

HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE

THE PATIENT / THE WORKFORCE / THE VISITOR

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

GRAB-AND-GO SOLUTIONS

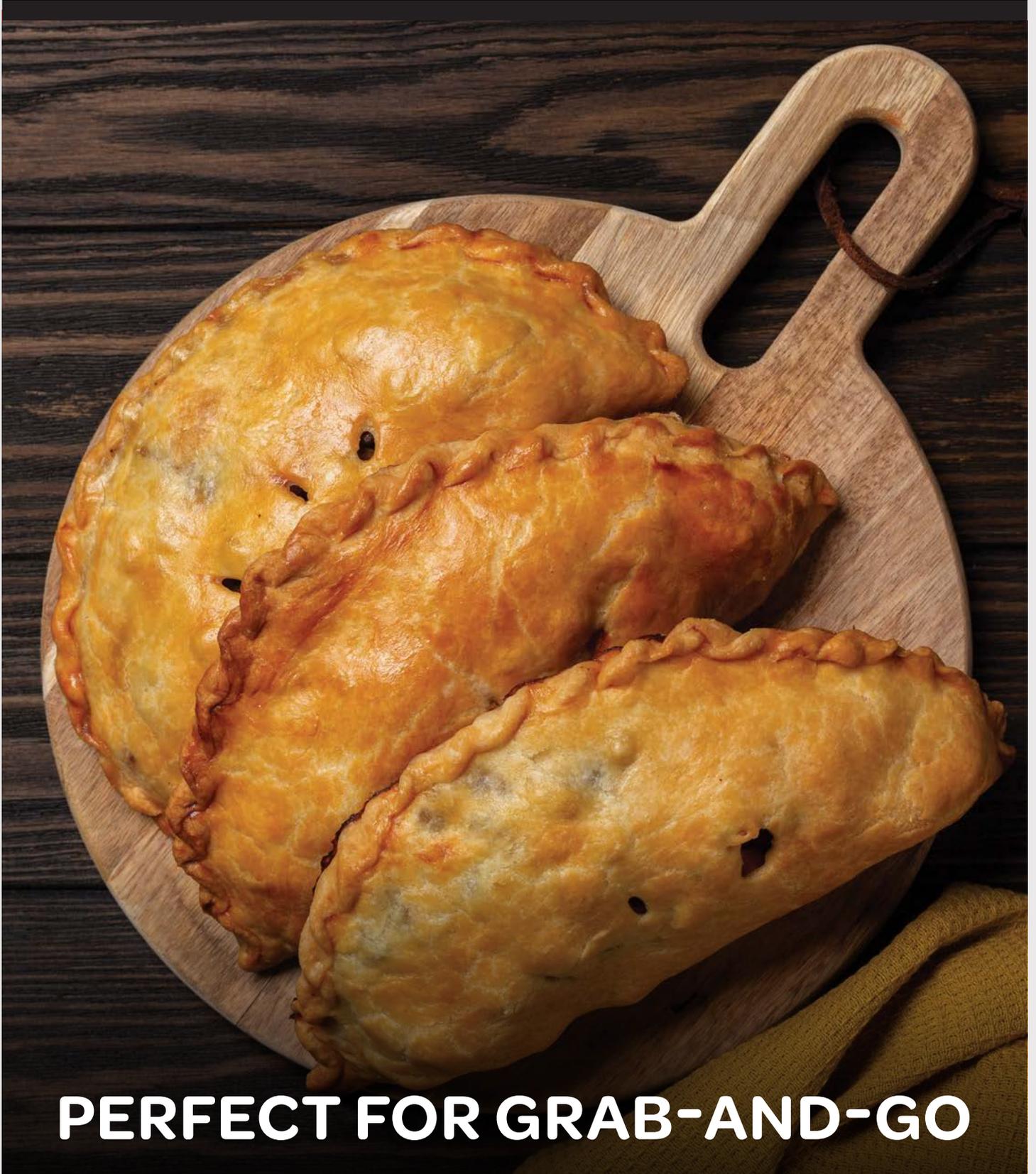
Developing a compelling offer - from street food pop-ups to traditional favourites

DISCOVERY DEN

Why we need to start putting goodness back into the land with regenerative agriculture

ON SITE

Aiming for "legendary" customer service at the Royal Free Hospital in North West London



PERFECT FOR GRAB-AND-GO



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WELCOME

ALL CHANGE

WELCOME TO THE LAST ISSUE OF HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE FOR 2023, A YEAR THAT WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR EXTREME WEATHER AND INCREASING CALLS FOR ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE - SOME MORE DISRUPTIVE THAN OTHERS - UNTOLD HUMAN SUFFERING ON THE GLOBAL STAGE, AND CONTINUING POLITICAL TURMOIL AT HOME.



As this issue goes to press the UK has a new Health Secretary. Victoria Atkins was formerly Financial Secretary to the Treasury and has been MP for Louth & Horncastle since May 2015, whilst the former Health Secretary Steve Barclay has moved to Defra. We will have to wait to see what these changes will mean for hospital catering services, for instance, the revised Government Buying Standards for Food, and other ongoing standards and programmes around reducing food waste, food sustainability and plastics policies.

This month, (November) we have celebrated the final of the third annual NHS Chef competition and the indications are that this event is really beginning to engage the sector. What's more, the standard at which the competitors are working is steadily rising and this is starting to cascade out into the wider teams working in hospitals across England. You can read a full report of this year's final by flipping this issue and turning to p12-13 of the Hospital Caterer.

Our On Site feature on p8-11 looks in more detail at the Royal Free Hospital, an exemplar catering service that is also raising the bar for the customer experience - be that the patient or the staff. The 24/7 provision of food for staff is leading to a surge in interest in grab-and-go offers that could form part of a solution. In Top Table (p12-13) and our Grab-and-Go feature (p14-18) we examine how to approach and implement a grab-and-go offer with some ideas of what to include.

To close the issue off, we have a new column to replace The Vole on p47. Called The Last Word, this column will feature the views and experiences of different people working within hospital catering; the people who are making a difference every day when they turn up for work.

As always, if there is anything you would like to see featured in Hospital Food + Service, or you would like to share any work your own hospital is involved with, please do get in touch. In the meantime, I'd just like to wish all of our readers a very Happy Christmas and New Year. Look forward to seeing you all in 2024.

Amanda Roberts

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With Erica Bell and Shelley Pearson-
Smith from Stepping Hill Hospital



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HCA EXECUTIVE TEAM VISITS NORTHERN IRELAND

October saw the Executive team of the Hospital Caterers Association (HCA) return to face-to-face meetings when they all travelled to Belfast, doubling up to attend the Northern Ireland Branch Study Day. It was a good opportunity to network with members of the local Branch and suppliers that support either in Northern Ireland or nationally, and to increase the visibility of the Executive team within the region.

Flip this issue to read HCA National Chair, Brian Robb's update of the association's current activities.



DIET DRINKS ARE OUT, AS EVIDENCE OF THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS MOUNTS

It is well-known that soft drinks with a high sugar content increase the risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Now a leading testing expert says there is increasing evidence that many diet drinks containing artificial sweeteners affect blood sugar levels, insulin resistance and our gut microbiome.

Until now, sugar-free equivalents to sugary drinks have been regarded as the healthier alternative. However, Dr Avinash Hari Narayanan, Clinical Lead at London Medical Laboratory says: "The fact that many so-called 'diet' drinks could be exacerbating symptoms for known diabetics, as well as severely affecting those who remain undiagnosed, is bad news."

In short, random tests of healthy, non-diabetics found that participants consuming saccharin and sucralose had noticeable spikes in their blood sugar levels, and these sweeteners were influencing changes in bacteria in the gut and the mouth as well as in their blood samples. In some cases these changes were so marked they were similar to those in people with diabetes or vascular diseases.

Further investigations reveal that another popular sweetener, aspartame, may affect the body's concentrations of glucose, insulin and a hormone that reduces appetite and releases insulin called 'glucagon-like peptide 1'.



NHS CHEF OF THE YEAR TEAM CROWNED

Darby Hayhurst and Dylan Lucas from Royal Blackburn Hospital (East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust) took the title of NHS Chef of the Year 2023 at the competition finals held at the Lainston House Cookery School near Winchester this month (November).

Ryan Corbett and Laila Darlington from Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust finished in second place, with third place awarded to Les Beare and Josh Banner from Wye Valley NHS Trust.

The final challenge of this two-week final was to cook and present a four-course menu in four hours, under the watchful eye of the judging panel, which this year included guest judge, Lisa Goodwin-Allen, Executive Chef of the Michelin-starred Northcote restaurant.

"The bar has been raised again this year, and the competition was incredibly close," Phil Shelley, Estates and Facilities Senior Operational & Policy Manager at NHS England told Hospital Food + Service.

For a full report from this event, flip this issue and turn to Hospital Caterer p12 & 13.





WHY THE NHS MUST TAKE ACTION ON BIODIVERSITY

Delivering the opening keynote address at the 2023 NHS Forest Conference (Trees and Woodlands on the NHS Estate), Alexis Percival, Environmental and Sustainability Manager for Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust, laid down a gauntlet to the entire NHS estate for action on biodiversity.

Biodiversity is intrinsically linked with climate change, which is intrinsically linked with human health. Action on this was mandated in the Environment Act 2021, which requires all public authorities to comply with the biodiversity duty. In terms of time frame, the Act states that relevant organisations must have a plan in place by January 1, 2024, and be prepared to agree policies and objectives very soon after this date.

Alexis set out what she called the 'Healthcare Biodiversity Pledge', saying: "We need to do this and we need to do it now." Action on biodiversity is action on climate change, and for the NHS estate it brings immense health benefits to patients, their relatives and staff too. Access to open, green space has mental health benefits, patients can be engaged with outdoor projects such as growing food, staff and relatives can escape from the indoor hospital clinical space to a more healing environment for exercise, for consultations, or simply to sit and think.

THE HEALTHCARE BIODIVERSITY PLEDGE

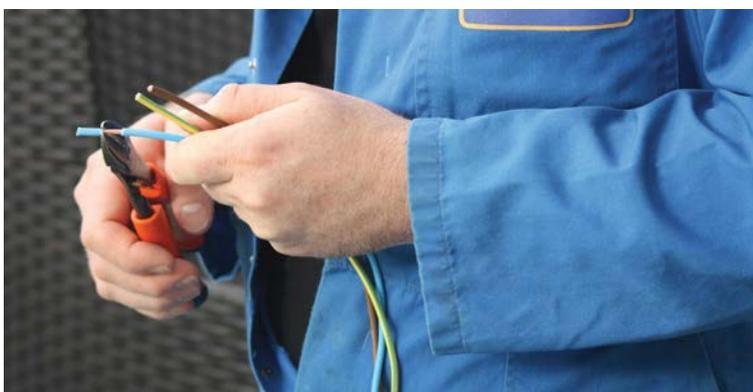
- Restore, regenerate, preserve
- Plant trees, plant biodiversity, grow life
- Create food security
- Reap health benefits of nature connection
- Increase biodiversity by 30% by 2030.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT SAFETY STANDARDS

The Foodservice Equipment Association (FEA) is underlining the importance of standards of safety around electric appliances following a court case brought against three companies in relation to the fatal electrocution of an engineer working in a hospital kitchen in 2017. The verdicts followed an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Craig Stocker died while working on a macerator at Bishops Wood Hospital in Middlesex. The HSE investigation uncovered flaws with both the design and installation of the macerator, which was not fitted with a Residual Current Device (RCD), despite the requirement being stated in manufacturer's instructions. The lack of an RCD was not identified by the hospital's operating company.

The result of this case demonstrates that the responsibility for maintaining high standards of safety for employees is spread between all stakeholders: manufacturers, dealers and suppliers as well as their customers," says Andy Threlfall, Technical and Policy Director for FEA. "This case demonstrates the tragic consequences that can happen when these standards are not met."



URGENT 'RE-IMAGINING OF POLITICS' NOW ESSENTIAL

Speaking at the Soil Association's annual Peter Melchett Memorial Lecture this month (November), Caroline Lucas, twice former Green Party Leader and Brighton Pavilion MP since 2010, called for an urgent re-imagining of politics in the face of the environmental and nature crises.

"Peter Melchett understood that the state of Britain's politics and the state of our environment were inextricably linked. He knew that you can't have a good environment without effective politics. That means an end to short-term thinking and far more joined-up government," she said.

"The Climate Change Committee has played a critical role in driving action on global heating - we now need an equivalent statutory committee, reporting to parliament, to advise the Government of the day on what must be done to build the resilience of our food and agriculture system to the shocks to come."

On the same day the Soil Association launched its new report 'The Time is Now', setting out its vision for the decade ahead, and calling for a better approach to policy making. The report calls for new alliances, new forms of citizen engagement, a new spirit of pragmatism and courage in political decision-making.



REPORT CALLS FOR SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN PROCESSED MEAT CONSUMPTION

A new report 'It's time to act on processed meat' from Eating Better considers the health impacts of processed meat and highlights the need for public sector caterers and health organisations to focus efforts on reducing processed meat consumption.

Processed meat is an unnecessary staple in the UK, currently making up about 30% of the average meat intake per person. This new report shows that each 50g of processed meat (equivalent to two slices of ham or one sausage) eaten on average per day can increase the relative risk of poor health outcomes including bowel cancer, cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

Commenting on the report's findings, Professor Kevin Fenton, President of the Faculty of Public Health says: "We support the key messages in this guide; its information will be useful in making the case for reducing the amount of processed meat on our plates."

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WHAT WE EAT COULD HELP PULL THE PLANET BACK FROM THE BRINK

Compassion in World Farming is warning that increasing the number of animals that are raised in industrial systems is a practice that cannot continue if we want to have a sustainable food system and a healthy planet.

Global CEO Philip Lymbery, warns: "In the richest countries we are, quite literally, eating our way to our own extinction. Our insatiable appetite for cheap meat and other animal-sourced foods is damaging our health, causing immense animal cruelty and killing our planet. Unless we wake up and act now to reduce this calamitous over-consumption, it will simply be too late."

The biggest single waste of food is feeding human-edible crops to industrial livestock. Cereals, soya and palm are fed to intensively reared livestock, who convert them inefficiently into meat, milk and eggs. Protein conversion can be as low as 4% for beef, for instance, whilst almost one fifth of the world's total catch of wild fish is processed into fishmeal and fish oil, the majority of which are used to feed farmed fish. Through this process, enough food to feed four billion people is wasted.

Compassion in World Farming says food businesses have a key role to play in effecting change at scale. Many food companies are moving in the right direction, taking their responsibility seriously and making active changes to their supply systems, for more nature-friendly, sustainable food. But they can't do it alone. Governments need to support the move towards healthier diets and regenerative farming practices to really drive the required level of change if the current climate and health crisis is to be stopped in its tracks.

STOP FEEDING THE ANTIBIOTIC CRISIS

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics has called for tougher public sector food standards to control antibiotic overuse in the supply chain. The Alliance describes the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering (GBSF) as "inadequate," and also criticises the efforts of leading catering companies supplying the public sector to control antibiotic use in the production of meat, dairy, fish and eggs in their supply chains.

In the first of its kind report, 'Catering companies - feeding the antibiotic crisis?' the Alliance outlines the growing problem of resistance to common antibiotics, caused in part by their overuse in both animals and humans. The UK Biological Security Strategy, published in June 2023, reports that 7,600 people die annually in the UK from drug-resistant infections, at an estimated cost to the NHS of £95m per year.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has been recognised by the World Health Organization as one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity, associated with the deaths of 4.95 million people in 2019.

The Alliance to Save our Antibiotics wants caterers supplying the public sector to publish antibiotic policies and adopt transparent procurement strategies. It also wants robust government standards of public procurement to ensure higher antibiotic standards for food supplied to hospitals and schools. The report recognises that the GBSF are under review, but points out that there is no mention of any need for responsible antibiotic use in the existing, or the proposed new standards.

SUPPLIER NEWS

HUPFER STRENGTHENS FOCUS ON UK MARKET

German manufacturer Hupfer is reigniting its presence in the UK market with a new team, structure and investment to support the specification of its solutions across all UK catering sectors.

Led by Sales and Marketing Director Marc Sumner, who previously spent almost 20 years working in foodservice publishing sales roles, the team also includes National Sales Manager Neil Greer, who brings a wealth of experience in foodservice sales, Senior Business Development Manager (Medical) Neil Bryan and Operations Manager Jordan Roberts.

Hupfer's portfolio covers everything from food storage solutions and servery units, to trolleys, transport, regeneration, holding and warming units.



BONCULINA FOCUSES ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TO DRIVE GROWTH



BonCulina is continuing its growth strategy by implementing its food quality assurance programme at its Colchester-based production unit, and accelerating product improvement and

development initiatives to rapidly enhance the culinary standards and service excellence for healthcare clients.

Following the acquisition of Anglia Crown in May, the business has expanded its production capacity and distribution fleet, whilst its culinary team is revising recipes, sourcing new high-quality ingredients and enhancing cooking techniques to deliver the highest standards of taste within healthcare catering.

15 MILLION AND COUNTING: APETITO WINS RECOUP AWARD FOR PROJECT BOOMERANG

apetito has scooped the prestigious national RECOUP Award for the Best Development/Innovation to enhance plastic products for recyclability or re-use.

RECOUP's Plastic Recycling Annual Awards recognise and celebrate excellence in plastics resource efficiency and recycling, to champion leading a more circular plastics value chain.

Through its Boomerang initiative apetito is collecting the plastic trays it delivers to customers and recycling them into new trays. The initiative, which started for its Wiltshire Farm Foods customers before being extended into healthcare, has seen more than 15 million trays returned and recycled.





WOULD YOU SERVE THIS TO YOUR NAN?

THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL IN THE HAMPSTEAD AREA OF NORTH WEST LONDON IS AN NHS ENGLAND EXEMPLAR SITE FOR CATERING. HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE FINDS OUT HOW THIS HOSPITAL SETS OUT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, THROUGH A FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER – BE THAT THE PATIENT OR THE STAFF – AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL.

