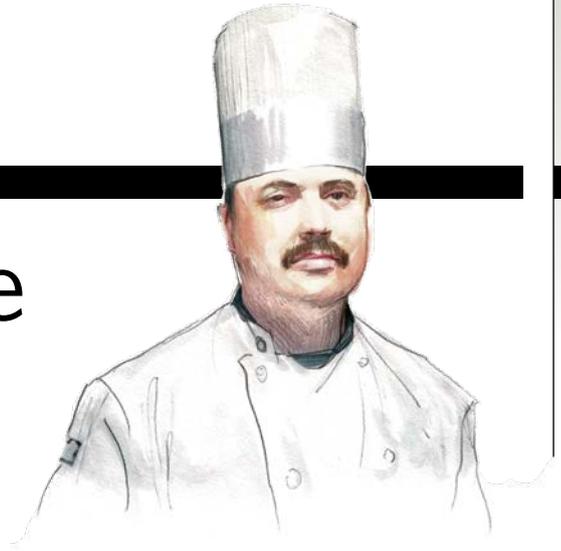


# Service stations evolve

Associate FCSI member **John Reed** examines why the industry needs to ensure chefs are given the right space



**A**s with any good design concept, success and failure are dependent on the details. Everything from the placement of electrical and plumbing services for equipment, to ergonomically designed workspaces and the finishing of countertops, it all goes into ensuring that the operation works smoothly.

These days there is a growing acceptance of the importance of efficient and technologically advanced cooking equipment. Consequently, FCSI members spend much of their time focusing on the design of the production capabilities. However, the chef's workspace is also in need of attention. Chefs are keen on using locally produced and highly perishable ingredients, nutrient rich foods, and "in the moment" cooking. They are also extremely focused on presenting their food in a highly artistic manner. This concentration on the plate in turn requires designers to think about one particular part of the kitchen design with a little more consideration: the expeditor's station, or service point.

The service station is no longer a dumping ground for food. It has become a highly important part of the design of

**Today's customers are much more educated in the details of the food being served to them than was the case in the past**

a foodservice operation and culinary programme. As the final point of contact between the food and the culinary team, these spaces need to have new accommodations built into their design.

Just as designers sweat the little details of the guest areas, the food coming from the kitchen needs to be expertly "finished". Today's customers are much more educated in the details of the food being served to them than was the case in the past, and have a higher expectation of quality and presentation.

## Culinary minds

Culinary teams are concerned about specific details of the final presentation which elevate the food from good to great. In fine dining this could be the addition of an herbal garnish, some delicate, modernistic foam or a drizzle of a highly aromatic infusion just as the dish goes out. In a collegiate dining programme, the ability of the cooks working at a made-to-order station to place the dish down in front of them to clean and embellish it provides a higher level of hospitality than simply flopping it down on top of a sneeze guard.

In addition, chefs need access to a whole range of new tools and storage spaces. I describe this as the artist's studio – the days of the kitchen printer, heat lamp and check strip are gone these days chefs use saucing spoons, "smoking guns", tweezers, micro-plane shavers and so on. And the dish of chopped parsley or lemon wedge has been replaced by edible

floral, spritzers of dressing, à la minute shavings of cheeses or citrus – or any array of inventive garnishes pouring out of their culinary minds.

Here are some design elements for your consideration for the next chef's station:

- Ice cream dipper hot wells for small tools
- Built-in induction plate for à la minute cooking or staging of small pots with saucing components
- Small, roll-top sandwich prep unit for garnishes and "at hand" storage
- Ample electrical outlets for hand-held tools and easy access built-into, roll-away storage
- Small pass-through warming unit or drawer from the line to the station
- Extended heated plating space to the side of the chef station for pick-up or finishing
- Photo-quality lighting to document the food and immediately update social media

This may seem over the top, but as kitchen designers are improving efficiencies through new technologies, additional space is being released that can be re-allocated to these new amenities. Chefs deserve the best designed cooking and production line, and we need to make sure they have the space to show the world their food in the best possible light. ■

John Reed CEC, CCA, ACE is the owner of Customized Culinary Solutions in Skokie, Illinois [customizedculinarysolutions.com](http://customizedculinarysolutions.com)