

berg focus

spring 2015 | volume VII | issue II

on the map



2015 "Cappie" for
Best College Food
-Cappex

The 14 Best College
Dining Halls in America
-The Huffington Post

Top 75 Best Colleges
for Food in America
-The Daily Meal

- meet chris and mary
- growing globally together
- the annual food fight
- where are they now?



meet the **new** (and not-so-new) faces of the team

by: Gabe Bernstein '15, marketing intern

mary lekan

welcome our new catering director



Red Door Catering at Muhlenberg College introduced its new Catering Director in fall 2014. Mary Lekan brings years of experience in catering and food management to the 'Berg dining team, along with her passion for customer service.

"To me, customer service means going above and beyond to please the client and guest, it means personal satisfaction for each client," affirmed Mary.

Mary has extensive catering experience working in management roles at other colleges, universities and country clubs. She believes her experience of working in a variety of environments will help in her newest role.

"I am excited to work for a team that has a great tradition of culinary excellence," concluded Mary.

Interests: **Art, Music, Sports** | Favorite Music: **Jazz**

Favorite Movie: **LA Confidential** | Favorite Food: **Mostly Everything**

Favorite Sports Team: **Cleveland Browns**

chris wallace

get to know our new operations manager

Muhlenberg Dining's management team has an old face in a new place. Former Catering Director Chris Wallace transitioned to become the Operations Manager in fall 2014. Chris has a passion for Muhlenberg and plans on sticking around.

"I like working at a small school where you can really get to know the students, faculty and staff," commented Chris. "Muhlenberg has a top-notch food service program."

He has more than 12 years of experience with the Wood Company and Sodexo at various colleges and universities in the mid-Atlantic region. In addition, Chris spent four years working in the private club industry in North Carolina.

Chris is looking forward to expanding his role on the team and is excited to bring new ideas to the table.

Interests: **Swimming, Reading to my four daughters at bedtime**

Favorite Music: **I listen to a wide variety but not much country or rap**

Favorite Movies: **Top Gun, Office Space** | Favorite Food: **Sushi**

Favorite Sports Team: **Pittsburgh Steelers and Pittsburgh Pirates**





going global

In the summer of 2014, Muhlenberg College welcomed 16 new international students from seven countries through its iconic red doors. The group arrived hungry to learn and eager to get a taste of American culture. But, along with their enthusiasm and excitement came the transition to new faces, a new language and new food.

"When studying and living in a new country and culture, food is a big deal," commented Kim Nguyen, Assistant Director of Admission and Coordinator of International Student Recruitment. "It's a way to bring people together while making new introductions and discoveries."

To help break the ice during the students' first week on campus, Muhlenberg Dining hosted a cooking activity in the Wood Dining Commons kitchen. Alongside chefs and culinary staff, students prepared scrambled eggs, pancakes and granola then enjoyed their first traditional American breakfast together.

"On the second day of my arrival, Muhlenberg invited us to make breakfast," recalls Yiran Qiao '18 of Zhenjiang City, China. "It was cool because it was the first time I ever cooked in a college dining hall."

With the majority of the group never having lived in the United States, the College assembled a group of student leaders to assist in welcoming the students to campus. Prior to enrolling at Muhlenberg College, Chayoot (Che) Chengsupanimit '16, of Bangkok, Thailand attended boarding school in Connecticut. Che was immediately able to relate with and assist in mentoring the new students.

"At first, I definitely had to adjust to the food in America," recounts Che.

"I also got some help along the way. Because of my involvement with wrestling, I've committed myself to a healthy lifestyle. The dining hall does a great job with offering nutritious options, so I've been able to stick to my diet without much trouble."

Students also benefited from one-on-one meetings with Muhlenberg's culinary team.

"Because the food is different from the food in my home country, I had to adjust," noted Ange Sandrine Uwisanze '18 of Kigali, Rwanda. "The biggest difference is how food is prepared. Chef Jon [Middleton] helped me with the transition by speaking with and showing me where I can find the food I'm looking for."

