



An Upscale Update

Designers create a state-of-the-art foodservice operation in the Union League Club of Philadelphia's landmark building.

By Karen M. Alley || Photos by Renate Siekmann, RS Specialty Photography

Take a stroll down South Broad Street in Philadelphia, and you'll notice a set of windows that allow you to peek in on chefs at work. They're preparing luscious dishes in an a la carte prep kitchen. The captivating scene is part of the Union League Club of Philadelphia's massive kitchen- and service-area renovation designed by William Caruso & Associates Inc. with offices in Denver, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Scottsdale, Ariz.

"The view of the kitchen is a unique slice of 21st-century ingenuity, and it's only part of the exciting things we were able to do with this space," says Stephen Young, FCSI, principal and director of design for WC&A. The firm got to design within the beautiful architecture of a landmark building (circa 1865), but the team was given a clean slate to create a new foodservice operation. "It was so fulfilling to open a workspace in this exceptional environment," he says.

Their involvement included renovating the existing 8,000-sq.-ft. main kitchen to add a new bakery with chocolate room, garde manger, meat and fish cooler attached to a butcher room (all temperature controlled), a volume-cooking banquet kitchen, the on-view a la carte kitchen equipped with a high-end cooking suite, a new room-service production area, cold and dry storage, warewashing, new service pantries for the club's Lincoln Ballroom and office facilities. Another new addition is an Innovation/Chef's Table display kitchen, the brain child of the club's general manger, Jeff McFadden. Finely finished for private, chef-helmed functions, it also is visible from the street. The club's iconic parlor bar was redone as well.

The design team expanded the club's basement, adding cold and dry storage for finished menu items and storage for beverages. "We also added a new exclusive wine/private function room with a dining table," Young adds.

A Blank Slate

One of the project's main goals was to enhance workspace efficiency while improving energy use in a kitchen that hadn't had a major renovation in more than 50 years.

"After years of bringing in new pieces of equipment and adding on little by little—changing things for new menu items—the workflow pattern was compromised," Young says. "We were able to clear out everything at the start of the project, so, in effect, it was like designing in a brand-new facility."

Logical workflow was a paramount goal. In the new floorplan, food flows logically from receiving to storage to preparation, then to the final assembly in preparation for service or holding for service. Over the years, and with the addition and installation of equipment wherever the staff could fit it, flow of food from receiving to service was less than optimal.

In With The New

The renovation entailed bringing in new equipment, which not only expanded the operation's menu but also enabled the club to provide more services, including private dining venues, cooking demonstrations, expanded bakery and chocolate work for catering and onsite filleting/meat preparation. The renovation also improved the club's production efficiency, giving the staff the ability to prepare foods for back-to-back meetings and functions. Among the equipment that improved labor, efficiency and throughput were an Irinox blast chiller, Alto-Shaam combi ovens and additional cold storage to hold finished foods.

"We worked closely with Union League Executive Chef Martin Hammond and his team during this project and introduced them to some of the equipment available to really increase production," Young says.

One of the highlights of the kitchen



▲ Rather than using the basement purely for storage, the designers expanded the in-house dining opportunities at the club by creating a comfortable, upscale private dining area in the wine cellar.

◀ The Innovation Kitchen was a new addition and provides a showplace for the chef-helmed private functions and demonstrations (far left).



is the Montague suite, positioned in the a la carte/demo kitchen right in front of the large windows facing South Broad St. Passersby can watch chefs at work on the state-of-the-art suite, which includes fryers, charbroilers and ranges.

By using multiple pieces of Energy Star-rated equipment, including broilers, convection ovens and refrigeration systems, new equipment choices helped reduce the kitchen's energy use by more than 50%. The new dishmachine and glasswasher use half as much water as their old counterparts, and the Gaylord exhaust system has demand-control ventilation, which means the exhaust rate ramps up or idles low depending on the cooking activity. It's reduced hood

energy use by more than 50%.

"The existing structure was one of our biggest challenges, especially when it came to ventilation and refrigeration," Young says. The building, nearly 150 years old, had 12-in.-thick walls, wooden floors and other time impediments that needed to be preserved.

"Working closely with the architect and engineers, we were able to properly route venting and even created depressions for the walk-ins," he says.

