

Kirsten McKinney



GNrEbYEo

Entry details

Entry Name: 8:15 at Boatwright

Institution Name: University of Richmond

Entry Completed By (*name and position*): Kirsten A. McKinney, Director of Marketing

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Introduction:

8:15 at Boatwright has served the University of Richmond community since October 2003, built around a simple truth: great coffee fuels great study. The 2025–26 relocation transformed that proposition into a full-service retail café experience. In partnership with La Colombe Coffee Roasters — one of only two Richmond-area locations to carry the brand — and through the introduction of SpiderEats, a new house-made brand featuring daily fresh-prepared grab-and-go items, 8:15 now offers an elevated, campus-tailored menu. From specialty espresso drinks and boba beverages to house-made overnight oats and artisan bagel sandwiches, every item reflects the distinctive tastes of the UR community.

Essay:

The 8:15 at Boatwright menu is built on four pillars: premium beverages, house-made retail items, curated local partnerships, and rotating specials that keep the experience fresh.

At the beverage bar, two superautomatic espresso machines — each pulling four shots simultaneously — anchor a full program of lattes, cold brews, chai steamers, matcha drinks, and blended frappes, with dedicated steam wands for dairy, non-dairy, and almond milk. A Nitro Cold Brew tap dispenses five beverages per minute via nitrogen infusion, enabling cold brew, nitro cold brew, infused teas, and lemonades. A Baby Hardtank flash-brews cold brew and seasonal tea blends, producing 32 gallons of specialty beverages daily. Boba teas — from Peach Crumble Milk

Tea to a Make-Your-Own option — serve the midday crowd. Biweekly drink specials — such as the Almond Matcha Latte and Salted Caramel Cold Brew — reflect seasonal trends, marketed on digital boards and social media.

Two high-speed ovens power the food program, turning out 110+ locally made bagels and 130+ bagel sandwiches daily. Palmiers, croissants, chocolate éclairs, babka bites, cakes, and desserts produced by UR's in-house Bakeshop satisfy customers' sweet tooth. SpiderEats offers heat-and-eat entrées, overnight oats, yogurt parfaits, and charcuterie boxes, providing substantial late-night options after the residential dining hall closes.

Introduction:

The original 8:15 at Boatwright occupied 952 square feet — a beloved but capacity-constrained space that the university had long outgrown. The 2025 renovation relocated 8:15 to the newly redesigned ground floor of Boatwright Memorial Library, expanding the footprint by 3,890 square feet and quadrupling kitchen and service capacity. An adjacent courtyard and upper-level outdoor terrace add 1,658 square feet of seating overlooking Westhampton Lake. Counter seating, lounge areas, and study bar stools are distributed to maximize natural light, transforming a beloved campus coffee stop into a destination retail dining environment worthy of the historic library it calls home.

Essay:

From opening day, every seat in the new 8:15 at Boatwright has been filled. The space delivers on a deliberate design philosophy: a café that feels as intellectually stimulating and welcoming as the library surrounding it.

The service counter features a full glass-front bakery display case presenting fresh-baked goods at eye level, flanked by a wall of digital menu boards and a dedicated rotating digital specials screen. The warm contrast of deep navy tile, reclaimed wood paneling, and soft lighting creates a refined, modern atmosphere. A striking hand-painted mural celebrating Richmond's cityscape anchors the dining room, grounding the space in a strong sense of local identity.

Seating is deliberately varied to serve the full spectrum of library visitors. Study bar stools line windows framing Westhampton Lake. Lounge chairs and bistro tables create intimate gathering nodes beneath a library staircase. A spacious dining room accommodates group study and community gathering under warm, round pendant lighting.

Reach-in coolers are positioned prominently within the service footprint, with SpiderEats branded packaging that communicates both quality and origin at a glance. Every item card displays allergen and dietary information clearly. The result is a seamlessly integrated retail environment where dining, studying, and community naturally coexist.

