

HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE

THE PATIENT / THE WORKFORCE / THE VISITOR

MAY/JUNE 2024

VEGAN & VEGETARIAN

Packing flavour and nutrition into a wider choice of meat-free dishes

SUSTAINABLE SERVICE

Finding out why the carbon footprint of food miles is not as significant as you might think

ON SITE

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WELCOME

OUT AND ABOUT

FROM THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS TO THE CITY OF LONDON, IT'S BEEN A BUSY TWO MONTHS WITH EVENTS SINCE THE LAST ISSUE OF HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE.



At the HCA 4 Nations Showcase, spectators witnessed a great display of cookery skills from seven teams of NHS chefs, on one of the biggest stages that there is – Salon Culinaire as part of the HRC at London's ExCeL. Salon Culinaire is widely recognised as one of the top competitions in the world for chefs, with the award of 'best in class' being coveted by top chefs – from Michelin Star holders to the innovative chefs of today who will be the industry leaders of tomorrow. Really well done to all the chefs who took part. Flip this issue and turn to p14- 15 of the Hospital Caterer for a more detailed report.

Then of course the eyes of hospital catering turned to the Scottish Highlands, specifically the Macdonald Resort in Aviemore, for the HCA's annual Leadership & Development Forum. It was an excellent event in a beautiful setting, and the organising team used the facilities of the venue to great effect, for instance, the awards ceremony was held in the theatre-style auditorium before guests took their places for the President's Dinner. We report from Aviemore on p12-13 of this issue, and in Hospital Caterer p10-13.

I'm proud to be a member of the HCA's Oxford Branch, which was a deserving winner of the Chairman's Choice Award. Of course, I would say it was a deserving winner, but really, it is true. When I first joined, some seven or more years ago, Oxford was very different to the vibrant Branch it has become – membership numbers were challenged, meetings were not well-attended, activities were staid. In comparison today it is buzzing, and that is mostly thanks to the hard work and efforts of our Branch Secretary, Mabel Blades and Chair, Steven Hall. So, I reiterate, this was a very well-deserved award win, and thank you to Mabel and Steven for making it such a welcoming and supportive Branch to be part of.

We've also had the Health Estates & Facilities Management Association's (HEFMA) Leadership Forum in recent weeks. Another excellent event, the speaker programme included a session featuring E&F matrons and the impact they are having on patient care, including in food service, where they are helping to bridge the gap between clinical and non-clinical staff. We will return to this in a future issue of HFS.

Our regular features in this issue include On Site (p8-11) where we take a closer look at the CPU at St Richard's Hospital in Chichester, which opened some four years ago. Discovery Den (p20-21) has a report on reducing carbon in hospital menus from the Round Table event in February co-hosted by apetito and HEFMA, and our Sustainable Service feature focuses on food miles (p18-19).

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.

Amanda Roberts

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NHS CHEF 2024: OPEN FOR ENTRIES

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR TWO-PERSON TEAMS TO ENTER NHS CHEF 2024. NOW INTO ITS FOURTH YEAR, NHS CHEF PROVIDES PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE, MENTORING AND PEER NETWORKING THROUGH WHICH CHEFS ARE GAINING KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE – AND ULTIMATELY SHOWCASE – THEIR SKILLS.

“The challenges faced by NHS chefs over the past few years have been unprecedented. This has not, however, stifled innovation or creativity,” says Phil Shelley, Chair of the Food Review and Senior Operational & Policy Manager for NHS England. “This year’s competition will focus on reduced saturated fats, sugars and salts and be nutritionally sound. All menus will be shared across the NHS and form part of a wider national NHS Menu Bank.”

Regional events will be held in July and August, and the winners will move onto a three-day mentoring event to be held in Cannock



from September 3 – 5. The national final will be held in York from October 13 – 18. The exact format of the final will be shared at the mentoring event when the teams are assigned their mentor.

Full information about NHS Chef 2024 can be found on [FutureNHS](#).

LOVE BRITISH FOOD HIGHLIGHTS BENEFITS OF BUYING BRITISH

Following a landmark meeting with public sector stakeholders, Love British Food has released a report detailing the key findings from the event which discussed increasing the supply of British-sourced food into UK public sector supply chains.

The key recommendations from the report include:

- To increase farmer understanding of the public sector as a customer, and to encourage more farmers to view the public sector as a viable partner
- A commitment to encourage and maintain progress where it has been made
- Strengthen commitments to buy British in the new Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services
- Promote a higher level of understanding of the potential opportunities provided by the Crown Commercial Service buying system, the UK’s largest public procurement organisation
- Encourage foodservice providers to include a ‘Buy British’ category in product listings.

The discussion between the relevant stakeholders will continue through a new Love British Food podcast, with the approach detailed within this report framing future efforts. Love British Food will also continue to lead engagement with two more farm visits already planned for this year, and will continue to engage with stakeholders through two industry working groups.

The report is available to download from the Love British Food website: lovebritishfood.co.uk/public-procurement-hub.



NUTRITIONAL FAILINGS IN ACUTE MEDICAL UNITS FLAGGED BY HSSIB

The Health Services Safety Investigation Body (HSSIB) has published a report (following a legal investigation) which it is hoped will support improvements in the identification of malnutrition and management of nutritional needs for patients within acute medical units (AMUs).

The investigation used a real patient safety incident in which the nutritional needs of a 61-year-old man were not met during a 19-day stay in hospital, (13 days in AMU), resulting in him losing up to 26% of his body weight within a six-week period. In spite of a nutritional screening using MUST (Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool) having been carried out, the scoring did not reflect his actual risk of malnutrition. Attempts to feed the patient via a tube were unsuccessful and he did not receive sufficient nutritional support.

Although this event took place during the pandemic, the HSSIB investigation identified that the findings are still relevant to the healthcare system today. These include the changing nature of the role of AMUs with increased length of stay, the difficulty of carrying out nutritional screening when short-staffed or relying on agency workers, and lack of availability – or use – of digital systems that could support staff in managing initial and ongoing nutrition assessment.

HCA WELCOMES NEW NATIONAL CHAIR

Iain Robertson, Catering Operations Manager at Solent NHS Trust, has succeeded Brian Robb as the National Chair of the Hospital Caterers Association, HCA.

In his first welcome to the Hospital Caterer since taking up the role, Iain explains how the HCA's new Strategy – launched at the Forum in Aviemore in April – will provide the Blueprint for his next two years. In particular, Iain is keen to develop the membership to make it more inclusive and open to anyone working in – and with a passion for – hospital catering, be they chef, catering assistant or manager. Flip this issue to read the full message.



SURREY HOSPITAL STAFF CATERING SCORES BEST IN THE COUNTRY

The catering team at Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (ASPH) in Surrey has been rated best in the country by their colleagues at the Trust.

In the 2023 NHS Staff Survey, sent to more than 1.4 million NHS workers across all Trusts, 64% of staff working at ASPH positively responded to the question, 'I can afford nutritious and affordable food while I am working' – compared to a national average of nearly 54%. It's the first time this question has been included in the survey, which is carried out every year to improve staff experiences across the NHS.

Since the new approach to hospital staff catering, pioneered working with Neller Davies, satisfaction scores increased from 52% in 2020 to over 70% in 2022. And despite lowering prices by 15% to ensure all staff could afford tasty, nutritious meals onsite, average spend went up by over 20%. Demand increased to the point where a new kitchen was built and opened in March 2022.

ASPH staff have been treated to pop-ups, takeaway dishes, themed days, guest chef events, barbecues and an ice-cream parlour, all initiated and led by a motivated catering team.



EAT MORE FISH TO PREVENT DISEASE AND SAVE THE NHS £MILLIONS

Eating just one more portion of fish per week than current levels could save the NHS up to £600 million every year, a study in England has shown. Furthermore, this change in behaviour could prevent up to 4,900 cases of type 2 diabetes and 18,000 cases of all types of cancer. It could also save businesses up to £360 million per annum, due to the better health of their workers and reduced amount of sick leave.

NHS guidelines recommend that a healthy, balanced diet should include at least two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish. However, Defra estimates seafood consumption across England is half the recommended level at just over one portion a week, and consumption is on the decline.

This preliminary research was commissioned by Seafish, the public body supporting the UK seafood sector to thrive, and carried out by Risk & Policy Analysts (RPA) and Health Economics Consulting (HEC) at the University of East Anglia (UEA). They explored how the health benefits of eating fish might translate to wider positive impacts for the economy.

Fish is a leaner and often less processed source of protein compared to other protein options, with lower fat content. Oily fish also contains long chain omega-3 fatty acids that support good heart health. Eating more fish and shellfish as part of a balanced diet could help individuals lose weight, reduce obesity, lower cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

PROTEIN-ENHANCED ICE CREAM WINS AGAIN

Researchers from Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust (NUH), who are working to improve nutrition among older patients, are celebrating two new wins for their protein-enhanced ice cream, Nottingham Ice Cream (N-ICE Cream™) at the prestigious Business Awards UK Food Industry Awards.

N-ICE Cream, now available in additional flavours – strawberry, salted caramel and mint alongside vanilla – won both the Innovative Food Product and Best Health and Nutrition Product categories.

Commenting on the award win, Professor Opinder Sahota, Consultant in Ortho-Geriatric medicine at NUH and Honorary Professor at the University of Nottingham (who is leading the research into N-ICE Cream), said: "What is most important is that we create opportunities for more patients to benefit from N-ICE Cream, which has been developed to address the serious problem of malnutrition and muscle weakness among older people."

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SUPPORTING THE NHS TO PROVIDE MEAL AND SNACK TIME RESOURCES

A joint project by The Patients Association and NHS England has identified several areas where NHS resources supporting meal and snack times in hospital could be strengthened or improved through minor amendments.

