



OFFICE PERK

A STUDIO CANTEEN GETS A GLOW-UP

The Marketplace is housed on the first floor of The Commons, an 84,000-square-foot building that's part of a sweeping upgrade to the Universal studio lot

BY PAMELA McCLINTOCK

Steven Spielberg is among the thousands of Universal employees flocking to feast at the most upscale studio cafeteria in recent memory. That's saying a lot, considering that Spielberg's Amblin (which is owned by Universal) is famous for employing its own chef for employees' lunches.

Part of The Commons, which also houses state-of-the-art screening rooms, the Marketplace is next-level — and subsidized for employees. Various food stations range from a proper sushi bar (if you're willing to wait in line) to comfort foods from a popular burrito bowl with pork chili verde to a BBQ salmon dish with Cajun rice and crispy brussels sprouts to pepperoni and hot honey pizzas.

Designed by Lever and Field Operations, the refurbished digs at Universal also include a new office building and a paseo with more than 10,000 square feet of green space, a serene place to sip a custom juice or savor a biscuit that's the secret recipe of chef Jake Holland, executive sous chef, NBCUniversal-Bon Appetit (no relation to the magazine). Holland says 1,600 to 1,700 meals fly out the door each day and about 20 percent of

sales are vegan. "The Marketplace has definitely been great for morale," says one NBCU staffer.

There's also a new executive dining room, The Grill, for which NBCU bigwig Donna Langley personally hunted down peacock-embellished upholstery to outfit the banquettes.

Studio commissaries, cafeterias and executive dining rooms long have been spaces to surreptitiously goggle at visiting talent as well as places to be seen with the powers that be for girding one's position in the corporate pecking order. While the pandemic put this time-honored tradition on pause, now it's roaring back as employers lure people to offices, as exemplified by the Marketplace at The Commons.

Delicious Dishes Above left: Three of the most popular items at the Marketplace, from left: BBQ glazed salmon from the Comfort station; the Peacock Roll at the Oishi Sushi stall, composed of shrimp, tuna, avocado and hamachi, all wrapped in salmon and flown in daily from Japan, according to chef Jake Holland; and the fall harvest salad. Right: Staffers outside The Commons; the Marketplace has an Eatlay vibe, with various upscale cuisine offerings at a subsidized price for employees.



MOST ORDERED AT OTHER STUDIO COMMISSARIES



Sony

One of the most popular orders at the employee dining room is the bao buns, with maitake mushroom, carrots, radish and cucumber topped with unagi sauce. Orange chicken also is a cult favorite: Word quickly spreads when it's on the menu.



Warner Bros.

At the legendary executive dining room, the sea bass swims out the door. It's served with farrroto, English peas, fava beans, sorrel sauce, Parmesan cheese and mint gremolata.



Paramount

Originally the RKO commissary where Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz met, the studio dining room changes its menu every six weeks, and daily specials are made with seasonal ingredients. Perennial favorite: the black cod.