‘Welcome to the Best Patient Feeding Service in the NHS (if we can do better please tell us how)’. This is not just what Larry Rosenthal, Catering Manager at the Royal Free Hospital believes, it’s a mantra he lives by, actively asking his clinical colleagues if they have seen better ideas, systems or solutions elsewhere to please let him know so he can arrange to go and see for himself, and learn. What’s more, this message is now broadcast to all who pass the entrance to the catering department, printed in huge letters above the door. On the other side of the same doorway there’s a message to all staff, a reminder of what they are there to do: ‘Our goal as a department is to have customer service that is not just the best, but legendary.’

This philosophy is a reminder of Larry’s roots. American by birth, trained in the US army, he believes in setting standards that are clear and simple, that everyone can understand, and he makes sure that catering staff at the Royal Free are reminded of those standards constantly, by printing them on the walls. Because Larry likes signs. They set the tone of a professional environment, and remind staff of who they are and what they are there to do. They also recognise and reward achievement, for example, celebrating the catering employee of the

month, which is appreciated so widely that these signs also appear in the staff restaurant so non-catering staff can share. Other signs promote the service, the hospital’s Food for Life Served Here Bronze Award, and sustainability and biodiversity messaging.

PATIENT SERVICE

So what makes for an exemplary patient meal service that can aspire to being the best in the NHS? It’s the positive attitude, the process and system that everyone understands, the culture that cares and the insistence on the highest levels of customer service that make the difference at the Royal Free Hospital - in a myriad of ways. The standard is simple: “Would you serve this to your nan?” It’s unequivocal and everyone can understand it.

Patient catering is a dietitian-led service based on a close relationship between caterer and dietitian within the hospital. The dietitians advise on patient needs and the caterers focus on the business of supplying food and drink to meet those needs. The hospital’s kitchens were closed years ago, and the space repurposed, so even if a budget was made available to equip a production unit there is no space to locate one. Patient food is bought-in from BonCulina (formerly Anglia Crown) and the



HERBS ARE GROWN IN PLANTERS ON THE ROOF TERRACE



service is predominantly bulk, with specialist diets catered as individual plated meals. The catering team then focuses on making sure everything else is perfect and that patient needs are met, which has involved implementing some innovative, but often simple ideas, from the very simple easy peel oranges to sending strawberries to the wards once a week for patients to enjoy.

The catering team constantly audits the service it provides, but with no catering staff on the wards they are reliant on feedback from nurses, clinical staff and patients themselves. Every bedside table has a sticker on it with a QR code that the patient can scan to not only view all the menus (complete with full nutritional information), but also to leave comments - complaints, questions or compliments. A manager will respond in person to any complaints, to discuss - and hopefully resolve - the issue.

Another simple idea, Larry realised that patients can be slow to eat and sometimes

this results in ward staff clearing their tray before they've finished, so he had coasters made with messages to say the tray may now be cleared because the patient has finished with it.

In addition to the standard lunchtime and supper menu for patient meals, which is a two-week cycle, the Royal Free offers a comprehensive choice of specialist menus: Dysphagia, A la Carte, Renal, Renal A la Carte, Sandwich, Vegan, Kosher, International (Halal), and HESP (elderly only), with Gluten & Allergy Free and a JAIN menu coming soon.

The carbohydrate content of each item on every menu is detailed, enabling diabetic patients to manage their diet by choosing appropriate meals. Energy-dense snacks and drinks are available at all times on the ward. These are branded and recognisable items, from Häagen Dazs ice cream to Jacobs Cheese and Crackers, Alpro dairy-free milk and yoghurt, Müller rice puddings and Bourbon biscuits. Fruit pots are freshly cut and prepared for the hospital by the sandwich and salad provider. This is a local company that Larry tasks with matching M&S levels of presentation for these items, with sandwiches cut into quarters for instance, and attractively arranged salad pots. The pantries across every ward are standard, with uniform signage so staff are able to move between wards and know exactly what is available for patients wherever they are working.

Patient food is available 24 hours a day, with orders placed by ward staff via the catering help desk, or out of hours through the portering service. This includes hot meals, which are re-heated in the ward kitchen, each of which is equipped with an iWave system.

The Royal Free's location in North West London means it provides healthcare services to a large Jewish community. It has a Shabbat room for the family and friends of Jewish patients to use, with hot and cold kosher food provided.

A bespoke electronic patient meal ordering system was about to go live when Covid hit, and the roll-out was delayed but it is now on all but two wards. Larry is genuinely very excited about this piece of technology, which he says will be a complete, bespoke catering management system. Chefs enjoy working with food, but all too often in a

“In the restaurant and the theatre café, as with patient meals, customer service and the customer experience is paramount”

hospital environment have to spend more time filling in reports and doing administrative tasks. The new system will alleviate this burden, feeding information automatically into reports that will be available at the touch of a button, and providing an impressive level of data, such as the number of meals served so far this month.

The Royal Free does have one small kitchen where meals for the hospital's 30-bed private patient ward are cooked. The challenge here involves providing a service that matches the expectation of these patients, many of whom are accustomed to Michelin-standard food, from a tiny space and a budget that although larger than the typical NHS budget remains very tight. The menu ranges from sophisticated main courses to comfort snacks such as jacket potatoes and a choice of eight soups as standard.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

All of the hospital's food waste is composted. The Royal Free is observing the three separate waste streams of patient plate waste, unserved food and production waste, each of which are weighed. Measuring unserved food and plate waste is a useful process when compared with menus because the depth of data being produced will allow correlations to be drawn between unusually high waste levels and what was on the menu at those times, enabling the catering team to identify if some dishes are just not as popular with patients as others, or there had been a problem on that particular day.

A voluntary segregation scheme for recycling in the large staff restaurant has also been introduced recently and the process of educating staff about how to separate their waste between the clearly labelled bins is ongoing. "Once we've cracked it here, the behaviour will spread across the hospital," Larry says, adding that recycling schemes tend to fail if you try to introduce them everywhere at once. "Get it right in one place and let it grow," he adds.

STAFF FACILITIES

The Royal Free has a theatre café on the third floor, co-located with the operating theatres, so staff don't have to change out of their scrubs to get food - when they only have short breaks this is a valuable service. The café serves between 150-200 lunches every day with food being supplied from the main staff restaurant.

The staff-only restaurant, which is an incredibly busy facility, usually serves 1,600 people at lunchtime. It is open from 7am - 7pm, and outside of those hours gates drop down to prevent access to the restaurant itself, leaving an area just inside the entrance that remains accessible to staff 24/7 and from where an automatic hot and cold food and drink service operates through a bank of sophisticated vending machines. This area is strictly staff only, and protected by CCTV as Larry is very security conscious. After more than a decade in the UK, he still finds it strange that people are able to come into the hospital at any time of the night without

“Catering staff at the Royal Free are reminded of those standards constantly, by printing them on the walls”

challenge. "It would only take one nurse to be harassed whilst using this area at night and no-one would use it again," he says.

In the restaurant and the theatre café, as with patient meals, customer service and the customer experience is paramount, and here that does not mean patients, but the hospital's hard-working staff. Larry believes in offering choice at all times and refuses to restrict this for any reason. "It just annoys people and loses the restaurant customers and money." He's referring in particular to pressure from campaigners to introduce a 'meat-free Monday'. In keeping with Larry's philosophy around choice, vegetarian and vegan options are always on the menu, and the hospital has also partnered with Quorn to offer 50-50 options so people are able to make an environmental choice if they wish to do so. Theme days are held to suit the demographic of the customers. Following a successful trial, Tuesday is Afro Caribbean day, Friday is fish and chips, it's curry on Thursday and a traditional British roast on Wednesday.

In addition to the expansive indoor seating and coffee shop corner, the restaurant has an outdoor, roof-top terrace giving staff access to fresh air in an area that has made good use of large 'planters' to grow herbs, shrubs and flowers, with the plants provided by Larry and other members of the catering team. This year they have harvested enough mint to pay for all of Larry's signs! Next year they hope to be able to harvest tarragon. It's not surprising that signs around the terrace encourage staff to grow their own herbs, and raise awareness of biodiversity, such as helping bees to survive.

Whilst the lunchtime period is very busy, the restaurant is quiet by about 3pm, so the space is made available to groups, such as the hospital's charity that may need a venue to hold events or just somewhere to meet.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Royal Free Hospital is a perfect example of how a service can set out to make a difference through small touches, setting standards and instilling a culture across the entire team that cares. 



BIODIVERSITY IS CELEBRATED ON THE STAFF-ONLY ROOF TERRACE

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MICROWAVE READY MEALS

The meals have no artificial colouring or preservatives, can be ready to eat in as little as two minutes and in many cases, are available gluten-free and halal approved (these fall within CQUIN guidelines issued by the NHS).

MACHINE RANGE

The machines will operate as ambient models and will have as standard a full change giving coin mechanism with optional extra of a contactless payment solution. There are two models of machines, standard glass fronted spiral vendor and a spiral glass fronted vendor with elevator and vend port for speedy and safe delivery. Both models offer two branding options, All machines will vend biodegradable sport sets – knife, fork, spoon, and napkin.

Self-Fill Operation – the machine are supplied on a self-fill basis, very simple restocking and very low maintenance – as on fridge unit, and with the additional benefit for over the counter sales and emergency patient feeding if dietary requirements are not immediately available.

Staff Health and wellbeing – many hospitals lack the facilities to cater for 'out of hours' catering, it is too costly in terms of staffing to keep the restaurant open that extra hour until 8pm or later and operate a reduced catering service over weekends. The health and wellbeing of staff working nights and long shifts along with improvement in hospital food and "out of hours" food service.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

The meals can cater for dietary and allergen requirements short notice, satisfy requirements for diverse cultures and religions, cater patients who miss a meal or had procedures during meal service times and over the counter sales from the restaurant. 📞

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TOP

TABLE

TAILORED SOLUTIONS

GRAB-AND-GO SOLUTIONS ARE BECOMING PART OF THE HOSPITAL'S RETAIL PORTFOLIO TO PROVIDE CHOICE AND VARIETY OF SERVICE TO STAFF, AND MEET THE 24/7 FOOD AND DRINK REQUIREMENT. HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE TAKES SOME ADVICE ON HOW TO PLAN AND DELIVER A SUITABLE GRAB-AND-GO SOLUTION.

The key, it seems, is to put the customer first. "Think around your customer base and their behaviour and habits. When, how, what and where do they typically eat, how long do they have to eat and how can the customer journey be made as simple as possible for them to order, pay and collect their food and drink purchases. Once you get to grips with this you can then tailor your menu and food offering to ensure it's as fresh and enticing as possible," Mark Kassapian, Director of Litmus Retail advises.

This is the approach that Compass One Retail takes. Recognising that quality, choice and convenience are key within the healthcare setting, for patients, staff and visitors, Managing Director Andy Jones says: "We serve our customers in a number of different formats and we

find that generally a solution must be tailored to the setting and the consumer. We work in partnership with our clients, to understand what will work for them. This often results in a number of different options within one site, which means they work together and customers get the benefit of a good range."

THIRD-PARTY OFFERS

Mark and Andy both recognise the potential of working with well-known, third-party brands. Indeed, Compass does just that within its suite of retail offers. This approach enables it to offer the customer a choice that is familiar, and these offers are especially popular with staff and visitors who need to pick something up quickly on their way home. Compass One Retail also partners with

"Another alternative maximises the flexibility of pop-ups using a mobile front cooking station"



smaller organisations, such as Change Please, which is in use in several of its partner hospitals. Within Southend University Hospital, Change Please coffee is served at outlets on the site and money made from sales of coffee is pumped into local communities to help reduce levels of homelessness. “We find that these local and charity initiatives work well in our retail outlets and as mobile carts. We also serve Change Please within Southampton University Hospital’s Wellness hub where it is part of a unique café called Bevan’s, which is set within the hub that focuses on health and wellbeing for staff. Here we have received really positive feedback on the range and format,” Andy confirms.

Mark Kassapian outlines the options that hospitals may consider: “Many hospitals sub-let prime selling spaces to third parties, which typically utilise these areas for pop-ups, carts and kiosks. The main catering facility can often be a little out of the way and hospitals need to ensure enough footfall and revenue is driven within the main facility so it remains financially viable.

“During out of hours times, hospitals could look at closing the main catering facility and instead just have the sub-let prime selling space open, with a view to minimising staffing, food costs and wastage.

“Alternatively, hospitals could look at making the main catering facility as interesting as possible to help attract consumers. For example, conceiving a street food offering would be a good idea. In order for it to be enticing, the offering should include branding, a street food-inspired menu and sauces or accompaniments to bring the idea to life.”

Another alternative maximises the flexibility of pop-ups using a mobile front cooking station such as the Rieber Varithek ACS. “Hospitals like ‘pop-ups’ to take advantage of good weather outside or to add front cooking capacity to existing serveries and counters,” BGL Rieber Managing Director, Gareth Newton explains. “Pop-ups work wherever there is a crowd, and the Rieber Varithek ACS pop-up front cooking station can be wheeled anywhere there is single-phase power.”

London’s Homerton Hospital installed a Varithek ACS to cook up food served outside the building. “The restaurants inside the hospital are so popular they get crammed, and this gives people a chance to enjoy their food outside in the fresh air,” says Stuart Hugill, Key Account Manager, ISS Facility Services UK.



“A successful grab-and-go solution needs to be convenient and offer speed of service”

The Rieber Varithek ACS (air clean system) Front Cooking Station is mobile and small enough to fit through standard doorways easily. It works with cooking modules, including induction woks and hobs, Ceran hobs, single and double griddles, pasta cookers and fryers.

Also suitable for hot food pop-ups, kiosks or mobile carts, the Rieber K-Pot will hold hot food such as rice and sauces, burgers and apple pie and custard, or cook dishes such as pancakes, bacon and eggs and omelettes.

TECHNOLOGY

A successful grab-and-go solution needs to be convenient and offer speed of service. The technology to deliver on this requirement has advanced considerably in recent years, and continues to do so. Indeed, the use of such technology will be critical to the success of any solution. Compass One Group has introduced technology to support speed of service, such as self-service tills, apps, click and collect kiosks and vending.

“Our Time2Eat app is a great example of our in-house innovation, which enables people to look at an online menu and book a time slot to visit a restaurant or café and pick up their order,” Andy Jones explains. “In some sites, it also offers the

functionality of booking tables. Some of our franchise partners operate their own apps and again, these have become more widely used during the last few years.

“Our vending offers have also become more diverse and in demand. This obviously supports convenience and flexibility. We’re rolling out machines that include a wider range of products, such as sandwiches and more healthy options, some with partner retail brands included too. We’re getting some really positive feedback on these offers and we’ll continue to react to what staff and visitors are telling us.”

Mark Kassapian adds a final word of warning. Recognising that there has been huge growth in technical advancements in recent years - which undoubtedly bring many benefits - always keep your customers, and what they want, at the heart of your decision-making. “For example, if the human touch and interaction is important to them, then there needs to be a careful balance between tech and humans to deliver the desired service expectation.” 

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GRAB IT... AND GO

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN GRAB-AND-GO OFFERINGS WERE LIMITED IN CHOICE AND IT WOULD TAKE A LARGE STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION TO DESCRIBE THEM AS ANYWHERE CLOSE TO HEALTHY OR NUTRITIOUS. WHILST THERE IS ALWAYS A PLACE FOR A BIT OF INDULGENT EATING, THE HOSPITAL GRAB-AND-GO OFFER NEEDS TO DO MUCH MORE.

Consumers use their senses when making their purchasing decisions, so products must have a strong visual appearance, contain quality and nutritious ingredients, and, when it comes to hot food, provide an appealing aroma.

Against this criteria, pasties and savoury pastries are perfect options. Easily baked-off within hospital catering environments to provide an enticing aroma, they are easy to eat on-the-go and can cater for a variety of dietary preferences.

Proper Cornish offers a wide range of pasties and savoury pastries including sausage rolls, slices and turnovers. Supplied uncooked frozen, they can be baked off throughout the day, depending upon demand.

When it comes to keeping the offer fresh and enticing, Paul Saunders, Managing Director of Proper Cornish advises selecting a core offering and introducing other products and flavours according to seasonality. "Frozen food can aid menu planning by providing an opportunity to vary the menu throughout the day to meet various meal occasions. For example, our all-day breakfast turnover or bacon & cheese turnover can be baked first thing

"Easily baked-off within hospital catering environments to provide an enticing aroma, they are easy to eat on-the-go"

in the morning for the breakfast occasion, with pasties and sausage rolls baked throughout the day to meet brunch, lunch and evening dining. Using frozen products also means that you can offer a variety of different flavours and only bake off what you need per meal occasion."

The Phat Pasty Co range offers savoury pastry choices which meet Food for Life standards. Handmade in Cornwall, the pastries provide a high quality offer that's simple to operate - a bake-off with hot-hold in a heated cabinet ready to serve.

When Torbay Hospital was looking for a hot grab-and-go offer for a busy café area, the Phat Pasty Co provided a turnkey package of product and POS to support. The offer launched with a full range of pasties, pies, slices, turnovers and sausage rolls, comprising firm favourites and an extensive range of plant-based options. Products are served in branded

greaseproof bags, with details of all allergens and calorie information as well as a QR code linked to a website to provide full nutritional details.

"We were looking for a supplier who would help us to create a brand identity within our restaurant offer, and Phat Pasty has been instrumental with this," explains Nathan Simms, Catering & Retail Operations Manager at Torbay Hospital. "Initial feedback from customers has been fantastic, and we saw a 300% increase in pastry sales in the first few weeks of introduction."

Mark Kassapian, Director of Litmus Retail points to a growing demand for authentic, global food flavours, which is being seen in supermarkets, with both Waitrose and Sainsbury's introducing grab-and-go kiosks in-store to serve fresh Japanese sushi. "South American, Asian and Mexican are also popular and hospitals should look to



PHAT PASTY AT
TORBAY HOSPITAL

bring in some global-inspired food to their menus to help drive sales," he suggests.

