

**THE LIVED
EXPERIENCE**
by *sodexo*

THE FUTURE OF MILITARY DINING

How Sodexo met the challenges
of satisfying the modern soldier's
appetite: Army EATS and beyond.



TIME FOR A FRESH APPROACH TO THE MESS

Expectations of messing and catering services have changed. The Army EATS Messing Survey showed us that today's military personnel demand flexibility, control over when and where they eat, and digital technology on a par with what they will find on the high street.

The EATS acronym - **Exploring the Appetites of Today's Soldiers** - hints at the concept that messing is about more than nutrition.

We understand that truly satisfying modern appetites means providing a social experience as well as good food. A welcoming, relaxing physical space is key to ensuring people want to stay and dine on base.

But change does not come easily. The military recognises the need to transform catering services so they are truly fit for all generations of service personnel, and doing so will take a great deal of work.

Junior Ranks Dining by Kitchen Works Co. is Sodexo's vision for the future of military dining, and our trial sites have already drastically shifted perceptions of what the Mess can offer today's armed forces.



Army EATS Messing is our pledge to deliver a dining and social experience that is relevant, nutritious and supportive of modern lifestyles.



COLONEL JASON PHILLIPS

ELEVATING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE

“Service personnel have many other choices of how and where to eat, and each year more of them leave us for the alternatives.”

This was the warning of David Morgan-Hewitt, Honorary Catering Advisor to Defence, in his foreword to the 2021 Delivering Defence Dining Quality Review. The review highlighted a years-long decline in the popularity of the Mess, and the impact it is having on the lived experience on base.

The lived experience is about mental as well as physical health, a sense of community and the work-life balance of all personnel. Messing plays a vital role; its priority status recognises not only the importance of good nutrition to wellbeing and operational readiness, but also the need to facilitate meaningful social interactions.

Yet, of over 9,000 people interviewed for the Army EATS Messing Survey, only a quarter believe it is easy to eat healthily on base, while 72% would like to see more relaxed spaces where they can socialise as well as eat.

Ipsos MORI research, commissioned by Sodexo, confirmed there is a strong desire to always eat healthily (67%), but a perceived lack of availability means many only eat in the mess a small number of times each week. Of those who prefer to visit a coffee shop or local pub, more than 60% said a more relaxing environment was a key reason.



How often do soldiers eat in the mess?

BREAKFAST: 1.18 TIMES PER WEEK

LUNCH: 2.78 TIMES PER WEEK

DINNER: 1 TIME PER WEEK

Army EATS Messing Survey
Averages based on responses from 120 bases

SETTING THE OBJECTIVES

The Army EATS programme challenged industry partners to create pilot sites that would explore ways to modernise the mess. We were tasked with meeting four key objectives:

- 1 Encourage and enable eating more nutritionally balanced meals, with alternative commercial models.
- 2 Provide easy access to these meals more often.
- 3 Encourage personnel to spend more time on base, with appropriate social spaces to do so.
- 4 Improve general satisfaction with food and services.

“
High street digital technology has reshaped our view of what a good dining experience looks and feels like and we must keep pace.”

MAJOR GENERAL DAVID EASTMAN
*GOC Regional Command,
Chair of the Army Messing Steering Group*



“ Army EATS is about recognising the customer’s needs. They may not want three meals a day; they want a more welcoming environment with modern technology, and a menu that responds to their needs.”