Participants in an online focus group held in February made a number of recommendations, key among which was the need to be clearer in describing the reasons why a patient may need help during meal and snack times. The group suggested aligning the staff and patient resource by highlighting the need for staff help in ordering meals and snacks.

The report notes the importance of the mealtime coordinator role and suggested mentioning it in the resource for patients, not just in the staff resource. Participants also raised concerns about the lack of clarity over bringing food in from outside for patients. The group recommended written resources have guidance on this issue.

It was suggested that resources highlight the significance of mealtimes as special occasions more prominently, particularly on celebratory days, which could aid in a patient's recovery process.

Participants also suggested the resources provide guidance on the availability of snacks and meals for family and friends who spend extended periods in the hospital supporting their loved ones.

The report is available to view and download from The Patients Association's website: patients-association.org.uk.

UNISON CALLS FOR MORE FLEXIBLE WORKING TO HELP SOLVE STAFFING CRISIS

NHS managers should do more to allow staff to work in flexible ways, including having more control over shift patterns or doing compressed hours*, says UNISON as data from a new survey by the union shows a significant proportion of healthcare workers are not being given the alternative work patterns they've asked for.

The survey found two-thirds (65%) of women employed in healthcare across the UK who have asked for different work arrangements had their requests agreed in full. However, more than one in five (22%) were unable to obtain flexible working. A further one in eight (13%) had their requests initially refused, but eventually found acceptable compromises.

*Compressed hours are when someone works their total contracted hours over fewer working days.

FARM LEVEL SUSTAINABILITY DATA TO INFORM BUYING DECISIONS FOR HOSPITALS

NHS caterers will soon be able to use new environmental measures for farms as part of their procurement of food and drink. Soil Association Exchange is set to deliver the environmental measures for farms in public sector purchasing as part of the Crown Commercial Service's (CCS) Buying Better Food and Drink agreement. Due to launch in late 2024, this agreement will be available for all UK public sector organisations to use through a single online access point.



As well as a shift to more dynamic food procurement – which removes barriers to allow small producers to contribute to larger public sector orders – the updated service will also use Exchange's holistic farm assessments for sustainability.

Exchange measures the environmental impact of farm operations by assessing six key areas – soil, water, carbon, animal welfare, social impacts and biodiversity. It does this by collecting data through on-the-ground farm surveys, satellite imagery and other datasets on metrics like soil carbon and bird counts, alongside considering the food production and community benefits a farm provides.

Any farmer can get involved with the new agreement by obtaining a free-of-charge sustainability score from Soil Association Exchange.

SUPPLIER NEWS

FOURTH ROYAL HONOUR FOR APETITO

Healthcare sector food producer, apetito has been honoured with the UK's highest business accolade, The King's Awards for Enterprise, Sustainable Development 2024.



Having previously won three Queen's Awards for Enterprise (two for Innovation in 2005 and 2016, and one in 2019 for Sustainable Development), apetito is one of an elite number of companies which over the past two decades have won multiple Enterprise awards in both Innovation and Sustainable Development.

This latest accolade recognises apetito's commitment to conducting business in a way that impacts positively on the environment, society and economy, and in particular 'Project Boomerang'. This pioneering sustainability initiative, initially launched through consumer business Wiltshire Farm Foods and then expanded further by its introduction into the Healthcare sector in early 2023, is the world's first closed-loop recycling system for plastic meal trays on an industrial scale and therefore a first into the NHS – supporting its own ambitious Net Zero targets.

FIRST HYBRID M&S AND COSTA COFFEE LAUNCHED AT WARWICK HOSPITAL

South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with One Retail, Compass Group UK & Ireland's retail sector and Noviniti, to transform the Warwick Hospital estate. The project is a huge investment, which will help create sustainable and accessible services alongside transforming the hospital's main entrance look, feel and flow of people.

As part of the development, the Trust is building a dedicated facility, known as an elective hub. This will increase the number of surgical procedures it can carry out – helping to meet future service demand and reduce wait times for patients.

The new entrance, which is due to open early next year, will see new retail offers launched. In a first of its kind, One Retail will combine two high street favourites. One of the retail units will offer a hybrid Marks and Spencer and Costa Coffee, bringing innovative digital screen self-ordering tech.

To ensure that the mandated 24/7 offer is also available, One Retail will introduce smart fridges, so people can access grab-and-go food at any time of the day.





METICULOUS (attention to detail)

HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE RETURNS TO ST RICHARD'S HOSPITAL IN CHICHESTER (UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS SUSSEX NHS FOUNDATION TRUST) TO SEE HOW THE MEAL SERVICE FOR PATIENTS ON THIS SITE AND AT WORTHING HOSPITAL HAS DEVELOPED SINCE ITS CPU BECAME OPERATIONAL IN FEBRUARY 2020.

“I'm really proud of what we've achieved here,” Head of Catering Services Tony Shea said as we began the tour of the CPU. What strikes you immediately upon entering is the calmness that prevails in a facility responsible for feeding up to 1,200 patients twice a day, seven days a week. As the chefs work five days a week, this means cooking, chilling, packaging, labelling and freezing in the region of 3,500 meals every day. The calmness is due to the careful planning that has gone into every aspect of this operation – not just the design and layout of the CPU itself, but the way it is used. “We've worked really hard on managing processes and improvements from a departmental management side,” Tony adds.

Firstly, the workflow has been designed to be one-way – so goods come in and flow through the facility, from stores to decant to kitchen, out to portioning and labelling before freezing and then finally picking and packing for delivery to the ward – no steps are ever retraced. This streamlining applies to work areas as well, so for instance, a corridor built alongside the kitchen itself means staff working in sealing and labelling or pick and pack do not have to walk through the kitchen, impeding the chefs, to access their work areas.

THE PROCESS

Among the many dedicated areas within this CPU, one that is key to the efficiency of the entire operation is the decant room where ingredients are weighed-up and prepared, according to the dietetic-approved recipes,



ROAST CHICKEN DINNER, APRICOT CRUNCH, SYRUP SPONGE, THREE CURRIES WITH RICE

“Key to the efficiency of the entire operation is the decant room where ingredients are weighed-up and prepared”

NATIONAL HEALTHCARE ESTATES & FACILITIES DAY



19 JUNE 2024

Last year **almost 290,000** Healthcare Estates & Facilities team members joined together and celebrated our National day to recognise the essential work of all estates and facilities professions.

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L-R: CHEFS SELJAN SEBASTIAN AND AVINASH MASIH, NATALIE MATTHEWS (PRODUCTION MANAGER), GILL RADLEY (FOOD SERVICE ASSISTANT), DONNA BOULTER (TEAM LEADER), SZEYAN CHAN (GENERAL ASSISTANT), ELMER BAINES (GENERAL ASSISTANT) AND LUKE SHEPPARD (BANK CHEF)

MENU CHALLENGES

Simple ingredient swaps have been introduced to reduce the carbon footprint impact of the menu – for example, the pasta Bolognese is now made with turkey mince instead of beef, and two other beef dishes have been substituted for chicken, although for those who want beef, the menu does include cottage pie and beef lasagne. In line with current thinking, these lower carbon options are not highlighted as such on the menu – they are simply presented as menu choices. Tony also notes that financial trends are driving some change – for instance, lamb has become very expensive and no longer features on the menu.

Some dishes have been fortified to meet the nutritional content required by dietetics. Chickpeas were added to the chicken korma, butter beans to the chicken supreme and shredded omelette to the fish pie.

WARD SERVICE

Four years ago, when the service was transformed with the opening of the new CPU, changes were also made on the wards, re-training staff into Food Service Assistant (FSA) roles reporting to the catering team. This is a move that has improved the service delivery to patients.

Every ward across both hospitals employs FSAs between 7am and 7pm, offering multiple shift patterns so staff have flexibility to commit to working times that suit them. In addition to serving patients three meals a day and providing seven beverage rounds over a 24-hour period, FSAs take food orders using the electronic patient meal ordering system that was introduced at the same time. They talk to patients about their meal choices and the most suitable portion size, and oversee the regen cooking of food, plating and serving. Within two–three hours of choosing and ordering their food, patients are eating.

THE POWER OF DATA

The dedication and expertise of the catering team together with the electronic patient meal ordering system which links to the back office for stock control, is providing an extraordinary level of data that is being used to inform decision-making. The data has provided insight around portion size which can be tailored to patient demographics on different wards, or to inform the kitchen about the most appropriate portion sizes for certain dishes. For example, on most wards only one patient will order the spinach & lentil curry, so batching that dish into six portion containers is not necessary.

One of the original exemplar sites, established following the Independent Review of Hospital Food in 2020, St Richard’s Hospital has taken part in much of the work that has been done since then. As part of its exemplar role the hospital has welcomed catering teams from many other hospital Trusts to visit, encouraging sharing of best practice and the exchange of ideas.

The data allows the catering team to be proactive and make changes very quickly. It can also flag up if and where more training is needed. A team of people look at the data, including catering ward managers and the Food Production Manager, Natalie. The menu co-ordinator, whose main responsibility is generating the ward picking sheets, also delves into the information to identify trends and areas for improvement. The team meet regularly to discuss and implement changes, proactively managing cost, reviewing recipes, what can be tweaked and supplier product changes that may be necessary.

FUTURE PLANS

There are plans to introduce a revised menu in November. It is the intention that this will include more seasonality with an autumn/winter and a spring/summer menu theme. The introduction of more lower carbon and vegan choice dishes is also likely. The vision for the future at this catering service is quite simple; continue to focus on the patient, review and seek improvement. 🍴

“The data allows the catering team to be proactive and make changes very quickly”

SHOWCASING THE BEST OF HOSPITAL CATERING

THE HOSPITAL CATERERS ASSOCIATION'S (HCA) 2024 LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT FORUM BROUGHT HOSPITAL CATERERS, DIETITIANS, FACILITY MANAGERS AND NUTRITIONAL SPECIALISTS TOGETHER IN THE STUNNING SETTING OF AVIEMORE FOR THREE DAYS IN APRIL.

