



environments
for aging DINING
COMPETITION



WELCOME TO EFA'S 2026 DINING COMPETITION

DINING SPACES IN senior living communities do more than serve meals. They shape connection, support daily routines, and help foster a sense of belonging. Now in its fourth year, *Environments for Aging's* Dining Competition recognizes projects that meet those demands with thoughtful, high-design solutions.

Firms and communities were invited to submit recent dining design work for review by a jury of industry professionals (listed at right). Through project narratives and images, jurors evaluated the resident needs each space addresses, the architecture and interior design strategies behind the work, and how each project supports efficient dining operations. Platinum, Gold, and Silver honors were awarded to the top submissions.

In this special supplement, you'll find a Q+A with members of the Platinum award-winning project team, profiles of the three winning projects, and a gallery featuring all entries submitted to the program. We hope it leaves you with fresh ideas and inspiration to carry into your next project. —Anne DiNardo, editor-in-chief

THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 DINING COMPETITION JURORS

Craig Wagoner

COO, National Lutheran Communities & Services

Eleni Stefania Kalapoda

Architect, Perkins Eastman

Jarin Tasnim Khan

Job captain/adjunct lecturer, Arete Architecture

Karen Smith

Senior interior designer, LNB Studio

Soo Im

Market leader, senior living, Gensler

Stacy Peters Gardner

Principal, Faulkner Design Group

Teresa Whittington

RN, Co-owner, Teresa's House – Craig Ranch and Argyle

Erin Richardson

Corporate director of healthy aging and functional ability, Sun Health

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, providers, and industry consultants. 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 project write-ups were provided directly by the submitting firms and were not edited for content by the *Environments for Aging* editorial staff.



MORE THAN A MEAL

LiveWell delivers two dining venues designed to support engagement and participation among all residents, including those living with dementia, earning the top award in *EFA's* 2026 Dining Competition.

by Robert McCune

AS PART OF a major redevelopment of its campus in Plantsville, Conn., LiveWell set out to redefine dining for residents living with dementia. Formerly the Alzheimer's Resource Center of Connecticut, the organization has spent more than 25 years advancing an approach to dementia care that focuses on retained abilities rather than limitations.

Its two new dining venues—the Test Kitchen and the Gathering Café—translate that philosophy into environments that encourage participation, social connection, and lifelong learning. Rather than serving solely as places to eat, the spaces invite residents with a range of care needs to gather, prepare food, and build

new skills. Opened in July 2024 as part of the campus' Resilient Living Center, the venues support LiveWell's vision of dining as an active, engaging experience.

The centerpiece of the project, the Test Kitchen, is designed to support demonstrations, classes, and collaborative meal experiences that encourage engagement in familiar routines. Residents, Resilient Living Center members, and guests can choose to assist with meal preparation and assembly, cooking alongside staff and family members, according to their own interests and abilities. The Gathering Café offers a more casual experience with a variety of indoor and outdoor seating, including a lounge anchored by a double-sided fireplace.

Submitted by RLPS Architects and RLPS Interi-

ors (Lancaster, Pa.), the project earned the top Platinum Award in *Environments for Aging's* 2026 Dining Competition. "It was clear the team put tremendous thought into supporting quality of life for residents with cognitive changes," one juror noted. "The result is a welcoming, beautifully designed space that meets residents where they are and supports every ability and need."

Here, Dustin Julius, partner at RLPS Architects, discusses the planning and design strategies behind the project and the need to shift expectations around dementia care environments.



Dustin Julius, partner
at RLPS Architects



Environments for Aging: How did you approach the design of the new dining spaces to support the community's overall philosophy of focusing on residents' retained abilities and meaningful participation rather than limitations?

Dustin Julius: LiveWell challenged us to question many of the assumptions that have traditionally shaped memory care environments. From the very beginning, we collaborated with their leadership to think beyond safety as the main design driver and instead consider how the environment could support continued growth, purpose, and participation—even if that meant accepting an appropriate level of risk.

We drew heavily from Dr. Allen Power's book, *Dementia Beyond Disease*, which describes well-being through domains such as connectedness, identity, autonomy, meaning, growth, and joy. Those ideas became our design framework. Instead of asking, "How do we keep people away from cooking?" we asked, "How can we teach safe cooking skills?"