DRINKS

"According to the British Coffee Association, approximately 95 million cups of coffee are consumed every day in the UK, with consumption steadily increasing by an annual growth rate of 3%. In addition, the branded coffee shop market achieved 11.9% sales growth over the last 12 months. Alongside this growth there's also been a shift towards more premium and speciality coffees and consumers have become accustomed to high-quality coffee drinks," Mark continues. "Hospital caterers should absolutely have a quality barista-style coffee offering as part of their drinks line-up."

Furthermore, menus should be on par with the variety and trends that are being seen on the high street, so include a range of non-dairy milks alongside syrups, such as gingerbread or caramel for creating seasonal specials, and iced coffees and frappes for warmer months.

Nutritious dairy products such as Kefir have been at the heart of an impressive makeover of the grab-and-go offering in recent years, and Biotiful Gut Health, a



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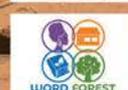


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pioneer of the Kefir category and the UK's leading Kefir brand, has played a pivotal role in this evolution. Over the past year, the Kefir category has witnessed strong growth, with Biotiful leading the charge with an impressive 48% value, 57% volume increase¹. This surge in popularity reflects the growing demand for nutritious dairy products in the grab-and-go sector.

Biotiful Kefir, available in convenient 250ml servings, brings a nutritious and delicious beverage choice to consumers on the move. With flavours including fruity cherry, tropical mango, and Great Taste Award-winning indulgent vanilla, Biotiful Kefir provides a wholesome grab-and-go option. It's perfect for breakfast or lunch, making it an excellent addition to meal deals and a smart choice to boost financial margins, drive up average spend and attract new customers.

Biotiful Kefir offers a quick and nutritious solution for busy staff who may not have had time for breakfast. Paired with a morning coffee, it provides a convenient and satisfying start to the day, all made with British milk and billions of live cultures, adding a touch of quality to the grab-and-go experience.

AUTOMATED SOLUTIONS

The Micro Markets concept has become established as an ideal alternative to costly, traditional catering operations, bridging the gap between traditional vending and managed on-site canteens to offer



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BGL RIEBER'S MULTIPOLAR SMART FRIDGE

convenient and quality meals 24/7 through automated retail.

Kepak, home to the £107.8m² Rustlers brand, provides a one stop solution, working in partnership with industry-leading businesses across food-to-go, interior design and payment technology to provide customers with the ultimate turnkey operation.

"Moving from a traditional solution to an unattended offer is a giant leap for many who have been tasked to 'make it happen' with design, payment systems, manufacturers and products to consider. We're proud to be able to incorporate all these services and more to make the transition as simple and hassle free as possible," says Kepak's Carl Hunter.

Kepak is appealing to the growing number of cost-conscious consumers seeking convenient hot food options on-the-go with the launch of a Marinara Meatball Sub Sandwich under its Rustlers brand. Launched into the out of home sector in April, the Marinara Meatball Sub (RRP £2.30, case size 4), offers a hot new addition to the Rustlers range that can easily replicate the popular high street menu favourites that consumers are craving, as they continue to curb spend.

EQUIPMENT

Grab-and-go is a great way to make healthy food choices available anytime, but fresh thinking is needed to apply it. Gareth Newton, Managing Director of BGL Rieber, uses the approach taken on the high street as an example, where operators are using online trading to create menu offers, reinforced with lunchtime specials and combination deals to boost trade. Hospital caterers can do the same, even

using loyalty points to promote healthy eating.

Recommended food storage equipment for 24-hour service is the Rieber Multipolar communal 10-compartment fridge, which can be stocked with online orders anytime for hospital staff to pick up using their smartphones as the key. Each mini fridge is big enough to hold prepared meals in GN containers for individuals and small groups.

Mark Kassapian further emphasises the opportunities of such smart fridges, saying that the global smart refrigerator market is expected to reach \$6.84 billion in 2026³. They require no staffing and can offer 24/7 solutions to staff working varied shifts and seeking a range of food and drink options outside of usual trading times.

Another essential piece of kit for grab-and-go is the chilled merchandiser. Appearance, temperature control and sustainability are key requirements.

Gem Multidecks from Williams Refrigeration are attractive and come with a range of options to tailor the equipment to the style of the venue, as well as tight temperature control and a raft of energy-saving features. Aesthetic customisation options include a wide selection of colour combinations. The range is also compatible with Williams' Chameleon vinyl wrapping system, so the merchandiser can be made to look as though it's a piece of art, or made of bricks or wood.

"LED strip lights, glass shelves and mirrored panels are amongst other aesthetic options to create the exact style the operator is looking for," Malcolm Harling, Sales and Marketing Director explains.

Loss of cold air from conventional grab-and-go merchandisers can be a problem. The latest open-fronted Gem

"Nutritious dairy products such as Kefir have been at the heart of an impressive makeover of the grab-and-go offering"



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DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS BIOTIFUL KEFIR DRINKS



Multidecks include features designed to maintain the interior thermal envelope, thanks to a curtain of cold air drawing down over the front of the unit. This includes a honeycomb profile for the top air discharge system that helps to keep the cold air directed within the display, and redesigned bottom air inlets which improve the temperature stability of the lower shelves.

Alternatively, units with doors can deliver further substantial improvements. In tests, hinged doors help to decrease the energy requirements of Williams' Multidecks by up to 60%, compared to the open-front equivalent.

Temperature control in the grab-and-go retail food offering is critical - the food should be fresh and served at the perfect temperature to eat on the move, whether that's hot or cold. The best advice to hospital caterers planning a grab-and-go menu is to look at the current display solution to understand if it is able to keep food fresh and enticing.

"Whether you are offering an aromatic sweet potato curry, a hearty winter

vegetable soup, a range of freshly baked vegan pastries or cold served items such as chilled juices, fresh fruit, or a range of salads, the effectiveness of the holding and display equipment is crucial," says Gary Thacker, Sales Director at Fri-Jado UK.

Specialising in hot and cold holding equipment for retail grab-and-go worldwide, Fri-Jado's portfolio has been designed to display food attractively, while patented technology ensures it is served in optimum condition.

"A crucial element to tempting a purchase in a hospital retail environment is making your food look irresistible. Whether that is using eye-catching packaging or writing tempting menus, the decision will ultimately rest on how easy it is for the customer to see the product," Gary continues.

Fri-Jado's Modular Convenience Counters (MCC) combine state-of-the-art airflow technology, with standout design and remarkably thin shelves to create a range of modular hot and cold counters that really do put food in the spotlight.

The range also uses several innovative green technologies to deliver impressive savings, including eco-friendly refrigerant R290 and patented OmniCold low-velocity airflow in the cold counter, and a patented Hot Blanket holding system, air curtain technology and hot air recycling per shelf enabling the MCC hot units to achieve ongoing energy savings of up to 40%. ¹

¹ IRI Total Market 52 w/e 6th August 2023

² Nielsen Total Micro-Snacking, 52 & 12 W/E 10 June 2023

³ Smart Refrigeration Global Market Report 2022

- bglrieber.co.uk
- biotifulguthealth.com
- frijado.com
- kepakautomatedretail.co.uk
- litmuspartnership.co.uk/services/litmus-retail/
- phatpasty.com
- propercornish.co.uk
- williams-refrigeration.co.uk

“Temperature control in the grab-and-go retail food offering is critical - the food should be fresh and served at the perfect temperature to eat”



WASH UP

TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE HOSPITAL'S WAREWASHING OPERATION INCLUDE ACHIEVING MAXIMUM HYGIENE AND TIP-TOP RESULTS, OPTIMISING PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY, REDUCING ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND MINIMISING CARBON EMISSIONS.

Heat recovery, reverse osmosis water treatment and ergonomic automatic hoods on pass-through machines are all developments in warewashing technology that pay for themselves. However, there is more than one way to recover heat in a dishwasher, Meiko UK Managing Director Paul Anderson explains: "Meiko dishwashers can feature multiple heat recovery systems, including wastewater heat recovery, exhaust air heat recovery and vapour extraction from around the dishwasher. The key benefit for hospital caterers is the dishwash now becomes a pleasant working environment. Larger Meiko machines emit air at just 22°C, and almost all the steam has gone! In most cases, this usually means that there is no need for a direct exhaust air connection, saving a significant amount of money."

The Winterhalter PT Utensil warewasher offers two machines for the price of one: a dishwasher and a utensil washer. Paul Crowley, Winterhalter's Marketing Development Manager, explains that a shortage of KPs means there has been a huge increase in demand for utensil washers. "The PT Utensil delivers superior results in a compact footprint, plus, it can be switched to alternate between washing dishes and utensils if required.

"Like other models in the PT range, the PT Utensil features upgrades and innovative technology that helps to reduce energy and water consumption while enhancing reliability and usability, which ensures that both utensils and plates are cleaned to the highest standards, time after time."

Winterhalter is also an advocate for connected warewashers, which minimise breakdowns while optimising performance - meaning fewer invasive visits from engineers and reliably, hygienically clean tableware. Programmes can be customised and controlled using its networking app



"Connected Wash makes it easier to manage large sites with multiple machines, enabling staff to monitor operating parameters and hygiene levels remotely"

Connected Wash, which allows operators to easily gather operating data including full HACCP information. Based on this data, Connected Wash can make suggestions to operators for optimising their wash, giving best practice advice to help reduce costs and improve sustainability. It can also

identify potential maintenance issues before they become too serious, so they can be quickly fixed.

Connected Wash makes it easier to manage large sites with multiple machines, enabling staff to monitor operating parameters and hygiene levels remotely.

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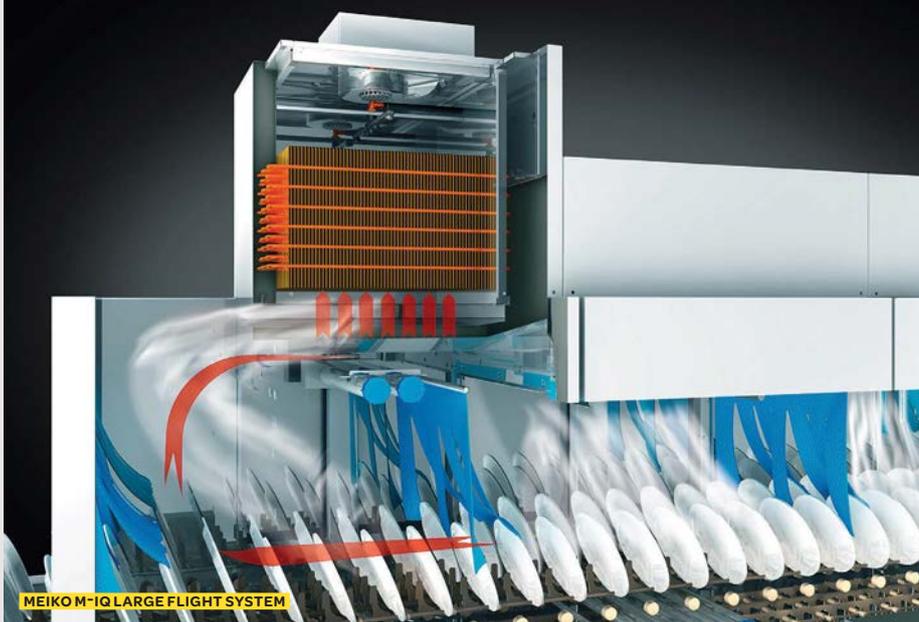


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“There is a temptation to swap dishwasher chemicals for cheaper alternatives, which may cause washing issues such as staining”

REDUCING EMISSIONS

Paul Anderson and Paul Crowley agree that when it comes to energy-efficiency and reducing the carbon emissions associated with the warewashing process, there’s more to consider than simply choosing more energy-efficient kit. “When replacing a warewasher, take a step back and review the overall planning, because small gains can make a big, collective difference, Paul Crowley recommends. “For example, reviewing and improving the workflow of your warewashing operation can make significant gains that will carry on delivering over months and years.

“Look for energy-efficient models, but be sure to examine the claims and check accreditations. For example, heat exchangers that recycle the energy from waste heat produced by steam and waste water can make a huge dent in energy costs. Using the correct chemicals can have a significant impact on results and reduce water consumption.

“Looking after the warewashers, both day-to-day and through regular servicing, will significantly improve machine life. Ensuring a machine lasts ten years or more is far more environmentally-friendly than buying a new one every four or five years.”

Paul Anderson cautions that choosing more energy-efficient equipment will only cut carbon when combined with improved operational procedures and greener chemicals. “The greenest catering comes from a good working relationship between supplier and caterer. Meiko’s goal is to be the most sustainable supplier of dishwashing. We tailor lifetime support packages for Meiko products, starting with specification and design, and building good ergonomics and economy in use from the start.

“We also offer face-to-face and tailored online training packages, so once operational, new dishwasher staff can arrive anytime on-site and access the training needed immediately.”

WARD LEVEL WAREWASHING

This must be simple to operate and have good graphics on the wall to show staff how to load the machine, use it, and clean it. Since ward staff can change at any time, good graphics help ensure the machine is loaded correctly and only switched on when it has a full load, maximising efficiency.

Meiko offers some key advice on the choices relating to equipment.

- A machine with water softening complicates operation and adds around a 12% risk of breakdown (according to Meiko’s call-out records). Engineers find that detergent added to softeners instead of salt is within the top three breakdown issues.
- Choose reverse osmosis water treatment because it eliminates legionella risk, removes the need for softeners and gives sparkling results.
- When there is a problem - blocked filters are common - hospital staff may need to call someone for help. Meiko has always had a person-to-person customer support desk staffed every day except Christmas, including weekends.
- When it comes to chemicals, stick with the supplier’s recommendation. There is a temptation to swap for cheaper alternatives, which may cause washing issues such as staining. Wards serve a lot of tea; tannin stain removal is essential, and chemicals to combat tannin need more power and cost more than budget brands.

Winterhalter recommends its UC undercounter machines are ideal for ward level warewashing. Compact and fast, they offer the option of thermal disinfection, meeting HTM2030 regulations by washing at 73°C for three minutes.

For larger ward kitchens the Winterhalter PT passthrough warewasher is the solution - again, it is available with thermal disinfection. “Our PT Utensil is perfect for wards that need to wash both dishes and utensils, as it can switch between the two,” Paul Crowley adds.



THE REUSABLES CHALLENGE

The switch away from single-use plastics to reusables places new demands on the warewashing operation. Reusable plastics tend to be lighter than traditional crockery items, so in a conventional dishwasher there is a tendency for them to flip over and fill with water, plus the sizes and shapes may vary, requiring custom racking. Conventional drying processes and the wash temperature are also issues that have required innovation from the equipment manufacturers.

Winterhalter’s plastics wash system can be used with any of its UC undercounter, PT passthrough and CTR compact conveyor products, allowing for plastic cups and bowls to be cleaned in less than two minutes. It involves three main elements: a special rack, a new wash programme and plastic-specific chemicals, enabling hospital caterers to clean reusable plastic cups and bowls easily, hygienically and effectively.

Meiko has been washing reusables for hospitals and airlines for decades, and urges



REUSABLE PLASTICS IN A MEIKO DISHWASHER AT ERGONOMIC WAIST HEIGHT

hospital caterers to seek its advice before making significant changes. Reusables washing may need special racks to hold unconventional shapes, or a grille to hold lightweight cups in place. Special rinse aids are also available to help clear water droplets from plastics. Last year, Meiko launched a large flight system for washing reusable cups and food containers. This is a bespoke Meiko M-iQ with an extra long belt, the addition of drying and a special vibration zone which shakes off the water droplets.

Earlier this year Hobart unveiled a toolkit of products to support caterers. HYLINE Rinse Aid provides superior drying performance for plastic cups, cutlery, and dishes. Ordinarily, plastics would come out of the machine moist and dripping with water. Not only does the Rinse Aid negate this, resulting in the best possible drying results, it does so completely hygienically - offering customers ultimate peace of mind - while saving on costly and laborious drying and stacking time.

Bespoke racking systems are designed to keep lightweight plastic cups in place during the washing and drying process. In the large warewash machines the flight type conveyors come with adjustable height bars that keep plastics in place on the specialised pegged conveyor, whilst giving operators the flexibility to change the height to suit the dimensions of their reusable plastics.

Hobart's innovative warewashers are designed to deliver consistent and reliable plastic washing and drying results. From undercounter machines with innovative Top Dry functionality that keeps heat energy

within the machine, through to tabletop dishwashers with hood machines and flight type dishwashers, there is a machine purpose-built to help every operator keep pace with the rise of reusables.

MINIMISING HUMAN ERROR

Training is essential, because human error is still a major cause of service issues. "Speak with the manufacturer and see what they can offer," Paul Crowley suggests. "For example, Winterhalter offers the Total Care package which means engineers not only maintain and monitor the machines, but also train staff, during service visits, on best practice when operating and looking after the equipment."

Winterhalter provides a total solution for dishwashing and glasswashing, from pre-sales advice to after-sales service, training and maintenance, with sustainability fitted as standard. Alongside dishwashers and glass washers, its range includes utensil washers, advanced water treatment machines, cleaning detergents and rinse aids.

Meiko's Paul Anderson points out that although the requirements of every hospital are different, they all need a specialist to provide training and maintenance support for the lifetime of the equipment. "A dishwasher is only as green as the operator, and our total dishwashing commitment includes lifetime training support, the offer of green chemicals, the machine itself and, of course, the maintenance support programme.

"Unexpected bills can wreck a catering manager's budget. Meiko's simple way to

“Reusable plastics tend to be lighter than traditional crockery items, so in a conventional dishwasher there is a tendency for them to flip over and fill with water”

avoid this is our transparent and fully-costed maintenance and support programmes, which provide an exact idea of costs and budget certainty."

Always be aware that whenever multiple suppliers are involved with providing one solution, such as dishwashing, there is the opportunity for blame and dispute. "We believe that the best quality and most sustainable dishwashing service comes from a manufacturer offering chemicals with their dishwashing, backed up with fast and reliable technical support, illustrated by a 94% first-time fix rate." 

