

All aboard

Penn Station East Coast Subs debuts restaurant redesign

By Kirk Durchholz

Penn Station East Coast Subs isn't a brand that changes often. Its fresh grilled sandwiches don't need changing, and the fast casual restaurant's operational flow has stayed the same to make sure consumers can watch as their sandwich is grilled to order. This has been a key differentiator for Penn Station among other sandwich restaurants.

As government restrictions have changed, the walls around the kitchen started to rise, blocking one of Penn Station's key restaurant design features – the open kitchen. Using that as a catalyst, Penn Station decided to refresh the entire restaurant design and reopen the kitchen so consumers can see how Penn Station is different from other sandwich brands.

When a supplier discontinued one of the main aspects of Penn Station's restaurants, the hood over the grill, the construction and leadership teams started a discussion about what else could be updated in the restaurants, especially if it lowered construction costs for franchisees.

The aesthetics of the stores have changed slightly over the years, but this redesign was planned to be more profoundly different than previous modifications to resonate more with customers. The team took the discontinuation of the hood as an opportunity to create something new that showcases where the brand is heading and better serves customers.

Penn Station didn't want to change the way it makes sandwiches or the way customers order, so the goal was to update the design while maintaining the customer flow. Penn Station knew it wanted to open the kitchen and cook line so it was even more visible to the customer and create an overall lighter, more open restaurant.



While these changes needed to be smart, they also had to maintain brand recognition and stay consistent with the old restaurant design.

Most important, Penn Station wanted to accomplish these design goals without increasing construction costs. As with everything Penn Station does, return on investment (ROI) and profitability for its franchisees were top of mind when redesigning the restaurants.

During the redesign process, Penn Station looked at every single aspect of the store, reviewing tile samples, tabletops, paint colors, and more. Penn Station worked with suppliers, which also came up with ideas and created sample boards. The team would even mock up sections of the restaurant in the corporate office so they could see how the finished product would look all together at full scale.

Features of the new design

The older Penn Station restaurant design featured visible duct work, monochromatic, earth

All aspects of Penn Station's new design stay true to the original branding and template while updating the look to be more palatable for today's customers.

tone colors and food photography on the walls. The walls previously were covered with dark wallpaper, and the cooking line featured a copper canopy structure on the ceiling.

The new design was created for aesthetics first – to be lighter and more open – all while reducing costs wherever possible. Penn Station dropped the ceiling to hide the duct work, using a light gray ceiling tile to make the restaurant feel open and bright, while also saving money on construction.

On the walls, Penn Station switched to gray paint, which is brighter and easier to maintain than the previous wallpaper. Reducing the amount of art on the walls also helped open the space up and update the look.

Since most of its competition doesn't grill food to order, Penn Station wanted to make the grill a focal point of the new design. The old copper canopy hood was replaced with a new stainless steel hood, which is easier to clean and maintain. It protrudes out, so people are better able to see the hood, reminding them that their food is about to

