



environments *for aging* DINING

COMPETITION



WELCOME TO EFA'S 2024 DINING COMPETITION

RECOGNIZING OLDER adults' thirst for autonomy and variety, while also trying to appeal to the next generation of residents, senior living communities are serving up new and renovated dining environments to enhance and evolve their communities. From rooftop restaurants and brewhouses to cafés and fine dining settings, project teams are approaching these projects with an eye to create vibrant, modern settings that feel welcoming and inviting to seniors as well as the greater communities where they reside. *Environments for Aging* is excited to celebrate these award-winning strategies and approaches in our second annual Dining Competition. We invited firms and communities to submit recent dining design work—up to three projects at a single location. From there, our jury of industry professionals (listed at right) reviewed narratives and images that shared the background on these projects, the resident needs they serve, architecture and interior design strategies, and how the design supports efficient dining operations. Our jury awarded Platinum, Gold, and Silver to the winning submissions. In this special supplement, you'll find a Q+A with members of the Platinum award project team, profiles of the three winning projects, and a gallery of all projects submitted to the program. Cheers!—*Anne DiNardo, editor-in-chief*

THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 DINING COMPETITION JURORS

Meldrena Chapin, architectural gerontologist,
UMBC Erickson School of Aging Studies

Aaron Fish, founder and CEO, Trestle Hospitality Concepts

Hao Huang, Ph.D. candidate, Texas A&M University

Dustin Julius, partner, RLPS Architects

Mary Leary, CEO and president, Mather

Janet Meyer, principal, BCT Design Group

Alison Nash, senior project manager, Faulkner Design Group

Karen Smith, senior interior designer, LNB Studio,
Architecture + Interiors

Tanya Snow, director, operations, Bria Communities

Jennifer Swasey, associate, director of interiors, KDA Architects

Tiffany Tello, healthcare administrator, Querencia at Barton Creek

About the submissions: The Dining Competition submissions come from across the U.S. and cover a variety of construction costs and project scopes. A multidisciplinary panel of invited jurors from *Environments for Aging* reviews the submissions. The panel includes architects, interior designers, researchers, academics, regulatory experts, and providers. Jurors view the submissions according to their areas of expertise, then rate the submissions and provide comments to help clarify the rationale for the rating before selecting winners. Jurors are excluded from reviewing projects that they or their firms were involved with; jurors who are associated with projects in the finalist round are not permitted to vote for winners. All participants pay a small entry fee and receive coverage of their project in the EFA Dining Competition Digital Download. The top three projects receive expanded coverage on the pages that follow. All write-ups were provided directly by the submitting firms and were not edited for content by the *Environments for Aging* editorial staff.



TRIPLE CROWN

Inspirata Pointe at Royal Oaks, the Platinum winner in EFA’s 2024 Dining Competition, delivers three new dining venues on its Sun City, Ariz., campus with distinct identities and experiences for each

by Robert McCune

ROYAL OAKS, an independent living, assisted living, and memory care community in Sun City, Ariz., embarked on a major expansion of its campus, adding a 156-unit independent living neighborhood, renovated entry and rehabilitation center, and upgraded amenity spaces. Completed in May 2023, Inspirata Pointe at Royal Oaks also offers three new dining venues, designed to provide a range of options for current residents as well as ap-

peal to the tastes and desires of future residents.

The three restaurants—Indigo Kitchen, Copper Skye, and Azul—are centrally housed in the community’s Club Center, connected by a variety of walking paths and open to all Royal Oaks residents. Each venue takes inspiration from the natural Arizona landscape, with desert motifs, warm colors and patterns, wood accents, and bronze metals providing richness and contrast throughout.

Lauded by judges for the sophisticated and rich designs, attention to detail, and warm and



Sandra Clarahan, associate,
Perkins Eastman



Peter Wood, senior associate,
Perkins Eastman

inviting atmospheres, the project took home the top Platinum award in Environments for Aging's 2024 Dining Competition. It was submitted to the awards program by Perkins Eastman (Chicago), the architect of record/design architect and interior design firm on the project.

Here, Sandra Clarahan, associate at Perkins Eastman and interior designer on the project, and Peter Wood, senior associate at Perkins Eastman and project architect, discuss planning and design strategies on the project and how it delivers a variety of experiences to residents.

Environments for Aging: These new restaurants are part of a major campus expansion. What steps did you take to deliver a new dining program on an existing senior living community?

Peter Wood: While Inspirata Pointe is the independent living component of the Royal Oaks campus, the three new dining venues are open to all residents. To encourage inclusivity in the restaurants, we invited all residents to events such as wine tastings and cooking classes to make sure everyone had a chance to experience the new spaces.

The Club Center, which houses the three new restaurants, is strategically positioned at the intersection of the existing community and the expansion to encourage use by all residents. A variety of walking paths join the existing community with Inspirata Pointe, creating ease of access.

Underground, adjacent to parking, is where loading occurs. Dry storage is maintained in the basement with direct access to the kitchen from an elevator.

What specific resident needs and expectations did you need to address here, and how did those shape the project?

Wood: Our design for the three new dining venues emphasized authentic experiences, distinctive branding, wellness, and choice. Creating the three dining venues as part of the campus expansion was driven by Royal Oaks' goal of providing a range of options and experiences to its residents.

We incorporated research from local residential, active adult, and hospitality environments to inform our design and reflect the next-generation's lifestyle and expectations. For example, our research led us to implement a farm-to-table concept in the dining venues as well as to provide flexible seating options, ranging from tables for large parties to intimate two tops and lounge seating. We also situated the host at the central axis with visual connection to the three



venues, which provides residents with a clear path in their dining experience.

