

# Feeding the 60,000

Superb quality and total efficiency are the key elements of the myriad catering outlets and restaurants at Emirates Stadium. Benjamin Walker finds out what's on offer.

It was thanks to its success in landing the Wembley Stadium deal that catering giant Delaware North Companies (DNC) was first invited to pursue the food and retail contract at Arsenal's new 60,000-capacity Emirates Stadium. DNC were awarded the exclusive catering contract at Emirates Stadium in March 2005.

The terms of Emirates Stadium's new catering contract demand that DNC invest £10 million into the catering hardware during construction and a further £2.5 million in the first three years after opening. In return DNC gets to run the catering operation for 20 years. All the facilities will be owned by Arsenal Football Club and DNC will make its profits from running the catering, after paying the club a percentage of the annual turnover – estimated at £17.5 million.

A strong emphasis on the latest technology will facilitate the smooth delivery of the comprehensive and diverse food on offer, which includes corporate hospitality, casual dining and retail concessions. Devices common in high street restaurant chains but rare in UK football stadiums, such as electronic table registration systems, hand-held waiter service and the latest electronic point-of-sale (EPOS) systems will be fully utilised at Emirates Stadium. "Technology is absolutely crucial for delivering customer service, and [gathering] invaluable customer data about what's selling," explains Simon Dobson, Managing Director of Delaware North (UK). "This will help us improve things going forward."

The ubiquitous stadium fare of soggy hot dogs and rubbery burgers will be banished from Emirates Stadium. At the same time Dobson stresses that it's essential to give fans what they want. "If you could only get sushi on the general concourse that would clearly be nuts," he says.

When Emirates Stadium opens for the 2006/07 season, DNC will be responsible for more than 250 points of service. At concourse level, kiosks will serve hot dogs, burgers, chips, fried chicken, sandwiches, wraps, soft drinks and beer. The difference will be that state-of-the-art cooking facilities close to the point of sale will ensure that hand-held items are fresh and of superior quality.

## Catering to the fans

Emirates Stadium will have one of the best cuisine set-ups of any UK football stadium.

- Delaware North Companies (DNC) has a 20-year contract to run corporate hospitality, casual dining and retail concessions.
- Total turnover is estimated at £350m.
- DNC will contribute £12.5m to the catering infrastructure budget.
- There will be more than 250 service points throughout Emirates Stadium, including:

Four Club Level restaurants and bars in each corner of the stadium with seating for a total of 7,000 fans.

150 executive boxes catered for by eight kitchens and 75 pantries with a capacity to serve 2,000 meals on match days.

Kiosks throughout the concourse serving high quality hand-held snacks and rapid-dispense soft drinks and beer.

Flat, tepid beer is not on the cards either. IMI Cornelius, a leading drinks dispenser supplier, has developed a new system called Ultra-Flow, designed specifically for event and stadium outlets. It can pull four pints simultaneously in five seconds and will ensure consistent ice-cold temperatures and head-height. Across the whole stadium this will mean more than 2,400 pints of beer poured every minute, which of course means more sales in a limited space of time – and therefore fewer queues, especially at half time.

Due to the easy-to-use electronically controlled system, staff won't need to be as highly trained. Reduced wastage, meanwhile, will provide greater keg yield. "We are looking forward to maximizing Emirates Stadium's till ring and minimizing the 'walk aways'," says Mark Schlotel, IMI Cornelius's European Marketing Director.

Leading the whole catering fit-out operation is catering services specialist KCCJ. The Kent-based firm, whose clients include Wembley Arena, the British Library and the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, have designed, supplied and are now installing all of the catering facilities at Emirates Stadium. One of the areas they have been most innovative in is the drinks distribution system.

"Our target was to be able to offer a drink to at least 50 per cent of a maximum crowd during the 15-minute half-time break," explains KCCJ's Managing Director Kevin Slatter. "We worked with leading experts within the industry to develop the beer system, and have had to organise the chilling, the bulk gas supply and also the massive task of distributing huge quantities of drink which in some cases travel some 100 metres to reach the dispense head. One of the most difficult tasks we faced was the routing of the extensive beer lines, refrigeration, gas pipe work, and the ventilation ducting that needed to run through the stadium. It required co-ordination with all of the other services and contractors."