Forum Facilitator for this event was TV presenter and experienced journalist, Rachel McTavish, who introduced a wide range of speakers and conducted the Q&A concluding each session. The Forum opening ceremony included the Association's Directors, Executive Team and Branch representatives with the Branch 'Coos' being piped into the auditorium in the traditional Scottish fashion, followed by a welcome and update on association activities by National Chair Brian Robb [see separate report and news items in the Hospital Caterer side of this issue for more detail].

Professor David Foskett then addressed the challenges around recruiting staff into hospital

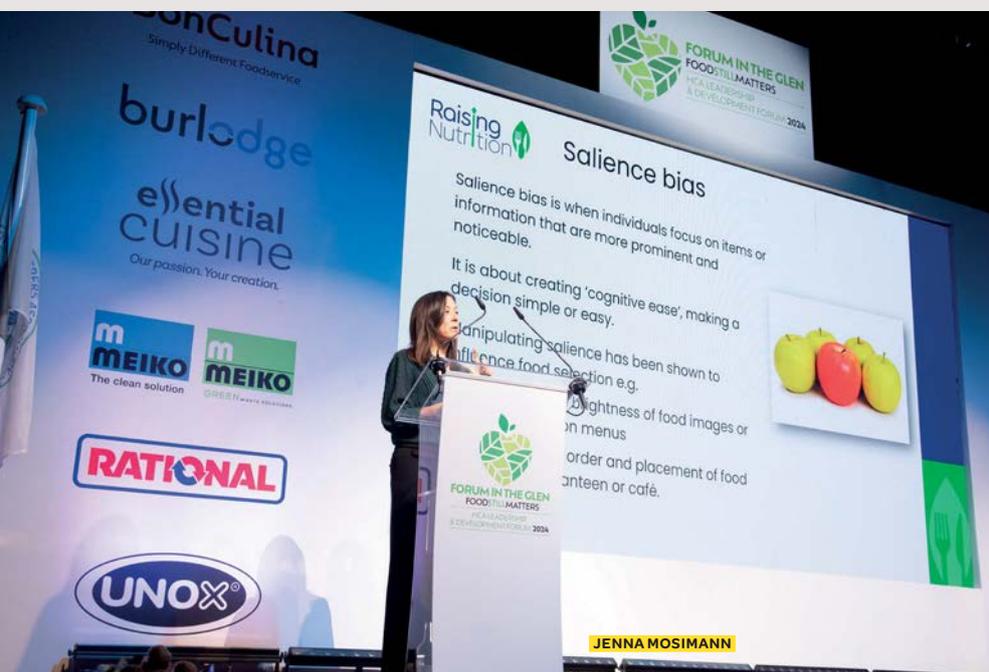
“Catering is an old-fashioned term that does not encompass fully everything that caterers do”

catering roles and he made a valid point about the terminology, saying that catering is an old-fashioned term that does not encompass fully everything that caterers do. He prefers the term hospitality, which reflects the full service – how meals are presented and delivered to the bedside, interaction with staff and the way a patient and their needs are looked after.

The afternoon of Day One began with two sessions designed to raise themes that would feed into the following workshop sessions. Dr

Hans Hartung, a Consultant in Respiratory Medicine and Staff Wellbeing & Support Clinical Lead at NHS Ayrshire & Arran spoke about staff wellbeing, linking this to productivity and organisational performance. Be kind to yourself was the starting point he recommended. He also said that little tweaks are not sufficient, and that the system needs people to change their way of thinking, have the courage to question and challenge current mental health models.

Professor Angela Tregear, University of Edinburgh, and Tim Radcliffe, Net Zero Lead for NHS England addressed sustainability. Angela focused on climate change and the impact of carbon emissions from catering across the public sector. She presented some actions to reduce carbon emissions, such as menu changes, reducing waste and more sustainable sourcing. Tim followed up with a look at sustainable nutrition. He widened the debate to include the importance not just of what we eat,



JENNA MOSIMANN



TIM RADCLIFFE



“It takes the safety pause that is practised in hospital theatres ... and translates it into food and drink”

- Patients with recommendations for eating and swallowing – what level of supervision do they need and do they have the correct meal?
- Patients with allergens
- Patients at risk of malnutrition and dehydration – do they need extra fortification prescribing, or extra helpings, and how much have they eaten and drunk?

Gill explained that a successful Safety Pause needs a mealtimes coordinator who is visible and leads the initiative. It also requires everyone involved with patient meal service – clinical and non-clinical – to share the vision, which is where relationships are critical. This team are now looking at how to apply the Safety Pause to the beverage service as well, for instance, to ensure patients with dysphagia are not served with the wrong drink. This work is now being rolled out across all Trusts in Northern Ireland, under the Mealtimes Matter Framework.

Keeping everyone awake after the lunch break, Billy Cunningham, who describes himself as the Grandfather of the West of Scotland host Branch, took us through a light-hearted history of the journey of hospital food and its rocky relationship with the media. There was a message though; caterers have the skills and the wherewithal to cook and present nutritious meals, and to recruit and train a workforce capable of meeting the highest standards. Don't obsess

over the successes or failures of the past, but remember that the decisions made today are the ones that will shape the future.

Mairi Gougeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands in the Scottish Government talked about Scotland's Good Food Nation Act 2022 and the next steps, and this was followed by a procurement-focused session featuring all four nations, represented by Phil Shelley (England), Loraine Hartley (Scotland), Rodney Smyth (Northern Ireland) and Romano Proveni (Wales).

At the end of the event, the West of Scotland Branch passed the Forum flag to Tim Radcliffe, representing the North West Branch, which will organise and host the 2025 HCA Leadership & Development Forum, with the theme of 'Food at our Core'.



but when we eat it, as well as farming practices and how food is produced. His starting point is to audit menus to identify carbon-intensive and high-cost items and look at opportunities for carbon and cost reduction.

The workshop sessions then saw delegates split into two streams, each tasked with working in smaller groups to address several questions around the issues raised, sharing their own experiences.

Nutrition, safety and procurement were addressed on Day Two of the programme, led by Jenna Mosimann and David Titman from Social Enterprise, Raising Nutrition. This session discussed understanding better nutrition using nutritional science, food science and psychology. It examined how different factors influence the food choices we make and how big brands and retailers use techniques such as emotional and environmental context to frame their product or service in a positive way.

Gill Murphy from the Health & Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland discussed the Food Safety Pause strategy. With the number of incidents being reported by staff, the Trust knew there were risks in its service, particularly around catering for patients with dysphagia and allergen controls. The Food Safety Pause is very simple. It takes the safety pause that is practised in hospital theatres before beginning a procedure, and translates it into food and drink. The focus is on four key areas:

- Patients and the medical environment – for instance, are they on oxygen, are they sitting up and do they need help?



FROM A TO B TO C

FOOD BEING SERVED TO THE INPATIENT AT LESS THAN OPTIMUM TEMPERATURE REMAINS ONE OF THE BIGGEST CRITICISMS OF HOSPITAL FOOD IN PATIENT SURVEY FEEDBACK. HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE FINDS OUT HOW THE LATEST FOOD TROLLEYS, TRANSPORT BOXES AND GOOD PRACTICE BY CATERING STAFF WILL HELP TO ENSURE HOT FOOD IS SERVED HOT, AND COLD FOOD IS SERVED COLD.

So why is food temperature often such an issue? Depending on the site and the cook/service style, meals may have to travel some distance from the kitchen to the ward. For sites with a temperature problem, Gareth Newton, Managing Director of BGL Rieber, advises working from the patient backwards, checking food temperature on arrival at the ward and then if the transport unit itself is not functioning correctly. He points out that modern distribution systems have all the benefits of technology to ensure food is delivered at the right temperature, such as digital temperature control, efficient insulation and lightweight construction. “There are many reasons why food is not served hot or cold to patients, but not all of them are down to the transport equipment,” he concludes.

For instance, food may not be hot enough when it leaves the kitchen, or it may be plated onto cold plates because there are no plate warmers, or they may not be working correctly. The ward serving staff may not be using the food distribution equipment

properly – leaving the doors open or lids off containers while serving a patient will let the heat out and allow the rest of the meals to cool down.

Serving food in warped GN containers with wonky lids is another, too common issue. ‘Non-spill’ self-sealing GN lids will ensure an airtight seal, as long as the GN container is not warped, keeping the heat inside no matter how bumpy the ground over which the trolley has to travel.

Every hospital caterer faces different logistics on their site, and solutions will differ too. Gareth recommends visiting other sites to see solutions in action, and then testing to ensure it works in your environment. Food distribution specialists with experience of multiple brands and a variety of solutions are well-placed to provide expert help.

For example, one solution to the issue of inadequate or questionable temperature

“Every hospital caterer faces different logistics on their site, and solutions will differ too”

HUPFER'S MENUMOBIL

control is to use individual meal trays fitted with enclosure lids. Food will never be hot enough for some, and others just like the extra attention that an individual meal tray provides. Individual trays are also a readily available solution to problems such as equipment failure.

The Rieber Thermotray is made from dishwasher-safe, foam-insulated hygienic plastic, so a meal consisting of hot and cold food can be served in one tray setting, with hot meals kept hot for up to one hour – longer with a heat-holding pellet. Thermotrays can be stacked and transported on standard trolleys.

The temperature of cold food can also be problematic. BGL Rieber's Thermoport 10 individual meal container is excellent for delivering both hot and cold/frozen foods, such as ice cream tubs and wrapped portions.

Hupfer has also dedicated research and development into solutions to overcome the challenges of transporting hot and cold food for service at correct and safe temperatures. Sales & Marketing Director Marc Sumner

points to Hupfer's ISOBOX mobile food transport boxes, which use advanced insulation to ensure thermal separation between compartments within the same trolley, even when side-by-side, to optimise temperature. Caterers can transport hot or cold food right to the ward, keeping food hot (and cold) for longer.

