framed by glass windows, offers a bright and inviting atmosphere to linger and savor your meal.

Essay:

The Beach Cafe is designed for both speed and quality, catering to the fast-paced needs of students, faculty, and staff. Its open-market layout promotes seamless navigation, allowing for quick selections and efficient checkout. Unlike traditional a la carte dining, students can customize their meals without long wait times. At Mediterranean Deli, glass display cases showcase freshly prepared salads and proteins, making choices easier. Mad Hatter's Coffee, with its open-concept design, immerses guests in the process of crafting rich coffee and freshly made crepes, enhancing the sensory experience.

The dining area is surrounded by natural light, creating an inviting atmosphere that fosters community and engagement amongst guests. While the campus dining halls offer variety, the Beach Cafe delivers authenticity and local brand familiarity—qualities that resonate with our customers. According to NACUFS survey results, The Beach Cafe outperformed other locations with a score exceeding 4.5 among respondents who value food presentation, reaffirming its success in creating an appealing and visually engaging dining experience.

Introduction:

The Beach Cafe offers a wide variety of meals to satisfy diverse dietary preferences and cravings. Our digital and printed menus are designed to be both informative and visually appealing, aligning with our brand identity. They highlight meal exchange options, daily offerings, specials, and more, ensuring that guests can easily navigate their choices. Our social media platforms feature special promotions and limited time offers, engaging the student community. All printed and digital materials maintain consistent fonts and color schemes, creating a cohesive, attractive storefront for our audience.

Essay:

Clear and visually engaging communication is key to the Beach Cafe's success. To enhance the student experience, we utilize multiple touchpoints to inform and engage guests as they navigate the space. Our upgraded Beach Cafe logo sign reinforces the cafe's identity, while each restaurant concept features distinct branding, allowing for easy recognition and seamless flow. Menu boards and printed signage reflect each brand's unique personality, making them both functional and visually appealing. Screens are strategically placed throughout our space, particularly at our rotating concept, Top of the Hill. These screens inform guests about the featured restaurant of the day, display menus upon opening, and showcase marketing content highlighting specials, events, surveys, partnerships, and other activities at the Beach Cafe. Meanwhile, intuitive wayfinding makes navigation easy.

Beyond in-store visuals, we connect with students through dynamic digital engagement. Our Purchase Passport campaign encourages students to explore the Beach and other retail locations, fostering excitement and participation. Additionally, limited time offers, grand openings, and social media promotions strengthen our connection with the campus community. Guest feedback is actively collected through our annual NACUFS survey, weekly secret shopping reports, and online Contact Us forms, ensuring our marketing remains responsive and effective.

Introduction:

Nutritious, high-quality food, especially for our medical students, faculty, and staff is important. Based on their feedback, we expanded our offerings to include concepts like Alpaca Peruvian Chicken and Makus Empanadas, enhancing our diverse, health-conscious selections. Every Beach Cafe location accommodates dietary needs, including gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, and halal options. Our featured restaurants—Mad Hatters, Alpaca, Med Deli, CholaNad, Italian Pizzeria 3, Hunam, Makus, and Bandidos—are all locally based, allowing students to explore Triangle-area flavors. Alpaca is known for its all natural, hormone-free rotisserie chicken, free of all major FDA-identified allergens.

Essay:

The Student Dining Board, composed of student representatives from various departments with different dietary needs, plays a key role in ensuring the Beach Cafe offers healthy, inclusive food options. Meeting bi-weekly, they provide valuable feedback that helps us improve. Of our nine restaurant offerings, four are permanent, and five rotate, ensuring variety. Every concept is locally owned and provides menu items that cater to different dietary needs.

To support informed dining, our website features menus with nutritional details and a dietary filter that allows guests to select allergens and preferences, graying out unsuitable options. Unique icons highlight the top nine allergens for easy identification. Carolina Dining Services also collaborates with campus organizations, such as the Muslim Student Association, to ensure inclusive options. Mediterranean Deli, for example, offers halal selections like fresh salmon salad, chicken shawarma, and za'atar fries. Makus Empanadas offers a vegetarian spinach and cheese empanada.

Introduction:

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that every guest who visits the Beach Cafe feels well fed, happy, and feeling at home. Guests take pride in the Beach, and we embrace their sense of ownership. A campus-wide survey of medical students and staff provided insightful input that shaped the direction we took with this concept. Their suggestions have been crucial in enhancing offerings and experiences, reinforcing our commitment to building a space where community is felt. With their support, the Beach Cafe continues to grow into a dining destination that meets their needs and exceeds their expectations.

Essay:

One of our main concerns was how to transition from an outgoing, well-known brand to a new local concept without sacrificing our financial targets. There were challenges, but thankfully, we met both our financial and traffic goals, and guests embraced the new concepts. The increase in outside traffic and positive feedback, including suggestions through our Contact Us forms, demonstrate the success of the transition. With this momentum, we are excited to continue evolving and hope to add another concept soon that students will love. Our NACUFS satisfaction score of over 4.5 across seven categories highlights the Beach Cafe's excellence in facility design and food presentation, validating our approach.

