

Good Eats Earns Galley Award

By PA3 Sondra-Kay Kneen, PADET St. Petersburg, Fla.

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- A white sign hangs near the entrance to the Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater dining facility in Clearwater, Fla. The sign features a Coast Guard racing stripe across the top and at the bottom is the proud declaration "Dining Facility of the Year 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2007."

Inside, tables are neatly arranged with a variety of condiments and the salad bar is set up with a colorful assortment of selections aimed to please those with even the most choosy palate.



FS3 Richard C. Caldwell prepares the *Soup of the Day* during the noon meal on "Fish Thursday" at Air Station Clearwater's honored dining facility. Coast Guard photograph by PA3 Sondra-Kay Kneen, PADET St. Petersburg, Fla.

Food Service Specialists and mess attendants are in a frenzy preparing for the noon meal. Vegetables are washed and chopped, as fresh fish is placed in the fryers. With the tempting smell of seafood filling the air, it's easy to see why Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater was named Dining Facility of the Year 2007, in the Largest Command Ashore category.

To be considered for the Dining Facility of the Year award, a galley must submit a detailed and comprehensive package. The package must include a letter from the command recommending the galley, a complete inspection check-list, photos of the galley, and a list of awards the galley has earned. Three finalists are chosen and the award is based on the package and a final physical inspection.

"The galley you see here today is the same galley during inspection, we don't do anything out of the ordinary, our crew just maintains its course," said Chief Food Specialist Richard T. Kuffler, food specialist officer at Air Station Clearwater.

The galley's mission is to support the air station's active-duty, retired, reserve, and civilian personnel, while instilling pride and ownership in its own crew. The galley serves more than 220 people per day during breakfast, lunch and dinner.

"This galley is always running, there are no slow downs or stops," said Kuffler. "It is a team effort and we work together to provide award-winning service everyday."

While some dining facilities are staffed by only Coast Guard members, Air Station Clearwater's galley is run by both Coast Guard members and civilian contractors. It has about 15 civilian-contracted personnel working in the galley as mess attendants or janitorial contractors.



A mess attendant dices red and green peppers to flavor the macaroni salad served during the noon meal at Air Station Clearwater's dining facility. Coast Guard photograph by PA3 Sondra-Kay Kneen, PADET St. Petersburg, Fla.

"I love my job," said Territa Hill, a civilian contractor from Gulf Coast Enterprises. "I wouldn't want to work anywhere else," Hill said. Hill has worked at Air Station Clearwater for six years.

"The relationship between Coast Guard members and the civilians is vital to the success of the operation, and is the true key to the quality of service the galley provides," said Bill J. Dietz, Project Manager for Gulf Coast Enterprises.

"We have a tight crew, Coast Guard and civilian, everybody gets along and everyone from the bottom up has the ability to put their ideas forth," said Kuffler.

"I love working with the Coast Guard, the Coasties have personalities that click with ours and we seem to always come to an understanding, even when the workload gets hectic," said Cassandra James, a civilian mess attendant for more than two years at the galley.

Whether it's the white sign out front boasting "Dining Facility of the Year," the staff's dedication to their patrons, or the tasty food, charming attitudes and mouthwatering aroma in the air, something keeps people coming back to Air Station Clearwater's galley.

USCG