For Mohammad Tobolat '18, it's the daily interactions that help to create a welcoming environment and ease the stress of living in a new country.

"Everyone is so friendly and they just want to do all they can so you can enjoy your meal," described the first-year student from Madaba, Jordan.

As the College expands its global footprint, Muhlenberg's culinary team is doing its part to further diversify its menu. Over the course of the past year, guests have seen an influx of authentic, ethnic cuisine in the Wood Dining Commons. Dishes such as Pozole, Banh Xeo pancakes, Shawarma and Empanadas are freshly prepared and available on a regular basis. While these are very popular dishes amongst guests, for students like Yiran, there are some foods here that are simply better than back home.

"My favorite food here is French fries," she explained. "Being from China, I don't think they are as crispy as in the US."



ONE OF THE BEST IN THE U.S.

Inside the entrance of the Wood Dining Commons, a wall is adorned with the "Muhlenberg Dining Philosophy Statement." The statement, developed prior to the opening of the Wood Dining Commons in 2010, reads:

"Muhlenberg College values the dining services program as a critical part of creating a healthy body and facilitating the development of an inquisitive and healthy mind. As part of a successful and active student union, Muhlenberg Dining offers excellent and unique experiences through creative and cultural menu planning, expert food preparation and innovative presentation.

As an important part of Muhlenberg's learning community, each of our dining environments incorporate transparent facilities and inviting upscale casual dining opportunities in support of learning and socialization.

Muhlenberg takes pride in providing a nutritionally balanced, appealing selection of food to meet varying needs, desires and life styles of students, faculty, staff and guests through unique and engaging experiences."

It's because of this philosophy and a highly motivated and dedicated team that Muhlenberg College's dining program garnered national recognition from various news agencies and

web sites in 2014.

"Food is something that students experience daily in college life," remarked Dean of Admission Chris Hooker-Haring. "So great food can contribute to a great college experience, and bad food is a daily irritation. The pride that our Sodexo partners take in providing outstanding food on a daily basis contributes a lot to what our students tell us is a great college experience at Muhlenberg."

In September 2014, Yahoo! and The Huffington Post recognized the Wood Dining Commons as one of "The 14 Best College Dining Halls in America." The list was compiled by Thrillist Media Group, a leading men's digital lifestyle brand, providing all that's new, unknown or under-appreciated in food, drink, entertainment, nightlife, gadgets and gear, according to its web site.

The write up centered on the most popular dining event of the year at Muhlenberg: Battle of the Chefs.

"Culinary pros from neighboring colleges duke it out by preparing small portions of really good food with students voting on a winner. Past themes include music, movies, tailgating and the Seven Wonders of the World. One college kid raved, 'It's the one time of year I would get in line and wait to eat dinner at 4:30. The amount of students waiting was

amazing. I think Muhlenberg won every year."

"The Wood Dining Commons is always one of the highlights of the campus tour," explained Mike Bruckner, Muhlenberg's Vice President of Public Relations. "It has the 'wow factor' that we were looking for when we built it."

Cappex is a one stop shop for prospective college students and families. The web site compiles results from more than 1.4 million student reviews on over 2,000 colleges and universities. Each year Cappex releases its "Cappies" which honor America's top 25 favorite schools across multiple categories. Muhlenberg College was one that "took the cake" receiving a 2015 Cappie in the Best College Food category.

Students applauded Muhlenberg Dining's dedication to offering delicious menus that focus on fresh and local offerings.

"Wide variety of food with fresh, local options," wrote one anonymous reviewer. "Good vegetarian selection as well. The campus dining program focuses on sustainability."

Another student raved, "Muhlenberg has the best dining hall. The food is great. I'll go to breakfast an hour early just so I can study in there."

Campus food has certainly come a long way, especially at Muhlenberg College. When The Daily Meal, a web site that covers all things food and drink, released its list of the "75 Best Colleges for Food in America" Muhlenberg once again found itself on the list.

So, what's the secret to success? Just like any other successful organization, Muhlenberg Dining sets its standards high, listens to its customers and adapts its programming.

