

A TASTE FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Something's cooking in the kitchen labs



Rosen College's state-of-the-art kitchen labs, are equipped with restaurant-grade equipment.

Pots, pans and commercial kitchen equipment are not the only things found in UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's kitchen labs. A component for hospitality education and research, the college's labs teach fourth year medical students to practice culinary medicine with a grain of salt, flip the kegs on undergraduates brewing beer, and serve as taste-and-test kitchens for restaurant brands looking to spice up a menu.

If you arrive at the number one hospitality college in the nation and are greeted with the fragrant aroma of spices and hops, don't question your nose. Something is cooking. Or maybe there is a blonde ale brewing. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management has state-of-the-art kitchen labs, equipped with top-of-the-line stoves, coolers, broilers and more. The equipment in the three kitchen labs, one specifically designed for demonstrations, was provided by Hestan, a world-class manufacturer of restaurant-grade kitchen equipment for the back of house

in restaurants and catering facilities, and an industry partner to the college. On the brewing side, or should we say the beverage side of the house, the Anheuser-Busch Beer & Wine Lab houses an extensive wine collection for the wine classes taught at the college; it was recently equipped with a system of Blichmann kettles and a fermenter, that will teach the next generation of brewmasters the art of making beer and ales in the college's [Beverage Management Certificate](#) program.

While this equipment may suggest that UCF Rosen College has a culinary school

component to its educational offerings, that's just one ingredient in the purpose for the labs. When fourth year medical students from UCF's College of Medicine enter the labs, they are there to learn how to treat their future patients using food as medicine in a Culinary Medicine course. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control, from 1999–2000 through 2017–2018, obesity prevalence in the United States increased from 30.5% to 42.4%. Obesity-related health risks include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. These are among the leading causes of preventable, premature death, and with Culinary Medicine, medical students are learning what foods, spices, portions and methods of cooking, can help make their patients healthier. When researchers noted that nearly 80% of the chronic diseases faced by those in the U.S. are preventable through lifestyle changes, food was a major factor that could be controlled. Poor diet has been identified as



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the top contributor to early death and lost healthy life years in the U.S. and dietary risks are associated with 11 million deaths across the globe annually. However, only an average of 20 hours is spent on nutrition content in U.S. medical schools—this is equivalent to approximately one week of the total average hours of instruction. In the Culinary Medicine program, the medical students have two full-day classes (eight hours), twice a week for six weeks. They take out-of-the-classroom visits to farms and ranches, and participate in cooking partnerships with the local hospitals and dietitians who work with populations who reside in food deserts.

The textbook definition of Culinary Medicine is as follows: Culinary Medicine (CM) is an evidence-based field that brings together nutrition and culinary knowledge and skills to assist patients in maintaining health, and preventing and treating disease by choosing high-quality, healthy food in conjunction with appropriate medical care. CM can be thought of as the applied, laboratory portion of a nutrition curriculum for medical trainees. CM training can be provided as part of medical and residency curricula, training programs for those in allied health professional fields, or incorporated later as continuing (medical) education. Good CM courses address basic healthy food preparation and acquisition (i.e., where to purchase or otherwise get food) skills while taking into consideration time, financial resources, and cultural food traditions of patients aiming to make dietary changes. Rosen College's chef instructors teach the almost-doctors about ingredient choices, that salt is not the only spice, and

options for meat-substitutions. They get the instruction before they establish a practice with patients.

"We teach the medical students that a few fresh herbs and a squirt of citrus, the acid from a lime or lemon, can be a substitute for a teaspoon of salt and still deliver the same flavor in a meal," said Chef Robb Seltzer, an instructor in the Culinary Medicine program who has over 40 years of experience managing food service operations including: restaurants, convention centers, stadiums and racetracks, food service distribution and importing. "It's about balancing flavors. There is experimentation to determine what spices, fruits, vegetables, grains and low-fat proteins, can produce the same satisfying sensations for the palate that one can get from deep fried french-fries, dredged in salt."

When the fourth year medical students complete the Culinary Medicine program, they have learned how to cook a variety of meals, using methods such as broiling, baking, sautéing, and even raw preparation, to produce meals that they and their future patients can embrace for better health.

On the beverage side of research, Rosen College is experimenting with one of the oldest drinks in the world: beer. Beer is made from just four ingredients—grain, hops, yeast and water. Students have a chance to learn about the ancient craft thanks to two brand-new, recently installed stainless steel 15-gallon Blichmann kettles and a fermenter. Chef Jonathan Judy, an associate instructor at UCF Rosen College, teaches the course

Quality Brewing and Fine Beer. Chef Judy, as he is known to his students, recently became a level-one Cicerone—a beer certification similar to the sommelier certification in wine. Why is beer brewing a taught skill and a much sought-after talent for future foodservice industry professionals? Last year alone the craft beer industry contributed \$62.1 billion and more than 400,000 jobs to the U.S. economy, according to the Brewers Association. Quality Brewing and Fine Beer is one of 10 courses that students can take to earn an undergraduate certificate in beverage management. Students also take courses in supply chain and logistics, law and management.

Periodically, UCF Rosen College's kitchen labs are used by industry restaurant partners for menu development and experimentation. Consider the burger you had for lunch. Its blend of meats and toppings may have come from proprietary research conducted at the college. Courses in sanitation and safety are also keys to the curriculum in the [Restaurant and Foodservice Management Bachelor of Science](#) degree program. With the COVID-19 pandemic, more emphasis was put on the cleanliness of surfaces, food handling practices, and storage. When one dines at a restaurant, gets take-out, or receives a meal from a specialty gourmet food producer, one wants assurances that what we are consuming has been prepared in a manner that will not be detrimental to health or life.

Sometimes a kitchen is just that, a kitchen. However, at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management it is a laboratory to teach the future leaders of the restaurant and foodservice management industry that research, curriculum and technical skills can make or break their future careers.



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