Introduction:

The launch of 8:15 at Boatwright was supported by a multi-phase marketing campaign designed to build anticipation, drive opening-week traffic, and establish long-term brand recognition. A refreshed logo and unified visual identity — carried across signage, packaging, digital boards, and branded merchandise — set the tone. Three days of invitation-only stakeholder preview events created campus ambassadors before the café opened to the general community. Grand Opening Week (August 25–29, 2025) featured daily menu sampling, free branded coffee sleeves for the first 100 customers each day, a Bose headphone giveaway, daily feedback surveys, and an oversized 8:15 coffee cup display with custom stickers.

Essay:

8:15 at Boatwright's marketing strategy recognized that its most powerful asset is its community. By cultivating stakeholders as champions before opening day, the café launched with built-in momentum by word of mouth.

Administrators and campus leaders attended invitation-only preview events during the week before opening, completing structured feedback surveys that allowed Dining Services to make final refinements before the public launch. Their enthusiasm became organic promotion across the university's social and professional networks.

Grand Opening Week employed a themed daily sampling structure spotlighting a different menu category each day: artisan Bakeshop items on Monday, egg bites and charcuterie on Tuesday, bagel sandwiches on Wednesday, specialty beverages on Thursday, and SpiderEats entrées and overnight oats on Friday. Each day featured a unique feedback survey, generating over 130 responses — actionable data that has directly shaped ongoing menu decisions.

Digital signage is the café's primary on-site marketing channel. A dedicated screen promotes biweekly specials, while a 20-second 'moment of Zen' video plays in rotation, offering students a calming visual interlude while waiting for their order. Specials are simultaneously pushed to social media and daily campus emails. The Grubhub menu ensures real-time item availability for mobile and pre-order customers — completing a cohesive omnichannel presence.

Introduction:

8:15 at Boatwright is committed to serving a campus community with diverse dietary needs and evolving wellness priorities. Every item on the menu is accompanied by clear allergen and dietary icons on digital menu boards and SpiderEats grab-and-go packaging. The SpiderEats product line was developed with dietary inclusivity as a core design goal. Beverage customization is extensive, with dairy-free milk alternatives available across all espresso and tea drinks, and all ingredients are listed on the Nutrislice app, ensuring that students with dietary restrictions can access the full menu experience without compromise.

Essay:

Dietary transparency is integrated throughout the 8:15 at Boatwright experience. Standardized icons for vegan, vegetarian, gluten-friendly, and major allergens appear on menu signage, item display cards, and SpiderEats packaging, enabling guests to make informed choices independently.

The beverage menu offers extensive customization with a range of dairy-free milk alternatives, ensuring students with lactose intolerance or dairy-free preferences can enjoy all espresso and specialty drinks. Feedback from Grand Opening Week highlighted the importance of milk alternative accessibility, prompting Dining Services to review pricing structures accordingly.

SpiderEats items are designed to offer nutritionally substantive options beyond typical coffee-shop fare. Heat-and-eat entrées like the Oaxacan Bowl and Lime Chicken, overnight oats in seasonal flavors, and yogurt parfaits provide balanced meals during late-night study hours after residential dining closes, addressing a significant unmet need identified by students.

Local partnerships with Chewy's Bagels and Ironclad Bakery expand dietary options, including gluten-free scones, vegan croissants, and a vegan chia croissant. Sustainability is treated as an extension of wellness: all cups, plates, utensils, and straws at 8:15 at Boatwright are fully compostable, reducing landfill impact and reinforcing a values-aligned dining experience for environmentally conscious students.

Introduction:

The results validate the vision. In the first sixteen weeks of the 2025–26 academic year, 8:15 at Boatwright generated a 32.8% increase in revenue over the same period in the prior year. Opening week alone delivered a 95.3% year-over-year sales increase and a 60.9% increase in guest count. Grand Opening Week customer surveys produced consistently high satisfaction ratings on every item sampled. Every seat has been filled since day one. The reimagined café has strengthened 8:15's role not just as a place to eat, but as an anchor of academic and community life at the University of Richmond.

