



"All Merrychef pieces of equipment we have in place are absolutely vital and are an intrinsic part of what we do"

Peter Anstess,
General Manager for Retail Operations,
University of Sheffield

University success story "The University of Sheffield"

“The University of Sheffield”

Providing the perfect solution for university catering



University catering has come a long way since Peter Anstess took over as ‘General Manager for Retail Operations’ at the University of Sheffield back in 2008. Challenged back then to transform an on-site campus café, which was serving instant coffee and high calorie snacks, into something more appealing, Peter immediately had a vision for something more akin to a high street coffee shop, than a school canteen. His problem however, was that there was absolutely no room for extraction and the available kitchen area was only slightly larger than a double wardrobe. As such, Peter felt his options were limited, as he explains:

“I had this vision of a bistro style café and whilst the good news was that I had an area to work with in a prime footfall location, the options to offer hot food were severely limited. I knew that my fall-back option of a series of Panini presses was only going to produce an uncomfortable wall of heat for staff working close by and therefore I went in the search of inspiration.”

The inspiration that Peter so desperately required finally surfaced during a visit to the Lunch Show, when he stumbled across the Welbilt stand and what he describes as ‘the perfect solution from round the corner’:

“As soon as I sampled a filled wrap from the Merrychef e4, I knew that I had discovered the perfect solution to my problems. I was totally blown away - It was crisp on the outside; steaming on the inside and, in truth, honestly delicious. What is more it required no extraction and offered an opportunity to develop a menu that was exactly on par with the vision I had. Unsurprisingly, I booked an appointment at the Welbilt Development Kitchen in Sheffield the following week.”

That visit convinced Peter that the Merrychef e4 was the answer he required, not just because of its ability to cook panini’s, wraps and toasties, but because it also allowed Peter to expand the menu to include Steak and Chips, Omelettes and other options. From then on, everything happened so quickly:

“Within a matter of weeks my vision had turned into reality and what is now the Jessop Café, owned and operated by the University of Sheffield, was operational. 100% of our hot savoury menu comes out of 3x e4’s which are snugly placed in the mini kitchen and we regularly turn around Steak and Chips in just three and half minutes to astounded students. Thanks to the Merrychef e4’s, Jessop Café now turns over in excess of £300k a year and is the ‘go to’ venue for a wide range of clientele from lecturers and students through to those looking for additional space for informal business meetings and study sessions.”

Whilst for some that may be seen as the end of the project, for Peter it was just the beginning. So much so that across the university there are now 19x Merrychef e4’s and 6x Merrychef e2s’, as Peter explains:

“Since purchasing our first Merrychef e4, we’ve grown in confidence with our food offering and we’ve continued to add equipment from Welbilt to other sites. Within our catering operations all Merrychef pieces of equipment we have in place are absolutely vital and are an intrinsic part of what we do - without them we couldn’t deliver the menus, the food offering or the concepts that we currently do.”

Located close by to Jessop Café is the Diamond Kitchen, a much larger facility that provides 1000 study spaces for students alongside multiple lecture theatres. When it was decided to upscale the size of the kitchen and the servery, Peter was keen to look at different concepts with Welbilt following the success of the Merrychef e4 within Jessop Café:

“When redesigning the Diamond Kitchen so that we could facilitate high volumes of customers with a ‘grab, collect and go’ serving process, we wanted to be able to cook fresh, hot products quickly - such as paninis and wraps - so for us, the Merrychef e2s was an obvious choice to install first. Not only does it have an exceptionally small footprint, but it has the speed and cooking quality of the e4 which is exactly what we needed.”



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Aside from the cooking functionalities of the Merrychef ovens, another key benefit is the simple operating system:

“One of our challenges across running multi-sites, and we’ve got over 20 catering sites at the university to date, is that our team frequently move around the sites. They have to be able to walk into different sites and feel comfortable as soon as possible and be able to operate the equipment quickly and efficiently. This was key when we were choosing the Merrychef units, because as soon as staff walk into an outlet they can see the same display unit on the Merrychef e2s and the e4 so they immediately feel confident in using them.”



As Awarded by The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies



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