



CASE STUDY // DARLINGTON COLLEGE

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DARLINGTON COLLEGE

In October 2016, Darlington College's main kitchens were destroyed in a fire. "The damage was far greater than we'd initially thought," says James Butterfield, head of estates and facilities. "It was quite a shock when we realised we'd need a complete refurbishment."

With approximately 1500 full-time and 1500 part-time students to keep fed, this unexpected refurbishment obviously required prompt action. As well as being a vital service for the college it is also part of its educational portfolio. "The kitchen is essentially split into two," explains James. "One half is for the food served in our food court and coffee shop, the other half produces food for our restaurant, both of which are run by students, supported by staff."

"We needed expert help in getting the kitchens back up and running as quickly as possible," says James. "This is why we called in GastroNorth. We've used them in the past on smaller projects, so we know they've got the expertise to be able to provide exactly what we need".

GastroNorth got to work and chose equipment that would be able to handle the demands of commercial production while meeting the educational needs of Darlington's students.

"On the commercial side we're producing up to 800 meals a day, high volume. But the restaurant has a more a la carte menu that requires completely different techniques," says James.

As in any kitchen, good refrigerated and frozen storage plays a vital role. James knew that Darlington would need it to be absolutely rock-solid. "Students can be, shall we say, not the most gentle of users," says James, "We explained to GastroNorth that we needed extremely robust equipment, so they recommended Williams."

Williams' equipment at Darlington College includes a walk-in coldroom, cabinets and counters from the Jade range, an Aztra undercounter refrigerator and an Onyx salad prep counter. This provides a complete storage solution designed to keep ingredients in perfect condition through every stage of their journey through the kitchen.

"The walk-in fridge is fantastic," says James. "This summer's been really hot, but even under these conditions it's able to maintain the correct temperature". Previously they had another brands' equipment, but Williams' range of refrigeration for compact kitchens has proved a hit with the college. "We've actually got more storage space now, within the same footprint – it's very impressive!"

Much of Williams' equipment can be customised according to the requirements of customers. "The Aztra unit has been fitted with a marble worktop," says James. "This is used to create a dedicated workspace for making pastries and cakes".

The new kitchens were finished six months after the fire. "It was a terrible shock when it happened, but getting a state-of-the-art facility out of it has been a real silver lining," says James. "Not only does it give students experience of the equipment they'll be using when they find employment in the industry, it provides our campus with top quality food."





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