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Stories



LEGENDS

Hospitality Management

Imagine owning a restaurant where 52,325 people come to dinner all at once. Imagine serving the bulk of those customers over the course of three hours or so at least once and sometimes twice or more. And imagine that each customer has to wait on average less than a minute and a half for an order of food. At the new Yankee Stadium, that's almost an everyday occurrence.

"But that's what ballparks do," you say? The difference at Yankee Stadium is that food is freshly prepared in front of customers. Almost nothing is pre-wrapped and held in warmers until fans show up. Instead, in most concessions inside the facility operations are laid out so fans see their orders prepared.

When New York Yankees owners started drawing up plans for a new stadium in 2003, they wanted it to represent the best team in baseball in the biggest and most diverse city in America. They wanted a first-class venue that evoked the rich history of a team that's won 26 World Series in which fans could have a great game experience. They wanted fans to have a first-class foodservice experience as well.

As the stadium plans came together, the Yankees teamed up with the Dallas Cowboys, investment banks and several

people with extensive experience in the foodservice industry to form contract feeder Legends Hospitality Management (LHM).

"We wanted to change stadium foodservice," says Jon Muscalo, Vice President of Facilities at LHM. "We started with the concept that 'it's all about the fans.' We wanted customers to be able to see how food is prepared, take the mystery out of it, and make their foodservice experience part of a great fan experience."

Before plans had been completed, Legends redesigned concessions and restaurants within the stadium to be state-of-the-art, servicing the public in a just-in-time production fashion. Floor plans were changed, walls taken out, and cook lines moved so customers can see orders being cooked and assembled. Heated tables with pass-throughs were added to keep every order as fresh as possible until it reaches the customer. Hot dogs,

for example, are served right off the roller grill instead of being pre-wrapped.

LHM operates 16 different foodservice concepts throughout the ballpark, providing more than 300 point-of-sale outlets for food, or about one for every 170 customers. Concessions are self-contained for the most part, equipped with everything they need to produce items on their menus. LHM also operates 17 other kitchens that provide food to suites, club restaurants and in-seat service.

Lots of the concessions are branded concepts, including Johnny Rockets (burgers), Nathan's Famous (hot dogs), Brother Jimmy's (barbecue), Moe's Southwest Grill, Famiglia Pizza, Mike's Deli, Carvel and Turkey Hill ice cream to name a few. Lobel's, a premium meat supplier in New York, operates a butcher shop in the stadium, ages steaks for the NYY Steak restaurant, and sells an aged prime rib sandwich from portable -carts in three locations. More than half the concessions, though, are LHM's own Highlanders brand, which offer hot dogs, hamburgers, fries and other typical ballpark fare.

Branded concepts, including Highlanders, have fixed menus making it relatively easy to forecast how much food is needed. Premium Services, though, operates two Legends Club restaurants, an Audi Club restaurant, the Mohegan Sun Club in the stadium's "batter's eye," and all the suites. Its menus change daily, making forecasting a little more difficult.



In front of home plate during the new stadium's inaugural season: Rick Reuschlein, Keating Representative; Jon Muscalo, Legends; Eliza Ann Keating; Eliza Keating, President.

"Serving Those Who Serve The Very Best"



“We generally know how many fans will show up,” Muscalo says. “We use a par system and check inventory at the end of every event. The computer generates a report that tells us what we need to bring each concession up to par level.”

A continuous supply of products is delivered to the operation’s “warehouse” —20,000 square feet of commissary and cooler space. A distribution team handles deliveries from there to all the concessions.

“A 14-day home stand can be pretty tough on our crew,” Muscalo says. “If we have a night game and a day game the next day, the guys who handle distribution will work overnight to resupply all our concessions.”

LHM has a foodservice staff of 2,500 at Yankee Stadium. The new stadium’s first scheduled event was March 30, 2009, but all the employees started training in December, 2008, to learn

both operations of the concessions or branded concepts they’d be working in and the LHM way of doing things.

LHM negotiated with the branded chains to operate their concepts, and in some cases even specified the equipment they wanted to use. “When it came down to it, we bowed to some of their requests, and they acquiesced to some of ours,” Muscalo says.

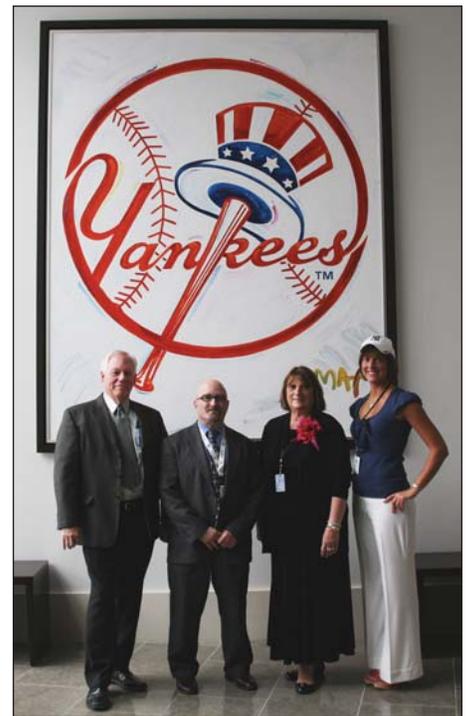
Reliability was one key factor in selecting equipment. Functionality was another.

“We were looking for durable equipment with the performance we needed,” Muscalo says. “We wanted 500 horsepower in our kitchens to turn out food as we needed it, and cost was not an issue.”

Many equipment selections were based in part on Muscalo’s and the management team’s past experience with manufacturers. From Keating of Chicago, LHM purchased a few Miraclean griddles with TopSide Cookers and 96 fryers.

“At Yankee Stadium we have a saying—‘if you fry it, they will buy it,’” Muscalo says. “People like to treat themselves when they go to the ballpark.”

Keating equipment, especially its fryers, offers LHM both the durability and performance the company was looking for. “In my opinion, they’re the toughest fryer in the industry, and I think



In front of the famed Peter Max painting hanging in the H&R Block Suite Lounge.

they’ll last us at least 10 to 15 years,” Muscalo says. “And they have great recovery time.”

That recovery time means concessions can make french fries and other fried foods quickly enough that nothing sits very long before being served. And durability means they’ll keep turning out perfect fried foods batch after batch.

In the first few months after opening, Keating was LHM’s only equipment supplier whose products hadn’t required some sort of service call.

“We had coolers and walk-ins go down, grills malfunction, and so forth, which is normal when operations start up,” Muscalo says. “To have that many pieces of equipment—100-plus—that you just turn on and have work, with no service calls, is amazing.”

Michael W. Sherer writes frequently about food and the foodservice industry.



Legends Associate proudly showing off the Keating® Fryer line-up.



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