"Our recipe for success to being one of the best in the country is to create an exceptional dining experience for our guests," revealed Muhlenberg Dining General Manager John Pasquarello. "In order for us to do that, it is critical that we understand the role we play on campus and in what way dining services is linked to the mission and values of Muhlenberg College. We are committed to creating a strong, long-term partnership by continually seeking to listen, understand and deliver on Muhlenberg's expectations of the dining program."





battle of the chefs

by: Gabe Bernstein '15, marketing intern

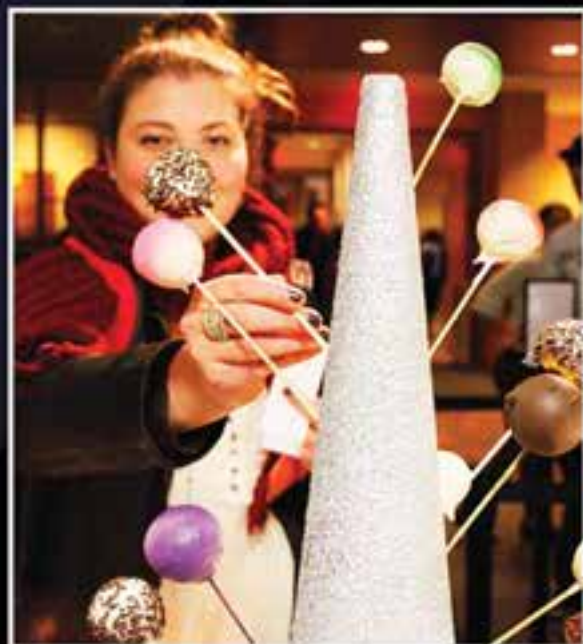
Each year, there's one dining event at Muhlenberg College that gains far more attention than the rest. At this event, students, faculty and staff pack the Wood Dining Commons and line up for a gastronomic experience unlike any other. This event is Battle of the Chefs, an annual culinary contest in which chefs from local colleges and universities travel to Muhlenberg College to prepare their finest food.

Participating schools include DeSales University, Lehigh University, Mansfield University and Moravian College. A new theme is unveiled each year, challenging chefs to develop new menus. Examples of previous themes include "College Comfort Foods," "Movies" and "Music Genres."

"I love Battle of the Chefs because it gives me a chance to sample foods from all the different schools nearby," said Matt Stovall '15. "All the schools bring their best, so it's nice to have a day to enjoy such carefully prepared foods."

Troy Elias '17 elaborated as to why the annual event is one of his favorites. He highlighted the fact that students have the opportunity to try food cooked by chefs from different schools.

"The Lehigh Valley food competition does a great job at concocting a plethora of unique foods that the students crave," explained Elias. "The event seems to always be hyped, yet never disappoints. Last year as a freshman, I was exposed to dishes from neighboring schools like Lehigh and Moravian. Each of the schools' chefs put forth their best dishes, while students piled into the dining hall."



"Battle of the Chefs is definitely one of my favorite events of the year. The lines are long, but the food definitely makes up for it. The creative menus make it hard to choose favorites," said Sabrina Gonzalez '15.

The quality menus and wide variety make for an experience that is highly anticipated every year. It's no surprise lines to enter the Wood Dining Commons begin building an hour before doors open. Once inside, guests taste each menu and cast ballots for their favorite.

Remarkably, against stiff competition, Muhlenberg Dining is undefeated and looks to continue its incredible winning streak on February 17, 2015.



MUHLENBERG!!
(you can tell i enjoyed
it by the food stains)
good job,
my college. ♡

Where are they now?

by: Gabe Bernstein '15, marketing intern

Nicole Cammisa graduated in May 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Biology. For three years, "Nickie" worked as the Sustainability Intern for Muhlenberg Dining. Currently, she is pursuing her Master of Science in Biology with a concentration in Ecology and Evolution at California State University - Northridge. In addition to taking classes and developing her thesis project, she also teaches Introductory Biology courses as a Teaching Associate, assists with Introductory Ecology as a Graduate Assistant and works as a Research Assistant.