This flexibility is made possible with convertible and attachable heating and cooling modules, which can be precisely adjusted with the digital controller. Convection heating quickly heats the interior up to 90°C, while the cooling module with robust Peltier technology cools the interior down to 4°C, all with the option to swap modules to meet changing requirements.

The ISOBOX solution is ideal for multi-site operations, moving food from 'A to B', such as CPU to satellite kitchens, or from kitchen to ward, smoothly, easily and safely.

Michael Eyre, Product Director at Jestic Foodservice Solutions agrees that continuous product innovation and advances in technology mean that appliances are now offering more versatility and flexibility than ever before. The all-new HHA series of hot holding trolleys from Moduline features innovative internal air distribution controls and water tank giving hospital caterers absolute control over how hot and how moist the food is for service.

THE BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY

Modern food distribution systems do provide solutions. Exclusively supplied in the UK through Jestic, the Moduline range of Retherm ovens are designed to provide precise control of temperature and humidity to ensure quality results for reheating



OPTIMISING SPACE ON THE DELIVERY VEHICLE

Food from a CPU delivered daily to a local clinic benefited from an unusual technical development by BGL Rieber, supplier of Thermoport insulated boxes. To save space, the push-handles were moved from the side to the top. Along with narrow heavy-duty bases, this ensured the Thermoports nestle together neatly and are easily secured for transport.

previously cooked and chilled foods.

Offering a variety of units to suit operators' needs, including a refrigerated version, all ovens in this range feature the innovative ClimaChef system which automatically monitors the climate in the cavity. Accurately controlling both the temperature and the humidity level ensures the very best quality and consistency on the plate even with the most delicate food items.

Flexibility is also key. BGL Rieber offers two 'Hybrid' models for fixed use or fully mobile on wheels. Needing only a standard 13-amp socket, they can operate virtually anywhere (Hybrids do not usually need ventilation, but Trusts could insist on siting them with fire detection and in a fire-resisting construction). Rieber's models will regenerate plated meals or GN containers up to 140°C or cook up to 200°C. The hybrid functionality means the ovens can simmer, chill, cook/regen in two zones and have a steam facility, which makes them ideal

for temporary use, for staff meals, event catering and where ward demand fluctuates. The bottom section has a moistening function, or it can be used with GN 1/1 cooling pellets as a fridge.

Designed for cook/chill, cook/freeze, and cook/serve, the Rieber Regio-Station bulk food regen trolley offers a choice of regen only or combinations of regen and chilling. To ensure food is served hot, key parameters such as the regen target temperature are protected. Flexible programming means Regio-Station can run any number of warming, regenerating or cooling cycles to suit the menu and the seasons. Furthermore, the Regio-Station keeps temperature records of the food arriving at ward level for up to 90 days, along with all HACCP information.

Hupfer's food transport trolleys with wells offer a heated design for prepared dishes in GN containers. Each trolley includes two wells for containers up to 200mm high, with no lid for easy serving, and heated cupboards for GN 1/1 trays. Foil heating elements in the well area help to significantly reduce the heating time while providing the same output, as well as reducing the heat emitted by the outer housing to deliver considerable long-term energy cost savings.

“This flexibility is made possible with convertible and attachable heating and cooling modules”

REGIOSTATION FROM BGL RIEBER



burlodge

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Burlodge has led the way with innovative meal delivery systems since 1984. With options for bulk and plated service, Cook-Freeze, Cook-Chill and Cook-Serve and a lifetime of support for all your food distribution requirements.



Multigen

The original mobile food hostess trolley



The Breakfast and Beverage Trolley



BCloud

Manage your fleet in real time with our BCloud HACCP monitoring system. Compatible with Synbiotix online menu ordering system



Logiko

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LOADING HUPFER'S ISOBOX

BREAKFAST SERVICE

Hupfer worked closely with a university hospital and developed Mobis Buffetcarts following analysis of 1,000 patient cards. Mobis Buffetcarts offer a customisable solution for distribution of chilled and ambient meals, straight to the bedside. Patients can make better meal choices from a range of buffet options. The cart can be plugged into the mains to run chilled sections, but it also has an integral ice store, which emits cool air to the interior and cooling surface for safe and convenient food distribution for up to 2.5 hours even when not connected to the mains.

“A central partition means hot and cold environments are separately controlled”



BGL RIEBER'S THERMOPORT 2000HD TROLLEYS



HUPFER'S ISOBOX IS IDEAL FOR MULTI-SITE SERVICES

GN-compatible mounting runners for ease of cleaning.

The Moduline HHA range is easy to handle when covering even large distances around the hospital. Trolleys are lightweight, include integrated shock absorption, ergonomically-designed handles and high-grade swivel castors.

From high-tech trolleys and regen ovens to boxes, trays and docking stations, there are solutions offering versatility and flexibility for any style of catering service, to help ensure food reaches the patient in optimum condition. 

bglrieber.co.uk
hupfer.com
jestic.co.uk

PLATED MEAL DISTRIBUTION

Hupfer's brand portfolio also includes MenuMobil, offering holistic systems for meal distribution in hospitals and other healthcare settings. For instance, ContactLine ward carts integrate contact heating into the tray through intelligent temperature sensors, allowing users to heat plated meals with precision directly into the dishware of the hot food components.

This gentle heating technology guarantees not only perfect eating temperatures, but also ensures that the warm components can't burn or dry out. Hot foods are covered by insulated covers, which effectively ensures no temperature or aroma exchange between different meal components on the tray.

Docking stations and their mobile plated/trayed meal delivery trolleys are popular with UK hospitals because they simplify meal distribution on trays. BGL Rieber's DSPRO system features the PROSERV Shuttle which is available in four sizes from 14 to 36 trays per shuttle. A central partition means hot and cold environments are separately controlled. The height of the PROSERVE is such that staff can easily see over the top.

Users also appreciate its ease of use and temperature control.

BGL Rieber adds a word of advice around conveyors and plating equipment. These make the loading of the hot meal delivery trolleys as fast as possible, helping to retain heat. However, if they are faulty or not configured correctly, the food could be losing too much heat even before it leaves the kitchen. If the make-up areas need a redesign, perhaps to accommodate new equipment, the latest generation of conveyors include features such as automatic tray stacking and can be supplied as fixed or mobile units.

The Moduline HHA series of hot holding trolleys from Jestic includes the AIRFLOW+ ventilated trolleys, made from high-grade stainless steel and featuring smooth-running castors for ease of movement from kitchens to service on the ward. Perfect for hospital catering, the Moduline HHA Series features the aforementioned integrated water tank with overspill control so each trolley can be moved simply, easily and without fear of spillage. Manual vents in each trolley door provide additional moisture control, and the whole range includes removable internal



JESTIC'S MODULINE HHA

WHY WE SHOULDN'T OBSESS OVER FOOD MILES



WE'RE HEARING MORE AND MORE THAT IT'S BETTER TO BUY LOCALLY-SOURCED PRODUCE. HOWEVER, FOCUSING ON ONE ASPECT OF THE FOOD AND DRINK ON OUR PLATES – SUCH AS 'FOOD MILES' – RISKS IGNORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF ITS TRUE CARBON EMISSIONS.

What are food miles anyway? Well, it's simple isn't it? The distance food travels from the point of production to the point of consumption would be the logical assumption, and indeed that is roughly the dictionary definition, but it isn't as simple as that. In a nutshell, there is no agreed definition of food miles or how they should be calculated when it comes to carbon emissions.

To elaborate on that statement, there are other variables that should be considered. In addition, what if the carbon footprint of the alternatives, even if they have not travelled so far, is greater?

STARTING POINT

The way that we eat and drink has changed; we expect everything that we want to consume to be available all year round regardless of whether it is in season or not, or even if it will grow in our climate. It would therefore be unrealistic for anyone to argue that every individual, food business or public sector organisation should source all food and beverage requirements from their own 'back yard', although some would argue that is exactly what is being mooted by the existing proposals for the GBSF (Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services) the final iteration of which is still awaited.

“The variable that should be given the biggest priority in this equation is the method of transport”

Transporting food is not great for the planet, and the shorter the distance it travels the better. However, unless there is a significant shift in the expectations of consumers about the availability of food and drink, transporting food will remain a necessary evil of how we choose to live. “If we were really honest about this we would stop eating some things at some times of year – but if you can't resist eating a strawberry in December, they have to come from somewhere,” Tim Radcliffe, NHS England's Net Zero Food Manager tells HFS. “We don't produce enough food any more,” he added, citing as an example, 95% of all our fruit is imported.

THE FOOD MILES CONUNDRUM

So what should be included in food miles? Obviously, the distance the food has travelled from A to B is part of the equation, but how the food has been transported has a far greater impact on carbon emissions. In addition, if you have travelled to shop by car, bus or train, those miles should also be part

of the equation – perhaps not so relevant in the hospital supply chain, although if you are purchasing from a wholesaler, the equation should include point of production to the distributor's warehouse and warehouse to site, that is, they should not be viewed just 'as the crow flies'.

The variable that should be given the biggest priority in this equation is the method of transport. Air miles in the context of transporting food are most definitely not good, generating roughly 47 times more greenhouse gases than transport by cargo ship. Fortunately, only around 1% of our food arrives by air freight, but it counts for 11% of transport emissions. Do you know if anything you buy arrives by air? If you don't, now would be a good time to start asking your suppliers.

SHIFT TO SEASONAL & BRITISH

It's not so much what you eat or where it has come from as when you eat it that matters. Therefore tweaking menus to reflect seasonality will make a difference.

