



Tuesday, August 28, 2007



Menu: Melissa Usry, left, and Sheila Robinson order from Patrick McAlister at Cool River Cafe at Dallas/Fort Worth airport.

Business Travel  
Every Tuesday

# Airport fare goes for local flavor

More airports offer fliers new, local restaurants to sample, 5B

# Airports unchain food choices by adding local fare

By Gary Stoller  
USA TODAY

Business Travel  
Every Tuesday

The food revolution at airports continues as more of them bring in local restaurants to upgrade the dining options for hungry air travelers.

The SweetWater Draft House & Grill, featuring beers of a local microbrewery, opens today at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson airport. In late November, the first of three Chickie's & Pete's, known locally for crab fries, chicken wings, mussels and beer, is scheduled to open at Philadelphia's airport.

Once upon a time, hungry air travelers were faced with picking their own poison: in-flight meals or food in airport restaurants.

That's not true any more. The move to more local restaurants is part of a broader trend of serving higher quality, healthier fare and replacing the tired menus of some national chains with more appealing offerings.

"There was a trend toward national brands in the 1990s, but now there's a desire for more balance with local brands," says Pat Banducci, senior vice president of HMS Host, a concessionaire at 102 airports worldwide, including 73 in North America.

Local restaurants make up 20% to 40% of all eateries at most big U.S. airports, Banducci says. He expects that to grow to 50% within five years.

The shift to local restaurants be-

gan largely after 9/11. People are spending more time in airports, checking in hours before flights to meet security requirements.

They're demanding something different, including better and healthier food. They're looking for quality takeout food, because most airlines stopped serving in-flight meals after 9/11 for security and economic reasons. And airports are also pushing for change.

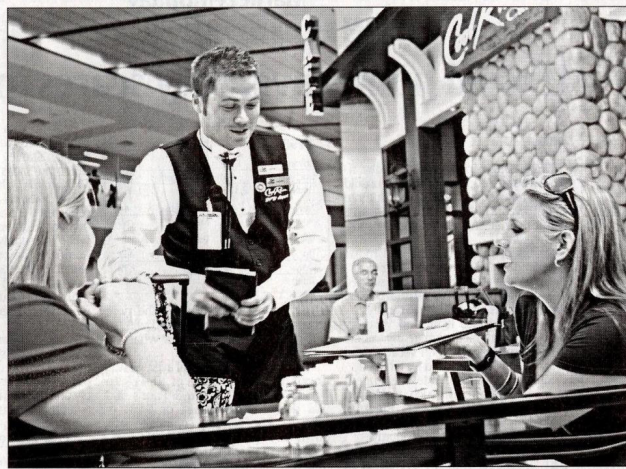
"Airports want to be able to distinguish themselves from other airports," Banducci says. "They want passengers to know what city they're in — not in a generic airport."

Julie Rodriguez, a spokeswoman for Phoenix Sky Harbor airport, agrees: "It's important that the local flavor comes through in our concessions for the benefit of our customers and for business owners in the community."

The new buzzword is "sense of place," says Pauline Armbrust, CEO of the trade publication *Airport Revenue News*. "Airports want to reflect what's going on in their community from a food standpoint."

### An appetizing mixture

An airport that's a hub for connecting flights needs a mixture of national and local brands, says James DeCock, the food and beverage



By Mike Fuentes for USA TODAY

Everything looks good: Melissa Usry, left, and Sheila Robinson, both of Jackson, Miss., order from Patrick McAlister at the Cool River Cafe at Dallas/Fort Worth airport.

manager at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky airport.

"Having local brands operate in your airport can be a challenge if the local operator is not prepared for the large customer volume," he says. "On the other hand, some local operators take great pride in their brand and are more committed to showcasing it to the airport traveler than the large national brand."

Dine Boston, at Boston Logan airport, goes a step further to showcase local cuisine. It has a visiting chef program and invites local culinary wizards to come up with new menu items. For the next three

months, Dine Boston will feature the food of Chez Henri, one of the city's finest restaurants.

Some local airport restaurants have become so successful they have become chains, expanding to other airports. Harlon's Bar-B-Que, which began as a converted gas station in Houston in 1977, for example, is located at both big Houston airports, as well as Dallas/Fort Worth and Austin airports. Regional chains such as Gordon Biersch, which opened its first brewery restaurant in Palo Alto, Calif., in 1988, have expanded to other regions and various airports. Biersch is located at 10 airports, including five

in California and two in the Washington, D.C., area.

### What fliers have to say

Many frequent fliers welcome the trend to local fare. Richard Glaser, the vice president of sales for an importer, says, "It's great to see airports start to get more local flavor." The national chains tend to serve "the same mediocre food priced much higher than they charge for the same product at their non-airport locations," says Glaser, of Brookline, Mass.

But frequent flier Chris Byrd, of Phoenix, says he prefers chains at

### Fliers' favorites

Some frequent fliers' favorite airport food choices:

**Marc Hall, Seattle:** At Seattle airport, go to Ivar's Seafood Bar for "the red chowder, fish & chips, salmon & chips," and to Anthony's Restaurant & Fish Bar for fresh seafood specials.

**Joyce Gioia-Herman, Greensboro, N.C.:** Philadelphia airport's Cibo Bistro & Wine Bar is "probably the only" restaurant that would make her spend extra time at an airport.

