



Then

Now

**Then:**

The original space held seating for 80 people. A 1929 *Overtones* article describes an “informal and pleasant [dining] room, with its wood-toned paneling and furniture, its open fireplace decorated with gay-colored tiles, and the windows high enough to catch the sunset glow which in late spring pours across nearby Rittenhouse Square at the dinner hour.” Faculty, staff, and students would gather for hearty meals and discussions of “musical personalities, technical problems, and ‘off-stage’ gossip.” Some of these confabs would continue over Wednesday afternoon tea in the Common Room—the cherished tradition that Mary Louise Curtis Bok started in 1925 and continues today.

**Now:**

The ashtrays are long gone and Gould Dining Hall, which opened in 2011, has increasingly focused on locally sourced and humanely raised food options. Bon Appétit Management Company, which provides food service operations, aims to purchase 20 percent of its food from small, owner-operated farms within 100 miles of Curtis.

“If you’re only ordering from farms within a hundred miles, you’re eating pretty seasonably,” Director of Dining Natalie Armentrout says of the greater focus on student wellness. “Of course, over the last ten or more years, culturally, you’ve seen a shift in people eating diets that are not as red meat based. They may not

**Then and Now**

# Curtis Dining

Mealtime has traveled a long way since 1927, when Curtis opened its first cafeteria on the fourth floor of 1720 Locust Street, now home to the Rock Resource Center.

be vegetarian or vegan all the time, but there are terms like flexitarian—people who eat anywhere from one to five meals a week with no animal protein.”

The farm-to-fork approach involves suppliers like the Lancaster Farm Fresh Cooperative, which sources a produce market held every Thursday in the dining hall. Even more local is a roof garden on Lenfest Terrace. With ample sunshine, the garden supports tomatoes, jalapeños, and green peppers, which are harvested for salsa (canned for later

use), and herbs such as basil, which has been used in pesto.

Ms. Armentrout says that a typical day sees around 150 diners. Student favorites include a rotating, made-to-order “expo station,” featuring items like a loaded baked potato bar and an autumn-themed bar. And demonstrating how much tastes have changed since the 1920s, a recent kitchen specialty is “Monday sushi mania.” Says Ms. Armentrout, “I’m sure it is soon to become one of the favorites.”