That shift influenced everything from the open kitchen and demonstration areas to opportunities for knife skills classes, collaborative meal preparation, and other everyday interactions around food.

A hallmark of this project is dining spaces that encourage autonomy, engagement, and participation. Why is that important in senior living, and how did you to approach that here?

Food has always been about much more than nutrition. It's how families celebrate, how friendships form, how traditions are passed down, and how many people connect to their cultural heritage. When someone experiences cognitive impairment, those rituals often

disappear because we unintentionally replace participation with protection.

We wanted to, instead, continue to celebrate those everyday moments. Someone may no longer prepare an entire meal, but they might still enjoy chopping vegetables, baking cookies with grandchildren, arranging flowers on a table, or simply watching food being prepared while smelling fresh bread coming from the oven. Those experiences reinforce familiarity, confidence, and connection. Designing for participation acknowledges that abilities change, but purpose doesn't disappear.

How did you design the Test Kitchen to support different activities as well as multiple levels of participation from residents?

Some people want to cook alongside the chef, while others are more comfortable watching a demonstration or participating in smaller ways. Seating at the island encourages chef-supervised, hands-on cooking, while integrated audiovisual technology allows demonstrations to be viewed comfortably from surrounding tables.

The important thing is that participation isn't all or nothing. The environment allows people to choose how involved they want to be on any given day. That flexibility extends into the adjacent Gathering Café, where participants can share meals with family, attend brain-health nutrition classes, enjoy coffee with friends, or simply spend time in an active social environment.

What input on the project did you hear from residents living with dementia and how did it guide the final design?

One of the most rewarding aspects of this project

was that we weren't designing for people living with dementia; we were designing with them.

During the planning process, participants shared what brought them joy, what frustrated them, and what they wished existed on campus. Their comments weren't filtered through caregivers or family members; we heard directly from the people who would ultimately use the spaces.

One suggestion that stood out was the desire for "a café or pub away from the households." Others talked about wanting learning opportunities, greenhouse gardening, opportunities to experience the sights and smells of cooking, and spaces that felt and functioned more like everyday life than a healthcare setting. Altogether, more than 2,000 individual responses were distilled into design themes that directly shaped the programming, layout, and atmosphere of the Resilient Living Center, including these culinary venues.

Those conversations reinforced something important: people weren't asking for specialized dementia spaces. They were asking for the same kinds of authentic places the rest of us enjoy.

What considerations should be top of mind when planning and designing dining facilities for memory care residents and their families?

First, design for choice rather than assuming one dining experience fits everyone. Offer a variety of settings—from active gathering spaces to quieter seating areas—and allow people to choose where and how they want to engage.

Second, don't separate food delivery from the experience of cooking and eating. Seeing, smelling, and participating in food preparation stimulates conversation, memory, and anticipation long before a meal is served.

Finally, dining is fundamentally social. The most successful spaces support interaction among participants, families, staff, and the broader community rather than isolating people because of a diagnosis.

Describe the overall aesthetics of the new dining venues and what inspired them.

The Test Kitchen feels authentic rather than being overly designed with functional elements taking precedence over staged accessories. Scandinavian influences provided a simple palette of natural materials, but the inspiration really came from familiar residential kitchens and cafés instead of commercial equipment.

Stone, wood, warm cabinetry, copper cookware, and natural light create an atmosphere where people immediately feel comfortable. The open kitchen allows cooking to become part of the experience, while curated everyday objects,



Test Kitchen wine wall

such as plants, clay pots, and serving pieces, help the spaces feel authentic rather than staged.

Each of these artifacts becomes a trigger for a memory, past experience, or future way-finding. The finishes intentionally stay in the background, so the activity, conversations, and shared meals become the focus.

How did you approach operations to support flexibility while also allowing for future expansion and evolving service models?

Operational flexibility was an important consideration from the beginning because LiveWell envisioned these spaces as a community hub rather than a traditional senior living dining venue. The Test Kitchen and Gathering Café support residents, adult day participants, family members, staff, and community programming, so they needed to accommodate everything from daily coffee service and grab-and-go offerings to cooking demonstrations, nutrition classes, family gatherings, and larger community events.