We've mentioned strawberries already, so taking them as an example, when in season British strawberries are plentiful, delicious and sustainable, but if grown on the same farms in winter under hothouse conditions, the carbon footprint of that strawberry is seven times greater. Indeed, it is likely to be far higher than the carbon footprint of importing the strawberry by boat from a European neighbour such as Spain or Portugal. It might be that you make a conscious decision to support the farmer and the economy that is local to your hospital, but that is a different conversation to the one around the carbon footprint of that product.

To be serious about sustainability in hospital food and drink, menus must start to change to reflect seasonality. When the whole life cycle of a piece of fruit, for instance, is factored-in the carbon contribution of food miles becomes less and less important. Indeed, experts are questioning that this debate is becoming a distraction from what really matters. It is how the food is produced – for instance, in hothouses and through intensive farming, and the mode of transport that has far greater impact on its carbon footprint. 



LEE SHEPPARD, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS,
POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY AT APETITO UK

PROMOTED CONTENT

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

TAKING THE CARBON OUT OF MENUS

An interesting discovery when looking at the carbon footprint of our ingredient mix used at apetito was that whilst beef only represents 5% by weight of all the ingredients that we use, it accounts for a staggering 37% of our ingredient carbon footprint. A stark difference when compared with chicken, which equally represents 5% by weight, yet only 7% of the footprint.

This finding really highlighted that making even small reductions in the use of red meat in favour of ingredients with a lower carbon footprint, such as poultry, fish, or plant-based options, could be a key driver in making change. An approach that we were keen to prove in practice when, after a highly successful pilot scheme in 2021, we delivered the first reduced carbon menus into the NHS in 2022 working with our partners MITIE and St George's University Hospital in Tooting, London.

And the results have been extremely encouraging. Since adoption, St. George's Hospital has seen its menu drop 17% in carbon emissions and overall, we have seen close to a 10% carbon reduction across all the main meals that we supply into the Healthcare sector. This has all been delivered without incurring any additional cost into the NHS.

One key takeaway from this initiative is the power of "nudge theory" and the significant impact achieved through only subtle changes to patient menus – often only changing around two meals on a two-week cycle. With just these small changes in choice, patients are not aware that they are even eating from a reduced carbon menu, and as a result we have seen no loss in patient satisfaction.

First and foremost, we must always ensure patients have access to appropriate nutrition and that their dietary needs are not compromised in pursuit of lower carbon. We would encourage other trusts to consider making small changes to their menu cycles and we're proud to have led the way and evidenced the art of the possible through collaborating with MITIE and St. George's Hospital. And all without driving any extra costs into the public purse.

apetito.link/HFS

The logo for apetito, featuring the word "apetito" in a lowercase, rounded font. The letter "i" has a green dot above it. A green leaf-like shape is positioned above the letter "o".

WILTSHIRE
EST. FARM 1991
FOODS



SMALL NUDGES

REDUCING CARBON ACROSS HOSPITAL CATERING SERVICES IS A HIGH PRIORITY. IN FEBRUARY, A GROUP OF NHS CATERING MANAGERS, FOOD AND SUSTAINABILITY LEADS AND FACILITIES MANAGERS GATHERED TO DELVE INTO THIS TOPIC IN MORE DETAIL, AND HELP TO SHAPE THE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL.

Healthcare meals provider, apetito UK hosted this event with the Health Estates and Facilities Management Association (HEFMA). Lee Sheppard, (who has held the role of Director of Corporate Affairs, Policy & Sustainability for the last five years at apetito) was keen to share the latest positive outcomes from its trial at St George's Hospital in Tooting, London. The trial started in 2021, after apetito completed a carbon footprinting exercise of all its ingredients and meals, which revealed that 5% of ingredients by weight were beef, but beef was 37% of the carbon footprint. By contrast, poultry was also 5% by weight, but only 7% of the carbon footprint. The trial aimed to encourage people into making small changes in their meal choice through swapping red to white meat or fish or plant-based choices. This is done without taking the 'sledgehammer to the head' approach of simply limiting the menu options to suit or demonising any single ingredient. Small changes that did not detract from patient choice or enjoyment were seen to make a big difference to the footprint.

The Trust initially took a cautious approach, opting for the menu that aimed to offer a circa 10% carbon reduction but was sure to be cost neutral. Having completed an extensive six-month trial, the results were fascinating with a CO2 reduction of 8% (following some menu changes to the initial proposal). Perhaps most importantly, patient satisfaction surveys looking at food quality over the period showed an improvement.

Encouraged by these results, St George's Hospital has continued to support and develop the concept further. In 2022, the menu dropped a further 2.1% in carbon, and in 2023, a further 7.2% – amounting to a 17% reduction over three years. This has been achieved by small nudges – good communication and marketing, with a menu card that talks about the journey to net zero and carbon reduction using consumer-friendly language to tell a story, but without labelling any meal choices as low-carbon.

NHS England is also working on a low



carbon recipe bank comprising more than 200 recipes, all of which have been carbon-rated. These are re-imagined recipes, so no-one is suggesting, for instance, that cottage pie should be removed from the hospital menu, but reducing the beef content by substituting for lentils keeps the protein which is so important for patient recovery whilst cutting the carbon.

DRIVING CHANGE AND INFLUENCING CHOICE

The language used on menus is vital to driving change. For instance, meat-free Monday at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals was greeted with such a backlash from staff who felt their choice was being removed that the catering team had to re-think. They now do meat in moderation, which might see a 50/50 protein split between beef mince and Quorn and people don't even notice. At Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt the sausage rolls labelled plant-based are always left sitting lonely on the counter at the end of the day, but the cauliflower coconut curry that is not described as plant-based anywhere is one of the best-selling dishes in the restaurant.

“The language used on menus is vital to driving change”



In his previous role as Catering Manager at East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust Tim Radcliffe also experienced backlash from staff when he introduced meat-free Mondays. He stuck with it, however, even though takings on a Monday initially dropped to 20% less than on a Tuesday, but after one year the difference had reduced to just 3%. Some staff boycotted the restaurant initially, but soon returned, and Monday's meal deal became the restaurant's biggest.

Another suggestion to influence choice is to consider the positioning of dishes on the menu – just by placing a lower carbon option at the top rather than the bottom of the menu card can have very positive results.

SOURCING

Unless produce is being air-freighted into the country, food miles are actually so tiny as to be insignificant when it comes to carbon footprint. Of far more significance is seasonality and tweaking menus to reflect this, using in-season, British produce will make a significant difference. [See our Sustainable Service feature on p18-19 of this issue for more on this theme]. In addition, start asking suppliers for the provenance and carbon footprint of their ingredients and products.

COMMON SENSE

Most participants at this event were already taking steps to reduce carbon on their menus, and it was clear that the approach to this is more common sense than scientific. No-one is sitting with a calculator trying to analyse the carbon content of one dish over another. The national team has done that with the new recipe bank, and suppliers such as apetito are also doing it. For the hospital caterer the approach is more intuitive. Approaches include reducing beef and dairy options, incorporating Quorn as a replacement protein or a protein split, using more pulses, including venison dishes (wild venison has a 35% lower carbon footprint than beef), and engaging with the Chefs Academy which has itself launched a plant-based concept.

Story-telling is also incredibly effective, and not used to its full potential by hospital caterers. Be descriptive on all menus – in the restaurant and for patients – and provide information about the provenance of dishes. If the meat is Red Tractor, state that, if it's sourced from a butcher or a farm down the

road, say so, if you've won an award make sure everyone knows about it – spread it over social media and internal communications. Make a feature of ingredients with their provenance, discuss them on the menu or posters. Tell people about it.

Another great idea was introduced by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust when its cafés were refurbished a few years ago. For the opening day each member of the catering team designed their own burger, which was named after them and offered on the menu with all the different toppings and sauces. They loved it.

MAKE A START

The more you drill into this topic the more complex it becomes. However, it is important to make a start, by focusing on the simple, straightforward and achievable actions. Whilst some of our participants were further on in their journeys than others, everyone agreed that introducing more sustainable food is something that the NHS, as an anchor institution, needs to do. 1

“No-one is sitting with a calculator trying to analyse the carbon content of one dish over another”

PARTICIPANTS

BACK ROW L-R: LEE SHEPPARD, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS, POLICY & SUSTAINABILITY, APETITO UK; MODREK ZANDY, SENIOR CAPITAL PROJECT MANAGER, SOUTH WEST YORKSHIRE PARTNERSHIP NHS FOUNDATION TRUST; JOE WARWICK, ASSISTANT CATERING OPERATIONS MANAGER, THE SHREWSBURY AND TELFORD HOSPITAL NHS TRUST; ANDREA RAYMOND, AREA SALES MANAGER – FRAMEWORK, BRAKES; AND IAIN ROBERTSON, CATERING OPERATIONS MANAGER, SOLENT NHS TRUST.

FRONT ROW L-R: SIAN LANGFORD, FACILITIES COMPLIANCE & SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER, THE ROBERT JONES AND AGNES HUNT ORTHOPAEDIC HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST; TIM RADCLIFFE, NET ZERO FOOD PROGRAMME MANAGER, NHS ENGLAND; HENRY MANZIRA, CATERING SERVICES MANAGER, SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST; AMANDA ROBERTS, EDITOR, HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE AND HOSPITAL CATERER; AND DUNCAN O'NEILL, GROUP FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGER, MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST.



'D' IS FOR ... DYSPHAGIA

THE NUTRITIONAL CONTENT AND APPEARANCE OF TEXTURE-MODIFIED FOODS FOR PATIENTS WITH DYSPHAGIA IS SO IMPORTANT, TO ENSURE THOSE WHO MAY BE NUTRITIONALLY VULNERABLE RECEIVE THE FOODS THEY NEED AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO EAT.

Although more prevalent in the elderly, dysphagia is a condition that can affect people of any age when it can be associated with a number of medical conditions, from stroke to mouth/throat cancer or cerebral palsy. Since the introduction of the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) framework across the UK in 2019, healthcare professionals have had a fixed set of guidance and descriptors for different levels of swallowing difficulty to follow, which has helped to standardise the approach, removing variation of interpretation and reducing risk that a patient may be served with a meal, snack or drink that is not suitable for their needs.