**Joan Eisenstodt, Washington, D.C.:** At Chicago O'Hare, she likes the Berghoff Cafe because "They have real turkey for their sandwiches."

**James Corgan, Winthrop, Maine:** Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen at Houston Bush Intercontinental has "great fish and shrimp dishes and fantastic étouffée."

airports "where you need something fast and may not want to take a chance on something new." He loves the local fare at Rose City Cafe at the Portland, Ore., airport. It "has a really broad menu with local foods like salmon on a bed of risotto," says the pharmaceutical research company manager.

Airport retail experts expect the local restaurant trend to have staying power. "Travelers like to experience the cuisines of a local community," Armbrust says. "It's exciting for them to try new things, whether they're on vacation or on business." "It's fun," says Banducci, "to maybe discover the next Starbucks."

### Local restaurants at airports

A growing number of local restaurants and food shops are appearing at airports. Some that have grown into chains are omitted.

Airport	Local restaurants
Atlanta	Sojourner's Cafe, Paschal's, SweetWater Draft House & Grill
Baltimore	Baci Bar and Grill, Chesapeake Bay Roasting Co., Obyrcki's, California Tortilla, Bill Bateman's Bistro, Mayorga Coffee, Mama Ilando's
Washington	
Boston	Legal Sea Foods, Legal Test Kitchen, Jasper White's Summer Shack, Dine Boston, Lucky's, Ozone-Bos, Fresh City, The Fudge Bar, Game On, Samuel Adams Pub
Charlotte	Stock Car Cafe, Yadkin Valley Wine Bar, Brookwood Farms BBQ
Chicago	Illinois Bar & Grill, King Wah Express, Luigi Stefani Pizzeria, Potbelly's Sandwich Works, Reilly's Daughter, Harry Caray's, Gold Coast Dogs, Manny's Deli, Lalo's Mexican Restaurant, Pegasus on the Fly, Tuscani, Let Them Eat Cake, Miller's Pub
Midway	Berghoff Cafe, Billy Goat Tavern & Grill, Burrito Beach, Gold Coast Dogs, O'Brien's, Skybridge Restaurant, O'Hare Bar & Grill, Zoots, Hotdog Express, Reggio's Pizza, Lou Mitchell's Express, Eli's CheeseCake
Chicago O'Hare	

Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky	Gold Star Chili, The Pub, Bluegrass Brewing Co.
Dallas/Fort Worth	Cool River Cafe, Reata Grill, Blue Mesa Cafe, Cantina Laredo, Cousin's Bar-B-Q, Dickey's Barbecue, Harlon's Bar-B-Que
Kansas City	Fountains of Seville, Just Off Vine, The Fly-By
Miami	La Carreza, Cafe Versailles, America's Favorites, Carousel Cone
New York	Greenwich Village Bistro, Soup & KimBob, Brooklyn Beer Garden, Napa Valley Wine Bar, Tuscany Cafe, Idlewild Wine Bar, Manchu Wok, Todd English's Bonfire, Balducci's Food Lover's Market, Cucina Sandwiches and Salads, Brooklyn Ale House, Shannon's Bar, The Away Cafe, Aunt Butchie's, Deep Blue Sushi, Latitudes, 7th Avenue Deli, Antonio's, Atlantic Bar & Grille, Broadway Brewing, O'Neals, NY Sports Bar & Grill, SoHo Bistro, Brooklyn National Deli, Abitino's Pizza, Bananas Ultimate Juice Bar
New York LaGuardia	Brooklyn National Deli, Così Pronto, Todd English's Figs, NY Sports Bar, Joey's Pizzeria, Slip Mahoney's, Big Apple Bar
Newark	Garden State Diner, Formaggio's Cafe, Gallagher's Steak House, Greenleaf's Grill, Sarku, Steak Escape, Vito's Gourmet Deli, Surf City Squeeze, Treat Street

Philadelphia	Jet Rock Bar & Grill, Cibo Bistro and Wine Bar, Sky Asian Bistro, Olde Philadelphia Tavern, Independence Brew Pub, Jack Duggan's Pub
Phoenix	El Bravo, Oaxaca, Paradise Bakery & Cafe, J.D. Hogg's BBQ, Blue Burrito, Yoshi's, Flo's Shanghai Cafe
Pittsburgh	City of Bridges Cafe, Garden Gazebo, Quaker Steak & Lube
Portland, Ore.	Beaverton Bakery, Pizzicato, Gustavo's Pub & Grill, Laurelwood Brewing, Sandoval's Fresh Mexican Grill, Stanford's Restaurant & Bar, Pizza Schmizza, Coffee People, Booya Juice, Capers Cafe, Cool Temptations, Jumping Jelly Beans, Riverfront Cafe, Rose City Cafe, Rose City Wine Bar, Widmer Pub, Good Dog/Bad Dog, Granatos, Squatters Pub Brewery, Millcreek Coffee Roasters, Watch Brew Pub, On the Fly Urban Market
Salt Lake City	Anthony's, Ivar's Seafood Bar, Pallino Pastaria, Dish D'Lish, Waji's
Seattle	Five Guys Famous Burgers and Fries, Harry's Tap Room, Tidewater Landing, Cuisine d'Avion, California Tortilla
Washington Dulles	Five Guys Famous Burgers and Fries, Tidewater Landing
Reagan Washington National	

Sources: The airports