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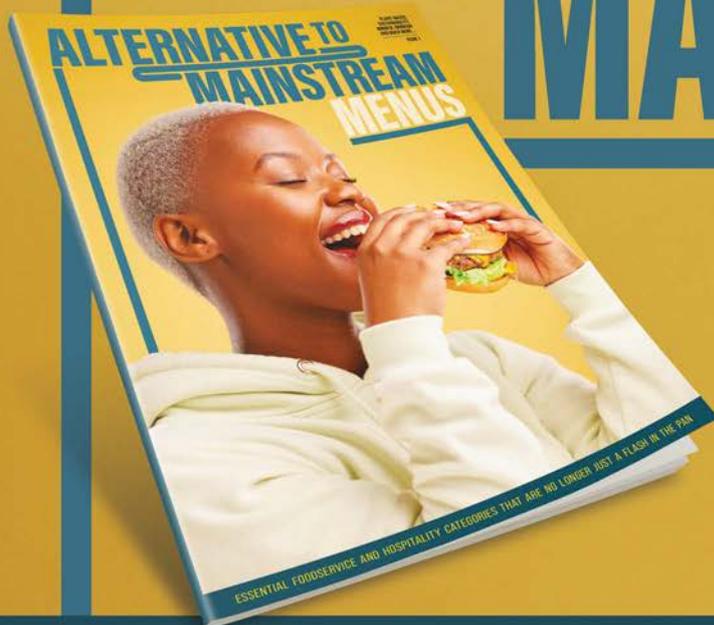
The Green Clean



Winterhalter machines deliver great wash results while minimising the consumption of water, energy and chemicals. Our advanced options can further increase sustainability and reduce your carbon footprint. We'll help with service, too, because well maintained machines are more efficient, greener machines. All Winterhalter warewashers are available with Connected Wash, allowing remote monitoring to ensure the machine operates at optimal performance. The system even makes work practice recommendations to improve efficiency.

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Speed, ease of use, flexibility/ versatility and the ability to enhance the quality and consistency of the food being prepared are all features that the latest bulk cooking equipment will bring to the hospital kitchen.

Metos combi kettles from BGL Rieber for instance have features to save labour, prevent sticking and burning and make the equipment easier and safer for kitchen staff in operation.

Automated stirring saves labour. Metos combi kettles (available in a range of sizes - 40, 60, 80, 100, 150, 200, 300 and 400-litre) can feature automatic pre-programmed stirring cycles for breaking down mince, mashing vegetables, kneading bread, stirring sauces and whipping cream.

The circular Metos Bratt pan with a flat base - the Metos MixPan in 150 and 200-litre - also has automated Scrapers for mixing. "If you are making fried onions, minced beef or meat-based dishes, for example, the cooking process is done in a standardised way, ensuring consistent quality results day after day," says Managing Director, Gareth Newton.

Burn control stops food from sticking and burning. Metos TempGuard balances the temperature of the kettle wall and the contents to ensure nothing burns in its combi cooking kettles, and it works even on tricky dairy sauces.

"Pressure steamer ovens are more energy efficient per kilo of food cooked or regenerated than conventional ovens or combis"

The latest Metos combi cooking kettles also feature the option of economic tap water cooling, which makes decanting easier and safer.

Energy efficiency is also vital in the hospital kitchen. "Pressure steamer ovens are more energy efficient per kilo of food cooked or regenerated than conventional ovens or combis. Cooking in a pressurised steamer is also 2-5 times faster than cooking in water or pressureless steam, such as that found in combi ovens," Gareth continues.

"Combi cooking kettles - with automated stirring - are the most energy-efficient way to produce food in bulk. Using 2022 prices, they cook 1600 portions of soup at a cost of 0.0098 pence per portion.

GAME-CHANGER

MKN's Wayne Bennett, VP Sales and Marketing UK, describes its multi-award winning FlexiChef as a "game-changer for high-speed production cooking." One of the most important objectives in hospital catering is to produce food on time and to a consistent quality, which often means having it ready ahead of service. A good

combi steamer will give caterers the option to perform a range of cooking processes from one single appliance, but the FlexiChef takes that to a new level, as Wayne explains.

"FlexiChef is essentially a very modern tilt skillet, which can high-speed cook and therefore speed up the cooking process - a risotto takes 11 minutes, for example, instead of 30 minutes. Users can fry, steam, boil, deep fry, high speed cook or sous vide cook with a single appliance that cooks up to two times faster than conventional pressure cooking technology and up to three times faster than conventional cooking equipment."

Available in five size variants from 50 to 150-litre to suit every hospital kitchen, FlexiChef includes MKN's MagicPilot operating system for fast and intuitive operation like a smartphone, and SpaceClean technology, the first and only automatic cleaning system for skillet pans.

"Caterers can produce consistent food day after day and combine multiple appliances into one high-speed production cooking appliance, to optimise space, maintenance costs and productivity."

SMART CLEANING

Kitchen cleaning will always be an important but time-intensive process in hospital kitchens. Recognising that any opportunity to save time (and cost) without impacting hygiene is welcome, MKN has added SpaceClean technology to the FlexiChef, thus removing the need for tedious and time-consuming cleaning of the skillet pan.

"SpaceClean is the first automatic cleaning system for pans, using no chemicals and up to 90% less water than manual cleaning to hygienically clean the FlexiChef pan in just two minutes (excluding set-up time). This automatic cleaning system uses just 26 litres of water to clean the pan smartly and quickly, ready for the next process."

MAKING THE BEST CHOICES

Hospitals are all different, and each will make a different choice of bulk cooking equipment, whether that be combi cooking kettles, bratt pans, steamers, ovens or fryers. For hospitals new to combi cooking kettles, a vital part of the planning process is to work with a supplier such as BGL Rieber, who will provide demonstration equipment to verify the scalability of your recipes.

"Why, for example, would you choose a 60 or 100-litre combi cooking kettle instead of 200, 300 or 400-litre?" Gareth asks. "One answer is that 100 litres is ideal for many sauces, which only need producing in relatively small volumes, such as cheese sauce for cauliflower. A smaller kettle is also suitable for producing small batches of special diets.

"Hospitals often mix and match the capacities of combi cooking kettles



GASTRONORM TROLLEY
FROM BGL RIEBER

according to menu demands and the type of catering, i.e., cook fresh, cook chill or cook freeze. The kitchen may need to expand output in the future, so saving space for more combi kettles is a key consideration.

"The key message I am trying to convey here is that the supplier's knowledge and experience are vital to getting the best result. Site visits to existing users are also essential to see how bulk cooking works in practice and to get impartial feedback on the service from suppliers.

"The other key area to get right is the service and maintenance backup, because hospitals want to avoid getting clobbered with unexpected bills as their equipment ages. BGL Rieber takes the long-term view, and we provide a complete analysis of running costs over time, including maintenance, to answer increasing requests for budget data."

CHOOSING A REGEN SYSTEM

Once again, Gareth recommends looking first to the supplier, and then to the trolleys.

"There is a big and bewildering choice in serving and regen trolleys, and every site has unique problems to overcome," he says. "Choosing a regeneration trolley is the start of a long-term relationship with the supplier. BGL Rieber has many different meal delivery systems in the UK, from bulk to plated to microwave.

"Some of our trolleys can be walked up to 9km in a day, so they must be comfortable to handle over those long distances and manoeuvrable through all those fire doors!

Other hospitals deal with loading vehicles outdoors in all weathers including ice and snow and they rely on easy to grip and tough handles on both sides of the trolley, as well as a wide base for extra stability. Uphill slopes, narrow doorways and rough footpaths also regularly cause problems, and we have the experience and kit to help in these scenarios, including two-speed motors for some trolleys to power up slopes.

"Solutions must be thoroughly evaluated, which means working with people with the experience of many different hospitals and their needs."

Key features to look for are lightweight construction using aircraft-style aluminium and digital temperature control and programming improves trolley design, versatility and handling.

"This automatic cleaning system uses just 26 litres of water to clean the pan smartly and quickly, ready for the next process"



STEAMING WITH MKN'S FLEXICHEF



CASE STUDY

MKN at Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

When the Independent Review of Hospital Food was published in October 2020, it highlighted - amongst other things - significant shortcomings in staff catering provision across the NHS estate. Staff meals were impacting morale and engagement, and in some cases this resulted in a knock-on effect on patient services.

Trusts responded with direct and immediate action, including Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in Surrey, which transformed its staff catering provision into a best-in-class operation with help from MKN's premium cooking equipment.

Today, the Trust uses MKN's FlexiChef appliance and FlexiCombi MagicPilot combi steamers to deliver a healthy, nutritious menu that would not look out of place in any high street or street food establishment. And hospital staff have reacted positively, with increased participation and satisfaction rates as a result.

Raouf Mansour, Head of Catering for the Trust says: "I've been an Executive Chef in high street B&I contracts before moving into consultancy and I wanted to bring the high street to the hospital. But I knew if I was to achieve that, I'd need the same equipment.

"I had used MKN on a couple of sites



in the past and got familiar with the brand around five years ago. I've always been impressed with the quality and the way teams use it. As a chef we want fast cooking, easy cleaning and peace of mind over service standards. With MKN, I get all three.

"I had seen the FlexiChef in use before and I knew I wanted one the minute I saw it. The scope is unlimited. From sous vide, to overnight, to express - in my old days I used to use what we call in French a fast cooker - and this express cooking is amazing.

"I was cooking pasta in three minutes in bulk during trials. Barley usually takes 45

minutes to boil, now it takes minutes.

"It's the same with meat offcuts - we love brisket and we use it in burgers and in different ways. It's a cheaper cut but using this kit gives me maximum flavour in a smaller amount of time. Before I would cook all day and it was hard - now it's in for 90 minutes and it's melting. It's the same with any other cut of meat - the harder the better for this kit. And the chefs love it because it cleans itself!"

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KATERBAKE BELGIAN WAFFLES

KEEP IT SWEET

WHO DOESN'T LIKE A SWEET TREAT? WHETHER IT'S CAKE WITH COFFEE OR AFTERNOON TEA, A TRADITIONAL COMFORT DESSERT, LIGHTER CHOICES FOR THE CALORIE CONSCIOUS, CHOCOLATE HEAVEN OR A HEALTHIER FRUITY PLATTER, CAKES AND DESSERTS ARE SOMETHING FOR PATIENTS, VISITORS AND STAFF ALIKE TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

Desserts can also make a vital contribution to the overall nutritional intake for patients, as Medirest Dietitian Helen Ream explains. "Many patients have a poor appetite when they are unwell and being cared for in a hospital environment, so desserts are often something that a patient is tempted to eat. They can frequently make a significant contribution towards the daily calorie and protein intake of a patient. A variety of desserts should always be offered on a hospital menu to suit a range of dietary requirements, for example, desserts that are lower in fat and sugar, alongside those that are higher in calories and protein. Menus should always offer fresh or tinned fruit and low-fat yoghurts alongside desserts that can be served with custard, such as crumbles, pies and sponges, plus cold favourites including trifle, mousse, ice cream or cheesecake. Desserts should

also cater for patients with common special dietary needs including diabetes, modified texture diets and those following a gluten-free diet."

FREE-FROM

The vegan and gluten-free food industry has come a long way in recent years. There are now huge ranges of gluten-free and vegan cakes, bakes and all things sweet readily available from major suppliers such as Bidfood. Sites that do not want to make their own, or do

not have the facilities, need look no further. However, for caterers that do want to make cakes and desserts from scratch but need some recipe inspiration to nail the gluten-free and vegan substitutes that enable a great bake, the Vegetarian for Life website has a recipe section with lots of tantalising suggestions from its team of talented chefs. Chef Oliver Bragg suggests choosing from rich chocolate cakes, muffins, brownies and mousse, and as the festive season approaches, maybe consider its Christmas Clementine Cake, which

"A variety of desserts should always be offered on a hospital menu to suit a range of dietary requirements, for example, desserts that are lower in fat and sugar, alongside those that are higher in calories and protein"

is both vegan and gluten-free and incredibly delicious. "A perfect alternative Christmas dessert," Oliver says.

Other publications are also available from Vegetarian for Life, such as Vegan Baking, which will teach caterers how to master egg replacements and help them to get the perfect rise and texture for all bakes. Vegan Baking includes plenty of gluten-free treats as well and can be downloaded for free from the VfL website.

For the ultimate convenience We Love Cake recommends opting for products that are individually wrapped, which means they retain their free-from integrity from bakery to bite, and remove any concerns over the risk of cross contamination. We Love Cake provides cake slices and tarts, all of which are gluten, wheat and milk free, made and lovingly hand-finished in a dedicated free-from bakery. New for this year is the now Vegan Cherry Bakewell to help satisfy the needs of even more patients and visitors. Choosing cakes which cater for more than one allergen or dietary requirement can help to keep stock levels and menu choices at a manageable level.

ON-TREND RETAIL

Offering desserts and sweet treats in hospital cafés and outlets gives the chance to both upsell and cross-sell, and frozen items that are individually portioned are particularly useful for this, Gordon Lauder, Managing Director of frozen food distributor Central Foods advises. If demand is uncertain, having frozen desserts on hand means 'fresh' stock is always available without high levels of waste.



FRESH FRUIT DESSERT

"Research from food delivery giant Just Eat has revealed that Belgian dishes are the menu items that are the third fastest growing in popularity in the UK - searches were up 86% between 2017 and 2022 for this particular cuisine. Searches for desserts in general were up 83%, highlighting the increasing interest in sweet treats," Gordon says.

"Our KaterBake Belgian plain waffles are individually wrapped for ease of portioning and - although you'd never know from the taste - suitable for vegans, making a perfect dessert option, given the increasing interest in

Belgian and vegan foods. They can be served at room temperature but are delicious when served warm with cream, ice cream and/or fruit and chocolate sauce - providing a sweet treat which is suitable for both take out and dine-in at hospital catering venues. Offer a range of different toppings to suit all tastes. Fruit, sprinkles, toffee pieces, chocolate, caramel or strawberry sauce, or biscuit pieces make great decorations and enhancements. Sweet waffles are a great way to tempt customers buying hot drinks to trade up, too, and by topping with fresh or frozen fruit the perfect way to increase their intake of their recommended 5-a-day whether they realise it or not!

"Sweet waffles are also a tempting treat for patients. Having individually portioned frozen options helps to cater for demand and also reduces food waste. Not just for dessert,

"Research from food delivery giant Just Eat has revealed that Belgian dishes are the menu items that are the third fastest growing in popularity in the UK"



WE LOVE CAKE LEMON TART



FRUIT CRUMBLE

“While a wedge of lemon is equally at home served with pan-fried plaice, the lemon juice can be used to make lemon meringue pie or sorbet whilst the zest adds a nice flavour to cakes”

waffles can also be served on breakfast and snack menus, so they are a great product to have to hand in any catering kitchen.”

We Love Cake points to Lemon, Chocolate, Vanilla and Raspberry as ever-popular flavours. Ensuring these are covered is helpful in creating a really accessible dessert menu and crowd pleasers for all. On retail and patient menus, adding fresh fruit to firm favourites offers a twist to traditional dishes and can help to add interest for patients and visitors when selecting their choice.

In a recent sweet bakery flavour study for the foodservice industry (Vypr, 5927 responses, April 2023), We Love Cake discovered that people fall into three main flavour choices when it came to desserts, which it categorises as:

- The Fruity Punchers: Just fruit please - I only eat healthy cake!
- Earthy Indulgers: Enjoy wholesome spices and some fruit/caramel or biscuit - but don't add chocolate please!
- True Chocolatiers: Happy to have caramel, biscuit, nuts added, as long as chocolate is the main ingredient.

OFFERING MORE FRUIT

Fresh fruit is a staple item that many patients

want to see on a hospital menu, but in reality it isn't the most popular dessert choice.

Medirest's Helen Ream offers some advice:

“Fresh fruit can be offered as a dessert, as part of a breakfast service or as a snack during beverage service. It should be easily accessible for patients who do want to eat it, and be presented ready to eat, for example, ripe enough to eat, to ensure it doesn't get wasted. Patients should also have the option for their fruit to be chopped up for them if they find this easier to eat and more appetising.

“Offering fruit more frequently during the day could ensure that fruit sitting in the ward kitchen is eaten and not wasted. Making fresh fruit available for patients throughout the day is important to ensure they are able to achieve their 5-a-day whilst in hospital should they wish to.”

MAKE IT THE STAR

Lee Callon, Head of Buying at Oliver Kay goes even further. “Fresh produce may once have cynically been dismissed as the Cinderella of hospitality menus, served on the side or as an afterthought to the main ingredient in a dish. However, with an increasing number of consumers actively seeking out plant-based

food choices, both for lifestyle and sustainability reasons, the growing profile of fresh produce has seen it become a star player in its own right in an increasing number of dishes,” he explains.

“At a time when inflation is still rising and consumer spend is under pressure, operators have to make every penny they spend count. Despite not having a nose or tail, fresh fruit and veg plays an essential part in the overall nose-to-tail, no waste approach that sets out to maximise the benefits of hospitals budgets, as well as to reduce food waste and drive sustainability efforts.

“Operators can tap into this through simple methods. Take a lemon for example. While a wedge of lemon is equally at home served with pan-fried plaice, the lemon juice can be used to make lemon meringue pie or sorbet whilst the zest adds a nice flavour to cakes and can even be used as a garnish.

“Fresh fruit is in demand right across menus, from a melon and prosciutto starter to berries in a summer pudding, but one fruit that hospital kitchens should be stocking up on is the humble pear. Pears and other similar whole fruits are known as ‘easy peelers’ and can be offered as fruit to go without any preparation, perfect for a patient's morning or afternoon snack. Alternatively, it can be stored ambient and is usually robust enough to display for a few days, reducing the chance of waste.” 

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SOIL

IN THE MIDDLE OF LOVE BRITISH FOOD FORTNIGHT, MEMBERS OF THE OXFORD AND LONDON SOUTH EAST BRANCHES OF THE HCA MET IN THE HEART OF THE COTSWOLDS, AT FarmEd, FOR THE LATEST IN THE SERIES OF FARM VISITS HOSTED BY THE LOVE BRITISH FOOD HOSPITAL & CARE WORKING GROUP.

