



Project: Fruitive,
1094 Palmer Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Architects/Interior Architects: **Teass \ Warren Architects**
MEP Engineers: **KK Engineering, LLC**
Contractor: **Battino Contracting Solutions**

Palmer Alley, NW—the main pedestrian thoroughfare of CityCenterDC—with the Fruitive shop at right.

Juicy Design

Small Shop in CityCenterDC Packs Outsize Style

by Deane Madsen, Assoc. AIA

As summer slowly fades into fall in DC, what better way is there to cool off than to sip a freshly-pressed juice while a breeze kicks through the alley at CityCenterDC? Answering that rhetorical question is Fruitive, a glorified juice stand at the corner of 11th Street, NW, and Palmer Alley, the latter a pedestrian thoroughfare set within the master-planned development that transformed the former site of the District's convention center into a glitzy retail and dining destination. So it's no surprise that that freshly-pressed juice will cost north of \$14.

Fruitive prides itself on transparency in terms of its ingredient origins as well as its processes. The company's lesser-known secret? While its staff does blend some fruits and vegetables in the shop's compact kitchen, the bulk of the actual juice pressing is done in a subterranean, commercial-grade kitchen on the other side of CityCenterDC. The corner shop serves as a juice showroom, the same way the Tesla dealership on the opposite corner shows one or two cars with the rest manufactured elsewhere. Architect **Charles Warren, AIA, LEED AP**, finds the iceberg metaphor an apt one for Fruitive: The café space is roughly 600 square feet, the commercial kitchen some 2,500. His firm, **Teass/Warren Architects**, designed both.

One of the biggest challenges in a heavily regulated interior fit-out is the set of existing conditions—what Warren calls the “vanilla box”—which, in this case, included mechanical systems and bathroom plumbing, but also a sizeable structural column supporting the 10 stories above the shop. From the earliest stages, Warren and partner **Will Teass, AIA, LEED AP**, sought to amplify the brand's focus on natural ingredients. “When we first talked to them, health was something we thought was key to their brand,” Warren said. “We picked up on that, and said we should reflect that in the architecture of the space.”

Walnut paneling of the shop gives way to a bookshelf lined with nutritional guides and cookbooks. One of the original design drivers for Fruitive was the concept of a card catalogue that would highlight the properties of each ingredient, and while that specific piece proved too onerous to materialize, the library motif stuck. But the flow of the space, or at least the queuing within it, Warren said, determined much of the programmatic layout within the limited floor area. The structural column bends customer pathways around it to the ordering counter. Digital displays above the counter list menu items, and are visible from outside the shop to passersby.

Set within a glass box and boasting a large vitrine window, the store capitalizes on its prominent position with elevated, glass-walled refrigerators that put the product on literal and highly visible pedestals. The interior is outfitted with natural materials that reflect the brand's mission: Carrara marble for the countertops, slate flooring, and walnut wood panels backed with marble subway tile add their own rich flavors to



Transparent refrigerators inside the shop.



Wood-paneled interior of Fruitive.

CityCenter's vanilla box. "We tried to utilize the vitrine window as much as we could to make it more like a retail experience, with the library piece as a backdrop to that," Warren said. "You get this lined idea with the wood of the library piece breaking the cold materials of glass as you're looking through the juices and display refrigerators. We framed things in the vitrine so that you look through the product into the space."

Just to the left of the entry is a cozy sitting area for two, which, despite its position beside a floor-to-ceiling window, is an easy space to miss if you're not looking for it. Warren refers to this area alternately as a reading nook or a *snug*, the latter a reference to the sometimes clandestine sipping rooms in Irish pubs—his brother was managing one while Warren and Teass were in design development.

For Teass and Warren, Fruitive revisits a project with which they were already familiar—the pair cut their teeth at Shalom Baranes Associates Architects, which master planned and was architect of record for the CityCenterDC development. Still, despite their understanding of the intricacies of the complex, they found surprises in the form of a major transfer beam immediately beneath their new client's space as well as an HVAC unit located 14 feet off the finish floor. Working simultaneously on the production kitchen at



Main ordering counter.



Corner dining area, inspired by the "snugs" in Irish pubs.



Service counter.

the other end of the development and the retail shop allowed the architects a certain degree of freedom from the constraints of the limited shop floor area, in that the commercial kitchen could accommodate any excess equipment too big to be shoehorned into the storefront.

Although Fruitive is technically located on an alley, it's an artificial one included in the CityCenterDC development to break up its massing, and it benefits from an abundance of reflected light bouncing between the glass boxes above it. Even with Fruitive's primary façade facing northward, this reflection plus the shop's west-facing, 11th Street side offer plenty of daylighting—enough that electric lights are seldom on while the sun is up. Pendants over the bar and recessed cans at the top of the double-height volume illuminate it as evening falls. Fruitive eschews preservatives in its products, so to reduce the effects of solar gain, Teass/Warren installed mechanical shades on the west side to help to keep temperatures lower. That keeps the juices as fresh as the shop's architecture. 🌱



Cabinetry and bookshelves in the Fruitive shop.