

Changes in high school cafeteria give students more choices

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Flagler Palm Coast High School unveiled a significantly renovated cafeteria last week that has drawn praise from students and attention from neighboring school districts.

The cafeteria, modeled after shopping mall food courts and designed with the help of a former

Disney executive and a former Darden Restaurants executive, offers students several options during lunchtime. Students can choose from Mexican food at T.Mex; Italian food at Pizza & Pasta; hamburgers, fries and chicken at Chick Frieberg's Fowl Play; a baked potato station at Light Bites; or traditional food at "Home Sweet Home Cooking," among other choices. All the stations feature bright lights and vivid colors as well as illustrated signs.

Director of food services Roy Pistone says he decided upon the renovation to keep the students satisfied. "You've got to give your customers, the students or even the adults who eat here, what they want," Pistone said.

"What they usually see out there in food courts at the mall are all these different choices," he added. Pistone said that while the cafeteria offered choices before, those choices have greatly expanded. Now, he said, "you're pleasing the palates of all these kids."

Pistone decided to renovate the cafeteria, also, to set Flagler County apart from others. "I wanted something that was going to be exciting for Flagler County," he said.

"Why do school cafeterias have to be the same type of cookie-cutter look?" Pistone asked. "Why don't we give something that the kids will really be proud of, something they'll get excited about?"

The options available to students changed, but so did the lighting and the colors. "Color and light does have a lot to do with food, and how people will perceive the food," Pistone said. "It'll brighten it up or make it more appetizing."

Tom Galvin, formerly of Darden Restaurants, spearheaded the change in lighting and colors. "In

restaurants, the color red will increase your sales," Galvin said. "Our lighting is all incandescent [so] the food will look more appetizing. The old lights were fluorescent and grayed out the food." Galvin calls this effect the psychology of color and light and says that malls use it in their food courts.

Pistone credits Galvin and Barry Snyder, from Disney, for the cafeteria's mall-like appearance. Snyder designed the different names and signs around the cafeteria. Galvin believes FPCHS's new cafeteria will become the new standard for school cafeterias. "This may be the forerunner of what's coming, not only in Florida, but also the rest of the country," he said.

Pistone says the new cafeteria, while not the first of its kind, has caught the attention of other school districts. "A lot of others have done food courts," he said. "Our food court, I just think, has a little different spin to it."

"Some of our buying group wants to come see it," Pistone said. The buying group, which includes 19 school districts and 384 schools around the state, allows school districts more buying power when negotiating prices for different goods.

Speaking Wednesday afternoon, after the first day of school, Pistone called the new cafeteria a success. "The proof is in the pudding today," he said. "I saw so many smiles on the kids' faces. 'This is better than the mall,' I heard some say."

So far, students seem to like the new cafeteria far more than its predecessor. Sophomore Hunter Elebash, 15, likes the "better variety" of the cafeteria. "It's a lot better than last year," Elebash said while waiting in line at Captain Smith's Port, a made-to-order sub station.

Sophomore Allan Reed, 14, called the cafeteria "much better" than last year. "It looks really good," Reed said. Sophomore Cindy Fevry, 15, agreed.

"It looks really nice," Fevry said. "This is better than last year."