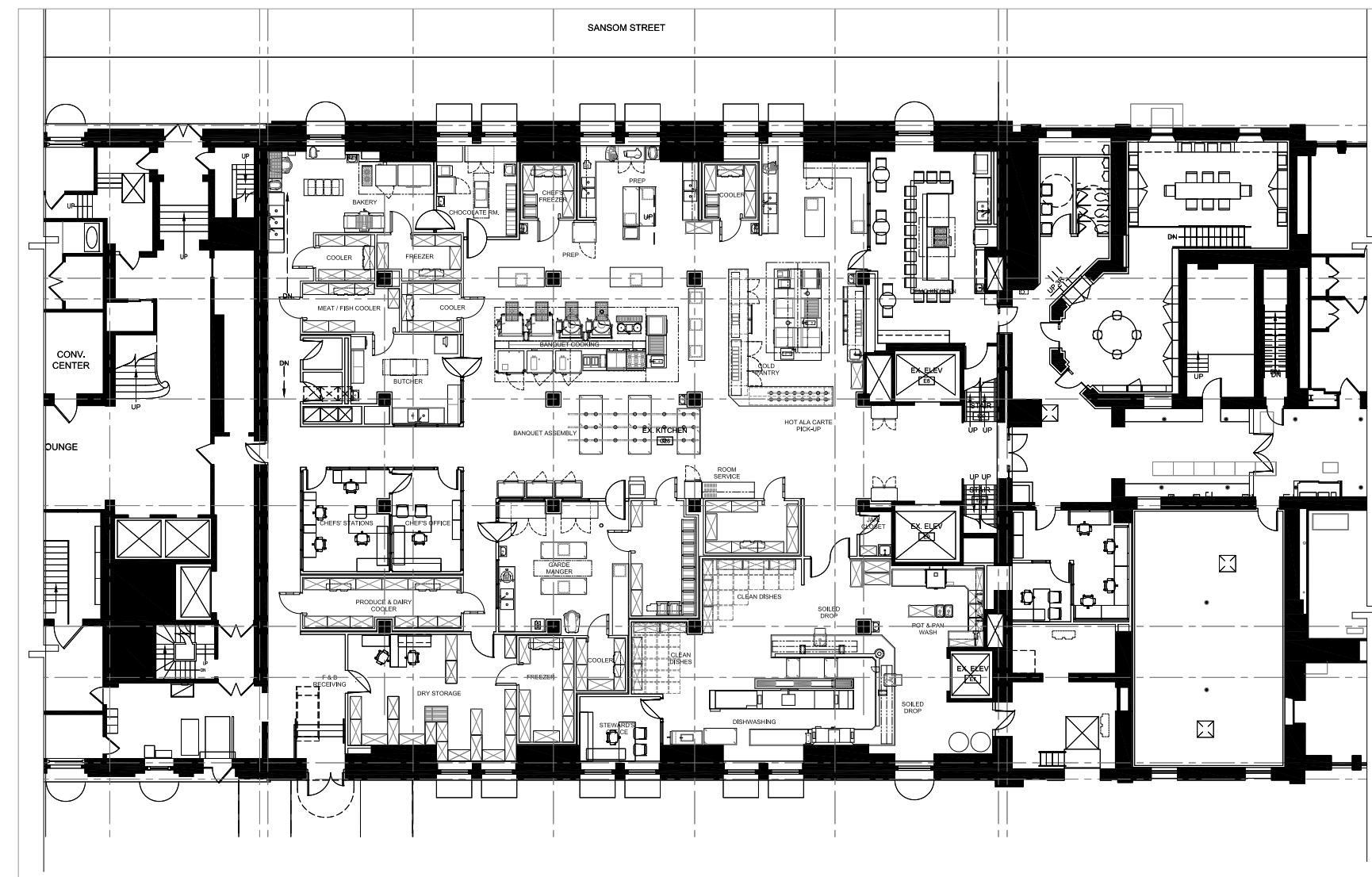
The bakery, meat/fish cooler attached to the butchering room and garde manger were exceptional additions to the kitchen design. Not only is each area fully equipped for its purpose, each also is enclosed for temperature control. The

ambient temperature of each specialty area can be modified according to what's being prepared. That means fragile pastry dough stays cool and chefs can do sugar and chocolate work without ingredients failing. They can cut meat and fillet fish in a cold-room environment, which enhances quality and food safety. The temperature-controlled environments are a feature you'd find in very high-end restaurants.

Unique Guest Spaces

The project came with a unique challenge: how to improve services for a club that already provided a premium, upscale environment with fantastic food. Young and his team met the challenge

▲ All new finishes from floor to ceiling, including new lighting and covers on exposed pipes and architectural elements, helped the kitchen meet current stringent health-code standards while creating an area that is more like a showplace than an institution. The kitchen is visible from the street.