The task of pulling together the plans for all of the restaurant and catering units fell to architectural consultants Rosborough Pratlley Associates (RPA). They pieced together the final design drawings after collaborating with electricians, equipment suppliers, and kitchen designers.



## Made to measure

The massive catering operations at Emirates Stadium were designed, supplied and are now being installed by catering services specialist KCCJ.

"We produced the concept designs for 35 concessions, 18 kitchens, 22 bars and the main support kitchen," explains the Managing Director Kevin Slatter. "Nearly 2,000 computer drawings were needed for the project and our equipment selection involved key partners such as Electrolux, Ventmaster, Carters and IMI Cornelius."

Once the stadium is complete KCCJ will continue to work with Arsenal Football Club on the maintenance of the systems they have installed. It is so far the largest contract the company has been involved with. Their other projects include Wembley Arena, the British Library, the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Wales Millennium Centre, BBC White City and the Burger King roll-out programme.

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Kevin Slatter, Managing Director, KCCJ.

James Breaks, RPA's Design Studio Manager, explains that the aim was to produce a highly service-driven facility. "The massive scale and mechanics involved will be invisible to the fan who benefits from less time spent queuing and more time spent participating, socialising, and enjoying Arsenal's many successes," he says.

Like the new Wembley Stadium, designed by the same architect HOK Sport, natural light is an important feature of Emirates Stadium. More than 15,000 square metres of glass will make public spaces, restaurants and bars pleasant and spacious environments where fans can linger long before and after the game.

Large LCD television screens showing match footage, exclusive interviews and commentary will provide a further incentive for fans to make match days an all-day outing, from brunch to evening meal. Meanwhile, the new Club Level area at Emirates Stadium means that fans have a very short distance to walk from the bars and restaurants to their seats.

Steve Brice is Head of Hospitality for Arsenal. It is his job to ensure that the whole customer journey is a "seamless, enjoyable experience". He is quick to point out that the new bars, kitchens and restaurants also provide excellent opportunities for the non-match business market of banquets, conferences, and exhibitions in an enviable central London location.

There is a wide range of price entry points to the catering on offer at Emirates Stadium and according to DNC's Simon Dobson the quality of experience will be consistently high throughout. There will be a 300 cover restaurant open to general admission ticket holders on a match day in Arsenal's new head office building, with views of the stadium. The restaurant is likely to offer a contemporary three course menu with three sittings expected on a match day.

Moving onto the hospitality on offer within the stadium, there are 150 private boxes compared to 48 at Highbury. These are catered for by eight kitchens and 75 pantries with a capacity to serve 2,000 meals on a match day. Club Level ticket holders will be able to dine in one of four restaurants with seating for 3,000 covers. Whilst the food offers have not been finalised, Dobson expects the restaurant to offer buffets through to à la carte dining.

All 19 full-time Highbury catering staff have transferred over to DNC's payroll. That number will climb to 24 when Emirates Stadium opens, with 1,100 casual catering staff on match days. 🏆



## Delaware North Companies

The facts and figures behind this catering giant.

- DNC was founded in 1915 by brothers Charles, Louis and Marvin Jacobs of Buffalo, New York.
- They expanded food concession contracts at baseball stadiums, ice hockey arenas, airports, and racecourses.
- DNC had a presence in the UK from 1960 to the mid-1980s when it owned racecourse caterer Letheby & Christopher (now part of Compass Group).
- From the 1980s onwards It expanded its business in the US and Australia.
- Key contracts include Kennedy Space Centre, Yosemite National Park, Boston Bruins Hockey Stadium in the US, and the Telstra Dome and Melbourne Park stadia in Australia.
- In 2002 DNC International won the contract to run the catering operation at the new Wembley Stadium.
- Today DNC is a US\$1.6bn corporation with 30,000 staff.