



# OUTSIDE THE BOX

Concession points can enhance fan experience and increase revenue

When acquiring a new food or beverage cart for a concourse, plaza, or suite level, one should think outside the box – literally. Integrated technology within mobile equipment has advanced, so why invest in a new cart with an exterior that already looks dated? A simple graphic façade on a rectangular base can serve its purpose, but greater consideration must be given when the project calls for outfitting an entire state-of-the-art stadium or arena.

Every new venue project has its own signature design elements, such as the million-tree motif of the Golden 1 Center, or the five 95ft-high doors and distinctive 'prow' on the northwest corner of the US Bank Stadium. These are the features that provided inspiration for Iowa Rotocast Plastics' Fabrication Division when they supplied the aforementioned venues with a full range of food and beverage carts. The carts designed for US Bank Stadium paid homage to the distinctive architecture by incorporating a triangular recess on a trapezium-shaped base. Materials such as chrome, acrylic, faux wood and stainless steel were incorporated, and backlit triangular accent panels made of high-density frosted acrylic were set off from the ACM base. IRP's design for Golden 1 Center in Sacramento, California, paired seamlessly with the thematic design elements of the arena's architecture. IRP's in-house design team wanted the carts' overall aesthetic to draw inspiration from Sacramento's climate

and culture, so the final design featured a stainless-steel panel die-cut in a modernist leaf pattern that was layered over an acrylic panel backlit with LED lighting.

A simple and traditional cart design can benefit from dimensional application of materials; a great way to achieve this is with faux façade panels such as brick, stone, subway tile and wood, all of which provide texture and depth without impeding the mobility of the cart due to weight. Current design trends for cart headers and canopies include LED lighting, die-cut individual letter signage, backlit illumination of acrylic signage, rounded aluminum tubing for a modernist look, and pergola-style wood canopies. IRP is the only manufacturer to offer its patent-pending hydraulic Lift Assist technology in its headers and canopies, which enables a single person to raise a canopy weighing hundreds of pounds with virtually one hand. Digital monitors and menu boards on headers have become commonplace, and offer the venue the option of changing their F&B menu offerings and pricing quickly and conveniently.

### Go with the flow

Customized equipment should not only apply to permanent concession areas. Many existing stadia and arenas – particularly dated structures – require mobile supplemental concessions in unrealized spaces to alleviate long lines and relieve congestion on the main concourse. It is also a common occurrence for a new



venue to underestimate the need for additional concession points until it begins hosting events. Consideration must be given to many factors such as allotment for space, traffic patterns, possible exposure to elements, and the architecture of the venue. Many of IRP's clients rely on the company's expertise in designing around existing interior structures, which was the case when IRP was asked to design kiosks and carts for Yankee Stadium. Two kiosks, both comprising multiple connecting carts with no headers due to height restrictions, were required to work within high-traffic zones on the 300 Level. Because of the challenge presented by the footprint of a central stairway, one of the kiosks comprised eight interlocking carts and was designed to wrap around the underside of the staircase. In this project, the Yankees were able to capitalize on underutilized space, provide a more convenient concession point of sale for spectators, and increase food and beverage revenue.

### Capitalize on Epicurean trends

Spectators are all about the overall experience, particularly millennial event-goers. Purchasing a beer or hot dog from the permanent concession is hardly a photo opportunity, but grabbing a walking taco, Bloody Mary with a hamburger garnish, adult root beer float, or any novelty food item from a themed kiosk, provides photo ops for foodies and non-foodies alike. A novelty cart can captivate the customer, increase engagement

and enhance their event experience. Not only does this net a venue free social media advertising in the process, but also affords the opportunity to sell premium-priced, high-margin items guaranteed to give operators ROI within the span of a few events.

Notable designs for IRP clientele include food truck-inspired kiosks for Montego beer and tacos, a Makus Empanada cart for PNC Arena, Doritos walking tacos cart for Frito Lay, wok grill carts that offer Asian-fusion fare at Golden 1 Center, and a Goose Island/Super Pretzel cart for Anheuser-Busch that was allocated to the Toyota Center.

Epicurean trends worth noting include: pre-packaged charcuterie and cheese plates; vegetable-based protein options; gourmet pizzas and flatbreads; and visually appealing single-serve desserts such as cupcakes, designer donuts, cookies and macarons. An eye-catching cart used as a dedicated mixed drink station can capitalize on the current cocktail trends, such as the Moscow Mule and its prolific variations. Another option guaranteed to enhance the spectator's overall event experience is a cart designed specifically for regional food and drink favorites. ■

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