Rather than creating spaces with a single purpose, we designed them to easily adapt throughout the day as programming changes. Flexible seating, indoor and outdoor dining areas, greenhouse connections, and integrated technology for demonstrations allow the spaces to support a wide variety of activities without requiring significant reconfiguration.

Behind the scenes, the culinary spaces also strengthen campus operations. The Test Kitchen functions as an extension of the production kitchen, expanding preparation capacity while providing additional flexibility for future menu and service offerings. During construction, it even served as swing space that allowed meal service to continue while the existing kitchen was renovated.

What challenges did you face renovating existing space into new dining environments?

The biggest challenge was transforming spaces that were never intended to support dining into destinations people would naturally gravitate toward. Former administrative offices moved to the second floor to make space for the Gathering Café, while the existing lobby was expanded into the Test Kitchen. Rather than treating the renovation as a series of individual projects, we focused on creating an intuitive sequence of connected spaces that felt like they had always belonged together.

Renovation also had to occur while maintaining food service operations. By designing the Test Kitchen to function as swing space during construction, the campus avoided the need for temporary trailers or off-site meal preparation.

Due to the existing layout and shape of the exterior wall, new steel framing was required to create an open floor plan in an area that was previously a series of smaller spaces. The investment in this restructuring creates a volume of space that is nearly unrecognizable. This framing also allowed for the creation of a new boardroom space on the second floor, adjacent to the relocated administrative suite.

How did you integrate the new additions on the existing campus?

Rather than positioning the dining venues off to one side of campus, we located them at the crossroads between the River Homes (small-scale residential homes designed for people living with dementia), the healthcare residences (licensed assisted living and skilled nursing memory care), and the new Resilient Living Center. That location naturally draws people together throughout the day.

Transparency was equally important. Glass walls with views into and out of the greenhouse create visual connections to the courtyards while open sightlines between activity spaces encourage curiosity and spontaneous participation. Instead of isolated destinations, the dining venues became part of the daily rhythm of the entire campus.

Jurors praised the project for reimagining the traditional dining room into a space that accommodates all levels of ability. What stands out to you most on this project?

LiveWell challenged us to approach design based on the question “What can people living with dementia continue doing if given the right support?” rather than asking, “What should people living with dementia no longer do?”

That shift changed everything. It influenced the programming, the architecture, the operations, and even details like an open kitchen and wine wall or teaching knife skills instead of restricting access. The result isn’t simply a better dining venue—it’s an environment that reflects confidence in people’s retained abilities and reinforces dignity through everyday experiences.

What lessons can be learned from this project about shifting expectations around dementia care environments?

Historically, many environments have been evaluated by how effectively they reduce risk. While safety remains essential, it shouldn’t come at the expense of autonomy, purpose, or joy. This project demonstrates that people living with dementia can continue learning, contributing, making choices, and participating in meaningful daily routines when environments are intentionally designed to support those abilities.

As expectations evolve, we believe dementia support can be provided in open and engaging settings where people of varying cognitive abilities can comfortably interact rather than being separated from everyday community life. They are empowered to truly live well.

For more on this project, see next page. eja

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



LiveWell [Plantsville, Conn.]

Submitted by: **RLPS Architects/RLPS Interiors**



LiveWell's social, educational, and wellness hub, The Resilient Living Center, reimagines dining as part of a larger system of wellness, learning, and social connection for individuals living with dementia and their families. Rather than creating a traditional dining venue, the design solution creates a series of connected culinary destinations centered on participation, choice, and everyday activity. The café, demonstration/test kitchen, greenhouse, and dining courtyard support a range of experiences, including healthy prepared meals, grab-and-go offerings, cooking demonstrations, nutrition education, collaborative meal preparation, and informal gathering throughout the day.

The design intentionally blurs the boundaries between hospitality, education, and care for people living with dementia. Open culinary spaces, transparent connections to the greenhouse, abundant natural light, residential materials, and carefully curated furnishings create an environment that looks, feels, and functions like a wellness campus. The Test Kitchen and Gathering Café occupy the crossroads between the River Homes (small-scale residential homes designed for people living with dementia), healthcare residences, and the Resilient Living Center,



encouraging spontaneous interaction while making food preparation, learning, and social activity visible and inviting.