Key Equipment

Main Kitchen Areas

Garde Manger

- Delfield/Manitowoc refrig. tables, salad dryer
- Eagle Group custom work tables
- Robot Coupe food processor
- Manitowoc ice bin and flaker
- Traulsen/ITW FEG reach-in refrig.

Butcher

- Eagle Group boning table, prep sink, work tables
- Hobart/ITW FEG meat saw
- Victory/Ali Group fish file

Bakery

- Garland/Manitowoc double-deck convection oven
- Montague range
- Eagle Group tables, racks
- Master-Bilt/Standex ice-cream holding freezer
- Stoelting/Vollrath ice-cream batch freezer
- Delfield/Manitowoc undercounter refrig.

Prep Areas

- Irinox blast chiller
- Delfield/Manitowoc undercounter refrig.
- Eagle Group tables, sinks, racks

A La Carte Suite

- Viking/Middleby cooking suite
- Montague suite, including range, bain marie heater and spreader, salamander and fryer
- Merco/Manitowoc overhead warmers

Banquet Assembly

- Eagle Group work tables
- Cleveland/Manitowoc kettles, tilt skillet, stands
- Montague charbroiler, plancha w/convection oven and spreader w/bain marie
- Viking/Middleby range
- Frymaster/Manitowoc fryers
- Alto-Shaam combi oven/steamer, roll-in combi oven/steamer
- Carter-Hoffmann/Middleby banquet cart

Demonstration Kitchen

- Viking/Middleby range
- Traulsen/ITW FEG reach-in refrig.
- Alto-Shaam built-in oven

Warewashing

- Eagle Group sinks, pot washer, tables
- InSinkErator/Emerson disposer
- Champion/Ali Group glasswasher, warewasher

West & East Pantry

- Cadco convection oven
- Alto-Shaam mobile drawer warmer
- Carter-Hoffmann/Middleby banquet cart
- Merco/Manitowoc retractable food warmers
- Manitowoc ice machine
- Everpure water-filtration system

Throughout

- Gaylord exhaust hoods w/DCV
- American Panel walk-in freezers, coolers
- Cold Zone cooler/freezer evaporators

At A Glance

- **Facility:** Union League Club of Philadelphia
- **Project:** Private city club
- **Total Budget:** \$20 million
- **Foodservice Equipment Budget:** \$2 million
- **Scope of Work:** Concept Development, Master Planning, Space Allocation, Preliminary Design, Detailed Design, Specification Writing, Site Inspections, Construction Management, Pre-Opening Inspections
- **Design Consultants:** William J. Caruso, FCSI, ISHC; Stephen Young, FCSI; William Caruso & Associates Inc., Denver
- **Architects and Interior Designers:** Donna Lisle, AIA, LEED AP; Robert Graves; BLT Architects, Philadelphia
- **Foodservice Equipment Contractors:** Singer Equipment, Mt. Laurel, N.J.



▲ One of the challenges of designing in an older building is working around the existing architecture. These columns were integrated into the design so that, rather than disrupting workflow, they create symmetry and add interest.

head on, creating new dining areas that provide unique experiences for the club's members. First was the basement. Charged with expanding refrigerated and dry storage, the team remodeled the basement to include bulk storage space as well as an attractive temperature-controlled wine storage room highlighted by the building's original exposed brick. The design team finished the space by creating two beautiful private dining rooms, one for a small party and one for a larger group.

Another exciting new feature is the Innovation Kitchen and Chef's Table. Guests are able to participate in the food-preparation experience as they sit at elegant tables with a clear view of the chef as he prepares their meals.

"It's exciting to see what happens in this kitchen, and it gives people the ability to experience a unique inside view

of commercial foodservice production," Young says.

Throughout the project, staff members—in addition to Chef Martin—were included in the planning. Everyone had an opportunity to voice opinions, which helped the final design improve operations for all involved. The renovation was successful not only because the project improved efficiency and reduced energy use, but also because everyone, from the staff to the guests, loves spending time in the new environment.

"You can tell that the staff is thrilled with the new space," Young says. "They walk people through on tours, and it's wonderful to hear them call it 'our kitchen.' It truly was a collaborative effort, and now the Union League Club and its talented culinary team are reaping the benefits of their hard work." 🍽️

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