

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH- RESIDENTIAL DINING CENTER PRODUCTION KITCHEN RENOVATION Duluth, MN



Rippe Associates partnered with the University of Minnesota Duluth to lead the comprehensive renovation of the campus' primary production kitchen, a critical infrastructure investment supporting all dining operations across the university. Originally constructed in 1971, with portions of equipment dating back to the 1950s, the underground kitchen had reached the end of its functional life. As the backbone of the award-winning UMD Dining program, the facility required a complete modernization to ensure reliability, efficiency, and flexibility ahead of future renovations to the Student Union and residence dining spaces. Opening in January 2026, the 18,000-square-foot renovation was designed to serve a campus population of approximately 9,300 students.

The project reflects Rippe's long-standing relationship with UMD, built over seven years of collaboration that included foodservice master planning, predesign studies, and previously developed concepts. This deep institutional knowledge allowed the team to approach the renovation strategically, balancing operational continuity with long-term campus goals.

Details

Opening Date: Jan 2026
Equipment Cost: \$2,933,236
Project Size: 18,000 SF

Scope

Foodservice planning and design for the full renovation of UMD's primary production kitchen, modernizing a critical campus-wide support facility serving residential dining, retail venues, and catering operations.

Working closely with UMD Dining leadership, Rippe aligned the design with evolving student expectations while supporting high-volume retail, catering, and residential dining programs from a single centralized production hub.

At the core of the design is a reimagined workflow that improves efficiency from receiving through production and distribution. Warehouse cold and dry storage were strategically located near the loading dock and along a central circulation spine, enabling streamlined distribution to retail locations across campus. Production areas were centralized and intentionally surrounded by directly supporting storage zones, reducing travel distances and improving labor efficiency. Dedicated production spaces, including hot production, cold production, grab-and-go, and an expanded bakery, were right-sized to support full-time staff and student employees, with generous workstations, wide aisles, and cart-based cooking designed to enhance safety and ergonomics.

Despite the kitchen's challenging location, below grade and two stories beneath the only residence dining facility on campus, the renovation significantly improved the working environment. Enhancements included upgraded lighting, sound-dampened workstations, reduced travel paths, and improved temperature and humidity control, particularly in the dish room. The bakery, home to a highly skilled production team, was expanded to increase capacity and flexibility, supported by dedicated cold storage and high-performance equipment such as deck ovens, rotating rack ovens, roll-in proofers, and a spiral dough mixer with automated bowl lifting. Across the kitchen, multifunctional equipment, including iVario tilt skillets, blast chillers, and combi ovens, supports contemporary menus and adaptable production methods.

Sustainability was a key driver throughout the project. A remote food pulping system located at the dock supports campus composting initiatives, eliminating disposers throughout the kitchen except in the dish room. The renovation complies with Minnesota B3 Sustainability standards and incorporates Energy Star-rated equipment, reduced water and steam consumption, and upgraded HVAC and plumbing systems. By reinvesting in an existing facility rather than building new, the project reinforces the University's commitment to responsible stewardship while delivering a modern, efficient, and future-ready production kitchen that will serve UMD Dining for decades to come.