For the last few years caterers across all sectors have been getting to grips with what it means to build sustainability into their service and the way they operate, for instance, with lower carbon menus, looking at their supply chains to source more regional produce, better quality meat, more plant-based choices and embracing seasonality. It is a challenge for many, but when it comes to how our food is produced the agenda has already moved on. "Sustainability is no longer sufficient," Jonty Brunyee, a consultant to FarmEd and a leading voice for regenerative farming explains. "It is no longer enough to leave the land as we found it. We have to put back. We have to move beyond preserving and conserving to rebuilding, enhancing, improving and reconnecting. That is regenerative agriculture at its heart."

What's more, for hospital caterers this is not just about caring for the environment, it is intrinsically linked to the nutritional care of patients.

ABOUT FarmEd

FarmEd is a farming and food educational centre, the inspiration for which was drawn from the link between human health and nature, and the urgent need to re-establish that connection. As well as being an organic working farm, with cereal crops (wheat and oats), grazing animals (a mixed herd of cows for dairy and meat as well as sheep), a kitchen garden producing salad and vegetables, an orchard of English heritage fruit trees and a variety of hives for

honeybees to thrive, it is also a centre for research, and much of that research has been around the soil.

WHY THE SOIL IS IMPORTANT

Soil really is the starting point. It is capable of storing carbon, although industrialised farming practices and the disturbance of grasslands and forests negatively impact that ability. The more carbon in the soil the better the water retention, providing a natural resilience to drought whilst supporting more microorganisms and containing more nutrients. Soil stores nitrogen, which is essential to support plant growth. Around 10% of a healthy soil comprises organic material. However, typically in a soil that has been used for intensive, industrialised agriculture, where crop rotation has not been practiced, repeated annual cropping leads to a depletion of the soil quality and reliance on the addition of a nitrogen fertiliser, putting farmers at the mercy of commercial organisations mass-producing expensive, artificial fertilisers.

Jonty demonstrated the difference between a depleted soil and a healthy, fertile soil during the tour. The depleted soil falls apart easily, visibly lacks organic material and other life, such as insects and worms. "The soil biology isn't working," he explained to the fascinated hospital caterers gathered around him. The result is a crop with plenty of carbohydrates and calories but reduced nutrient density. In contrast, healthy soil clumps together with roots, smells earthy, and teems with life.



HERITAGE FRUIT ORCHARD



JONTY BRUNYEE EXPLAINS THE PRINCIPLES OF REGENERATIVE FARMING



A GOOD QUALITY SOIL SMELLS EARTHY



HERBAL LEY SYSTEM

Central to soil management at FarmEd and other regenerative farms is the herbal ley system. Herbal ley uses a variety of deep-rooting plants, such as clovers and legumes, which add nitrogen to the soil; a sort of free, natural fertiliser. The herbal ley is the foundation to a crop rotation programme running over an eight-year cycle. It provides a diverse, natural and healthy diet for the animals that graze it, offsets carbon and attracts insects, birds and bees. For four years animals are allowed to graze the herbal ley fields in fenced sections. They eat or trample the grass in that section and are moved on daily allowing that section to recover and preventing any one variety of grass becoming dominant, thus preserving diversity. The four years of herbal ley builds the fertility of the soil, and it is then used for other crops, such as oats or wheat for four years, before being turned back over to herbal ley for another four years of recovery in a constant cycle.

The meat from animals that have been grass-fed on herbal ley rather than soy and other grains is nutrient-dense with a high mineral and omega-3 content. The benefits of this system are becoming more widely recognised, and the government is incentivising farmers to grow herbal ley to feed their animals. Jonty recommends that hospital caterers should insist that the meat they buy is from animals that have been 100% grass fed, because once they are returned to an artificial diet of soy and grains, perhaps because they have been brought indoors for winter, all of the nutritional benefit of the natural grass diet is reversed in as little as one week.

NO-DIG

The kitchen garden area of the farm has been converted to a 'no-dig' system. This means the soil is not disturbed, it retains moisture, carbon and nitrogen, and encourages a natural ecosystem of beneficial insects and birds which helps to control pests without the application of pesticides or herbicides.

At FarmEd, the kitchen garden supplies fresh seasonal vegetable boxes every week to people in the local community for a fee of between £38 and £50 per month and a commitment of one year.

NUTRIENT-DENSE

The food grown in a good quality soil is nutritionally better than that grown in a poor soil. Plus, anyone who has ever grown their own vegetables at home in the garden, allotment or greenhouse

will have recognised the difference in taste between their carefully tended crops, freshly picked and served, and the intensively produced equivalent from the supermarket. However, there are even more compelling reasons for buying the freshest, most natural produce possible. Scientists are now starting to prove that as soon as the fruit, leaf or root is harvested from the plant, within days or even hours it starts to lose its nutrient density. Therefore, for hospitals the procurement of fresher vegetables has a direct impact on the patient's nutrient intake.

“Herbal ley uses a variety of deep-rooting plants, such as clovers and legumes, which add nitrogen to the soil; a sort of free, natural fertiliser”

PROCURING CLOSER TO NATURE

Buying from a regenerative farming system requires a different approach; it requires buying with diversity. Crops are not grown for the biggest yield, the most attractive appearance or the cheapest price, but for better nutrient content and taste. The slow crop rotation system means a diversity of crop is necessary to enable the farm to supply customers all year round.

British farmers are at the beginning of a journey to change the way our food is produced, reconnect with nature and natural systems, and reduce carbon in the food supply chain. The will is there, as is the capability for British farmers to grow and produce enough food to feed the country, if waste is reduced and procurement prioritises sustainability, giving back to the environment. Putting more of the procurement budget into the British and regional economy, enabling farmers to grow more food and make the big changes to farming practices that are necessary to combat climate change are simple decisions that can make a big difference. Caterers across the board need to take the initiative, control what they want and how they want it. 🌱

THE PERFECT BASE

WHETHER YOU MAKE YOUR OWN, GO FOR PRE-PREPARED OR A COMBINATION OF THE TWO, STOCKS AND SAUCES ARE ESSENTIALS FOR BRITISH STAPLES AND THE BASE FOR MANY INTERESTING INTERPRETATIONS OF MODERN AND INTERNATIONAL CUISINE, WHILST SOUPS ARE AN ENDURINGLY POPULAR - AND NUTRITIOUS - CHOICE.

Pre-prepared stocks and sauces bring many advantages to the hospital kitchen, not least of which is peace of mind when catering for dietary requirements, the prevalence of which is increasing. The Free-From Foods Market Report 2021 by Mintel UK, highlights that the 'free-from' sector in the UK broke through the £1bn mark in 2020, up 16.9% on the same period in 2019. Caterers have to offer meals to suit all patients, staff and visitors, regardless of their dietary requirements, and Fergus Martin, Development Chef at Major International suggests one way of doing this is sticking to allergen-free products, which eliminates the risk of cross-contamination and mistakes being made.

"Thanks to many years of research and development, our free-from range of stocks and sauces is indistinguishable from the products they're designed to replace," Fergus explains.

"At Major, we're committed to supporting our customers with a wide range of free-from ingredients. Many of our stocks, sauces and gravies are 'no allergens to declare', meaning our customers know they can rely on us to deliver exceptional flavour, texture and taste with added peace-of-mind. Almost our entire range of products is gluten free, making them suitable for coeliacs, and

"Using pre-prepared stocks and sauces also makes it easy for caterers to tap into high street trends, offering theme days and dishes with authentic flavours from around the world"

they are made in a state-of-the-art, nut-free site. Many are also certified as vegetarian and vegan.

"For ease, and quick identification, our packaging is clearly labelled with all relevant allergy information and our website contains a handy, downloadable suitability chart for further information."

Using pre-prepared stocks and sauces also makes it easy for caterers to tap into high street trends, offering theme days and dishes with authentic flavours from around the world. "A report by Mintel titled 'World Cuisines UK' from March 2020, found that 81% of consumers were looking for a 'flavour adventure' when eating out, and as a trend, this is certainly something that can be adopted on a hospital menu.," Fergus continues. "For a hospital, the use of pre-made stocks and sauces on a menu is about three key elements - authenticity, meaning as near as to scratch as possible, time saving and consistency."



MAJOR'S MARI-BASE RANGE MAKES IT EASY TO OFFER AUTHENTIC WORLD FLAVOURS, IN THIS CASE MOROCCAN VEGETARIAN CHIMICHANGAS



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At Essential Cuisine, we are here for you every step of the way. We understand that making stocks from scratch can be very costly and consumes a lot of time and energy. Our gluten free, highly versatile and easy-to-use range is available to offer you a consistent, time-saving solution.



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*Meets 2024 salt targets set by Public Health England.



ESSENTIAL CUISINE'S FROZEN SAUCES AVAILABLE FROM CENTRAL FOODS

Authenticity is particularly important when catering for global flavours. "Our Mari Base products showcase the very best global flavours. From Tex-Mex favourites such as Barbecue, Fajita and Caribbean Jerk, to Pan-Asian variants such as Korean, Oriental and Tandoori, as well as our Keralan and Sri Lankan bases."

The Major Mari Base range is gluten-free and uses a water-based recipe, meaning the products are versatile and have multi-use application, suitable for adding directly onto protein as a marinade, or using to create rich sauces, dips and soups. Available in 11 world cuisine flavours, the range is completely vegetarian certified, with nine of the products also being suitable for vegans, and many of them allergen-free.

Major has taken a pioneering approach to product development, including the use of a world-leading expert sensory panel to define what is gold standard. "Our ambition is to shape the future of food by becoming the partner of choice to our customers, delivering insights and on-trend recipes utilising our product portfolio," Fergus explains. "We use only the finest ingredients in our range and ensure all of our products are gluten-free, contain no added MSG or palm oil and meet the latest 2024 salt targets - giving you added peace of mind."

Major's range of gluten-free stock powders, created by chefs, delivers consistency every time, and flexibility in use. They offer a cost-effective and convenient solution for caterers who don't have the time to make their own stocks from scratch or don't want to have to make multiple stocks, sauces and condiments to cater for different dietary requirements. They are available in seven flavours - beef, chicken, lamb and fish, as well as three vegetarian certified, cheese, mushroom and vegetable, the latter two also being vegan certified. Major Gluten Free Stock Paste is available in 13 varieties, including one vegetarian certified and five vegan certified products.

FROZEN OPTIONS

Single-serve, frozen portions of sauces are a real asset in the professional kitchen, according to Gordon Lauder, Managing Director of frozen food distributor Central Foods.

"Individual portion sachets of sauces offer lots of advantages to any catering team," he says. "They are available in a wide variety of flavours, they are always on hand in the freezer to deal with unexpected demand, and they help to avoid unnecessary waste."

"The recently launched Essential Cuisine range of frozen sauces available to the foodservice sector via Central Foods is also entirely gluten-free which means the products are suitable for coeliac diners and others who avoid gluten. Being individually portioned means there's less of a cross contamination risk too."

Stocks and sauces are a key part of many dishes, providing important flavour and texture. When staffing issues or skills shortages are a challenge in the kitchen, pre-prepared products are the ideal solution.

Some classic sauces such as Hollandaise or Bèarnaise are notoriously tricky to make from scratch, so it's especially helpful to have these options in the freezer.



"Fortification is essential to those who are malnourished, and adding nutrients to soup is an ideal opportunity. Making soups with legumes and pulses is ideal, but it may not go well with all the flavours, such as tomato soup. To add creaminess to the soup, add soya cream, to thicken soups use soya protein powder instead of cornflour. Adding nut butters enriches the soup with natural oils which aids creamy mouthfeel, but also adds healthy fats and protein. Serve soups with 'sour cream' like silken tofu or soya yoghurt, or with sliced almonds, tahini or even houmous for a little special twist." Justina Bajorinaite, Roving Chef, Vegetarian for Life.

<https://vegetarianforlife.org.uk/recipes/lighter-meals/pea-super-soup>

https://vegetarianforlife.org.uk/files/Fortification_guide_2021.pdf

The new Premium Frozen Range sauce selection from Essential Cuisine, exclusively available from Central Foods, features seven different flavours - peppercorn, Diane, Hollandaise, Bèarnaise, red wine and shallot gravy, blue cheese, and smoked bacon and mushroom. The sauces can be served in a wide variety of ways with meat, vegetables, burgers, open sandwiches and a whole lot more. Simply heat, snip and serve!



BGL RIEBER SUGGESTS HEAT-SEALED FOOD BAGS FOR DECANTING AND STORING SOUP AND SAUCES

FROM SCRATCH

When making soup in the hospital kitchen, a combination kettle with automated stirring is the essential piece of equipment, according to BGL Rieber Managing Director Gareth Newton. "A combi kettle guarantees consistent results, saves labour and uses the least energy per portion for large batches."

BGL Rieber has calculated that using a Metos combi kettle a portion of soup could be prepared and cooked off for as little as 1p energy cost. "Combi kettles help pay for themselves. They have been proven reliable and long-lasting and have minimal maintenance costs compared to conventional equipment. They are also ideal kitchen tools because they suit all forms of NHS catering, including cook fresh, cook chill and cook freeze."

Accessories such as heat-sealed food bags and depositing equipment make decanting soups quick, easy and safe. Metos has also devised a labour-saving, hands-free method of blending soups using an optional lid attachment in the kettle. This also means soups and sauces can be made to any consistency, ideal for different dietary needs.

"For cook fresh kitchens, nothing beats creating a fresh batch of soup because just one batch makes many dishes," Gareth enthuses. "A simple tomato base, for example, can be built into various tomato-based soups and sauces for pizza and pasta. Even if all the food is bought in, the kitchen can create a fresh batch of soup daily for patients, retail and staff meals. Tomato-based soup is the nation's favourite and needs only tinned or frozen ingredients, seasoning and water; the rest is heating, stirring and time."

To boost nutrition, the key to creating foods for special diets is the ability to tailor recipes in volume and content. Here the combi kettle comes into its own. The 60-litre Metos Proveno 4G for instance is ideal for



"Tomato-based soup is the nation's favourite and needs only tinned or frozen ingredients, seasoning and water; the rest is heating, stirring and time"

creating smaller batches of special recipe soups because the pre-programmed recipes take the chef or kitchen operative through the process of adding ingredients in the correct order, leaving the combi kettle to do the rest automatically.

RATIONAL's recommendation for making soups from scratch is its iVario Pro advanced bratt pan, which includes pre-defined settings for both soup and soup under pressure, and takes operators step-by-step through the process, enabling 400 servings of vegetable soup to be prepared in 35 minutes.

With the iVario Pro, operators can cook soups from scratch, in bulk, in a fraction of the time it would take in conventional cooking appliances. Once a process has been identified, it's easy to develop and programme so that it can be replicated, to ensure consistency.

The iVario Pro's even heat distribution ensures that soups are cooked uniformly. This prevents scorching or uneven heating

that can negatively affect the final product and increase waste. There is no need to constantly monitor as the iVario will communicate and alert operators when they need to stir.

Several optional features and accessories also assist with soup production. An integrated socket enables soup to be blended in the pan, avoiding the need to decant. There is also an optional colander accessory to pass soups through, as well as a scraper to facilitate the efficient removal of products, meaning less wastage.

RATIONAL cooking systems allow for easy customisation of cooking programmes to meet specific dietary needs and preferences, whether dishes are made fresh or using pre-prepared stocks. With the impressive speed and ability to cook large quantities, stocks can also be made in bulk, in advance, even overnight. The optional intelligent pressure-cooking function enables stocks and soups to be cooked up to 35% faster than in conventional appliances, without any loss of quality.

The RATIONAL iVario Pro can also be used to re-heat ready-made or convenience products, such as powdered soup mix for instance. Eighteen litres of water can be boiled in the RATIONAL iVario 2-S in eight minutes as opposed to between 30 and 40 minutes on a stove, which is a significant time and energy saving. A chef could potentially make 18 litres of soup in only 10 minutes. 



bglrieber.co.uk
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SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RECYCLING WITHIN THE NHS

WORKING IN COLLABORATION WITH ITS SUPPLIERS TO REDUCE CARBON AND IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY IS A LARGE PART OF THE NHS' JOURNEY AS IT HEADS TOWARDS THE PROMISED NET ZERO BY 2040.

Leading provider of meals into the Healthcare sector, apetito, is one such supplier that leads the way in sustainable practice and shares a commitment to reach Net Zero by 2040 alongside the NHS. The company believes in acting now – and that means looking to innovate in new ways.

For example, apetito has now collected and recycled over 15 million of its trays through its consumer business. Its closed-loop recycling process known as 'Project Boomerang' is the first ever of its kind on an industrial scale.

Following a successful pilot scheme earlier this year with three hospitals, this innovative new scheme is not only the NHS' first closed-loop recycling system for meal trays, but it's enjoying rapid adoption and is now operating in close to 20 sites with plans to extend across all apetito's NHS customers over the next year.

Under the 'Project Boomerang' scheme, all the plastic trays used in apetito's CarteChoix and Specialist Nutrition ranges can be collected by apetito when new meals are delivered. The trays are then recycled into plastic flakes before being transformed into new trays, here in the UK.

Most importantly, apetito guarantees that 100% of trays returned will be recycled into completely new trays.

This innovative initiative is setting the stage for the transformation of the Healthcare industry by introducing a closed-loop recycling system on an industrial scale, while simultaneously providing high-quality and nutritious meals to NHS trusts and hospital caterers.

NSECH IS ONE SUCH EARLY ADOPTER AND SHOWCASES BOOMERANG

The Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital (NSECH) in Cramlington opened in 2015 and is England's first purpose-built specialist emergency care hospital, dedicated to providing emergency care.

The hospital treats seriously ill or injured people from around Northumberland and North Tyneside, who require immediate care from a specialist.

NSECH has emergency care consultants working on site 24/7 with other specialists providing services seven days a week. The hospital has 337 beds and a 72-hour average length of stay for patients who are admitted to the emergency site.

NSECH has been returning its meal trays since April 2023. So far, the Trust has returned 1.3 tonnes of trays, reducing wastage costs, as well as a significant saving of 827kg of CO2.

A spokesperson for NSECH explains how Project Boomerang has been implemented across the Trust.

"Here at NSECH, we intend to be Net Zero by 2040. That runs through every operation that we have. Not just our estate, it covers every area of functionality, including catering.