Essay:

Through Fall 2025, 8:15 at Boatwright welcomed 73,226 guests — a 14.2% increase over the same period in Fall 2024 — while average transaction value grew from \$5.93 to \$6.89, a 16.2% lift. Commercial-grade equipment drove this scale: dual Eversys Enigma E4 machines increased rush-period capacity from 115 to 145 customers per minute, and dual Merrychef Eikon e3 ovens turned out 110+ bagels and 130+ bagel sandwiches daily.

Opening week's performance was particularly striking: \$35,566 in sales versus \$18,210 in the prior year — nearly 95% growth — driven by pent-up community demand and grand opening marketing momentum.

Customer satisfaction data from Grand Opening Week confirms what the financial results suggest. Across 130+ survey responses, items consistently earned 'Excellent' ratings for taste, presentation, and quality. The Lime Chicken earned perfect 'Excellent' scores from every respondent. The Fruit Tart was rated 'Excellent' by 77% of tasters. Qualitative feedback captured the spirit of the transformation: 'I love the new space... I will 100% be getting [food here] on a late night of studying in the library.'

8:15 at Boatwright is more than a café. It is where the University of Richmond comes to fuel its curiosity — and it has never been more ready for that role.

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



1-Stakeholder-P... 328 KiB



2-Signage.jpeg 304 KiB



3-GrandOpenin... 253 KiB



4-Seating.jpeg 327 KiB



5-Seating.jpeg 271 KiB



6-ServiceOption... 279 KiB



7-Reach In Cool... 334 KiB



8-Equipment.jp... 301 KiB



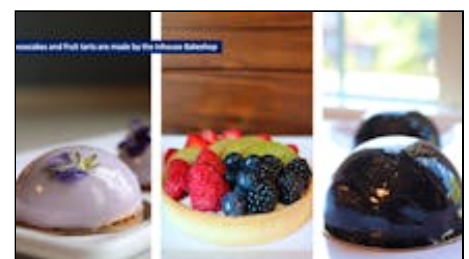
9-Equipment.jp... 282 KiB



10-Bagel Sandw... 284 KiB



11-EggBites.jpeg 186 KiB



12-Desserts.jpeg 180 KiB



13-SpiderEats B... 244 KiB

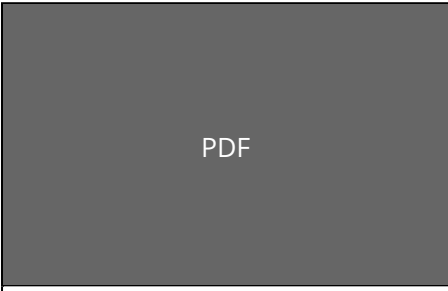


14-SpiderEats ... 268 KiB



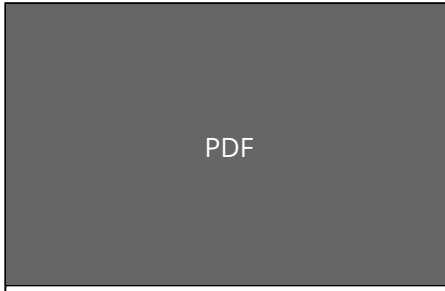
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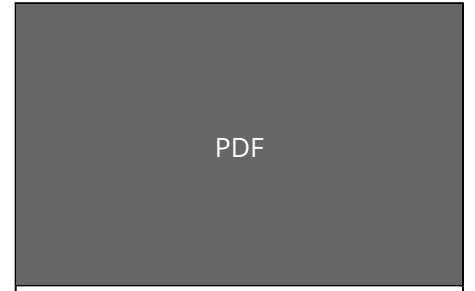
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815 production ... 18 KiB



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815-GO-Feedba... 213 KiB



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Quick Tour

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