

City bank Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein is moving its 2,500 employees into one central London building with its own fine-dining restaurant as well as regular staff catering facilities. *Diane Lane* goes behind the scenes in the Baxter & Platts contract's two new kitchens

My new kitchen



In the City many deals are done over lunch and dinner, so it's only fitting that the deal brokers of international investment bank Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein have their own fine-dining restaurant in the heart of the company's London headquarters.

Over the past few weeks the company, previously housed at four separate sites, has been gradually moving into its new premises at 30 Gresham Street, opposite the Guildhall. Most of the 2,500 employees are now settling in to their new workplace, with the remainder joining them over the course of the next few days.

"We did a lot of research, and people said they wanted a fine-dining restaurant," says Ian Pigeon, the company's front-of-house manager. ▶



THE BRIEF

Amalgamating four sites into one new building gave front-of-house manager for Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, Ian Pigeon, the opportunity to tailor the catering facilities to the needs of the company's employees and to provide Baxter & Platts head chefs Richard Ross (above, seated) and Stephen Hurley (standing) with the right tools to do the job well.



1 Both kitchens have a modular Baron cooking suite with four burners and a solid-top on each side. For the fine-dining restaurant, a built-in griddle cooks guinea fowl – which might be on as a special – and freshwater prawns, while two fryers opposite are used for tempura and deep-fried desserts, such as beignets.

2 Refrigeration is by Foster. With bulk refrigeration in coldrooms and localised cabinets so chefs have ingredients to hand, both kitchens have sufficient to keep different food types segregated, reducing the risk of cross-contamination. Upstairs, there's a pass-through upright cabinet next to the cold pass so chefs can load items such as cheese plates for functions, ready for waiters to take out the other side without having to come into the kitchen. The refrigeration compressors are remotely sited to reduce the amount of ambient heat in the kitchen, which would otherwise need to be extracted or chilled.

3 Fish and chips, with mushy peas, if desired, is the most popular dish on Fridays, with about 200 portions dished up in two hours. The three fryers that make up part of the cooking suite are by Baron's sister company Rubbens and feature circular fry tanks and baskets.

4 There are seven Convotherm combination ovens in total between the two kitchens, four of which are sited in the staff restaurant kitchen on the lower ground floor to enable Hurley and his brigade to deliver a high volume of freshly cooked food. Upstairs, the combis get a lot of use for canapé parties, roast meats, shellfish for bisque, and steaming veg. Ross has each one programmed with a different alarm, so chefs know which one is sounding.

5 There are two pastry chefs who work between the two kitchens to deliver restaurant-quality desserts, a real bonus for the customers in the staff restaurant. The sixth-floor kitchen has a dedicated pastry area complete with marble worktop and not one, but two Pacojet machines. On the lower ground floor there's a separate pastry kitchen, away from the heat of the main kitchen and equipped with a Salva pastry oven.



Left: Ross's kitchen was designed so that the hot and cold passes are close together, ensuring he can see all the plates going out

Below: The "dishes of the day" station has a hatch to the kitchen

Bottom: Theatre cooking is a big feature of the staff restaurant, with three stations serving pasta, stir-fried and chargrilled dishes

◀ "When entertaining clients it's so useful to be able to just take the lift and you're there, rather than go outside the building to another restaurant."

For design consultant Andrew Humble, of HAA Coverpoint, a member of the Foodservice Consultants Society International, this meant planning not one, but two new kitchens – one to serve a 34-seat fine-dining restaurant on the sixth floor and another, complete with a stylish front-of-house servery area, for staff dining. Both kitchens were installed by C&C Catering Equipment.

Taking into account the numbers to be fed and the longevity required of the equipment, Humble decided on medium- to heavy-duty kit. Flow was an important consideration, designing from goods in at the back through to the passes at the front for collection of prepared dishes.

Dishwashing areas, kitted out with Hobart machines, are completely separate from the kitchens, although the fine-dining restaurant has a dedicated potwash area, complete with an IMC potboy,

centrally located so everyone has easy access to it for dropping off dirty pots.

In the sixth floor kitchen, presided over by executive head chef for hospitality Richard Ross, six chefs prepare the food for the fine-dining restaurant and for 12 private dining rooms for between four and 20 people each. Due for completion shortly is a terrace adjoining the restaurant which will provide a further 20 seats outside for use during the summer months. Restaurant covers vary from 12 to 20 at present, but the ultimate aim is for 20-30 covers every lunchtime and to provide a dinner service two nights a week.

"The food is of a very high standard but simple and quick, as we're looking to serve two courses in 35 minutes," says Ross, who describes the style of the food as modern European.



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The user-friendly menu is changed frequently, giving simple descriptions of the six choices at each course – for example, English lamb rump marinated in lavender with a celeriac potato cake, roasted baby carrots and rosemary jus. A weekly-changing vegetarian main course ensures that non-meat eaters are not neglected, and daily specials provide variety for the more frequent diners.

The staff restaurant area takes up half of the lower ground floor and currently serves about 600 breakfasts and lunch for 1,200-1,400. "We provide a good-quality meal for £2 and also cater for those spending £15 who want what they would get on the high street," says Pigeon. "There's a wide range of people to keep happy." Dinner is available from 7.15pm to 8.15pm Monday to Friday, when two or three counters are open to serve something traditional, such as grilled meats or fish, plus fresh fruit and desserts.

The 10-strong brigade is directed by head chef Hurley. "The kitchen is quite compact for the number of covers we're doing but it lends itself well to traditional sections," he says. "The menu changes every day. There's no cycle; each day's menu is completely individual."

Theatre cooking is a big feature, and three stations provide items such as pasta, stir-fries and chargrilled steaks and kebabs cooked to order in front of the diner. Positioning of ventilation meant that one station needed to be fully electric, and pride of place here goes to a Menu System induction wok, which sits between a pasta cooker and sauce well. Baked pasta dishes sit on a hotplate, and a Bakers Pride pizza oven completes the Italian-style lunch offering. The "dishes of the day" station has a hatch to the kitchen through which dishes are passed to replenish the station.

All walls, tables and chairs are white to combat the lack of natural light in the servery area and dining room, and smart granite hotplates and worktops with an absence of tray rails help to avoid an institutional look. Several self-serve points offer hot and chilled snacks, sushi, soup and cold meats, and there are assisted-service salad bars, one of which operates a "weigh and pay" system.

There has been plenty of positive feedback regarding the new catering facilities, not least from the chefs themselves. Says Ross: "We've got everything we need."

