

## Under an Asian Moon

If students want Asian food on campus at a school with food service operated by Metropolitan Food Service in New York, they just need to look for Asian Moon. The company created the one brand to handle all its Asian offerings on its campuses. “In different colleges, we have it in different capacities,” said Metropolitan Food Service President John Kuitwaard. “For instance, at City College, Asian Moon covers our Asian food station, sushi and a separate noodle bar in a different location. It is the brand and it encompasses those three areas.”

In addition to City College, Asian Moon locations are at Brooklyn College, Queensboro Community College and Lehman College in New York City. “Every campus is unique and it is not cookie cutter, so we are super flexible in structuring it around, not only the facilities we have there, but the wants and needs and desires of the students and the community,” he said.

The City College location was the first. “It was driven by need, student, faculty and staff input, client input and our own input,” said Kuitwaard. “We were talking about utilizing some space that we had and discovered that that was something students at the time were looking for.”

An Asian chef was hired to prepare Chinese Szechuan and Thai-influenced dishes. “The chef basically came up with all of these recipes,” he said. “Each chef at each location uses his or her own recipes. They each have their own style. We don’t have standard recipes that each of the chefs must follow. We leave it up to them, as long as they are making sure the dishes are somewhat similar.”

At City College, also under the Asian Moon brand, there is sushi. “We have two sushi chefs who prepare sushi for our grab ‘n go operations around campus,” said Kuitwaard. “They prepare it to-order for any student who wants something custom made. Everything is done on site by professional chefs.”

Authenticity is very important at the location. “We are fortunate that where we are located, in New York City, we have access to professional Asian chefs, but it definitely was important to us because we have to compete against local restaurants that the students were also visiting, and we wanted to have it as authentic as possible,” he said. “In Manhattan, there are Chinese restaurants everywhere, and students have those choices for lunch, but not only that, when they go home, they may have it at night or on the weekends. You always want what you are serving to match that.”

Being located in New York also helps with procuring authentic ingredients. “We are purchasing those items from Asian distributors,” he said. “We use separate distributors to obtain those items, both on the sushi and the Chinese side. The students love having these authentic dishes.”

After the success of the Asian Moon Chinese and sushi offerings, the brand was expanded to include a noodle bar at City College in the Bare Planet Café.

From there, Asian Moon was launched simultaneously at Queensboro and Brooklyn Colleges. “At Queensboro, it is just the sushi, and at Brooklyn, it is the sushi and noodle bar,” said Kuitwaard. —OCH

