

Students jump for joy over kangaroo burgers

By Patricia A. Russell/Daily News correspondent
Monday, February 05, 2007 - Updated: 10:27 PM EST

FRANKLIN - "How many of us can say we've eaten kangaroo?"

The question was posed by Michael Ward, Dean College's general manager of Dean Dining Services - Sodexho. After last night, several hundred students can attest they've eaten the unusual meat during the Global Chef Program, which arrived at the school yesterday.

"Kangaroo burger?" asked Meghan Stewart, of Mansfield, to fellow students who stood in a long line waiting to sink their teeth into one.

Sponsored by Sodexho Dining Services, which runs the college's food service program, Dean College was the first stop on a tour for Australian executive chef John Deane, who will visit this month with several other colleges in the New England area that also contract with Sodexho.



Australian chef John Deane
(Orlando Claffey)

The Global Chef Program is a month long international chef residency that provides an opportunity for Sodexho's chefs to travel to different countries and share international cuisine with Sodexho chefs at various locations.

Deane has been the Sodexho executive chef at Telstra Stadium in Sydney, Australia, since 2002. His 16 years of experience in the hospitality industry have taken him from formal training in his native Ireland to London, Germany and Australia.

Deane has overseen kitchens at several prestigious venues including the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney Town Hall, Fox Studio Australia and the Sydney Opera House. In 2000, Deane was executive chef for the Athletes Village during the Sydney Olympic and Paralympics Games and, in 2003, of the Rugby World Cup tournament.

While on campus, Deane worked with the onsite Sodexho team and prepared lunch and dinner menus that featured a range of Australian specialties. He chopped, sauted and cooked as students dined.

Deane said he enjoys bringing food indigenous to Australia so others can "share in the experience."

Also on the Aussie menu, besides the sliced kangaroo burger with beet chutney and mizzuna lettuce, was dukkah crusted lamb with mixed beans and roasted garlic oil, grilled mango chili chicken with palm sugar dressing, baked rice custard pudding and lime and ginger mousse.

One student asked Deane if he could stay indefinitely at the college and prepare meals. "No, I just left 100 degree weather," he said.

Between 5 and 7 last night on one of the coldest nights this winter, the room was filled with lively conversation. Students chatted with each other as did staff, some accompanied by their families as they tried new dishes.

"It looks like lean roast beef," Gylens Toussaint said of the kangaroo burgers. The 19-year-old Boston resident and Dean College communications major said he's always game to try something new.

"It's good," said Joseph Perouich of Allentown, Pa. "I like to try new things."

Chelsey Mellow of Johnston, R.I., is not a finicky eater, but she said she wouldn't try the specialty burger offered last night. "I like kangaroos; I don't eat them," she said, as she scored a slice of pizza.

Franklin resident Kevin Hearn, assistant vice president at the school, stopped by to sample the kangaroo meat with his wife and three young sons.

"I absolutely wanted to try it," he said.

"I like it," he said after taking a second bite. "The taste is very unique."

Deane's tour includes stops at several colleges and universities including Babson College, Wellesley College, New England College, Plymouth State College, the University of Vermont, St. Michael's College and Champlain College.