

# BLUEPRINT

Investigating the Metro Area's Hottest Kitchen Projects



## Mountain Creek Ski Area, Vernon, NJ

### Rob Younes' Approach

I've been with Crystal Springs Resorts for five years. We bought the ski lodge in 2010, and it was my first experience working with that sort of facility. Everyone told me that the goal was just to move people in and out as quickly as possible. I thought that something was missing in that vision. I saw myself coming in from the slopes and wanting a glass of wine and a fire-

place to sit in front of. So I thought there was a lot of room to change the way ski resorts do foodservice, and our owner and our CEO supported me on that a hundred percent.

So our goal with the construction of the Red Tail Lodge was to change the whole culture in ski resorts. We wanted a new mentality, one that would allow us to provide food for thousands of people a day without sacrificing qual-

### The Operator:

*Rob Younes, Vice President of Lodging and Hospitality  
Mountain Creek Holdings  
Vernon, NJ*

### The Equipment & Supply Dealer:

*Michael Konzelman, Co-owner  
Economy Restaurant  
Equipment And Supply  
Clifton, NJ*

ity. No longer were we going to be content with just serving chicken fingers and fries. You walk into the Red Tail Lodge in the morning, and the first part of the experience is our Kickstand Coffee place, with Starbucks beans. We wanted the quality of Starbucks while still providing a slightly different experience than our customers' ordinary coffee place back home.

The biggest part of the food service

operation at Red Tail is The Market, which is our main cafeteria. It's dining-hall-style, and we still serve all the basics, but we wanted to commit to providing higher quality food and also healthy options. So we brought in top-of-the-line combi ovens, so we could control not only the heat, but also the humidity as well. So we can do all our fried items in there, and it's much healthier—we brought in six chefs to

do a taste test, and none of them could tell the difference between our French fries and French fries done in oil. We also decided we weren't going to be satisfied with standard frozen burgers. So we went to Green Tree for our meat, we created our own unique blend, which comes to us fresh every day to cook in the oven.

We also wanted to provide healthier options in The Market. So we provide eight different types of sandwiches, we provide eight different kinds of soups, both in regular bowls and bread bowls; we have a sushi bar, all kinds of different healthy snacks. We added a carving station as well: prime rib, semolina bread, and your choice of add-ins and herb mayonnaise.

You move outside from there, we have an outdoor beer garden. We wanted to go for a German theme, so we only serve German beers there. We serve big pretzels, and bratwurst and knockwurst from a German butcher in Alpine, New Jersey. It's outdoors, but we built a heated kitchen in the back. You could put any top chef in there and he'd have no problem cooking—we even put heated floors in.

We designed our private dining club, The Hawk's Nest, to be a completely unique dining experience. We installed one of the largest fireplaces ever built in there. It seats around 65 people, and we combined American and European cuisines to create a menu that could satisfy a wide range of palates. You can order Wiener schnitzel on a pretzel croissant, but you can also order a bone-in rib eye steak. We also offer a large selection of whiskeys and bourbons and wines, and various types of leaf teas and French press coffees, all of which can be taken on the Hawk's Nest's private deck.

Above the Hawk's Nest is Schuss, our biggest bar. It's 140 feet long, with 65 stools. We offer shots served on skis, which we call "ski shots", and a menu of Neapolitan pizzas and other Italian-style entrees, like meatballs, mac and cheese, and handmade pastas.

So across our various restaurants, we try to offer as many different cui-

sines as possible. We built a million-dollar kitchen to handle it all, and we're proud to say that it runs like a well-oiled machine. It's incredibly clean and incredibly efficient, I've never been involved in anything like it before.

not going to be making a pizza on the main level of the lodge; they're taking a frozen pizza up there and finishing it. When you expect a thousand people an hour, you can't be making pizzas or flipping burgers one at a time. So we installed walk-in combi ovens

them their own oven, an Earthstone dual-fuel oven, gas with wood assist. It's great for producing flatbreads and pizzas.

Jeff at Arctic Glacier provided the beverage facilities, but we did all the engineering for that. We also worked with Coca-Cola on placement issues, but it was up to me to figure out where the racks for the soda dispensers would go and where the beer system would go.

With so much equipment going into a building that was still under construction, installation was also certainly a challenge. The building didn't have doorways yet, so we often had to lift equipment thirty feet into the air to put it through a hole in the side of the building. It was certainly not the type of installation I'm used to doing, and it was a fraught process at times.

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I had worked with the Konzelmans before, but never on this kind of scale. They really wowed everyone, from the owner on down. They worked hard, seven days a week, and they're still coming in on a regular basis to help us, whenever we need them.

### Michael Konzelman's Approach

I got involved with this project in December of 2010. Rob called us and said that he was building a new ski resort, and he asked me to drop everything and come take a look. Interwest had made the initial drawings the previous owners of the property, before they sold back to Crystal Springs. They hired a new architect, who was making changes to the building. I told him that I didn't think the changes they were making would work, so Rob told me to fix it and come back in a week.

I realized that the plans they had drawn up would have prevented them from achieving their vision of a complete rethinking of ski resort cuisine. They needed a kitchen that was much more of a finishing facility. They're

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