Community partnership has always been an integral part of our vision. With the recent additions of Alpaca Peruvian Chicken and Makus Empanadas, and the replacement of a popular international concept, we are proud to have a fully local restaurant lineup, made possible by strong collaboration with the School of Medicine, our medical students and staff, and our Dining Board. By staying connected and responsive to our guests' needs, we continue to elevate the Beach Cafe experience and look forward to even greater success.

Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



Campus Beach C... 263 KiB



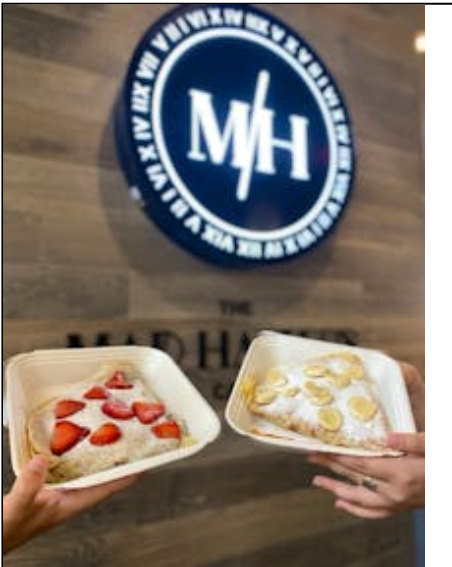
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makus_posters-... 1.4 MiB



Makus Empanad... 760 KiB



Mad Hatter Crep... 387 KiB



Mad Hatters Sta... 1.1 MiB



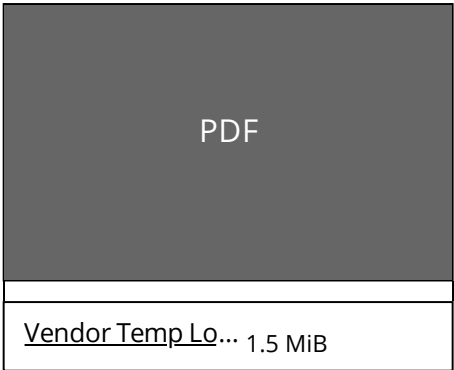
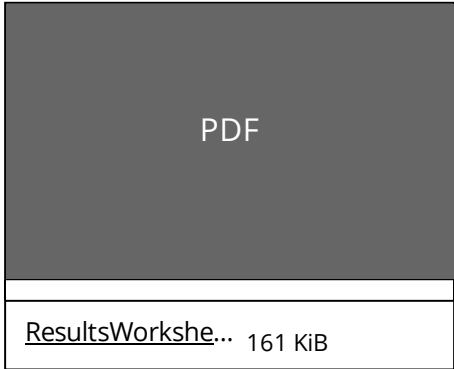
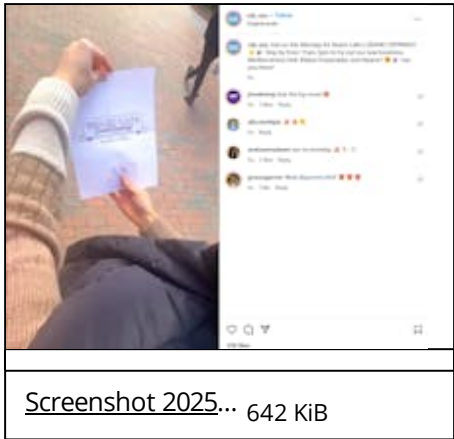
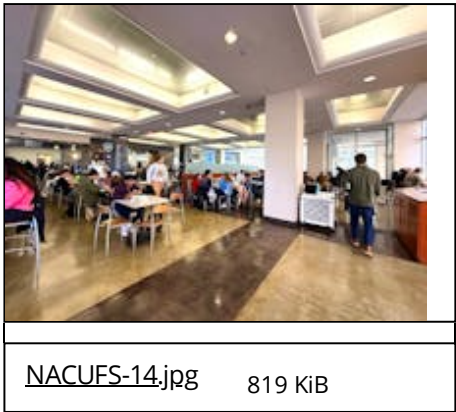
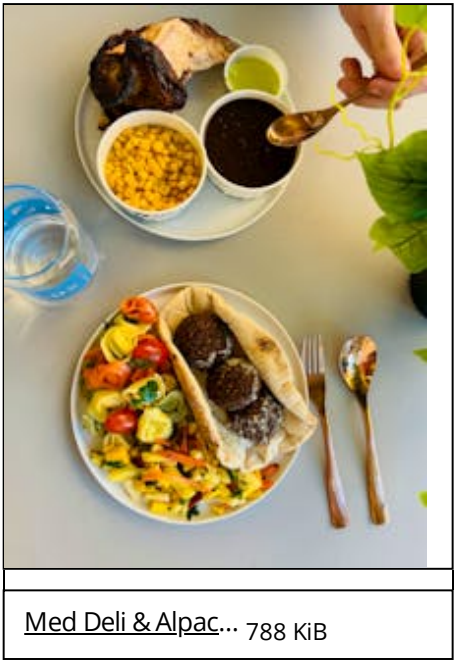
Mad Hatters Nu... 1.1 MiB



MedDeli Station... 2.5 MiB



NACUFS-17.jpg 2.2 MiB





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