A defining aspect of the project is that individuals living with dementia participated in the planning process, helping shape decisions about programming, social interaction, and the character of the dining environment. The culinary environments further challenge conventional assumptions by encouraging continued participation in cooking, baking, and meal preparation through guided engagement rather than restricting familiar activities.

The dining venues embody LiveWell's dementia-positive philosophy by emphasizing personal abilities, autonomy, and purpose. Residents, community participants, families, staff, and visitors are encouraged to engage with food, culinary education, and shared experiences that reinforce confidence, familiarity, and meaningful daily routines. The result is a welcoming, socially

active environment where dining becomes a catalyst for learning, connection, and living well.

JURY COMMENTS:

- This is a notable example of a wellness experience that combines dignity, autonomy, and optimism. It offers residents personalized support, fosters independence, and nurtures emotional well-being. Serving as the basis for the design of a dementia care setting, the Center makes campus cooking, nutrition education, and everyday livability visible to families and the community.
- The purpose-built spaces for engagement and sensory comfort made it feel homier, and not institutional. It wasn't just a place to eat; it offered space where residents could engage in activities that were fun and encouraged them to be involved.
- This project stood out for its innovation and inclusivity. It was clear the team put tremendous thought into supporting quality of life for residents. They reimagined the traditional dining room, designing a space that accommodates all levels of ability. The

focus throughout was on resident wellness rather than restriction. The result is a welcoming, beautifully designed space that meets residents where they are and supports every ability and need.

- The project thoughtfully enhances comfort for aging residents through acoustic softness, filtered daylight, clearer service points, and a dignified arrival. By bringing the outdoors inward and balancing supervision with agency for residents with dementia, the design makes respect visible in both function and experience.

Design team: RLPS Architects (architecture and interior design); OnePoint Partners (project development); Snell Engineering (structural engineer); Reese Hackman (MEP engineer); SCOPOS Hospitality Group (food service); C.E. Floyd (general contractor)

Cost per square foot: \$386

Firm Contact: Margaret Yu, associate partner, 717-560-9501, myu@rlps.com, rlps.com

Photos: © Nathan Cox Photography



Belmont Village Senior Living San Ramon [San Ramon, Calif.]

Submitted by: **HKIT Architects**

Belmont Village Senior Living San Ramon embraces the architecture and lifestyles of San Ramon Valley, its location in the Mount Diablo foothills, and a proximity to the Livermore Valley vineyards. The building wraps around a courtyard open to broad views and an adjacent park. Common areas on the first floor connect to this spacious courtyard blending indoor and outdoor living spaces and activities.

The interiors draw inspiration from the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. Regional colors and textures throughout feature the green hues of the local hills and the decorative wood columns that define circulation and amenity spaces. To offset these materials, brushed gold accents, oversized custom lighting and decorative tile provide an elegant dining experience for residents. Salvaged wood from the site was used to create custom dining tables and signage, further connecting residents to the surrounding Bishop Ranch environment.

The dining areas are designed to serve as destinations for the residents to enjoy a quick meal, refreshment, or a full-service dining experience with a wide variety of rotating menus. Grab and Go and in-room dining are also supported to provide further flexibility for the residents.

Josephine's Kitchen is a full-service dining experience separated into three zones. At the entry, the coffered ceiling, dining niches, and banquettes provide a more intimate setting. The main dining room beyond is bright and opens to alfresco dining at two operable glazed main walls. The Private Dining/Wine Room supports smaller events and



overflow from main dining. The variety of dining zones, seating types, lighting, and views support a unique experience for each diner.

The alfresco dining patio is a covered outdoor dining space with heating for cooler evenings and misting for warmer afternoons to provide a year-round outdoor dining experience. It is served by Josephine's Kitchen and provides the same level of service in an outdoor setting.

The Bistro is a quick-service dining option where the residents and guests can order a meal or specialty coffee to dine in or takeaway at all hours. Prep work is done in the main kitchen, but a robust kitchen line can support a varied menu. The beverage bar allows residents and guests to enjoy cold beverages and brewed coffee. It is designed to support a full bar for special evening programming.

