

BARCLAYS CENTER





SPREADING THE BROOKLYN FOOD NEWS

by LINDA DECKARD

By offering up an NBA All-Star Taste at Barclays Center, Brooklyn, and taking a sampling to Manhattan via a food truck, Levy Restaurants and the arena accomplished more than one goal.

The outreach was a showcase for what they are doing with food through Taste of Brooklyn at Barclays Center and at 20 other NBA arenas served by Levy and a way to expand their fanbase across borders.

And Barclays Center didn't even host the All-Star Game, which went to Madison Square Garden, New York. They did host the pregame weekend events, however. And they made the most of it.

Marco Fabozzi, general manager of concessions at Barclays Center for Levy, said they had never deployed a food truck in the past, though he was familiar with the logistics from his days in the hotel industry where trucks were used to cater events and give people a different perspective.

The All-Star Brooklyn 2015 truck did just that with the All-Star logo and Brooklyn's famed Taste programming. "We sent it out to various stops throughout Manhattan and Brooklyn to have people at least be able to sample food offerings that are unique. It was not cheap to lease a truck. And to customize it," Fabozzi admitted. They hired a production company to wrap it in the way they wanted it to look and feel.

Barclays Center executive chef Al Lanza said the truck was stocked with three items and four chefs. Some of the food had to be pre-prepared, a strategy he does not like, but he was limited by the equipment on the truck.

Meanwhile, at Barclays Center, Levy showcased food from 20 different National Basketball Association teams, all of which are also in the Levy family, in honor of the All-Star events it hosted.

For example, United Center has a hamburger that is unique to Chicago. Barclays Center prepared and sold it at the burger stands in the arena.



New offerings at the arena resulted in a \$20,000-bump in food sales for the weekend, "but it's hard to quantify because we didn't do away with other menu items. From a production standpoint we had to make sure we didn't overproduce. Everything we did produce we sold out of," Fabozzi said, admitting it was hard to get right, but there were no leftovers.

New All-Star items were served in stands that already prepared that menu, so training was somewhat easier and the proper equipment was in place. It still took extra training though. That was the most challenging part of adding 20 new items to an arena concessions menu.

Some of the items sold included Spicy Chicken Coney from the Palace at Auburn Hills, home to the Detroit Pistons. The crispy chicken topped with Coney sauce, yellow mustard and crispy onions on a buttery brioche was served in Fresco's 13 stand.

The menu for the truck was limited to Chicken and Biscuit, Cuban Classic and United Center's Mad House Burger (griddled burger topped with a polish sausage, caramelized onions and American cheese on a pretzel roll).

They prepared only 350 servings of each item, Lanza said, and sold out of the free menu.

Both Fabozzi and Lanza saw this as a one-shot deal. It was a lot of work, but it paid off in promoting the famous Taste of Brooklyn, which Levy instituted when Barclays Center opened.

"In Brooklyn, all of our items are partnered with local restaurants," Lanza said. "We use their recipes. We can't just use someone else's."

Planning, all in, took six months, Fabozzi said. "Wanted to focus on the food because we are unique."

They also did some food drops where the truck could not park, including NBA headquarters.

All Star Brooklyn 2015 was promoted through social media, gaining over 100 million impressions.

"We take tremendous pride in the food program at Barclays Center," Fabozzi said.

To pull this off, "you have to be committed."

CONCESSIONS

Chefs and cheerleaders prepare to roll with the All-Star Brooklyn 2015 truck, which left Barclays Center to venture into Manhattan.