

University of Richmond.

A dining program
in the top of its class.



Meeting elevated dining standards.

“College dining is an important part of our university culture,” says Terry Baker, Executive Director of Dining at the University of Richmond. “Our society’s focus on food has become more sophisticated and transformed the way we eat. Students are more knowledgeable about the preparation of food and foodways. They expect good food with global origins, and they desire excellence.”

These standards are met by Baker and Executive Chef Tyler Betzhold, who lead the dining program at the University of Richmond. The university serves between 4,000 and 5,000 meals daily, with RATIONAL iVario Pro and iCombi Pro units powering kitchens that serve the dining hall, retail, commissary, and catering operations.

RATIONAL has been part of the dining service program at the University of Richmond for 15 years. Baker came to the university in 2019, bringing nearly three decades of experience in higher education dining. She sees to it that her skilled and motivated team has the right equipment they need to succeed.

“Our staff really wants to do their best, and these pieces of equipment help make it happen. We have a kitchen that’s open 15 hours a day, with nine chefs a day and numerous cooks. The ability to program recipes provides the necessary consistency and quality that we need to provide for the students,” she says.

“I’ve had RATIONAL wherever I’ve worked in my professional career. To me, they have always been the benchmark for success.”

“It’s a game changer. It will help your operation in ways you weren’t aware of.”

Tyler Betzhold, Executive Chef, University of Richmond Dining Services (right)



Industry:
Education

Core business:
Private liberal arts university

Location:
Richmond, VA, USA



A game changer in the kitchen.

Executive Chef Tyler Betzhold has worked at the University of Richmond for 15 years and in the foodservice industry since he was a teenager. "My whole life has been in the kitchen," he says.

"Anyone in the industry will say, if they've gone from a convection oven to a RATIONAL, there's no comparison. The iVario is the same – it's the same story. RATIONAL came out with a superior product by far."

In the dining hall kitchen, he has three iVario Pro XL units with two more on the way. The versatility, high-volume output, even heating, and ability to maintain high temperatures without recovery time are crucial to him. The iVario Pro makes it easy to sauté large batches – a game changer for Betzhold. Overall, it cuts production time in half, and in some instances by an astonishing 90% using the pressurization option.

"The iVario settings are phenomenal," he says. "You go straight from protein or vegetables, to caramelization, deglaze, right into adding liquid, and it will walk you through how to do that. It reminds your team, 'Have you deglazed yet?'"

"That's amazing because the fear of a lot of people in our industry, myself included, is I don't want to lose the cooking. I don't want to lose this knowledge that we're teaching people of what the process is, what's happening with the food, what's making it taste great. RATIONAL doesn't skip that step. It doesn't do those things for you. You still have to cook."

Consider the chicken tinga that starts with 200 pounds of chicken thighs braised in the iCombi until caramelized, then transferred to the iVario where liquid is added, spice flavors bloom, and the meat is pressure cooked. A process that once took 3.5 hours now renders a perfectly tender product in 20 minutes.

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The challenge:

Attain and maintain the highest quality, consistency, and efficiency in university dining.



Centralizing the focus: great food.

“It’s freed up the team to be focusing on the flavors and the quality more, to get more in-depth, and a better understanding of the recipe itself,” Betzhold adds. In addition to extremely quick cook times, Betzhold deeply appreciates the safety features the iVario Pro offers kitchen staff. Kettles, which tend to only have the option to drain hot fluids from the front, have the potential to cause severe burns. The iVario Pro provides the option to drain to the rear, which makes the kitchen environment much more friendly – no accidental burns and no messy floors.

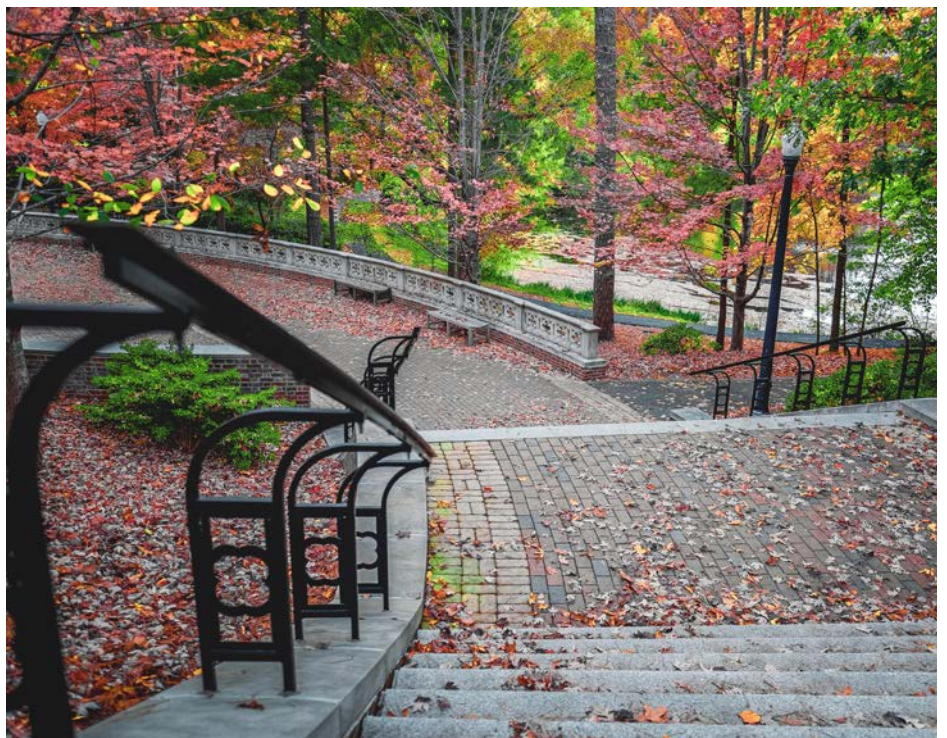
Both Baker and Betzhold note that RATIONAL equipment consumes less energy and less water, saving money, and radiates less heat into the kitchen than conventional equipment, saving the kitchen staff from enduring uncomfortable temperatures while working. It also helps in stretching food budgets and minimizing waste, fulfilling the University of Richmond’s new sustainability standards.

Tasks that used to require a large team now take only one or two people, effectively reducing the kitchen labor footprint by 50%. At the same time, the dining program is growing in exciting new directions.

Catering can now prepare protein entrees sous vide, finishing them just before serving, and there’s more room to experiment with new recipes, international flavors, and à la carte options. Baker and Betzhold’s team gained insight into business operations as they developed a plan to manage and maximize their kitchen investment and minimize operating costs.



The solution:
iVario Pro, iCombi Pro,
ConnectedCooking



A connected system of solutions.

Everything is managed on the RATIONAL ConnectedCooking app: the entire kitchen workflow and all their custom recipes. They update and upload new recipes whenever they need to and retain all their HACCP data in one place. As the university continues to upgrade kitchen equipment and replace conventional kettles with the iVario Pro, Betzhold reflects on what is perhaps the most valuable benefit to him: the ability to move from one task to another quickly and efficiently, turning items faster in his high-volume kitchen.

“Some people refer to us as a cafeteria. We are not; we are a dining facility providing very high quality for the student body and the population here,” he says. “This is the equipment to do that. This is the technology to do that. This equipment is built to help bloom flavors, to caramelize, to add these components that are so imperative to making food taste right and taste good. And especially in a high-volume setting.”



Customer benefit:

- › Shortening cooking times by up to 90%.
- › Increasing cooking and energy efficiency.
- › Digital recipe and HACCP management through ConnectedCooking.
- › Decreasing labor costs.
- › Freeing up staff for other tasks.



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