"We take waste very seriously and Project Boomerang is a 'stand-out' project because the catering team has totally run with the idea of recycling the trays and each member of the team has taken it as part of their job. This is what's needed at every hospital that we have in the Trust.

"Boomerang has reduced waste going out to our general waste and is totally in line



APETITO'S CARTECHOIX RANGE COMES DELIVERED IN RECYCLABLE PLASTIC TRAYS



with our sustainability strategy and green plan to reduce waste. And it has been highly successful and is now an integral part of our waste management targets.

“We now need to replicate this across all our hospitals, so it simply becomes business as usual. We want a closed-loop system across all our sites and if we can reduce waste arising from all our catering teams, then that stands with our Net Zero 2040 target.

“With CO2 savings of 827kg to date, we’ve made a pretty good start and we envisage Boomerang being unrolled in the same way as we have here to every other site we have. It’s been an excellent showcase for other NHS trusts”.

Project Boomerang has evidenced that apetito’s commitment to recycling goes beyond mere compliance with environmental regulations. It reflects the company’s dedication to enhancing the communities it serves and reducing ecological impact. This responsible approach to business not only contributes to society but inspires and encourages other organisations to follow suit.

By creating a closed-loop recycling system on an industrial scale, apetito has demonstrated that sustainability can be achieved without compromising the quality of care provided to patients. In fact, it enhances the overall quality of service, as it addresses the concerns of a more environmentally conscious generation.

REDUCING WASTE EVEN FURTHER....

It’s not just the trays. Food waste is also central to best practice.

apetito’s plated meal system and support during implementation results in a reduction of waste, which costs the healthcare sector alone £230 million each year, according to WRAP, with over 120,000 tonnes of food waste and 49,000 tonnes of associated packing waste.

apetito’s CarteChoix plated meals are cooked for the specific individual, which compared to portioned meals, can save up to 50 per cent of food wastage, adding to both NSECH’s and apetito’s targets to reduce wastage. 🌱

For more information on how apetito can help transform the meals service in your hospital or healthcare setting, visit www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/hospital-meal-services or call us on 01225 637 717.



NEW PRODUCTS

COOK MOVES INTO HOSPITALS WITH 24/7 VENDING OFFER

COOK, a pioneer in frozen ready meals, has successfully launched its frozen vending machines into hospitals. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Margate, William Harvey Ashford and Medway Maritime are the first hospitals in the country to sell COOK's hand-prepared, frozen ready meals, providing a delicious hot meal offering 24/7, including Chilli con Carne, King Prawn Linguine and Portobello Mushroom Risotto with an average price of £5.35. Freezing means wastage is reduced to a minimum.

Jonathan Pinnick (Catering Lead Manager, 2gether at East Kent NHS Trust) says: "We are thrilled to be partnering with COOK to offer the East Kent Trust and 2gether staff the opportunity to access nutritious, tasty and balanced meals. We hope having home-cooked tasting meals available 24/7 will help support the wellbeing of our staff, and in turn help them care for our patients."

COOK vending works on a six-month lease basis, with a three-month break.

[Enquire at vending@cookfood.net](mailto:enquire@vending@cookfood.net)



APETITO COOKS UP NEW WINTER WARMERS

apetito has added nine new dishes. The allergen-free range now includes energy-dense dishes Cottage Pie, vegan Butterbean and Cauliflower Curry, and vegan Tomato Soup. The plant-based choices have been extended with Vegan Root Vegetable Pie, Leeks in Cheese Sauce and Root Vegetable Medley.

Individual Apple Crumble is the perfect dessert option for multiple dietary requirements, being energy-dense, low in salt, and the crumble topping is vegan and gluten-free. Within the traditional range, new Salmon Tagine is energy dense, gluten-free and a great oily fish option.

For patients with a sweet tooth, apetito's pastry chefs have developed a new gluten-free Lemon & Orange Pudding; the perfect alternative to the company's popular Lemon Sponge.

apetito has also launched some festive additions to its Christmas range, including Wiltshire Ham served with an Orange & Cranberry Sauce and a new Cauliflower, Broccoli & Stilton Crumble. Festive Fruit Crumble, Mincemeat Bar, Brie & Cranberry Turnover and Curried Parsnip Soup return, and for hospitals using CarteChoix, patients will be able to choose Curried Parsnip Soup, Sliced Turkey with Roast Potatoes, Carrots, Sprouts, Stuffing and Gravy, and Christmas Pudding with Custard.

For patients with swallowing difficulties apetito's Level 5 and 6 Roast Turkey with Redcurrant and Orange Gravy are new Christmas dishes, joining its Level 4 Turkey with Stuffing, so everyone is able to enjoy the taste of Christmas.

apetito.co.uk/our-service/hospital-meal-services

MEIKO LAUNCHES SPACE-SAVING COMPACT POT WASHER AND UTENSIL WASHING MACHINE

The Meiko M-iClean PF-S potwasher is a slimline pot washing powerhouse that is optionally available with energy-saving heat recovery. At only 775mm wide and 898mm deep, it takes up less than one square metre of floor space. However, the large wash chamber - measuring a massive 830mm high - takes everything a potwasher must, including crates, sheet pans and kitchen utensils.

A fold-down weighted security grid with chains is optionally available to stop lightweight pans and reusable plastics from moving around or rotating during the powerful wash.

The lower front door hinges release to allow the bottom door to fold flat, providing ergonomic access for cleaning or loading heavy pans.

Meiko's Blue operating concept identifies the removable parts that need to be cleaned manually. Optional extras include AirConcept heat recovery and Meiko GiO reverse osmosis water treatment.

Three wash programmes provide up to 30, 15 and 10 cycles per hour.



meiko-uk.co.uk



NEW PANASONIC APPLIANCE OFFERS PERFECT RICE-ULTS!

Panasonic UK has added a new Electronic Rice Cooker, the SR-UH36F to its range of professional cooking appliances. Featuring 1400w power and a 3.6-litre cooking capacity, the design of the new unit incorporates wrap-around heaters to offer improved heat retention, holding rice at the correct temperature for up to 12 hours - making the SR-UH36F a reliable, durable piece of equipment for commercial kitchens looking to cook perfect rice and deliver consistency without the fear of over-cooking.

Offering 360-degree triple heat, the SR-UH36F incorporates a heater housed within its lid, dual heaters in its base (a pair of completely circular heating coils which ensure uniform, even heating) and side heating to give consistent warmth. Its Thermal Reed Switch (TRS) maintains and monitors heat for improved temperature monitoring and control, and glass wool heat insulation keeps the temperature and protects the body of the unit from overheating.

This precision temperature control and functionality guarantee the quality of the cooked rice. The SR-UH36F's steaming vent and dew collector prevent the sogging of rice, and the non-stick coated inner cooking pan makes clean-up easy and minimises food waste.

panasonic.co.uk/pro-cooking

PHAT PASTY CO ADDS SEASONAL SPECIALS

The Phat Pasty Co is adding two new festive options to its pasty and pie ranges for the Winter period.

Christmas Dinner Pasty, handmade in Cornwall, filled with British turkey, bacon, sausage with cranberries and a sage & onion seasoning and wrapped in a shortcrust pastry, is a perfect seasonal grab-and-go option.

For main meals the Scottish Estate Venison & Red Wine Pie is a large, 285g baked pie ready to serve with vegetables of your choice. Venison is seen as sustainable and is high in protein.

The new pasty and pie are both supplied frozen and are available across the country via Bidfood and other national and local wholesalers.

phatpasty.com



NEW CLEANING SYSTEM FOR ICOMBI PRO TABLETOP UNITS

With the iCareSystem AutoDose, Rational now offers an integrated cleaning and reserve cartridge system as an option for the selected iCombi Pro tabletop units. Cleaner and care products are securely stored in the cooking system in solid form, enabling autonomous cleaning, either at the push of a button, or according to a cleaning schedule.



The iCareSystem AutoDose starts either at a specific time, or at the push of a button whenever it fits into the daily routine. Cleaning can be programmed separately for each day according to appliance usage or the weekly schedule. The iCombi Pro automatically retrieves the cleaning products in the required concentration from the loaded cartridges.

The iCombi Pro always keeps the user up to date and warns if, for example, the amount of cleaner product falls below a certain level or when cleaning is due. This information is displayed directly on the cooking system panel or via ConnectedCooking, the Rational kitchen management system.

rational-online.com

THE FUTURE IS NOW X-GENERATION FROM UNOX

Unox has launched X-Generation, its new flagship combi oven which it says sets a new standard in performance and user-machine interaction in a professional kitchen. With the release of CHEFTOP-X™ and BAKERTOP-X™ the way chefs interact with their combi oven is changed for good.

X-Generation takes inspiration from the way we interact with our intelligent smartphones. Ovens feature Digital.ID™, for a fast, intuitive and fully customisable interface, complete with hyper-connectivity enhanced with artificial intelligence.

CHEFTOP-X is the perfect oven for use in foodservice, while BAKERTOP-X is devised specifically for the needs of bakeries and pastry shops. Intuitive and designed to learn from the intricacies of each chef, both ovens instinctively adapt to a kitchen's preferences, asking for the operator's feedback after each cooking process to improve and align cooking performance with expectations. The ovens are equipped with state-of-the-art technology including HEY.Unox which enables chefs to voice-operate their ovens, and SMART.Energy, a system that is capable of reducing and optimising consumption and CO2 emissions.



unox.com

STEAM AND SMOKE CONDENSATION HOOD FOR THE ELOMA COMBI STEAMER

Taylor UK is now supplying the KH1 Pro Multi-Eco condensation and smoke hood system for the Eloma Joker combi steamer. The KH1 Pro combines the functions of a condensation unit and air filtration system in one. It is designed to prevent steam and grease particles from being released, allowing the Joker to operate without needing additional exhaust and ventilation systems, with no effect on the quality of cooking results.

The KH1 Pro uses a powerful, four-stage filtration system to achieve this, comprising grease filter, particle filter and an active carbon filter which remove particulates and odours, and finally a flame protection filter that prevents the excess steam and smoke from being released into the room.



taylor-company.co.uk

BLAST CHILLING IS BEST WHEN IT'S FAST CHILLING

Williams Refrigeration has released a new version of its reach in blast chillers and blast chiller/freezers which provides significant improvements over previous models. The new models ensure safety regulations for chilling food are followed by rapidly chilling through the danger zone where harmful bacteria can grow, to a safe storage temperature.

The range now uses natural hydrocarbon refrigerant which has low Global Warming Potential and zero Ozone Depletion Potential.

Chilling and freezing times have been reduced compared to previous models, while a powerful food probe sensor can save energy by stopping the cycle as soon as the food reaches the required temperature. A powerful self-regulating system protects the compressors whilst cooked food is being loaded by cooling down the system before the programme cycle is activated. The reduction in chilling and freezing times helps to deliver significant savings in energy compared with previous models.

williams-refrigeration.co.uk





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- CROWDALE FOOD SERVICES LTD
- DELICE DE FRANCE
- FRESH FAYRE LIMITED

- GREENFIELD FOOD COMPANY LTD
- H N NUTTALL
- JJ FOODSERVICE LTD
- MJ SEAFOOD
- MORRISONS PLC
- NH CASE LTD
- THOMAS RIDLEY AND SON LTD
- TREVOR'S WAREHOUSES LTD
- W MCCLURE LTD
- YEARSLEY FOOD LTD

MULTI TEMPERATURE PRODUCTS

- AIMIA FOODS LTD
- BFS GROUP LTD T/A BIDFOOD
- BRAEFORGE LTD T/A PENSWORTH
- BROWN BROTHERS LTD
- CEREAL PARTNERS UK
- CLEGG'S CHILLED FOOD SERVICE T/A MARK CLEGG & COMPANY LTD
- DAIRYGOLD FOOD INGREDIENTS UK
- H.J. HEINZ FOODS UK LTD
- HARVEY AND BROCKLESS LTD
- IVORY & LEDOUX LTD
- JUICEWORKS LTD
- KELLOGG
- LAKELAND DAIRY SALES LTD
- LITTLE TOWN DAIRY LTD
- MARRILLO FOODS LTD
- MARTIN MATHEWS & CO LTD
- MCCAIN FOODS
- MEDINA DAIRY LTD
- MIDDLETON FOOD PRODUCTS LTD
- NESTLE UK LTD
- NH CASE LTD
- NUTSHELL PACKAGING
- PREMIER FOODS LTD
- SILVER PAIL DAIRY



NEW BEGINNINGS FOR NHS SUPPLY CHAIN: FOOD'S DPS AND CHEFS ACADEMY

NHS SUPPLY CHAIN: FOOD IS CELEBRATING THREE INCREDIBLE YEARS OF CHEFS ACADEMY.

After identifying a gap in training and resources for NHS chefs, NHS Supply Chain: Food launched Chefs Academy in October 2020 and has since provided over 25 exceptional training experiences across the UK. Over the last three years, the Chefs Academy team has motivated and inspired over 200 members through immersive, hands-on culinary experiences. They have shared new, innovative recipes based on seven delicious culinary concepts and provided chefs with the opportunity to share and network with their peers, as well as equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to elevate catering offerings and progress their personal and professional development. Amongst the standout achievements of the Chefs Academy, in addition to witnessing the growth of attendees, the team won the 'Training and Apprenticeship Award' at the Public Sector Catering Awards 2022.

Abigail Attenborough, Nutrition Compliance Manager at NHS Supply Chain: Food says: "I truly believe in the importance of delivering our Chefs Academy events. I have been so pleased with the passion from attendees. With its third birthday being celebrated, there is clearly an appetite for learning, developing and growing amongst NHS chefs and catering staff. These events demonstrate how combining relevant, tailored training programmes with delicious, new recipes, we can not only help to motivate and inspire the great chefs working within our NHS Trusts, but also attract and develop younger catering leaders. It's a privilege to be part of a growing culinary education piece that is only going to get bigger and better - watch this space!"

NHS Supply Chain: Food extends its appreciation and gratitude to all who have been a part of the academy's success over the last three years and eagerly anticipates its growth and expansion. To celebrate, NHS Supply Chain: Food will be hosting a special birthday event in Bristol and welcomes you to join in the festivities.

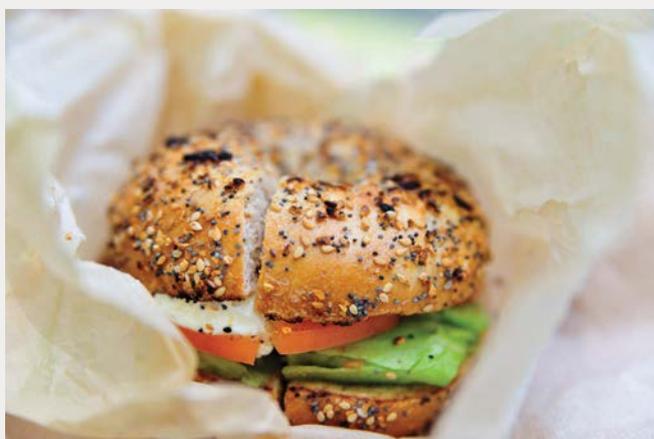
The next Chefs Academy event will take place on Wednesday, November 22 from 9am - 3pm at Cobbs at The Farm, Stratford-upon-Avon.

'FOOD TO GO' DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM (DPS)

Following on from the enormous success of the Fresh Food DPS, NHS Supply Chain: Food is continuing its mission to innovate and drive real change in food procurement with the launch of the second DPS agreement, Food To Go.

The new open-market solution, which provides greater flexibility and variety, offers an extended range of retail categories, including Patient Feeding Solutions and Café Retail Feeding Concepts.

The new café retail feeding concepts offer a range of products, including but not limited to patient feeding sandwiches, salads, and snack pots, retail sandwiches, salads, sandwich fillings, cakes,



street food, snack pots, pies, pastries, pizza, frozen desserts and ice cream, chilled and frozen drinks, grab-and-go and branded equipment linked to food brands.

The Food To Go DPS will be in place until September 20, 2030 as a minimum. NHS Supply Chain: Food encourages teams to share their local suppliers to be included on any or all of the product categories for Food To Go, to help drive better solutions for patients, staff and visitors whilst supporting the local economy.

LOOKING FORWARD INTO 2024

As the year draws to a close, NHS Supply Chain: Food is putting the finishing touches to another successful year, setting the table for another Food Forum which will be held early next year, whilst preparing two culinary concepts to dish out in 2024. NHS Supply Chain: Food wishes you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful new year and is excited to serve up a whole menu of delicious food and products, innovations, and exciting projects for 2024. ⑦



THE LAST WORD



SHELLEY PEARSON-SMITH AND ERICA BELL COMPETING IN THE 2022 NHS CHEF FINAL, WHICH THEY WON

THE LAST WORD

A NEW SERIES IN WHICH HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE SHARES THE VIEWS OF INDIVIDUALS WORKING WITHIN HOSPITAL CATERING SERVICES ABOUT THEIR WORK, THEIR MOTIVATION AND WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE. THIS SERIES BEGINS WITH **ERICA BELL** AND **SHELLEY PEARSON-SMITH**, ASSISTANT HEAD CHEFS AT STEPPING HILL HOSPITAL (STOCKPORT NHS FT).

ACHIEVEMENT

Winning NHS Chef of the Year last year. It was a lot of hard work, but great fun. It also made our job more interesting as we now have a greater motivation to produce amazing dishes. We've experienced so much after winning that we wouldn't otherwise have had a chance to do, such as spending a day with the great brigade of Chefs at the House of Commons, and lunch with the Worshipful Company of Cooks at Innholders' Hall, plus our collaboration with Kitchen Prep UK to help develop a range of meals. We have formed a lifelong friendship in the time that we have spent together.

DEVELOPMENT

The collaboration between NHS England and Churchill to introduce a range of visually appealing crockery is a great initiative. This has been designed to be a like-for-like replacement for the old NHS crockery so that lids and trays still fit, and Trusts save on the cost of buying new. Available in two shades of blue, this range has been shown to aid nutrition in patients and reduce plate waste by making food more visually appealing than on the white china, which can make dishes look quite flat.

CHANGE

Later staffed hot food service; 2pm is too early for the staff restaurant to shut, and 24hr vending solutions can only go so far.