WO1 (SSM) COLIN SINCLAIR
HQ Regional Command

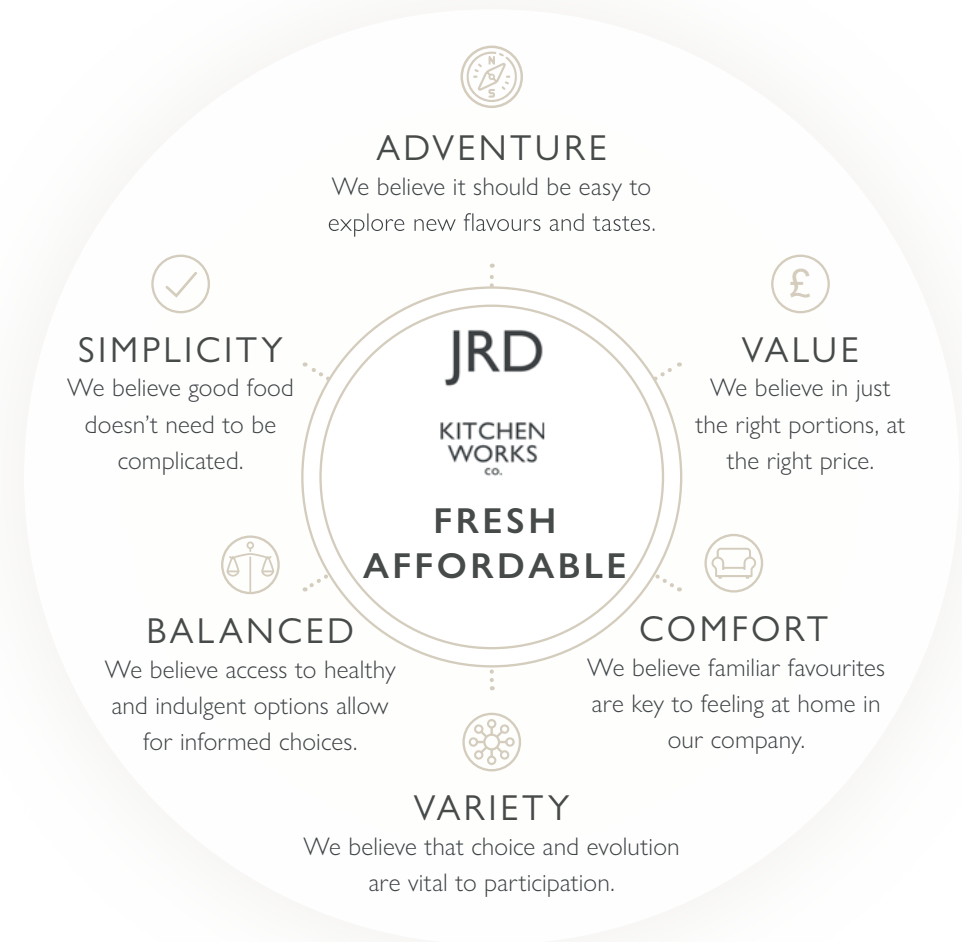
LEARNING FROM THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Sodexo's 40 years of experience supporting Defence forces meant we understood the unique nature of military life. But we also knew a creative, modernised approach would need to draw on our experiences outside the military.

We have worked in corporate environments where encouraging people to stay on site in the face of fierce competition from the high street has been a key priority. Fresh, innovative menus are vital, as are physical spaces where customers can relax and refresh.

This knowledge, combined with our own research into the lived experience of Armed Forces personnel, led to the creation of **Junior Ranks Dining by Kitchen Works Co.**

While our existing JRD menus were restricted by JSP 456 regulations, the revamped new offering allowed for a fresh approach. Our chefs developed a range of healthy, balanced meals for all occasions, built around the brand's six culinary principles, with **Fresh** and **Affordable** at the heart of it all.



THE CULINARY PRINCIPLES OF JRD BY KITCHEN WORKS CO.



As Emily Bird, Service Development Manager at Sodexo, explains: "It was a really exciting opportunity for all of us to challenge the current guidelines, to essentially bring them up to date and bring people something that will be really exciting to them as well."

JRD by Kitchen Works Co. features 'grab and go' options for convenience, along with a full range of hot meals that personnel can take their time over and enjoy with colleagues.

There is a choice of categories every day, from Nostalgic Comfort dishes that offer a taste of home to Global Bowls that offer variety and new flavours from around the world.

We answered the concerns raised in the research through a wider range of healthy options than ever before, along with more support for plant-based meals, cultural diets and food intolerances.

