

50,000
Number of people stadium holds for sporting events

65,000
Number of people the arena holds for concerts

36
Number of kiosks in general area of the stadium

285
Number of point of sale outlets in the stadium



STADIUM ROCKS

Sweden's Friends Arena is considered one of the world's leading venues. Peter Hultqvist FCSI told Jackie Mitchell about the challenges of designing the foodservice offer

Hultqvist travelled to Germany, the UK and the US studying arenas to get ideas and to see how they handled feeding huge volumes of people in a short space of time

It was the biggest project in the Nordic countries. There was no know-how available, so we had to start from scratch.” That’s how Peter Hultqvist FCSI describes Friends Arena in Solna, north of Stockholm, Sweden.

Named after Friends, an anti-bullying organisation, the arena seats up to 65,000 people for concerts and 50,000 for sporting events. It is home to the Swedish men’s national football team and the AIK football team and is designed to handle all types of events from sports matches and concerts to galas, business meetings, conferences and trade shows. Its retractable roof ensures that events can be arranged all year round, regardless of the weather.

Hultqvist, who runs Galepo Restaurant Consulting with his wife Eva, spent four years on the project, planning all the foodservice outlets.

Flexibility is the key to Friends Arena foodservice outlets and the challenge for Hultqvist. “It’s more difficult to build something if it needs to be multi-purpose,” he says. “One day it’s a football match, then speedway, then a pop concert and each one has different requirements.”

Hultqvist started researching the project in 2008. “We had to work out what food we were going to sell and how the customer would approach the outlet.”

He travelled to Germany, the UK and the US studying arenas to get ideas and to see how they handled feeding

huge volumes of people in a short space of time.

Hultqvist discovered that according to Fifa regulations, there must be one point of sale outlet for every 250 visitors during a soccer match. Out of those, up to 40% would make a purchase. “So we had to time how long a purchase takes and how quickly the queue moves,” he says. This is crucial when there is a soccer match, as there’s only a 15 minute break.

Hultqvist’s solution for the Friends Arena was to have as many kiosks as possible. For the general area, there are 36 kiosks on three levels, serving a range of fast food including hot dogs, burgers and wraps. Each kiosk has several point of sale outlets. During a soccer match there are 285 point of sale outlets for 50,000 visitors, which more than meets Fifa regulations. “The idea is to minimise waiting time and queues,” he says.

“We came up with the ideas and concepts for the Arena and then worked with other contractors including IT consultants, kitchen designers and construction workers.”

In addition there are four restaurants for VIP corporate hospitality packages. The main issue here was the kitchen, as it needed to be flexible so on one day it could serve a buffet and on another, fine dining.

“We drew up plans for a full production kitchen, but we didn’t do the actual drawings,” he says. “We planned all that would be necessary to provide this kind of flexibility. >

October 2012

Date Friends Arena opened to the public

100,000

People in audience for Swedish House Mafia gig

43,466

Record attendance for an AIK football team game

1981

Year Peter Hultqvist started in foodservice industry



We indicated where all the equipment would be located and the kitchen designer did the actual drawings.”

Since Friends Arena opened in October 2012, it has staged numerous notable events. Swedish House Mafia dance music band performed with over 100,000 people in the audience. AIK football team has beaten its attendance record with 43,466 spectators.

Completing the Friends Arena project has given Hultqvist invaluable experience. “We now have this expertise which is unique in the Nordic countries. Subsequently we helped the Copenhagen Arena with some analysis before construction work started.”

Hultqvist has an extensive background in the foodservice sector. Starting in 1981 as a 15-year-old apprentice chef, he worked as a waiter and bartender before attaining a BA in restaurant science. After working as restaurant

manager for a Michelin-starred restaurant, he moved into contract catering as Nordic region brand manager for Compass. During this time, he developed 10 different concepts for the Norwegian armed forces.

His last staff job was as CEO of HMS Host at Stockholm Arlanda Airport, where he developed nine restaurants including Sweden’s first Illy coffee concept.

Galepo Restaurant Consulting celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. His wife Eva started the business and it was so successful she was unable to handle the volume of work so Peter joined her.

How does he find working with his wife? “It works for us. Eva looks after the finances, reports and organisation, while I’m hands on, working with clients on concepts and start-ups. We’re like any normal working couple – we meet in the evening and talk about our day.” ■

Since Friends Arena opened in October 2012, it has staged numerous notable events

Mall content

Shopping malls are another area of expertise for Galepo Restaurant Consulting. These have included Emporia food court in Malmö, Sweden, which required six restaurants with over 600 seats; the Utopia shopping mall in Umea, where Hultqvist worked on four foodservice units and Sollentuna Centrum in Stockholm, where he worked on six restaurants in the food court.

“All food court projects are similar,” he says. “About 18 months before the opening, I have a meeting with the restaurateurs who will be running the various outlets, where we talk about the start-up and opening issues.

“The planning is exactly the same as for a single restaurant on one location,” he says “You plan everything from where are the groceries going to be delivered, where is the food going to be produced, how will the customers enter the outlet, is there a seating area. As soon as the food court opens, our responsibility is transferred to the shopping mall management.

“Our challenges are to make it work when we’re always short of time and getting clients



to make early decisions. The longer decisions are postponed the fewer options you have. For example if you don’t decide where the warewashers will go in time, they may end up three floors away!”

Hultqvist also carries out an annual survey of Stockholm’s 150 farmers’ markets in a ‘mystery shopper’ exercise for the City of Stockholm to determine the best in terms of customer service and product knowledge.

“We’ll know this year’s winner by the end of June,” says Hultqvist. “It’s great fun and something totally different from what we normally do.”

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