The outdoor kitchen and alfresco dining area provide seasonal space for resident activities, happy hours, and by-reservation dinners hosted by the culinary team. The pizza oven provides flexibility to prepare a wide variety of appetizers, entrees, and desserts.

JURY COMMENTS:

- By opening its dining venues to courtyards and year-round outdoor living, Belmont Village San Ramon blurs the boundary between architecture and landscape, creating a dining experience uniquely rooted in its California setting.
- What stands out most is how layered the experience feels. The mix of casual and more formal dining options gives people the freedom to choose their mood, making the space feel inclusive rather than one-dimensional. The warm color palette, combined with wood ceiling details and decorative elements, adds both texture and intimacy—key ingredients in creating an inviting atmosphere.
- The design elements were intentional and well-considered, creating an environment that engages residents across all ability levels. Together, these elements create a dynamic, adaptable space that invites participation and enhances quality of life for every resident.



Design team: Christophe Laverne, principal-in-charge; Dannielle Sergent, director of interiors; Jamie Demelo, interior designer; Jeff Loustau, project manager (HKIT Architects); Mike Hostler, vice president of architecture; Victoria Meehan, director of interior design (Belmont Village Senior Living)

Cost per square foot: \$437

Firm Contact: Dannielle Sergent, director of interiors, (510) 625-9800, dsergent@hkit.com, hkit.com

Photos: Zack Benson



The Carnegie at Washingtonian Center – A Kisco Signature Community [Gaithersburg, Md.]

Submitted by: **Kisco Senior Living**

The Carnegie at Washingtonian Center set out to answer a question the senior living industry had long left unanswered: what does it look like when a community refuses to compromise? A Kisco Senior Living Signature Community and one of two Signature properties in the Northeast, The Carnegie was charged with integrating boldly into Gaithersburg's dynamic Rio Lakefront district while standing apart as a destination worthy of its surroundings. The challenge was as architectural as it was cultural: to deliver five-star hospitality standards within a senior living

environment, and to make every resident feel not just cared for, but genuinely celebrated.

At the heart of that vision is a culinary program unlike anything the sector has seen. Three distinct dining venues give residents, families, and staff a full spectrum of experiences under one roof. Dupont Bistro anchors daytime dining with a hearth oven, grab-and-go offerings, and a self-serve specialty market. The 1878 Bar and Lounge serves as the community's social soul, a seasonally driven gastropub that transitions effortlessly from a relaxed daytime retreat to a lively evening

gathering place. And Forge and Fire, the community's full-service dinner restaurant, delivers upscale regional cuisine in a sleek, restaurant-caliber setting crowned by a private dining room with peek-a-boo windows into the kitchen.

Grounded in Kisco's Art of Living Well philosophy and built for the next generation of senior living residents, The Carnegie does not ask what senior living can be. It answers the question, beautifully.

JURY COMMENTS:

- Dining becomes theater, community, and hospitality all at once. Every meal is transformed into an experience through open kitchens, vibrant gathering spaces, and a level of choice rarely seen in senior living today.
- This project made great use of design and spacing to create an environment that feels elevated yet welcoming and accommodating. It's a space that feels both beautiful and barrier-free, allowing residents to navigate and enjoy it with confidence.
- Beyond aesthetics, the project excels in supporting resident autonomy and choice. The range of dining venues, combined with self-service offerings available throughout the day, empowers residents to engage in dining on their own terms.



Design team: THW Architecture (architect);

StudioSix5 (interior design)

Cost per square foot: \$227

Firm Contact: Craig Taylor, vice president of development, craig.taylor@kiscosl.com, kiscoseniorliving.com

Photos: Andre Klotz, Nature's Line of Drift Productions



The Blake at Tyler (Tyler, Texas)

Dining at The Blake at Tyler offers a layered hospitality experience with distinct venues supporting choice, connection, and daily routine. From casual bistro dining to refined main dining and a residential country kitchen, each space, rooted in local context, creates a cohesive, non-institutional environment.

Banko Design

(678) 202-4812
bankodesign.com



Photos: Annie Gannon | Photo by Gannon



FINALIST

The Cedars of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, N.C.)