The standardised approach to modified texture meals provided by IDDSI describes six different levels of food textures from Level 7 regular through to Level 3 liquidised. Maxine Cartz, Dietitian with Medirest, part of Compass Group UK & Ireland, elaborates. "The common terminology means that there is consistency and understanding of what each level should be. We offer our teams training in this area, to ensure safety, consistency and enjoyment of our meals – with a true focus on taste, nutrition and quality.

"Across our industry it is widely acknowledged that standard practice should be to make modified-texture food look as appetising as possible. Over the years we've seen more chefs present modified-texture food in interesting ways to make it look appealing. An example is moulding Level 4 puréed items into the shape of the original food, such as puréed carrots in the shape of the vegetable or chicken in the shape of a chicken breast.

"In the last few years, adapting to the



"The common terminology means that there is consistency and understanding of what each level should be"

IDDSI framework has been crucial for the industry and development of meals, to conform to each of the texture levels. Understanding IDDSI and developing new menus that comply with the framework, as well as training our frontline teams has been a significant piece of development work for us and across our industry – helping to set improved mealtime standards."

Healthcare meals provider, apetito, provides a wide selection of texture-modified meals for patients with dysphagia. apetito's Development Dietitian, Sophia Cornelius, explains that people living

with dysphagia are also at a higher risk of malnutrition due to several factors, including fatiguing quickly at mealtimes, dislike of texture modification or limited access to nutritionally dense meals. "For individuals in hospital whose dysphagia is a new diagnosis, there will be new physical and emotional challenges as well as uncertainty about a texture-modified diet, and so access to recognisable foods is key to promoting good nutrition. Providing a wide choice of meals can support the transition from a normal diet to a texture-modified diet as well as supporting

individuals to meet their nutritional requirements. It can be challenging for hospitals that scratch cook to cater for the nutritional needs of all patients, buying in ready-prepared texture-modified meals may remove some of the pressure from the hospital catering team while ensuring more choice as well as safe, well presented and nutritionally-dense meals to people with dysphagia.”

Sophia emphasises the point made earlier by Maxine, that meal presentation is key, adding that it is one of the most important factors in promoting inclusivity at mealtimes. “Providing a meal that is recognisable and visibly similar to what others around them are eating enables inclusivity and removes some of the embarrassment that can be associated with a texture-modified diet. Another important factor is choice, as with someone on a normal diet, people with dysphagia need to still have multiple options available to them at mealtimes to help prevent monotony and enable them to enjoy a variety of flavours.”

OFFERING CHOICE

It is necessary to extend the choice of texture-modified food to include snacks, vegan and vegetarian options, as well as drinks. Maxine welcomes the increase of plant-based meals, as well as the wider selection of meal options for people with food allergies, in the ranges offered by manufacturers of pre-prepared texture-modified meals. For dysphagia sufferers who also need their drinks thickened, there are five different IDDSI levels for liquids. “Hydration is



THE DYSPHAGIA HYDRATION STATION FROM REFRESHMENT SYSTEMS
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important for all patients, so it is great to see more diversity in pre-thickened hot and cold beverages,” she adds.

When it comes to snacks, examples could include puréed fruit or a custard pot or thick yoghurt, as well as treats such as puréed Level 4 tea and biscuits or a puréed Level 4 scone and jam add variety. These also provide additional calories and protein to help nutritionally vulnerable patients.

The IDDSI criteria for texture-modified meals for children are different to those for adults as the particle sizes need to be smaller and the sodium content in children’s meals should be lower than for adults. Many manufacturers of modified-texture meals now include paediatric meals, which offer suitable child-friendly dishes in the appropriate texture.

DYSPHAGIA DRINKS

Vending company, Refreshment Systems has introduced the UK’s first dysphagia drinks machine, to improve the lives of patients with swallowing issues. The Dysphagia Hydration Station was unveiled at the recent IDDSI Festival, showcasing the company’s commitment to innovation.

The machine simplifies the adjustment of beverage thickness with a single button press, ensuring safe and enjoyable drinks.

“People living with dysphagia are also at a higher risk of malnutrition”



A SELECTION OF PRODUCTS FROM APETITO’S TM RANGE



APETITO’S LEVEL 4 PUREE SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE



“There is no substitute for training to ensure all staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of patients with dysphagia”

It also streamlines operations, reducing handling and labour costs, especially valuable in busy hospitals. The dysphagia drinks machine offers a variety of beverages, including hot and cold options, meeting different preferences and adhering to IDDSI levels.

Steve May, Managing Commercial Director at Refreshment Systems, expressed pride in this ground-breaking machine’s potential to enhance the lives of dysphagia patients. He says: “Our goal is to make a profound difference in the lives of these individuals by providing them with beverages that are typically considered fundamental essentials. This innovative machine marks a substantial stride towards achieving that goal.”

The dysphagia drinks machine is now available across all healthcare sectors, and Refreshment Systems is offering hospitals a free trial.

UNDERSTANDING DYSPHAGIA

There is no substitute for training to ensure all staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of patients with dysphagia and what the different IDDSI levels mean to

make sure patients are served the food and drink that is safe for them.

“Training and knowledge are so important,” Maxine Cartz insists. “Dysphagic patients’ needs can change and their ability to swallow may be re-assessed by a speech and language therapist daily – so their dietary prescription may change quickly, for example even between the ordering and the eating of their meal. Communication is key to getting this right, as is an understanding of the need to only give the prescribed IDDSI level.

“Our approach must be all encompassing – from understanding what the patient’s needs are to working alongside other professionals within the hospital, such as the hospital dietitians and speech and language therapists. This ensures that patients and residents receive, eat and enjoy a meal that is safe for them and, of course, enables them to meet their nutritional needs.”

Sophia adds: “When using pre-prepared texture-modified solutions, staff must also receive training around the preparation of meals. Cooking instructions can often vary and so these should be read carefully

to ensure the best mealtime experience for the patient. If cooking instructions are not followed, this can also cause safety concerns surrounding the food texture, such as meals becoming too watery or a ‘skin’ developing, altering the overall consistency. As these meals are created following specific guidance to ensure safety, staff must never add any additional sauces, or similar, to a texture-modified meal during the preparation process. This would also result in a change of the overall texture of the meal, causing it to no longer be safe for the patient to consume.

“When serving the meal, staff should be taught to always serve a full portion to make sure that the patient gets all the nutritional content of the meal. If patients need assistance when eating, serve meals on a red tray to highlight to staff to support at mealtimes.”

Dysphagia is a condition that is growing in prevalence, as the population ages and people live longer with certain conditions. Ensuring staff understand what it means for a patient to be suffering with dysphagia, and keeping them up-to-date with the importance of serving patients with the correct texture-modified meal, helping them to eat safe, nutritious food, and dine with dignity are all essential to providing the best possible care. 

apetito.co.uk
compass-group.co.uk
refreshmentsystems.co.uk

CLEANING, HYGIENE &

KITCHEN MAINTENANCE



Perhaps the logical starting point is planning a cleaning routine, and as Kate Gould, Senior Consultant at The Litmus Partnership explains, a failsafe cleaning routine will look different for each hospital kitchen, as it will be tailored to the individual set-up. There are some common factors, however. “In any hospital, cleaning must be carried out at every stage of the food production process from the delivery bay to the service point, and should be included in the Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points (HACCP) Plan,” she advises.

“To start with, hospital caterers should complete a Risk Assessment of all the catering areas including preparation and production, as well as delivery bays and storage areas. From this, cleaning schedules can be drawn up and should include a high level of detail such as a list of what needs to be cleaned, chemicals and materials to use, dilution and contact time of chemicals, frequency of cleaning, PPE requirements and so on.

“Safety precautions should also be detailed, such as if there is a presence of electricals or any high-pressure hoses that could spread contamination of *Listeria monocytogenes*. In addition, regular removal of waste from the kitchen should be included in the cleaning routine, which is essential to reduce the risk of cross contamination and pest infestation.”

CROSS CONTAMINATION

Kate outlines some fairly simple initiatives to help prevent cross contamination. “Firstly, colour coding food preparation equipment,

SPOTLESS

THAT THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE MUST BE MAINTAINED IN HOSPITAL KITCHENS IS AN ABSOLUTE GIVEN. GETTING THIS RIGHT DOES NOT JUST MEAN EFFECTIVE CLEANING PROCESSES AND MONITORING; EFFICIENT OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CRITICAL EQUIPMENT, SUCH AS DISHWASHERS, CAREFUL CHEMICAL SELECTION AND WELL-TRAINED STAFF ARE ALSO ESSENTIALS.



MEIKO ENGINEER CARRYING OUT MACHINE MAINTENANCE

“Surface cleanliness could be assessed by visual, rapid chemical residue detection”

utensils and cleaning materials is key, as is separating high and low risk preparation areas through ergonomic designs and efficient operating practices.

“Also, aside from the actual cleaning itself, it’s important to establish a monitoring and assessment system, to ensure the cleaning is being done to a high standard and that a build-up of pathogens is avoided. It sounds surprising, but some pathogens, such as listeria, can persist on equipment such as food slicers even after years of cleaning and disinfection.”

There are various ways of doing this. Surface cleanliness for example could be assessed by visual, rapid chemical residue detection, such as adenosine triphosphate (ATP), or protein tests. Surfaces can also be tested for general counts, indicator organisms or for pathogens.

WAREWASHING

Do not overlook the importance of cleaning, servicing and maintaining a warewasher for an efficient hospital kitchen setup is the advice of Victoria Carroll, Sales and Marketing Director at HOBART Service. “While they’re often disregarded, compared to the likes of refrigeration and cooking equipment, it is surprising just how much it will impact a hospital if a warewasher is not working to an optimum level or worse still, out of action altogether,” she stresses. Implementing regular planned preventative maintenance visits and using specially formulated chemicals will not only save time but also energy, cost and ultimately maintain hygiene standards.

