



*Melinda L. Smith*  
Director of Dining Services

**You officially became director of Dining Services on July 13. What staffing changes have you made?**

Dining Services has recently undergone a wonderful remodel, which resulted in several food stations. Each of these now has an area leader responsible for training, maintaining product integrity and employee performance. With so many students it is sometimes overwhelming to make each one feel like part of a team, so instituting the “small group ministry” philosophy made sense for each area to “shepherd” a group of students in their area. I also changed upper management. We now have a great team of four upper-level managers: Dianne Wilson, computer networking; Kristine Walker Fraser, human resources; Karen Robinson, purchasing and finance; and Philip Dwyer, assistant director. Philip is an Andrews alum who went on to pursue culinary arts at Le Cordon Bleu in Chicago, and then worked for the Hyatt Corporation and in South Bend, Ind. He brings a fresh culinary approach and caring spirit to the team. I feel it is important for people to work in an environment where people really care about each other, support one another, pray for each other.

**What steps have been taken to increase environmental awareness, i.e. use of disposable items?**

Ben Chilson, the previous director, had begun a very successful recycling program. We recycle all our aluminum food cans, glass jars and cardboard products. A station was added where customers could place their aluminum, glass and plastics. Beginning July 15 we removed all Styrofoam products and plastic ware from the cafe and replaced it with “green ware” that is more environmentally friendly.

Last spring, Kathy Koudelle, professor of animal science and manager of the Dairy, introduced me to Lee Lavanway, market master for the Benton Harbor Fruit Exchange, the second largest fruit market in the U.S. After hearing him speak, I felt very impressed to start a food sustainability program in cooperation with local growers and Andrews University Department of Agriculture. So far, the department has provided us with tomatoes, green peppers, corn, “yellow doll” watermelons, cucumbers, squash, collard greens, and the most beautiful large blackberries. We are currently working with an agriculture student to grow herbs for us—Thai basil, mint, cilantro, parsley, etc. Local farmers have provided us with asparagus, organic blueberries, fresh sweet peas and green beans.

We have worked hard all summer to freeze some for the cold winter months, so we can continue to enjoy the bountiful harvest of local fresh vegetables and fruits. When we froze this summer we had 200 pounds of fresh product within two hours of it being picked in a local field. We cannot offer the students any better nutrition than that for a frozen product. By caring about local produce, we also support local commerce and keep our dollars in the communities we live and work in. Future goals include working with the AU farm to produce even more products for us using greenhouse production, hydroponics and possibly farm fresh eggs.

**How is the menu changing with the new Dining Services configuration?**

Currently Dining Services has a cafeteria with two lines—Classics One and Classics Two. We are now working on menus for the Classics One line to feature “comfort home-cooked foods” like macaroni & cheese, lasagna, Sam’s chicken, mashed potatoes, etc....these will all have a vegan “twin” to accompany them.

Classics Two will have a theme of “Food by Country” in which we will feature foods from international countries. We will start with Algeria and go all the way to Vietnam. Our student population is composed of many different nationalities and we have a responsibility to care for their dietary needs as well as the needs of our American students. Last year I met a student from Nepal who was not an Adventist but came to Andrews because it was the “first A” on the list of American universities that had accepted her. She confided in me she had lost 10 pounds during her first month because she was used to very strong spices, ginger, curries, peppers, and our food tasted “bland, with “no flavor.” So I have hired “mommies” from many countries to cook authentic food from their homeland and season it as they feel it would

be made in their country. We have cooks who represent the Philippines, Chile, Mexico, Jamaica, West Indies, Nigeria, India, Japan and China. They all bring a “flavor” of love and care for the students they cook for.

We have a salad bar where we feature artisan fresh greens, local produce and salads we prepare on-site. The most popular is our fresh fruit section where currently we have fresh watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, strawberries, grapes and pineapple. We also have a cheese and dried fruit section where we feature cheeses made from AU Dairy milk. Currently we are featuring Brie, Camembert, Gouda, Fontina and Manchego. These are served with dried apricots, dates, figs, etc.

Recently, a smoothie station was added. Students have fresh fruit options available with soy, dairy or tofu-based drinks. This station has become extremely popular!

There is a grill area that will shortly feature the foods of Mexico and a World Market where we are developing a line of pizzas. Currently we have a traditional crust with vegetable or cheese toppings as well as a BBQ vege chicken pizza. However, one of our most popular offerings is the vegan pizza, made with whole wheat crust, eight different fresh vegetables and topped with garlic and olive oil. It is delicious! We even have a gluten-free pizza crust for our students with allergies to gluten products. We have two large woks used to prepare fresh stir-fry—the most popular is Pad Thai and orange chicken. I like tofu with coconut curry sauce! We have a breakfast zone with waffles and cereals, featuring our own granola made in-house.

**How do you plan to encourage students to “dine-in” rather than choose the fast food option?**

If we are going to keep them eating at the café, we have to have enough staff to keep the food fresh and easily accessible for their 24/7 student lives. We have expanded hours in the Gazebo, our fast food alternative. Our college store, The Cardinal’s Nest, has moved into the Gazebo. This provides many more purchasing options, from food to cleaning supplies for their room. It is a much-needed service for students who do not have their own transportation. Today’s students are nocturnal, so to answer those needs we have also expanded choices for the late-night eater. After intramurals or late nights in the lab we have pizzas available at the World Market, which is open until midnight. The Gazebo is open until 11 p.m. and students can get sub sandwiches, ice cream, burgers, fries, etc.

**Is your recipe for Sam’s Chicken a state secret?**

No, but I can tell you it tastes different with each chef who makes it. However, I am excited about the future of Sam’s Chicken! In the past it was very difficult to provide this because we needed approx. 160 pounds of MGM chicken roll that comes in 4-lb. loaves and has to be torn by hand—many student hours! I have been working with Alejo Pizaro, the president of Cedar Lake Foods, who is working on a process to ship the product already “pulled” and packed bulk frozen. This would eliminate many hours of preparation and allow us to provide Sam’s Chicken more frequently. Tartar sauce and Sam’s Chicken are the most requested foods by alumni when they return home to Andrews.

**What special things have you instituted for Sabbath?**

I feel strongly that Sabbath lunch should be a meal that we prepare differently from the rest of the week. On Sabbath, we are providing a different, special environment. We now have breakfast on Sabbath morning. Then after breakfast we set up the tables with real linens, flatware and glassware, and place fresh flowers on the tables. More families are coming to the cafe on Sabbath and students are staying longer after they eat, sitting around the table as they would at home—talking and enjoying Sabbath together. I believe Dining Services is as much a ministry as is church. We have the challenge of meeting the physical needs of the students, but combined with the mental and spiritual needs of the students, Andrews University has the perfect environment for the success of our students. I hope and pray you have the opportunity to join us soon!