

Global Cuisines: Mexican

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A new global flavor concept has hit college and university campuses – Fresh Mexican.

“Fresh Mexican is a cuisine that is designed for a made-to-order concept,” said Gary Occhiogrosso, president/CEO of Desert Moon Grille, a national Fresh Mexican concept. “The guest has complete choice over the items that are put into their tacos or burritos. The food is grilled. The proteins are grilled. It is very flavorful, it is very bold. It is not spicy, in the sense that it is like Tex-Mex where you are going to get a mouthful of chili powder or hot peppers. You can have it that way if you want.”

He continued, “The clearest definition of Fresh Mexican is it’s a menu that maintains the integrity of the food, the respect for the guest’s choices, where the food is made to order, with minimum processing, minimum preservatives and lots of healthful choices on the menu. It’s not food that is layered and covered in refried beans that have been fried in lard and then covered in cheese. It is not that. The integrity of the food is very important. It is really about giving the student the choice to create the end product that they want and yet not give up flavor.”

Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., recently opened a new Maui Taco Fresh Mexican restaurant in its Student Center.

According to Eisa Shukran, area coordinator at Lackmann Culinary Services, the campus foodservice provider, the school originally brought the concept on campus based on feedback from student surveys and committee meetings. “We completed studies/surveys to identify if students prefer ‘fresh food made to order while they wait’ or the convenience of quicker service, with an item that is premade. Almost all surveyed were in favor of preference and making the experience their way, if even it is a wait of a minute or two over pre-made items.”

Students have been very pleased with the concept. “There is plenty of variety for all types of eating habits, including vegetarian items and healthy salads,” she said. “And it is made fresh in front of them. We are looking into remote ordering systems to allow flexibility and to improve on speed of service in the ordering process. It will be interactive so they can pick and choose their selections through a touch screen and their order will be ready at the time of the request.”