The Cedars of Chapel Hill is a Life Plan Community that blends timeless Federal-era architecture with a refined, hospitality-inspired living experience. Drawing inspiration from the character of a gracious Southern family home, the community offers thoughtfully curated spaces, elegant detailing, and a strong sense of place, creating an environment that feels both sophisticated and welcoming.

THW Design

(770) 916-2220
thw.com

Photos: Edde Burgess Photography



The Chelsea at West Orange (West Orange, N.J.)

The Chelsea at West Orange is a 3-story, 85,000-square-foot ground-up assisted living and memory care community in Essex County, N.J. The 85-unit community features a bistro, sports lounge, a full-service dining room with attached private dining, and a separate memory care dining room. Each dining room has access to a patio/courtyard.

Meyer

(610) 649-8500
meyerdesigninc.com

Photos: Jeffrey Totaro



Chestnut Park at Cleveland Circle, a Benchmark Assisted Living and Mind & Memory Care Community (Brighton, Mass.)

Chestnut Park at Cleveland Circle is undergoing a transformative dining renovation, replacing an outdated model with a vibrant, hospitality-driven experience centered on resident choice, engagement, and wellness. Existing dining spaces are being reimagined with a new commercial kitchen to serve all spaces, a new bistro/bar and outdoor dining deck.



Benchmark Senior Living

(781) 786-7745
benchmarkseniorliving.com

Renderings: Meyer



Covenant Living of Northbrook (Northbrook, Ill.)

The vision for the project was to completely reimagine the Town Center with the primary focus on enhancing and diversifying the dining experience while creating an active, energetic social hub for residents. The redesigned environment sought to foster greater interaction, encourage daily socialization, and establish stronger visual and physical connections to the surrounding exterior spaces and courtyard amenities.

THW Design

(770) 916-2220

thw.com

Photos: ©2026 Covenant Living Communities & Services



Encore Village (Schaumburg, Ill.)

Designed to balance sophistication with comfort, this dining space features warm wood architectural elements, layered ceiling details, elegant lighting, and a calming neutral palette. Contemporary furnishings and refined finishes create an inviting atmosphere that encourages gathering, conversation, and connection, elevating the dining experience while maintaining a welcoming sense of home.

AE Design Group

(718) 215-3870

aedesigngroup.com

Renderings: Courtesy of AE Design Group

Freedom Village of Bradenton (Bradenton, Fla.)

Located just eight miles from Florida's oceanside, Freedom Village is a senior living community in Bradenton, Fla. The campus features a distinctive commons building influenced by Victorian and Craftsman architectural styles, uniquely set on a surrounding moat. Recent renovations focused on interior enhancements, bringing a refreshed look to the dining venue while maintaining the character and charm of the original structure.

SBA Architects

(515) 232-8447
sbaarchitecture.com



Photo: ©2025 Olson Photographic, LLC



La Costa Glen (Carlsbad, Calif.)

Inspired by the timeless elegance of old California, the lounge blends classic sophistication with modern comfort. The culinary experience was designed to complement the lounge's atmosphere, offering a menu that blends elevated comfort food with refined fine dining influences and an extensive wine selection, creating a destination where residents can gather everything from a casual drink at the bar to an elegant evening with friends and family.

DLR Group | Braytonhughes

(415) 777-4770
dlrgroup.com

La Costa Glen

(760) 606-6923
lacostaglen.com

Photos: theBigTomProject

Lake Port Square (Leesburg, Fla.)

Located on the shores of Lake Harris on a 78-acre nature preserve, Lake Port Square retirement community in Leesburg, Fla., offers a wide variety of beautifully appointed residential options, a wealth of exceptional services, and now a variety of new amenities. These include a new multipurpose conference room, a new open design bistro, an exercise/fitness room as part of a wellness plan with a salon/spa, and a wood shop for the project-minded.

SBA Architects

(515) 232-8447
sbaarchitecture.com



Photo: ©2025 Olson Photographic, LLC



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Moorings Park Retirement Community (Naples, Fla.)

The reimagined C+J Café transforms a dated wellness snack bar into a hospitality-driven social hub at a large CCRC's main campus. Designed within the existing footprint, the café supports wellness, dining, arts, and community engagement through flexible seating, contemporary aesthetics, and an integrated experience that connects residents to the daily rhythms of campus life.