Since she is still in academia, Nickie claims that almost everything she learned in the classroom at Muhlenberg has helped her upon graduation. Her well-rounded experience at Muhlenberg has played a role in developing a unique perspective compared to other students at CSU-Northridge.

"I took classes [at Muhlenberg] that were outside of my comfort zone and they helped build the foundation that now helps me interpret scientific papers written by those outside my specific field," explained Nickie. "Being able to take courses totally outside my field of study is a luxury that I miss! I'm very glad I was able to do this at Muhlenberg and certainly learned a lot about the world I would have missed if I only took science classes."

Nickie points out that her internship with Muhlenberg Dining has helped her prepare for life after college in countless ways. Through the internship she learned professional etiquette, how to work both independently and in teams, as well as when and how to ask for help. In addition, she gained invaluable experience on how to communicate with a wide variety of stakeholders.

During her time as Sustainability Intern, she recounts many fond memories such as celebrating the hard work put into planning Earth Day and the annual Battle of the Chefs events. Yet one memory lasts a bit more than others, and appropriately so.

"I found out about my acceptance to graduate school while working alongside Evan [her internship supervisor] in the Wood Dining Commons during my senior year," reminisces Nickie. "It was very appropriate, considering he wrote me a stellar letter of recommendation and was a mentor to me throughout my senior year as I tried to figure out what path I wanted to take."



nickie cammisa '14

jen verola '13

Jen Verola graduated in May of 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Public Health from Muhlenberg College. During her senior year, Jen worked with Muhlenberg Dining as its nutrition intern. Currently, she works as the development manager at Tuesday's Children, a non-profit organization founded to promote long-term healing for all those directly impacted by 9/11.

Her primary responsibilities include managing the Endurance Fundraising program, planning fundraising events and serving as the liaison for the organization's Junior Board.

"Working at a nonprofit did not seem like the 'nutrition job' I dreamed of, but a year and a half later, I'm extremely happy with my decision," expressed Jen. "I've been able to explore how I can incorporate my passion for nutrition and physical fitness into a fundraising-focused position."

Verola asserts that the most significant thing she learned from her internship with Muhlenberg Dining is the importance of communicating and working well with co-workers, and how valuable those relationships can be. She emphasizes the importance of building relationships with coworkers, not only for work productivity, but also to find mentors who can enable career growth. Marketing Manager Evan Rehrig and Regional Dietitian Sue Hurd were her supervisors throughout her Culinary & Nutrition Internship and served as mentors from day one.

"Now a year out of college, both Evan and Sue continue to guide me through this confusing time. I've asked both of them for advice

on job interviews, potential job changes, issues at work, and every time, they have been extremely helpful and offered wonderful advice," said Jen.

She also credits her time inside the classroom as a major contributor to her post-Muhlenberg success.

"The continuous motivation and support I felt from my friends, professors and the larger Muhlen-network pushed me to do what I love and I soon found myself working full-time at Tuesday's Children, while also interning at The Food Tank," expressed Jen. "Muhlenberg encouraged me to hold myself to a certain standard, a standard that I continue to hold myself to in my post-Muhlenberg world, and I am so thankful for that!"

A few memories from Muhlenberg that stick out include spending time in Parents Plaza with friends, attending her favorite classes, Sunday night Zumba, hours spent in Seegers with friends, being a sister of Delta Zeta, and walking to and from the Farmers Market on weekends. She also has many fond memories from her internship.

"As an intern, I sat behind the desk in the Wood Dining Commons and worked closely with the dining staff," recalls Jen. "They all have so much energy, which made my job fun. I looked forward to our daily banter and most of all to everyone's smiling faces and support," said Verola. "I viewed my internship as my first real job, and I was so fortunate to have such incredible coworkers for this milestone."





CONNECT WITH YOUR FOOD

Sync up with Muhlenberg Dining Services and get all of the info on menu items, upcoming events, contests and more! Post, tweet and comment away - we are always looking for your suggestions to help improve your dining experience.



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