

URBAN, EDUCATED TECHIES:

# T. Rowe Price finds market for vegetarian meal choices

**T** Rowe Price's employee population represents a prime market for vegetarian dining options. The Owings Mills, MD, location of this major national investment firm—which also has branches in Baltimore, Colorado Springs and Tampa—is home to the company's Investment Technology and Human Resources personnel, primarily young, urban, well-educated and decidedly "techie" individuals.

And T. Rowe Price is aggressive about keeping them happy: The multi-building, suburban campus offers a number of high-touch on-site amenities, including a health and fitness club, running trails and a pond, and two cafeterias with outdoor dining.

"This is a pretty demanding group," says James Sanders, g.m. of the Brock and Company-managed facility. Although only about 3-5% of the Owings Mills population is actually vegetarian, according to Sanders, the appetite for variety is pretty much insatiable.

**Maximizing space:** A new central cafeteria, opened in 2000, helped fill the bill. Designed by Hospitality Services Inc. (HSI) of Baltimore, the dramatic new servery incorporates a series of stations intended to provide serious menu flexibility. There is a grill, bakery-cafe, deli, entree station and salad bar, each with a display cooking component. Front and center is a wood-fired pizza oven, also used for hot sandwiches, pastas and

other baked items. "It packs a lot into a little space," notes HSI president Allan Greenberg. "That was important, because in a campus situation people really depend on the cafeteria."

The client also wanted to keep employees on-site. "There's a large mall and restaurant row right up the road, and that represents serious competition," says Jim Fris, vice president of operations for Brock and Company, a 75-year-old firm in Malvern, PA, with approximately 60 accounts—from Virginia to New Jersey. "We had to be able to offer a great deal of variety, and the ability to keep on top of trends." The fact that the T. Rowe Price facility enjoys participation of 71% is evidence that the strategy is working.

Indeed, Brock wasted no time in maxing out the potential of T. Rowe Price's facility. Pulling from a base of 2,200 workers—the company's largest employee population—the cafeteria offers literally dozens of selections every day, including a number of meatless options.

**Keeping locals happy:** There's a cycle menu for the basics including daily hot entrees, but the unit chef designs the rest of the menu—a strategy typical of Brock's philosophy. "There's a lot of room for individuality and creativity," explains Sanders, who joined the account from another Brock-managed B&I at the end of 2002. "It helps us

adapt to the local population, including vegetarians."

There is always one vegan soup available per day, for instance, and sometimes two. "So many soups are made with 'hidden ingredients' like chicken stock or butter," notes Sanders, "but ours are always 100% vegan," a fact that's denoted with signage at the point of purchase.

The grill features a daily "veggie burger" option, as well as specials like the Portabello Mushroom Stack—sliced grilled mushroom, zucchini and yellow squash on a multigrain roll. Cook-to-order capability expands the possibilities.

A top seller among vegetarians and carnivores alike is the daily roasted vegetable wrap, made with whatever vegetables are fresh in season, plus a variety of different condiments. "There's a lot of demand for something like that," says Sanders. "It's light and colorful, as well as being tasty and filling."

**New Year's peak:** Sanders adds that sales of vegetarian items spike particularly high in spring and summer, when employees are dining outside on the patio, or using the running trails. "And it's always really high right after January 1," he laughs, "although that only

lasts for about a week."

The extensive salad bar also represents a means to the vegetarian end. The company has been experimenting with this component, and may ultimately convert one of the bakery cases over to more salad space. In the meantime, the list of ingredients keeps expanding, including items like grilled tofu and other meatless protein items. A fresh salad "tossery" (a tossed-to-order component featuring special salads of the day) features a variety of vegetari-

an specialties—or items that can easily be made so. California-style sushi (all vegetable) is yet another option.

The Command Performances demonstration-cooking station is home to a rotating array of cook-to-order concepts, including omelet bars, a carvery and stir-fry, all of which lend themselves to custom meals, says Sanders. The deli section features eight specialty sandwiches per day, displayed in a refrigerated glass case for quick decision-making; many of these are meatless.

**Oven ovation:** The jewel in the crown, however, might just be the pizza oven. The introduction of personal pizzas, hot baked sandwiches, traditional items such as calzones, and baked pastas and other casseroles has multiplied variety, vegetarian and otherwise—and spurred a sales increase of 39% from the station.

"It's become a real showplace for us," says Sanders. All of this is the result of attention to customer feedback, industry trends, and daily consumption figures, he adds.

by Joan Lang



Meatless meal demand surges during the spring and summer months at T. Rowe Price.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF T. ROWE PRICE/BROCK AND COMPANY