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Culinary Delight

East meets West in this chef-friendly showroom

By Sallie Moffat

Despite regularly updating vignettes since the Connecticut showroom's opening in 2001, Sean Clarke, general manager of Clarke, wanted to "breathe new life into the facility." His plan? To draw in greater numbers of visitors with two entirely remodeled areas.

The first was The Clarke Culinary Center, a 650-sq.-ft. space containing not one, but two kitchen theaters where home chefs can learn from professional chefs and get hands-on with a bevy of high-performance appliances. As Clarke noted, "The students need to experience the space as if it were a professional culinary institute in New York or Paris."

Each centered on an expansive island topped with white marble, the demo kitchens are laid out in a way to encourage camaraderie among students and allow ample space for chef instructors to cook in view of their audience. Featuring white custom cabinetry, stainless-steel appliances and rich woods, they evoke "a traditional European ambiance," said Clarke, yet offer modern conveniences. Students have access to four cooktops, and a central plasma screen on the back wall allows for video support in classes or team-building exercises.

Just steps away is a dramatic 14-ft. x 18-ft. vignette that Clarke hoped would put the showroom on the map as having the largest

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Concetto by CaesarStone installation in New England. Modern with an Asian influence, the space incorporates rift-cut oak cabinetry in a dark soy finish with natural golden ash accents and thick backlit quartz countertops for contrast and drama. Two custom ventilation hoods crown the space; one is mounted on the back wall and the other—with a form reminiscent of a Shinto shrine—floats effortlessly over the peninsula cooking area.

Distinct but similar, the kitchens encompass every type of appliance a chef might call upon in a setting that feels like home, taking this facility from showroom to ultimate kitchen resource center. ■



sources

Designers: Sean Clarke and Marco Barallon—Clarke, South Norwalk, CT; www.clarkecarp.com; Peter Deane and Kelly Stewart—Kitchens by Deane, Stamford and New Canaan, CT; www.kitchensbydeane.com; Peter Genovese and Vincent Capello—Putnam Kitchens, Cos Cob, CT; www.putnamkitchens.com **Manufacturers:** Appliances: Sub-Zero, Wolf, Asko, Best; Plumbing: KWC; Cabinetry: Bentwood Cabinetry, Downsview Cabinetry; Countertops: CaesarStone, Marble and Granite Inc. (supplier) **Photography:** © John Ferrarone Photography