The range and value for money that we could provide with an in-house service would be far greater, but when it has been tried in the past the uptake from staff and visitors hasn't been enough to make it economically viable.

MOTIVATION

Working with great ingredients in a well-equipped modern kitchen with a system that allows us to modify the menu on a regular basis. We are feeding patients high-quality, varied food which aids their recovery. We are all working together with the mantra "Let food be thy medicine" - the better the nutrition the quicker patients recover and can be discharged home to their families. We are lucky that we have a great team around us at Stepping Hill, all of whom are trying to improve the image of hospital food, both within the hospital itself and at a national level.

SUPPORT

We feel that there should be more direction for Trusts that are struggling with their food production and variation. The national menu bank is a great initiative but we feel that some Trusts would struggle without more guidance on how to adapt recipes for their equipment and service style. So more education, alongside visiting chefs from NHS England would be beneficial. 🗣️

THE FINAL MENUS

East Lancashire:

Cauliflower Three Ways - Tempura, Chargrilled & Pureed; Spiced Moroccan Cakes and Mixed Beans with Red Cabbage, Apple and Carrot Slaw; Pan-fried Duck Breast, Confit of Duck Leg Croquette served with Glazed Carrots, Fried Midnight Kale and Golden Beetroot with a Red Wine Jus; and Ember, Chocolate, Rock and Pop Crumble served with Caramel Drops and Orange Tulle.

The Woodlands:

Seabass Fillet; Beetroot Wellington; Pie & Mash; and Mille Feuille.

Wye Valley:

Beet the Goat; Secret Garden Lasagne; Black Duck Do; and Apple Jack.



SPICED MOROCCAN CAKES

THE 2023 FINALISTS:

- **Guy's & St Thomas's NHS FT:** Mary Garcia & Marti Canal
- **Solent NHS Trust:** Jim Richardson & David Williams
- **Stepping Hill Hospital (Stockport NHS FT):** Nick Roberts & Wun Suen

Making the second week:

- **Glenfield Hospital (Leicester University Hospitals NHS Trust):** Andy Berry & Joseph Joseph
- **Hereford County Hospital (Wye Valley NHS Trust):** Les Beare & Josh Banner
- **Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS FT:** Gill Owen & Dan Roberts
- **Royal Blackburn Hospital (East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust):** Dylan Lucas & Darby Hayhurst
- **The Woodlands (Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS FT):** Ryan Corbett & Laila Darlington
- **West Suffolk Hospital (West Suffolk NHS FT):** Connor Gutsell & Glen Stone



THIRD PLACE: LES BEARE AND JOSH BANNER

separating the first and fourth teams. If you could bottle their work ethic, skills and positive attitude you could take this anywhere in the world and be successful."

THE FINAL DAY

The teams were given four hours to put into practice the skills they had demonstrated during the competition and produce what could be the most important service of their career to date. They were asked to present a starter, two main courses - one of either meat or fish and one vegetarian - and a dessert, serving three plates of each. One course had to be low carbon, one allergen free and one dish had to use at least one ingredient from the kitchen garden.

Host, Tim Radcliffe, Net Zero Food Programme Manager, NHS England comments: "This year we have seen more innovation and complexity of flavours, and a real understanding of using fresh, local ingredients, especially from the on-site garden."

Joining the judging panel for the final day was Lisa Goodwin-Allen, Executive Head Chef at the Michelin-starred Northcote Restaurant in Lancashire. Lisa told the Hospital Caterer: "The food and hospitality industry is so diverse, but I believe that everything stems from the family table - Michelin starred food or hospital meals, we all share the same passion. We have one amazing industry, and we can all learn from each other to make our environment, hospitality and food even better. This competition has given these fantastic chefs a platform to



SUPERB PRESENTATION WAS A FEATURE OF MANY DISHES

shine. I am impressed with the inspiration that each of them has put onto their menus. I have seen some real passion on a plate and some great flavours."

After careful consideration, the judges named Dylan Lucas and Darby Hayhurst as the overall winners with Ryan Corbett and Laila Darlington as runners up, and returning chefs Les Beare and Josh Banner in a creditable third place. We will be talking to Dylan and Darby in a future issue.

As part of the presentation, Simon Corben, Head of Profession and Director of NHS Estates and Facilities, NHS England paid tribute to all the teams saying: "I love this competition, it has been an absolute joy to see NHS Chef grow. Everyone must be amazingly proud of what they have all achieved."

using any of the ingredients available in the larder. The mentors were allowed a ten-minute consultation before this challenge began. Then the scores were totalled up and a decision made about who would progress to the final day.

Sadly, Glenfield Hospital had to withdraw from the second week due to illness, and it was the teams from West Suffolk and Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Hospital who were stood down at this stage.

Nick Vadis, Head Judge and Culinary Ambassador, Compass Group UK & Ireland says: "The nine finalist teams have been exemplary, there were only four marks



JUDGES NICK VADIS, LISA GOODWIN-ALLEN AND TIM RADCLIFFE

NHS CHEF 2023 WINNERS CROWNED

DYLAN LUCAS AND DARBY HAYHURST FROM THE ROYAL BLACKBURN HOSPITAL HAVE BEEN CROWNED AS THE NHS CHEF 2023 WINNERS AFTER AN EXHAUSTING SIX DAYS OF CHALLENGES.



This is the third year of the NHS Chef competition and nine teams from across England qualified for the finals, which moved to a new venue, Seasons Cookery School in the grounds of the prestigious Lainston House, near Winchester.

The teams had already had their skills tested at the regional finals before the traditional mentoring event at Parts Town UK's premises in Cannock. Each team was assigned a mentor, who are as keen to win as the competitors!

Stephen England, Head of Culinary Operations South, Medirest explains: "It is the mentors' role to get the teams to fully understand the importance of competition cooking and feel comfortable cooking with equipment and ingredients that perhaps they are unfamiliar with. First and foremost, this is a cookery competition; every dish has to not only hit the brief but be of the highest quality if your team is to progress."

To get the finals underway the teams

were given the recipe and method for a cauliflower, sweet potato and beetroot curry with rice, with the purpose of the round being to test their understanding of the importance of following a recipe. Whilst all nine dishes had their positives, only two had followed the instructions for how to present the dish, a point that was not lost on the judges.

Lainston House has its own walled vegetable garden, and the chefs were treated to a tour by the head gardener, with the offer to use some of the produce over the following days - really good for reducing the food miles!

The first afternoon saw an ingredients recognition round, which also tested the mentors. This was followed by the Choux Challenge, which resulted in some excellent dishes. During the rest of the first week the chefs were tasked to produce a plant-based dish; something that could be easily replicated for a retail offer in a 24/7 environment; an innovative breakfast suitable for a patient menu; and a children's challenge.



At the end of the week three teams were eliminated. Phil Shelley, Senior Operational & Policy Manager at NHS England says: "It's always hard to say goodbye to the first group of chefs, but this year the competition was even higher than we have seen before. It is a positive sign that our efforts to encourage great chefs into the NHS are working."

To start the second week, the remaining teams were asked to create a healthy eating concept suitable for a take-away retail menu, and three energy-dense dishes that could be eaten in no more than six mouthfuls. One dish had to contain 7-10g protein, another 12-15g protein and a final one containing 8-12g protein. At least one dish had to be allergen free. A further requirement was for each dish to contain between 300 and 450 kcal per item, which tested the chefs on their dietetic knowledge.

The following day offered two more challenges. Firstly, the chefs were asked to create two desserts, one hot, one cold and at least one had to be allergen free. This was followed by a Wildcard Challenge,

2023 MENTORS & JUDGES

Mentors:

Michael Sharp, NHS Supply Chain
Bruce Toon, Medirest
Stephen England, Medirest
Martin Wright, Medirest
Keith Turrell, HIT Training
Erica Bell & Shelley Pearson-Smith, Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport NHS FT
Rodney Lankester, Rational
Alan Higginson, Rational
Evan Welsh, Hobart

Judges:

Nick Vadis, Compass Group UK & Ireland
Lisa Goodwin-Allen, Northcote Restaurant
Tim Radcliffe, NHS England
Emma Brookes, NHS England
Phil Shelley, NHS England

OXFORD AND LONDON SOUTH EAST CELEBRATE LBF FORTNIGHT TOGETHER

AS PART OF LOVE BRITISH FOOD FORTNIGHT, THE HCA BRANCHES OF OXFORD AND LONDON SOUTH EAST GOT TOGETHER ON THE ROLLING FIELDS OF THE WONDERFUL OXFORDSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE.

Honeydale Farm, a diverse 107-acre mixed farm in the Cotswolds offers an educational experience as well as farm-fresh produce for the local area. This was an ideal location for the two Branches to meet for their first face-to-face outing since the pandemic. They enjoyed a talk from Jonty Brunyee, a Consultant to FarmEd, about the not-for-profit organisation's passion for regenerative agriculture and farming alongside nature before being taken on a walk around the farm.

The group saw how the strip fields can become more productive by the use of organic methods without the need for harmful chemicals. During the visit they witnessed how the kitchen garden produced boxes of food for the local community as a commercial venture, before walking through the meadows and heritage orchard.

Following the tour a well-deserved lunch was enjoyed by everyone. As this was Love British Food Fortnight, the meeting concluded with an inspiring talk from LBF's Director, Alexia Robinson, who praised the work of the Hospitals and Care Catering Group, co-chaired by the HCA Vice Chair, Ian Robinson.

For more information about the group visit, see: lovebritishfood.co.uk/love-british-food-hospitals-and-care-catering-working-group

Love British Food is planning four more farm visits for next year in Norfolk, Buckinghamshire, Wales and Durham, details of which will be published shortly.

Further details of the regenerative farming practices at Honeydale Farm can be found on p32-33 of Hospital Food + Service.



OXFORD & LONDON SOUTH EAST BRANCH MEMBERS

SOMERSET NHS FT RUNNERS-UP IN LBF COMPETITION

The Love British Food competition aimed to find and honour the people who are doing the most to make good food available for all in their community. Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, led by Facilities Manager Anna Warman, was recognised for the work that has been done across acute, community and mental health sites.

During LBF the Trust held lots of events, including a food quiz with a basket of British goodies for the winner, as well as a fruit and vegetable hamper, a voucher to spend with a local butcher and some coffee and a reusable cup - all donated by local suppliers, many of whom also donated hampers, cakes, cream and other goodies for staff and patients to share.

During the fortnight, all patient menus displayed a Union Jack heart to highlight the British products, and Trust-wide displays promoted local, British suppliers, such as on a map of the South West highlighting where the Trust sources British products.

Other quintessentially British events included a British breakfast, afternoon teas and British apple tasting competition, and one site encouraged staff, patients and volunteers to have lunch together, making a real social occasion of the mealtime.

The competition was judged by three Love British Food Ambassadors: author, Jenny Jefferies, film maker and campaigner Claire Mackenzie and Emily Ashworth of the Farmers Guardian.



JANE WILLS, ANNA WARMAN & AMANDA VICKERY
RECOGNISED FOR THEIR CELEBRATION OF BRITISH PRODUCE





FROM FRONT, GOING LEFT: STEWART NIMMO, DEBORAH MCNEILL, CAROLINE DARVILL, NICOLA STRAWTHER, JANICE GILLAN, IAIN ROBERTSON, BRIAN ROBB AND MARGARET VALENTI
PICTURE TAKEN BY CRAIG SMITH, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT

THE NATIONAL CHAIR AND THE EXECUTIVE VISIT NORTHERN IRELAND

THE HCA NATIONAL CHAIR, BRIAN ROBB HAD BEEN INVITED TO ATTEND THE NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH'S STUDY DAY, SO HE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE THE IDEAL OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM TO PULL TOGETHER THE EXECUTIVE TEAM FOR THEIR FIRST FACE-TO-FACE VISIT SINCE THE PANDEMIC PUT AN END TO OPEN TRAVEL.

As the Northern Ireland Branch had organised a study day at La Mon Hotel and Country Club, Newtownards, so the team gathered the day before to hold their meeting. An open invitation had been given to the Northern Ireland Branch offices to attend in an observational capacity, however, they were all busy ensuring that the study day and supporting exhibition were set up correctly. [See page 5 of this issue for a report on the study day].

Since Covid, the Executive and Board meetings have been held online, which certainly has its advantages, but nothing can beat the opportunity of debating issues in an open forum and seeing each other in person. This meeting lasted considerably longer than the online ones do, and had a very full agenda.

The team were able to consider an update of the Forum held earlier this year in Birmingham as well as taking a full briefing on the planning for the 2024 Forum in the Glen. [See page 9 of this issue for the early bird booking details]. The Treasurer was also able to give a full presentation on our financial situation, something that is much easier to do face-to-face as opposed to across a screen.

Another debate that is easier to have when everyone is together in the same room is around the forward-looking strategy of the Association. This had been put on the back burner during the pandemic, but Vice President Alison McCree had provided the group with a first-class template to work on. Over several fortnightly meetings the Executive team had been studying each element of the strategy, and it was good to have the

time to look at some of the elements in more detail. There will be more about this in upcoming editions of Hospital Caterer.

The meeting was considered to be a great success, especially as most of the Executive were also able to attend the Study Day the following day. It is hoped that this idea will be replicated in the future, allowing the hosting Branch to send representatives to see how the executive decisions are reached on their behalf.





FORUM IN THE GLEN FOODSTILLMATTERS

HCA LEADERSHIP
& DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2024

17-18 April 2024 - At The Macdonald Aviemore Resort
In Cairngorms National Park, Scotland



- Food Safety
- The Vision for HCA

A series of interactive workshops designed to generate delegate participation and shared outcomes will also run across the two days and will benefit all in their workplace planning.

It will be a packed two days and further information regarding the programme will be available at: www.hcaforum.co.uk.

EXHIBITION

Over 70 exhibitors will share new products and service initiatives. The hospital sector is fast moving and always subject to pressures and strains of delivery, but the fantastic supply chain that supports our work is always developing ideas that will help improve

the service. The exhibition is your chance to catch up and find out what is new.

NETWORKING WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

The President's Dinner is on Wednesday night and this is where the Association hosts its annual awards ceremony. This year we will have an 'Oscars' style twist to the evening that will help celebrate the amazing work produced by hospital caterers across the four nations. We will soon be calling for nominations, so look out for emails and information on websites and social media about how to enter.

THURSDAY, APRIL 18

The Branch Dinner theme is a closely guarded secret but given we are in the highlands you can expect some proper Scottish hospitality. More information will be shared on the Forum website in the next month.

SEE YOU THERE!

We look forward to welcoming you to Scotland and encourage you to join us in Aviemore in April 2024.

So, visit the website (www.hcaforum.co.uk) and get booked in. If you have any queries speak to Jo or Laura, by calling 0845 108 5504 or emailing: HCAForum@dewberryredpoint.co.uk or contact any of the Forum Management Team.

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT

In 2023 we introduced an 'Early Bird' booking discount for those that book before January 31. It proved so popular that we have the offer available again for 2024 with discounts saving around 7.5% on the regular price.

Visit: www.hcaforum.co.uk to book now!



BRIAN AND COOS



COO ON A TRIP TO AMERICA



COO ON A TRIP TO AMERICA



COO IN CANADA



Coo In Canada

MARGARET VALENTI,
HOSPITAL CATERER MANAGING EDITOR
WITH A HERD OF COOS



LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2024

17/18 APRIL 2024, THE MACDONALD AVIEMORE RESORT



**KAREN MCLAUGHLIN, NORTHERN IRELAND
BRANCH CHAIR AND COO**

COOS REUNITED

National Coo Service continues with 'Forum 24' promotion spreading far and wide by our furry little McMoos.

In October McKiltie and McFudge travelled to Belfast and attended a National Exec meeting under the watchful eye of big daddy Glen, (and a stern warning from Brian Robb...).

The following day the visiting herd were let loose at the Northern Ireland's Branch Annual Seminar where they were reunited with Yin Horn and Radcliffe. The little moos enjoyed centre stage and a bit of mischief was had at the trade exhibition.

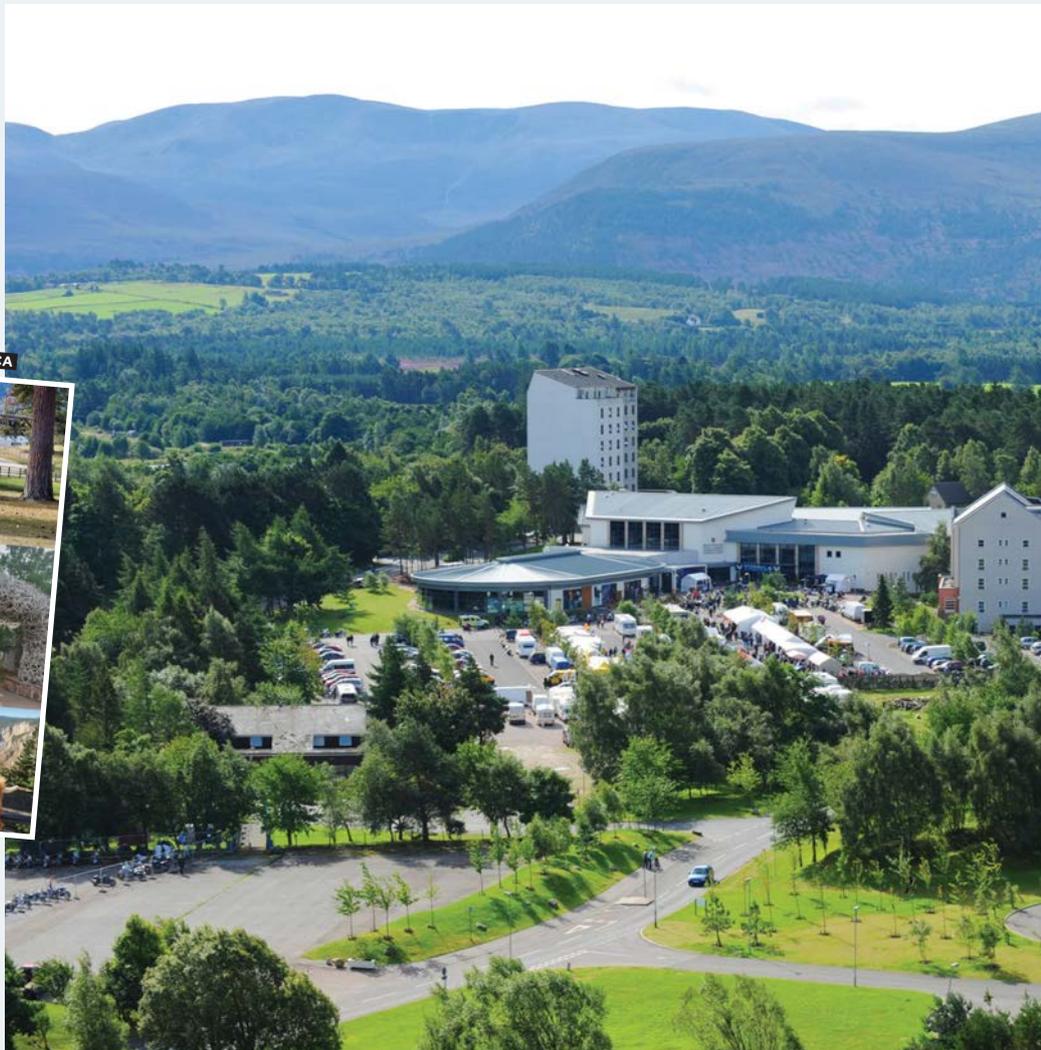
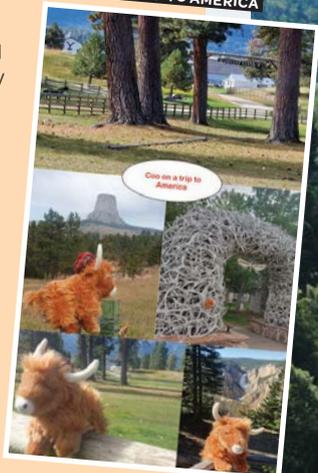
Meanwhile the rest of the mischievous moos remain busy out in the field spreading the news. Some new friends have also been made - lovely young Branch custodians who have been looking after them exceptionally well.

