

Casey's Dish D'Lish concept takes off at Seattle airport

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Kathy Casey

Kathy Casey, celebrity chef, consultant, cookbook author and entrepreneur, is one of a handful of culinary luminaries who have lent their names and expertise to the improvement of airport foodservice. She is the creator of Dish D'Lish, a fast-casual cafe and specialty food concept with two locations at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and a flagship cafe and store next to Kathy Casey Food Studios, her consulting and special-events venue, in Seattle's historic Ballard neighborhood. The airport locations are a partnership between Casey and **HMSHost Corp.**, the Bethesda, Md.-based provider of travel amenities. The two airport units are about 2,500 and 1,500 square feet in size. The larger one has its own production kitchen and supplies the smaller unit, which has minimal kitchen space for food assembly.

Both locations feature trademark Casey fare like the Northwest Salad, made with mixed greens, roasted pears, toasted hazelnuts, blue cheese, dried cranberries and cranberry vinaigrette, and Kathy's D'Lish Favorite, a hot-pressed sandwich of roasted chicken breast, Brie and Washington apple chutney grilled on focaccia.

What are your favorite equipment and design elements?

The Rational [combi oven-steamer] is our only hot[-food preparing] piece of equipment. It all comes out of there. It's a single, half-size unit that takes half-sheet pans. For example, we use it to bake stratas and also to roast chicken. It's programmed with all of our recipes. We also have a cup-sealing machine for bubble tea and fresh fruit-and-yogurt parfaits. It seals the cups, so they're not going to spill when people take them out. I've also designed "bagelabras." They are really beautiful candlesticks with stainless-steel rods welded onto them that we use to display bagels.

How would you describe the potential market for chef-made gourmet food at airports?

I think there's a huge, huge niche there. Dish D'Lish is excited to be part of the front-runners with **HMSHost**. People are looking for great experiences to make traveling easier for them and to make it a nice, calm and relaxing experience. They're getting food to bring on the flights because they've been through the experience of sitting there for hours with nothing to eat but half an ounce of peanuts.