Wegman Design Group LLC

(239) 596-8551
wegmandesigngroup.com

Photos: Christopher Wegman



The Newbury of Brookline (Brookline, Mass.)

The Newbury of Brookline redefines senior dining through three inspired venues: Frederick's, a garden-filled full-service restaurant celebrating New England's finest flavors; Harbor Bar, an elegant nautical retreat for evening cocktails and light bites; and Skyline Lounge, a rooftop sanctuary with sweeping views of Brookline and Boston. Every mood, every moment, perfectly matched.

Kisco Senior Living

(760) 642-6481

kiscoseniorliving.com

Photos: Courtesy of Joe St. Pierre Photo



Oak Hammock at the University of Florida (Gainesville, Fla.)

Oak Hammock's dining repositioning is anchored by Botanica, a skylit biophilic social hub. The phased renovation expands dining choice, improves operations, and creates a vibrant indoor-outdoor destination that supports connection, flexibility, and year-round engagement for independent living residents.

Studio 121

(615) 469-4121
studio-121.net

SFCS

(704) 372-7327
sfcs.com

Rendering: GreenGrass Studios (after image);
Photo: Courtesy Studio 121 (before image)



Penick Village (Southern Pines, N.C.)

The dining renovation at Penick Village repositions the community's culinary experience through a series of distinct hospitality-inspired venues, including a bistro, pub, casual dining space, and formal dining room. Designed to support evolving resident expectations, the project emphasizes social engagement, acoustic comfort, accessibility, and greater variety in daily dining experiences.

RLPS Architects

(717) 560-9501

rlps.com



Renderings: Courtesy of RLPS Architects, created by abSketches



Rye Brook (Rye Brook, N.Y.)

The Rye Brook independent living community elevates senior living through a curated dining experience that unfolds throughout the day—from artisanal morning coffee to relaxed midday fare, lively afternoon gatherings, and refined evening dining. Interconnected venues, seamless flow, and beautifully designed settings foster connection, offering residents exceptional cuisine within an atmosphere of understated luxury.

Curated by Sunrise

(571) 205-8999

curatedbysunrise.com

Photos: Courtesy of Curated by Sunrise



FINALIST

Sea Bluffs, Ivy Signature Living (Dana Point, Calif.)

Azure Haven, Woven Warmth reimagines dining at this independent living community above the Pacific in Dana Point. The concept draws the coast indoors through texture, light, and layered materials, turning a formal hall into a flexible restaurant where woven rattan ceiling sculptures quiet the room, filter glare, and signal place at once.

Sechrist Design Associates (SDA)

(425) 723-1147

sechristdesign.com

Renderings: Sechrist Design Associates (SDA)



Shenandoah Valley Westminster-Canterbury (Winchester, Va.)

The Canterbury Dining Room reimagines an underutilized dining space as a dynamic hub for community life. A fresh palette of brand-inspired greens, blues, and beiges breathes new life into the interior, while flexible seating, dedicated storage, and thoughtful zoning ensure the space serves residents well beyond mealtimes.

CIC Interiors

(540) 303-1355

cicinteriors.com



Photos: Lincoln Barbour



FINALIST

Sunset Senior Communities Manor & Villages (Jenison, Mich.)

Aiming to revitalize an outdated dining venue, the final space exudes a vibrant, modern French patisserie vibe that feels sophisticated and accessible. Designed to transition seamlessly from a bright, energetic morning coffee spot to a relaxed, elegant evening gathering space, it provides a continuous dining experience for everyone on campus.

Luminaut
(513) 984-1070
luminaut.com

Photos: Luminaut



The Watermark at Marco Island (Marco Island, Fla.)

The Watermark at Marco Island is the island's first assisted living and memory care community, enabling residents to age in place near family and familiar surroundings. Designed as a coastal, hospitality-inspired extension of the island, it blends wellness-focused living, community connection, canal-front architecture, public park access, and elevated dining experiences.

Chancey Architecture & Interior Design
(813) 248-9258
chanceydesign.com



Photos: Nicholas Ferris Photography