How did you approach the planning and design to offer distinct identities and create authentic experiences for each of the new dining locations?

Clarahan: We aimed to create a gradient of experiences in the three venues, starting with the open bar setting at Copper Skye, which serves as a welcoming social space and connects to the breezeway for an outdoor dining experience. That moves into Indigo Kitchen, a bright and airy venue with an open kitchen, range of seating options, and view of the courtyard. And finally, Azul provides elevated dining in the evenings.

The interior design approach, including the use of texture, color, and fabric, as well as distinct menus and table settings, creates branded experiences in each space. For example, Copper Skye features a dark color palette, pops of greenery, and a pin light feature to create an intimate gathering space.

Indigo Kitchen, serving Mediterranean and Italian bistro cuisine, includes a main room with the production kitchen and a room with a large indoor/outdoor fireplace. The setting utilizes terrazzo flooring, white oak wood tones, basket-woven light fixtures, and a desert-inspired color palette. A terracotta wall divides Indigo Kitchen from Copper Skye.

For the elevated dining venue, Azul incorporates woodwork and paneling, a sculptural light feature, and a vaulted ceiling. Azul has its own separate entrance with a lemon tree courtyard, sculptural water feature, and a beautifully detailed door. The chef's table is flanked with wine display cabinets and a window into the nearby kitchen.

The project created a central kitchen for preparing meals for the three restaurants. What are some of the major features of the kitchen and how does it support operational efficiency?

Wood: The production kitchen at Inspirata Pointe was designed around a two-level approach. The food preparation occurs on the main floor with the dining venues while storage, loading, and back-of-house functions take place on the level below. Continuous movement between floors is through a dedicated circulation path.

The partition of functions allowed for a more consolidated and efficient footprint where active cooking and preparations were not interrupted, which includes an open-hearth pizza oven at Indigo Kitchen and intimate display kitchen at Azul.

How did you incorporate biophilia principles on this project and why was this an important part of the design?

Clarahan: Connection to nature and flow between indoor and outdoor spaces is central to the design of Inspirata Pointe. Within the dining venues, there are textures and patterns inspired by nature and the surrounding Arizona landscape.

Located in the Sonoran desert, we were inspired by the intersecting horizontal and vertical planes and incorporated that into the design. For example, there is an architectural canopy within Indigo Kitchen, which was created through the use of a latticed suspension ceiling system. This element reflects desert canopies that provide shelter and shade. eja

Robert McCune is senior editor of Environments for Aging and can be reached at robert.mccune@emeraldix.com.



Inspirata Pointe at Royal Oaks [Sun City, Ariz.]

Submitted by: Perkins Eastman



ROYAL OAKS' KEY goals for its new dining venues were to provide a range of options for current residents, as well as support the needs and expectations of future residents. The three new spaces offer distinct identities and create authentic experiences.

The designs of Indigo Kitchen, Copper Skye, and Azul reflect the beauty of the Arizona landscape. Desert motifs, warm colors, patterns inspired by nature, wood accents, and bronze metals provide richness and contrast throughout each venue. Azul offers a sophisticated space with a sculptural light feature that creates a canopy over the seating area. For a curated experience, residents can sit at the chef's table for a glimpse into the

kitchen. For more casual dining, Indigo Kitchen provides Mediterranean fare with an open kitchen, range of seating options, and view of the courtyard. Indigo Kitchen leads into Copper Skye, an inviting bar where residents can gather and connect.

This major campus expansion succeeds in elevating the community's dining program while also providing 156 independent living residences, expanding supportive living, renewing the public entry and rehab center, and upgrading common amenity spaces. Throughout the community, clean modern architecture with expansive overhangs and large windows allow interior spaces to flow seamlessly into the landscape.





JURY COMMENTS:

- Overall, this is a highly sophisticated project with outstanding attention to detail. The interior has a layered, rich design with special attention to ceilings, lighting, walls, and casework. Wood finishes on walls and ceilings add a layer of warmth and coziness, making the areas very friendly and inviting. The special variety of eating spaces is great for residents and enhances the overall dining experience.
- The spaces feel like authentic dining experiences one would have at any upscale, stand-alone restaurant. The chef's table and showcased production kitchen are inspiring. Lighting levels enhance mood without being too dark. The connection to the Outdoor Promenade serves the venues well and encourages meaningful interaction with residents and guests.
- Copper Skye has such a warm and inviting atmosphere; the use of natural materials and natural colors on the finishes and furnishing is very well done. The high ceilings were utilized to bring the eye up with show-stopping fixtures, and top-notch lighting design and create the perfect warm glow without being over-lit.
- Azul provides a totally different atmosphere that is sophisticated and glamorous. The accent wall and divider panels are reminiscent of the opulent Art Deco era. The view into the kitchen from the chef's table is genius, and along with the beautiful light fixture and flanking wine storage this space says, "This is going to be an experience!"
- Indigo Kitchen with views from Copper Skye continues that same warm feel into this space by using the same warm natural finishes and colors; I absolutely love the cacti. Well done! Everything from the ceiling to the flooring including the divider panels, light fixtures, fireplace, and open kitchen with the show-stopping pizza oven creates a moment here. OUTSTANDING!

Design team: Perkins Eastman (architect of record/design architect and interior design); Architectural Resource Team (associate architect); Sundt Construction (general contractor); IMEG Engineering (MEP/FP engineering); PK Associates, LLC (structural engineer)

Cost per square foot: \$348

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