

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA- MIDDLEBROOK DINING HALL

Minneapolis, Minnesota



Rippe Associates partnered with the University of Minnesota to renovate the Middlebrook Dining Hall, a 16,000 square foot residential dining facility originally built in 1969. Serving nearly 900 students living in the adjacent Middlebrook Residence Hall tower, the facility required a major upgrade to align with modern campus dining expectations while maintaining operations throughout construction. To meet this challenge, the project was delivered in two carefully sequenced phases over consecutive summers, ensuring continuous food service to students on the University's West Bank campus, where no alternative dining centers exist nearby.

Phase one focused on creating an engaging, culinary-forward front-of-house environment. The scope included a completely new dish room, expanded dining room, six distinctive serving stations, a central salad and deli island, beverage counters, and a vibrant open kitchen designed to showcase cooking and improve transparency. These updates enhanced both operational efficiency and the student dining experience, adding variety and flexibility to menu offerings while increasing seating capacity, an important client priority.

Details

Opening Date: August 2025

Equipment Cost: \$2,000,000

16,000 square foot residential dining facility

Scope

Phased renovation to modernize a vital dining hub serving 900 students in the adjacent residence tower. A refreshed front-of-house with multiple serving stations and an open kitchen, while reprogramming the oversized back-of-house into right-sized support areas, expanded offices, and new student-life amenities.

The second phase addressed the oversized and outdated back-of-house areas, originally designed to function as a central bakery and commissary for campus. By strategically right-sizing cold storage, prep, baking, and support spaces, the design team was able to repurpose square footage to better serve current needs. This reallocation provided expanded office space for staff as well as student-life amenities, including a wellness and lactation room. The result is a rebalanced facility that supports today's residential dining model while adapting to evolving student expectations.

Key to the project's success was Rippe Associates' ability to coordinate input from multiple University stakeholders, including Housing & Residential Life, Capital Project Management, Sustainability committees, and building code officials, while navigating complex code compliance and legacy infrastructure challenges. The design integrates a flexible equipment package to support culinary variety, including a Hestan Chef Suite, mobile interchangeable international station, Marra Forni electric deck oven, Rational iVario units, and a dedicated allergen prep area. Together, these elements reflect a dining program designed not only to meet the operational demands of today, but also to adapt for the future.