Of course, the environment is just as important as the food on offer, so we also designed the physical space to satisfy modern appetites.

"Food and dining is about more than just fuel, says Liam MacDonough, Executive Development Chef at Sodexo Government. "This new venture and venue gives service personnel an opportunity to break from the structure of their daily routine and relax and enjoy good, nutritious food in a bright, airy and trendy environment.

"We had to consider the needs of a very active personnel and how we could fuel them to get the best out of their day, and help them perform."

MINDFUL ACTIVE

One of the keys to the success of JRD by Kitchen Works Co. has been the complementary launch of Mindful Active - Sodexo's holistic health and wellbeing programme.

Through Mindful Active, we offer information and guidance on menus and digital platforms so service personnel can make nutritional choices that support their activities and objectives.

Each JRD by Kitchen Works Co. meal corresponds to one of the programme's four pillars:



FUEL

prepare the body for what lies ahead and sustain a healthy lifestyle

FOCUS

target body performance goals and power up brain training

PERFORM

boost energy levels and strengthen mental endurance

RESTORE

re-energise the body post-workout and reset mental wellbeing

TAKING OFF

JRD by Kitchen Works Co. launched at Sodexo's two pilot sites - ATR Winchester and Dalton Barracks, Abingdon - in the summer of 2022.

We focused on value-for-money, with balanced, consistent portions and promotions tailored to our customers. This, combined with a friendly service style and revamped restaurant design, ensured we met each of the Army EATS objectives:

- 1 More nutritionally balanced meals - through fresh ingredients and a fresh approach.
- 2 Easy access, more often - with a wide-ranging all-day menu, not limited to set mealtimes.
- 3 More time on base - thanks to a space fit to relax and socialise, not simply fuel up.
- 4 Improve general satisfaction - by responding to what service personnel truly want and need.





The revamped offering was immediately embraced by personnel, who responded to the dining experience as much as to the food itself. Feedback on individual dishes emphasised improvements in flavour, while customer research at Winchester showed satisfaction with the facilities increased dramatically.

Dining facility satisfaction

56% BEFORE **84%** AFTER

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK:



Fantastic breakfast service, thank you chef family.



Excellent service & chicken caesar salad. The sooner it's rolled out army wide, the better.



Mexican fish po'boy was super tasty for lunch. Everyone at the table loved the food all round!



It's fantastic to see our vision brought to life in this vibrant new environment, and to know that we are contributing to the wellbeing - and ultimately the operational capability - of our armed forces.

PAUL ANSTEY

CEO Government, Sodexo UK & Ireland

PAVING THE WAY


We believe JRD by Kitchen Works Co. is the future of military dining. A modern take on messing with seasonal, global flavours that excite and inspire service personnel.

Surveys we have conducted across Sodexo sites show that satisfaction is highest where there has been investment in the facilities and services on offer. Army EATS represents an opportunity to implement the recommendations of the Delivering Defence Dining Quality Review, and invest in facilities that will make a meaningful difference to the lived experience.

As David Morgan-Hewitt observes: "Good food (well-cooked from good ingredients) served in an inviting and suitable environment is what we must now aim for." The right food, in the right environment, has a significant impact on morale, fitness, readiness and - ultimately - retention.

A more holistic approach to nutrition and wellbeing will satisfy the appetites of today's soldiers, and pave the way for a healthier and more capable force.





“ We’re asking our service personnel to put their lives on the line, so we need to invest in them. Facilities like JRD by Kitchen Works Co. are a positive step forward in how we elevate the lived experience of our people and show them that we’re investing in them. ”

WO1 (SSM) COLIN SINCLAIR
HQ Regional Command

SUPPORTING THE WHOLE FORCE

Sodexo has over 40 years of experience supporting the Defence forces of the UK, the US and France.

We are committed to developing a better understanding of military life, so we can improve the lived experience for the whole force.

We are proud to support individuals, the community and the environment on bases of all sizes, working with military leaders to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of all service personnel.

Find out more about Sodexo Government

CONTACT US