Winterhalter UK’s Marketing Development Manager Paul Crowley agrees that dishwashers are big users of resources – energy, water and chemicals – and points out that manufacturers have developed technologies that reduce the consumption of all three. Winterhalter has produced a Guide to Reducing Operational Running Costs, which focuses on energy saving and

is available to download from the advice section of the company’s website.

CHEMICALS

When it comes to seeking sustainable dishwash chemicals, Paul Anderson, Managing Director of Meiko UK advises checking with your dishwash supplier because new ranges of chemicals have been launched that can cut usage by up to 40% for detergent and 60% for rinse aid. This saves on road miles and packaging, and – thanks to the minimal use of chlorine, phosphates and other environmental ‘nasties’ – provides dishwash chemicals that are less damaging to the environment.

Winterhalter’s e-chemicals have been formulated to work in conjunction with Winterhalter machines to deliver guaranteed results, but they are also suitable for use with other warewasher brands.

All the e-chemicals are very close to being PH Neutral, so they are safer to use, kinder to the waste water treatment system and better for the environment than conventional chemicals. They include F720 BLUE, a detergent that’s especially useful for delicate items; and A100e and A140e, both of which are enzymatic pre-cleaners designed to remove stubborn dirt. F420e is the all-purpose detergent that carries the EU Ecolabel.

Understanding that the prospect of switching from tried and trusted conventional warewasher chemicals to green alternatives may be a concern, Winterhalter is happy to offer trials of its e-chemicals, so that customers can test the results for themselves.

“Sustainability has shot up the agenda,” says Paul Crowley. “It’s always been part of the specification mix for our customers, but it is much more of a focus now. Our e-chemicals can play an important role in reducing a foodservice operator’s impact on the environment.”



DIGITAL SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE ROUTINES

The free-to-download Meiko CONNECT app makes the manager’s life easier because they can check machines all over the hospital and in every ward without leaving the office.

Via a smartphone, CONNECT provides access to all Meiko dishwashers, to data for reports such as maintenance management, hygiene status, wash statistics and consumption data.

This helps the management of cleaning routines by providing assurance that all necessary parameters – particularly wash and rinse temperatures – are being maintained.

Understanding the need for spotless cleaning, HOBART Service developed its Hyline chemical range to include specially formulated warewashing detergent, glass washer detergent and rinse aid. The detergents have been developed to be suitable for use in hard and soft water areas. Hyline chemicals are highly concentrated, meaning a lower dosage is required to achieve a consistently outstanding, hygienic clean. The lower dosage also takes less energy to clean, delivering ongoing savings.

“The unique formulation has been developed over many years, factoring in the latest warewashing and glasswashing technology to deliver the very best clean,” says Victoria Carroll. “The hard-water range has also been specially designed to prevent the build-up of limescale, helping to avoid damage to components and ultimately extend the life of the machine.”

For cleaning cooking equipment, HOBART DET2 is designed to support HOBART equipment with the best performance and



“Staff training is critical to achieving and maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene”

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FOOD HYGIENE PRACTICE

Cofresco Foodservice has identified a move away from cardboard cutter boxes in hospital kitchens alongside a growing demand for its Wrapmaster® chef wrap systems.

“Hospital caterers are placing an even greater focus on maintaining excellent hygiene practices to keep their food safe, but also have the added pressure of cost-savings, as well as reducing their impact on the environment,” says Cofresco Foodservice Managing Director, Adrian Brown.

“Using the ultimate chef wrap system from Wrapmaster® means that the plastic casing protects your kitchen wrap, and it can be easily sanitised with sanitiser and 100% disinfected in a commercial dishwasher with a rinse temperature of above 80°C. By making the switch today you can ensure your kitchen is a safe and hygienic environment for your team and those staying in hospital.”

wrapmaster.global/en/

cleaning, contributing to lower overall water and energy usage. Suitable for the auto clean function, the chemicals allow the kitchen to start the cleaning cycle and continue with other jobs or leave at the end of a shift, confident that the hygiene sequence will be completed quickly and effectively.

EQUIPMENT LONGEVITY

“One of the most important elements to effectively maintaining a comprehensive cleaning and hygiene schedule and subsequently delivering both cost savings and sustainability, is having a regular preventative maintenance schedule in place,” Jason Krebs, Technical Director at Tec Line, tells HFS.

At a time when energy costs remain high, hospital caterers are increasingly looking for ways to manage costs and run their kitchens as efficiently as possible, ensuring the correct service and maintenance is a simple answer. “From the basics of properly cleaning filters and sensors to prevent compressors and fans from having to work harder than needed, to checking and replacing door seals to reduce energy wastage, correct servicing schedules help a business save money,” Jason continues.

“What’s more, a regular preventative maintenance schedule can identify more serious faults and issues before they occur. Helping to prevent untimely breakdowns, an effective equipment service can reduce food waste caused by faulty appliances and

even reduce or eliminate the cost, stress and hassle of having to replace broken-down catering equipment.”

Tec Line has been a leading service and maintenance provider for more than 35 years. Approved by several key equipment manufacturers and backed by a specialist service desk, UK spare parts and fully insured equipment stockholding, Tec Line offers emergency repair, preventative maintenance contracts, installation and commissioning, annual testing and full certification.

TRAINING

Last, but by no means least, staff training is critical to achieving and maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene in the kitchen. “A hospital could have the most in-depth cleaning schedule but if staff do not know how to execute it properly, then it’s useless,” says Kate Gould. “All cleaning duties should be included in staff training programmes, new joiners must have robust, practical training and senior team members should implement a process where they monitor and feed back any substandard cleaning to ensure standards are maintained.

Paul Anderson also emphasises the importance of staff training. In the warewashing operation, routine maintenance by staff, in addition to the machine’s self-cleaning programme, such as cleaning filters, is key to smooth and hygienic operation. Meiko UK provides training

support for the lifetime of the dishwasher, including instruction on cleaning and routine maintenance tasks for staff. This support is designed to ensure the machine’s sustainability credentials, such as energy and water consumption, are maintained throughout its working life.

“Sustainability is not something that you can buy; it must be taught! Yes, things like reverse osmosis water treatment and heat recovery help achieve a high sustainability result for the dishwasher, but that’s little use if the dishwasher operators waste it with poor working practice.”

Paul is so passionate about the importance of training support for the lifetime of the dishwasher that he goes so far as to recommend walking away from any purchase that does not include it. 📌

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VIBRANT VEGGIES

IT WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE THAT THE POPULARITY OF VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN DIETS IS CONTINUING TO GROW AT A RAPID RATE. THE CHALLENGE FOR CATERERS IS TO OFFER A WIDER AND BETTER CHOICE OF PLANT-BASED OR MEAT-FREE MEALS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE NUTRITIONALLY WELL AND THE NUTRITIONALLY VULNERABLE.

Research carried out in January 2024 and published by online consumer information platform, Finder¹ estimates that there are now 2.5 million vegans in the UK and 3.1 million vegetarians, collectively comprising 10.5% of the adult population.

Furthermore, the number of vegans rose by 1.1 million between 2023 and 2024, underlining the growing trend towards a meat-free diet. This remains a minority of the adult population, but indications are that it is a sector that will continue to grow and cannot be ignored or fobbed off with a poor choice of quality or nutritious food, particularly in healthcare environments.

Catering for a plant-based or meat-free diet is by no means the most complex set of dietary requirements faced by hospital caterers. However, it is a significant trend currently – and likely to remain so – driven by lifestyle choices, particularly among younger adults, which might be influenced by factors such as concern for animal welfare and the health of the planet. In the Finder research, 26% of Gen Z and 22% of Millennials already follow a meat-free diet – that includes vegans, vegetarians and pescatarians – with a further 26% and 17% respectively intending to go meat-free.

“26% of Gen Z and 22% of Millennials already follow a meat-free diet”

All hospitals should offer at least one plant-based option on the patient menu at every mealtime, as well as snacks. Retail areas too should include plant-based choices. Mark Kassapian, Managing Director of Litmus Retail, advises getting the basics of this right first before trying to be too ambitious. “Focus on a core range of seven dishes, so there is one for each day, that are done really well,” he says, adding there is little point in hospitals offering plant-based choices if they don’t taste great and therefore end up being wasted.

As an example, at The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, every new dish is trialled on the staff restaurant menu first to assess how well it sells before adding to the patient menu. If a dish is not popular, it is dropped and goes no further.

To offer choice and variety of vegetarian and vegan food, ensuring a balanced diet, Sophia Cornelius, Development Dietitian at apetito suggests developing meals from different cuisines, providing a wide variety

of flavours that can cater to many palates. “Utilising different plant proteins can also promote variety and choice, as well as increase the nutritional density of a meal,” she adds.

ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS & VEGAN INGREDIENTS

Firstly, Sophia points out that vegetarian and vegan meals should adhere to the recommendations of the Eatwell Guide and be able to cater for the nutritional needs of both nutritionally well and nutritionally vulnerable patients as per the 3rd Edition of the BDA’s Nutrition and Hydration Digest.

“Nutrition should be a key consideration in the development of meat-free meals as alternatives may be higher in fibre and lower in saturated fat but can also be lower in protein, making it more challenging to meet the needs of nutritionally vulnerable patients. Plant-based alternatives that are naturally higher in protein, such as tofu, tempeh or mycoproteins should be



considered in meat-free meals to achieve the higher requirements,” Sophia explains.