More McMoo updates can be found on the Forum website.

And remember to use the website to send your updates and photos directly to us so that we can share.

<https://hcaforum.co.uk/9/mccoo-tour-hca-2024>

COO ON A TRIP TO AMERICA



IT IS NOW ONLY FIVE MONTHS UNTIL THE WEST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH WELCOMES YOU ALL TO THE 2024 LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT FORUM IN THE BEAUTIFUL HIGHLAND RESORT OF AVIEMORE.

The fresh air, beautiful scenery and warm welcome that will greet you are the perfect backdrop for networking with peers and colleagues, absorbing information and sharing great work practice away from the busy hospital environment we all operate in.

PROGRAMME

Plans are going well; we have an excellent programme of speakers coming together for the two-day event, which the Forum Management Team (FMT) know that delegates will find relevant and beneficial

in their job roles. The title for 2024 is 'Forum in the Glen' with a sub-title 'Food Still Matters' and the programme will look at many of the current issues that we all face whilst providing exceptional catering services within the NHS across our four Nations. The programme will include subjects like:

- Sustainability
- Food waste
- Four nations panel debate on the Good Food Nations Act, the Government Buying Standards for Food and similar devolved legislation
- Staff Wellbeing

COO IN CLIFTON



SOUTH WEST BRANCH

Report by Jane Wills

Over the August bank holiday weekend, Nick Cryer undertook a sponsored walk along the Jurassic Coast and raised a fantastic £388.89 to add to our total amount raised for the Lyme Regis lifeboat station.

Nick and I went to present a cheque to the crew this week, for the total amount raised to date which is an astonishing £6,200.00.



WEST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by Margaret Valenti

The last Branch meeting was held on Wednesday, November 1 at Bidfood's Hospitality Hub at Larbet.

A product promotion from 'Best Foods' was given by our Bidfood hosts who showcased new frozen food items with a focus on retail catering.

Quorn also provided a product presentation delivered by development chef Mark Wetherill and National Account Manager Gordon Murray. In addition to other items new 50% meat-50% Quorn recipes were promoted where people can still eat meat with the following advantages:

- Lowering fat intake
- Increasing fibre intake
- Lowering carbon footprint.

A warm welcome was extended to new Branch Patron Mike Lloyd who gave a very informative presentation on the LoSalt product. He gave an overview of associated studies and the health benefits from reducing salt intake.

The meeting was well attended and it was great to see everyone again in person.

Thanks were given to Ian Stonebridge and Kevin Chalmers who very kindly hosted the event.

The Branch AGM and Christmas Dinner will be held on December 8.



HCA PLEASED TO SUPPORT NACC'S CALL TO SAVE MEALS ON WHEELS

The HCA is adding its voice to that of the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) and other industry bodies, in calling for urgent intervention from the Government in the wake of a damning report that shows vital Meals on Wheels services are on the brink of collapse. The report reveals only 29% of services are still in operation across the UK.

Meals on Wheels supports older and

disabled people to live independently in the community by reducing the risk of malnutrition, loneliness or social isolation. Alongside at least one nutritious meal every day, the regular caring contact helps reduce avoidable health and care costs; BAPEN reports that malnutrition costs the UK taxpayer £19 billion per annum.

The NACC asserts that there is a direct link between the decline in public

spending on the service and the increase in community-based malnutrition, and that a boost to spending could significantly reduce financial burdens to health and social care systems. It is asking the Government to implement statutory responsibility for the provision of Meals on Wheels and lunch clubs in the UK, and that funding be ringfenced for support in delivering these essential services.



SELL-OUT THIRD UK IDDSI FESTIVAL FOCUSED ON SAFE AND DIGNIFIED DINING

Caterers, suppliers, professional and clinical bodies convened for a one-day festival in September, which brought together hundreds of stakeholders involved with food and drink for people with swallowing difficulties. The HCA was represented officially by National Vice Chair Iain Robertson, and Executive member Nicola Strawther.

Keynote presentations included Kathleen Graham from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists discussing the current and in-progress position statements on the use of drink thickeners. Mindy Bhalla from the CQC spoke about regulation and the ways it can support care providers. Speech and Language Therapists Hannah Crawford and Sam Bradley provoked deep thought on patients' mental capacity and exploring the wider risks. Dietitian Alison Smith chaired a large panel of speakers to debate issues with the audience in lively Q & A sessions.

The Festival also featured live cooking demonstrations, and members of the audience were able to taste food and drink samples for themselves, from thick mocktails to delicious and nutritious fortified snacks.

HOSPITAL CHEFS SHOW PORTSMOUTH COMMUNITY HOW EASY IT IS TO COOK HEALTHY FOOD

Hospital chefs Naz Ahmed and Dave Williams led a hands-on workshop at Portsmouth's Mental Health Festival designed to show people how to make delicious salads and shortbread biscuits. Volunteers got stuck in mixing up shortbread, rolling dough and cutting out biscuits before creating a selection of salads, including rice, Waldorf, feta and beetroot, and chilli and potato.

The practical workshop was run in conjunction with the Chat over Chai community group, with whom Naz regularly works to promote healthier food options for people with diabetes. As well as leading the workshop, Naz and Dave, both based at Southampton's Western Community Hospital, cooked a lunch of chickpea and spinach soup, plus potato and cauliflower biryani, for 100 people.

Iain Robertson, Catering Operations Manager at Solent NHS Trust, says: "Our chefs are highly experienced in cooking nutritious food for so many different patient diets. It's great to see them working in the community, where sharing their food and nutrition knowledge - as well as their cooking skills - can have a huge impact on people's lives."



OXFORD BRANCH

Report by Mabel Blades
WE ARE DRAGONS.

For around three years Oxford Branch members have been breathing fire during meetings, holding some Branch meetings in a 'Dragons Den' format. This replicates the well-known Dragons Den programme found on the BBC, which most will have seen, where innovative ideas are showcased to the Dragons who may offer to invest in the idea.

The Oxford Branch does something similar. Producers of all sorts of items from full kitchen refits to footwear are asked to provide a short presentation of around six minutes to Branch members, aka Dragons, via Teams. After the presentation members are able to ask questions and follow up with participants, maybe arrange to visit them to hold



further discussions if they are interested.

Sometimes the presenters bring slides or actual equipment if the items are small enough. The event is not without its technical (IT) problems, which at times have prevented some slides being seen. Overall it is great fun, with lots of laughter and requests to hold pieces of small equipment higher or to rotate them so that they fit on the screen. The accompanying pets add even more fun - the honorary budgie from our retired treasurer and my tom cat who is besotted by any trolleys, and I have trouble getting him to stop patting the screen!

It is a fun way of having a meeting to cover a number of innovative products, which is easy and less worrying for presenters, and we have a stream of people wanting to present. Other Branches may like to use the idea for their meetings.

WESSEX BRANCH

Report by Fiona Sinclair

After a busy summer of face-to-face events and meetings, Wessex Branch meetings during both September and October were held online. During the October meeting FSG Tableware gave an interesting presentation about reusables - FSG has a wealth of experience supplying hospital Trusts.

The Wessex membership has now climbed to 53 which is the most we can recall!

It was lovely to hear from Stella Gardener, who as one of our life members has been organising social get togethers with other retired hospital caterers. They've held two lunches so far and there are now 11 retired caterers in the group. Stella says: "On Friday September 29, seven of us had a great get together at the Empress of Blandings in Copythorne. This pub used to be called the Old Well, so Kevan (Wallace) suggested that we call this group the 'Old Well Club'." The next date for the 'Old Well Club' is Friday, March 22, 2024.



Stella has kindly said that any retired hospital catering people out there who would like to join them are welcome - please do get in touch.

NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH

Report by Karina Watterson

Since the last report, the Branch has had an enjoyable and educational visit to David Irwin's Dairy Farm in Dervock, County Antrim, held a Branch meeting in the beautiful Glenarm Castle on the North Antrim Coast, and its annual seminar study day in La Mon Hotel, Belfast.

David Irwin is a Marks & Spencer (M&S) Select dairy farmer, and the group heard how his 230 pedigree Holstein Friesian cows are fed on a 100% soya-free and grass-based diet, supplemented with nutritious cereals and pulses to produce delicious milk and other dairy products.

Members also learned about new technology in dairy farming. For instance, a piece of equipment called the 'Rumen Bolus', which is administered orally by a farmer or veterinarian and then remains in the cow, feeding information about that animal's welfare, such as temperature, water and food intake, to David and his team. This helps to provide early prevention of infection or illness allowing a larger yield of milk.



At the Branch meeting at Glenarm Castle the theme was resilience, and the Rev. Don Gamble, Lead Chaplin from the South Eastern Trust delivered an informative session that left everyone feeling better equipped to handle the everyday stresses of modern life. This was followed by ceramics painting with Zara McLaughlin, a local artisan potter and artist.

On October 4, the annual seminar, with the title 'Together is Better' was hosted by National Chair, Brian Robb. The day started with Danielle McCormick presenting Guardians of Grub, encouraging us all to reduce food waste.

Gill Murphy, Assistant Director of Nursing Safety, Quality and User Experience Northern H&SC Trust updated delegates about the implementation of the Safety Pause, sharing challenges and triumphs of implementation.

We then heard from Joanne Deery and Jill Stewart, Dietitians from Northern H&SC Trust. Joanne guided us through the 3rd Edition of the BDA Digest and Jill told us about progress with Nutritional Standards.

Shane O'Neill and Phil Rooney from South Eastern H&SC Trust and Angela Dickson and Darren Taggart from Northern H&SC Trust shared their experiences of participating in the HRC 4 Nations Challenge 2023 in London, and Brian Robb and Iain Robertson, National Vice Chair, laid out the entry criteria and encouraged catering managers to enter teams for 2024.

Over lunch, delegates were able to visit the exhibition - where 22 exhibitors showcased their products over 33 stands - and were able to catch up with catering managers and provide solutions to challenges.

Linda Vladeanu, Interim Assistant Director, Prevention and Population Health from South Eastern H&SC Trust outlined the various initiatives currently taking place to improve staff health and wellbeing.

We were honoured to be joined by National Executive for our seminar, and hope they were able to learn a little of what shapes hospital catering in Northern Ireland.



BEST IN CLASS WINNERS OF THE 2023 HCA 4 NATIONS CHALLENGE

HCA 4 NATIONS CHALLENGE 2024 LAUNCHES

Following the success of last year's event, the HCA is delighted to announce the launch of the '4 Nations Challenge 2024' to be held once again as part of the HRC show based at the London Excel on March 25, 2024.

NHS chef teams of two have been invited from each nation to come together and showcase their catering skills. Last year in the live cooking theatre every team achieved a coveted medal which was a wonderful achievement to gain in such a highly respected event.

Last year's Best in class winners, Alan and Jim were invited by the event sponsor Unox to attend a two-day VIP study tour in Venice and to visit the Unox global headquarters located in Padova. The boys had a fantastic trip in September where they saw the latest innovations being produced by Unox and observed a full cooking demonstration in their arena. They also enjoyed a tour of Padova, a visit to the local food market and some free time in Venice.

Jim and Alan also took the opportunity to promote the fast approaching HCA Forum 24 in the Glen with their Branch mascot.

This event is free to enter and is only open to chefs paid directly through the NHS, or through its contracted catering suppliers who prepare staff, visitor and or patient meals. The teams representing England will be automatically secured from the current NHS England Chef of the Year competition.

This is a fantastic opportunity for our talented chefs to demonstrate their skills and to raise the profile of hospital catering.

For further information on next year's event please contact your Branch secretary or email: Margaret.Valenti@ggc.scot.nhs.uk



LAST YEAR'S WINNERS WERE HOSTED ON A STUDY TOUR TO VENICE AND PADOVA WITH SPONSOR, UNOX, ACCOMPANIED BY BRANCH COO, WHO MADE FRIENDS WITH UNOX CHEFS

TRENT BRANCH

Report by Helen Westwood

Trent Branch had our first full face-to-face meeting in September, at ReFood in Doncaster. Members were fully kitted up to do a site visit and look at the food waste collector turning all waste into usable energy.



TRENT BRANCH MEMBERS AT REFOOD

EAST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by Loraine Hartley

At the end of September a Branch team building day was held at the Holyrood Distillery in Edinburgh, where Gin and Whiskey were sampled before dinner at the Auld House, home of Edinburgh's largest nachos.

A committee meeting on October 3, saw our Chair having to wear sunglasses due to the lovely weather ... yes, you guessed it. Sean was not in Scotland. On October 24 the Branch held a business meeting with some good discussions on the programme for 2024 - one to watch.

The Branch Christmas lunch will be held at DINE in Edinburgh on Friday, November 24, followed on Friday, December 8 by the AGM. Any changes to Branch places will be updated in the New Year. Dates so far for 2024 include the first Committee meeting on January 9 and the Branch Dinner on January 19.

McFudge continues to see the world, experiencing lots of new things and is being kept busy. Keep following him on X (formerly twitter) and the Forum website because he is a winner.

The Branch would like to wish everyone a great, happy and successful 2024.





OUT AND ABOUT

OCTOBER SAW THE ASSOCIATION'S EXECUTIVE TEAM START WHAT WILL HOPEFULLY BECOME A NEW TRADITION WHEN WE ATTENDED THE NORTHERN IRELAND STUDY DAY, AND HELD OUR EXECUTIVE TEAM MEETING ON THE PRECEDING DAY, THE FIRST FACE-TO-FACE SINCE 2020 AND POST COVID.

This was such a good opportunity for the Executive team to get out and about 'en-masse', and to participate in a Branch event, meeting members and supplier colleagues who support the Northern Ireland Branch and the HCA in general. It's good for the Executive team to be visible to the members and I would like to think we can repeat this across the 4 Nations.

I was particularly impressed to hear from the four chefs who represented Northern Ireland at our first 4 Nations Challenge earlier this year. Shane O'Neill and Phil Rooney from South Eastern H&SC Trust and Angela Dickson and Darren Taggart from Northern H&SC Trust gave a talk that I can only describe as infectious, outlining the full experience of travelling to London to showcase their cooking skills at this event. It was clear that they had taken so much from participating, and that they are still living the experience; even considering re-entering for 2024. I sincerely hope they do. Any catering manager listening to these four speak could not fail to be enthused about the

possibilities and rewards from supporting their staff to enter such an event.

At the end of October, I attended the Public Sector Alliance (PSA) Expo in Coventry. I'm a member of the PSA and represented the HCA in a panel debate, speaking to the 'state of the nation'. We discussed several subjects, but high on the agenda were staff - recruitment and retention - and the ongoing effect that current inflation is having on managers. It was a really good Expo and an excellent opportunity to network with National Chairs from other organisations serving the public sector.

As this issue reaches you, most Branches will be holding their AGMs. I've received a few invitations to attend Branch AGMs in person and I will be attending the West of Scotland AGM on December 8. If any Branches want a National Officer to attend their AGM virtually, please do get in touch.

Work is now starting on plans for the third annual National Healthcare Estates & Facilities Day on June 19, 2024. The National Chairs of all supporting

organisations, which includes the HCA, have been contacted to reconfirm their support and meetings are now being scheduled to build on the success of the previous two years and make the 2024 celebration day the best yet. Do make sure it is in your diaries and start to think about what you can do across your service to make the day special for all staff.

This is the last issue of the Hospital Caterer for 2023 and indeed there are only a few events left. The East of Scotland Branch is celebrating Xmas early with the Branch Xmas dinner on November 24, which I am looking forward to attending. The next big event is a PSA meeting at the House of Commons on December 14 and those discussions will set the scene of Public campaigns for 2024.

It just remains for me to wish you all a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year. I hope you all manage to enjoy some quality time with family and friends, have a rest and recharge the energy levels for 2024.

Brian Robb
National Chair Director

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HOSPITAL CATERER

FOOD STILL MATTERS

Early bird bookings now being taken for the 2024 Leadership & Development Forum

HCA 4 NATIONS CHALLENGE

Time to start thinking of entering your chef teams for the 2024 showcase

NORTHERN IRELAND HOSTS

The Executive team holds a meeting in Belfast and visits the Branch study day



Darby & Dylan crowned winners of NHS Chef 2023