

Kosher Food Stand Opens at Citizens Bank Park

Jarrad Saffren | Staff Writer

On June 17, a kosher food stand opened on the third base side at Citizens Bank Park.

The stand combines ballpark favorites such as hot dogs and pretzels with kosher staples such as hot pastrami on rye and potato knishes, according to Aramark, which organizes the concessions at CBP.

The Kosher Grill is open for all home games ... except on Fridays and Saturdays. The Community Kashrus of Greater Philadelphia, Keystone-K, certifies the food. Mordy Siegal, the founder of the Kosher Grill, has operated a similar stand at the Wells Fargo Center since 2015.

It's been popular, according to Kevin Tedesco, Aramark's general manager at CBP. And lines at the Kosher Grill at CBP were long during the stand's early days. Siegal told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that "probably a third of our customers are keeping kosher."

Tedesco said Aramark has seen an increase in kosher requests from ballpark suites in recent years.

"It's been a fun cart. It's a great location. And the food's good," he said.

"It is all about being inclusive," added Jason Firestone, the director of concessions at CBP. "We're making sure that every fan that enters the building has options."

In recent years, CBP staff have seen increased requests for other types of foods, according to Tedesco. Those include vegan, vegetarian and plant-based options. So, Aramark added those options as well.

"We've been ranked by PETA in the top 10 of vegan/vegetarian ballparks," Tedesco said.

Siegal, who is from Chicago, also operates concession stands at Soldier Field, home of the Bears, and the United Center, home of the Bulls and



Some of the kosher food options from the Kosher Grill at CBP



The Kosher Grill at CBP

Blackhawks. Kosher food is also sold at Fenway Park in Boston, Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles and several other ballparks.

Siegal said the stands are targeted at kosher fans. At the same time, they wouldn't work if only kosher fans ate the food.

"I want the product to be a quality product offering kosher food where there isn't any," he said.

This has worked at the Wells Fargo Center, according to Siegal. It's key to combine stadium favorites with kosher fare. But the kosher stand at CBP also has a topping bar with onions, relish and sauerkraut. No one is giving you packets. Your sandwich comes ready-made.

"There's no stand at the stadium that's going to give you gourmet pickles and relish and sauerkraut," he said. "We have more topping options."

Kosher food at stadiums is becoming the norm, Siegal said.

"Stadiums that don't have kosher food are missing the boat," he added.

Siegal has worked with Aramark for more than a decade. Tedesco and Siegal had discussed the CBP idea for years.

"It's something we've always wanted to do," Tedesco said.

Tori Smith, a concessions manager at CBP, is Jewish and grew up at Beth Chaim Reform Congregation in Malvern. She said it's positive to put Jewish culture "front and center" for others to see.

"Pastrami sandwiches — we've never had them at the ballpark. But we know that's a Jewish or Jewish-centered food," she said. "People come up and say, 'I didn't know that was a Jewish food.'"

"We have regular fans that come through and eat it and are like, 'Wow, this is not something I was expecting,'" she added. ■

jsaffren@midatlanticmedia.com