The choice of alternative, plant-based proteins is quite wide. In addition to the ones already mentioned, Ollie Bragg, Vegetarian for Life Roving Chef, suggests seitan, legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas), quinoa, seeds and products made from soya or pea protein. Legumes are easy to add to soups, casseroles, salads and curries, whilst grains are good in salads or added to porridge or snack bars. Alternative proteins bring other nutritional benefits too, as Ollie explains: “These options provide essential amino acids, vitamins and minerals crucial for a balanced diet. Combining different protein sources throughout the day ensures intake of all essential amino acids. Incorporating a variety of plant-based proteins also adds diversity to meals, enhancing both flavour and nutritional value.”

Vegan ingredients too, such as alternative milks, fats, stocks and bases are becoming more widely available and easier to incorporate into menus, and the chef’s task is made even easier with modern technology in the kitchen. “Incorporating vegan ingredients into menus has become increasingly easier with the growing availability of alternative products,” says Ian Leadbetter, National Corporate Chef at RATIONAL UK. “Plant-based fats such as olive oil, coconut oil, avocado oil and vegan margarine can easily replace butter and other animal fats in cooking and baking. Options like almond milk, soy milk, oat milk, coconut milk and rice milk can be used as substitutes for dairy milk in various recipes. Plant-based meat substitutes like tofu, tempeh and vegan

“Focus on describing the dish so it sounds delicious”

burgers can be used as alternatives to meat in a variety of dishes. They can be grilled, baked, or stir-fried, and RATIONAL cooking systems allow for gentle and precise cooking, which helps to preserve the colours and flavours of vegetarian and vegan ingredients creating delicious, healthy hospital meals.”

MEAT-FREE SNACKING

Between meals, vegan and vegetarian snacks should also be available. Mark Kassapian suggests talking to suppliers, getting samples and handing out tasters for feedback to establish the likes and dislikes of customers on site. Ollie Bragg lists new snacking innovations as including plant-based jerky (made from mushrooms, soy, or seitan), vegan cheese snacks (made from nuts or soy), plant-based protein bars and snacks (incorporating ingredients like pea protein, quinoa and chia seeds) and the growing trend in vegetable-based chips and crisps (made from ingredients such as beetroot, sweet potatoes and kale).

SIMPLIFYING THE CHEF’S TASK

Gordon Lauder, Managing Director of Central Foods recommends making the job of kitchen staff as simple as possible by stocking ingredients that work well across a variety of different vegan and vegetarian dishes. “A product like vegan mince is really versatile,

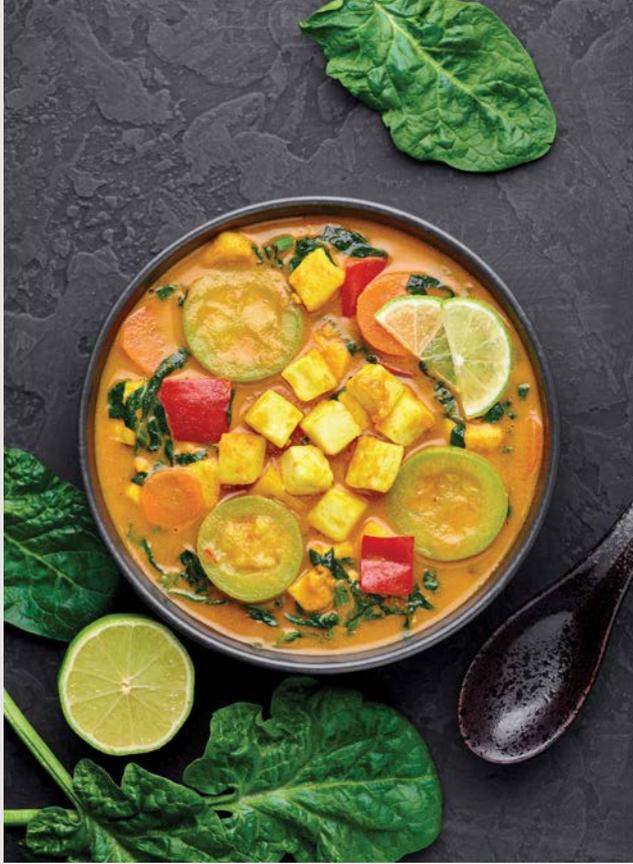
as it can be used for curries, Bolognese, shepherd’s pie, chillis and other dishes that would traditionally feature meat mince. Switching traditional favourites like this, that are already familiar to customers, to meat-free versions may also appeal to people who are looking to reduce their meat intake.

“With caterers having to make their menus work harder, it’s imperative that meat-free dishes don’t just appeal to those with dietary requirements – they need to also tempt others too, whether they are flexitarians or just fancy one of the plant-based options on the menu.”

Gordon points to a lot of new product development in the frozen vegan sector, responding to the growing demand. In addition, the ingredient costs for plant-based dishes are often more cost-effective. He cites KaterVeg! vegan mince as an example, which is both cheaper than standard beef mince and provides up to 20% higher yield. “We think it’s a great meat swap in many popular dishes such as lasagne, chilli or Bolognese.”

APPEALING TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

Firstly, why would you want to? Well, partly because food and drink represent some 6% of total NHS carbon emissions², and the NHS is legally committed to becoming net zero by 2040. Plant-based and meat-free meal choices tend to be lower in carbon. A recent Round Table event, hosted by the Health Estates & Facilities Management Association (HEFMA) and healthcare meals provider apetito, drilled into this topic in more detail [read more about it in Discovery Den on p20



& 21 of this issue]. One of the insights that emerged quite strongly from this event was that it helps not to describe the dish as vegan or plant-based on the menu. Yes, it needs to be labelled so that vegans or vegetarians know they are choosing a dish that is suitable for them, but over-emphasising this point may put other diners off. To encourage more people to try these choices, it is better to focus on describing the dish so it sounds delicious. Another suggestion is to position plant-based choices more prominently on the menu.

Sophia Cornelius outlines that familiarity is a factor. "For many people, food choices are made based on what you recognise and what takes your fancy at the time, particularly if ordering from a menu. Patients may avoid choosing the meat-free option if they don't recognise ingredients or have never tried the meal. Catering staff and housekeepers should be trained to explain the choices available to reassure and encourage patients to try meat-free meals. Alternatively, meat-free alternatives of traditional meals, for example a pie or lasagne, may be a more comfortable swap for those who are hesitant to choose meat-free meals."

Ollie Bragg recommends focusing on flavours, textures and presentation that mimic familiar meat-based dishes. "Offer hearty and satisfying options like veggie burgers with savoury toppings, plant-based meat substitutes in familiar favourite dishes like lasagne or pies, and flavourful vegetable stir-fries with tofu or tempeh. Highlight the freshness and variety of plant-based ingredients and showcase creative culinary techniques that enhance taste and visual appeal."

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PREPARING PLANT-BASED MEALS MADE SIMPLE WITH RATIONAL COOKING SYSTEMS

“Think lots of colours and make those taste buds zing with the taste”

Mark Kassapian reminds us of the common adage that ‘people buy with their eyes’. “It is true and plays a big role in sales,” he says. “If you can make a dish so visually appealing that people want it, then it will sell. Think lots of colours and make those taste buds zing with the taste – don’t forget garnish, condiments and upselling to really round it off.

“It’s also worth remembering that there has been a lot of innovation and, compared

to five or 10 years ago, free-from products have come on leaps and bounds. Much of this is due to an increasing range of free-from raw ingredients allowing caterers to develop free-from products from scratch rather than adapting recipes, trying to compensate traditional ingredients with free-from that didn’t always perform in the same way. Cheese is a good example of that with the development of plant-

based cheeses that now melt, grate and spread as you would wish, and with a great taste profile. Again, this will help ensure meat-eaters are satisfied with the dish and encourage them to make the switch again in the future.”

Gordon Lauder points to research from Cambridge University³ that reveals that increasing the number of plant-based dishes on the menu can encourage more take-up of vegan and vegetarian options. It showed that doubling the number of veggie dishes – from one in four to two in four – increased the proportion of plant-based dish sales by between 40% and 80%.

“Plant-based dishes shouldn’t be an afterthought. Moving to a more plant-based diet is one of the most effective ways of reducing the environmental footprint of food, so with this increasing interest in health and sustainability, plant-based items should play a key role in any hospital menu. Make sure that descriptions on the menu are tempting and focus on flavours to encourage take-up from those who might not ordinarily choose meat-free options.” 



VEGAN CURRY WITH KATERVEG! MINCE

¹ finder.com/uk/stats-facts/uk-diet-trends

² Delivering a net zero National Health Service

³ cam.ac.uk/stories/veg-nudge

- apetito.co.uk
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MKN has set new standards in commercial kitchens with the launch of the new FlexiCombi combi steamer.

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conventional GN1/1 size. The crosswise insertion ensures clarity, stability and increased work safety.

Other innovations include the hygienic cooking cabinet door, the WaveClean automatic cleaning system and DynaSteam, which automatically adjusts the steam volume to optimise cooking results and water efficiency.

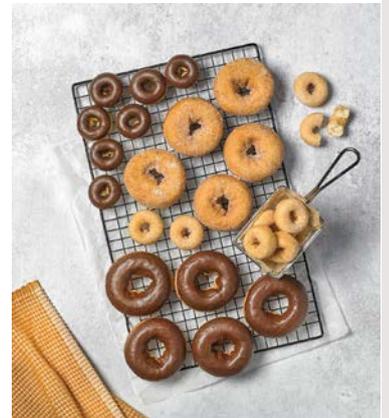
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DONUTS JOIN KATERBAKE RANGE

The KaterBake bakery range at Central Foods has been expanded with the addition of five new donuts for the foodservice sector, including a gluten-free version.

The ring-shaped, cake-style donuts are suitable for vegetarians and simply need thawing before serving.

centralfoods.co.uk



ELEVATING HOSPITAL DINING WITH NEW SEASONAL MEALS

apetito has unveiled a selection of brand-new nutritious meals for the spring and summer months.

New additions include an aromatic Orange & Ginger Chicken which boasts a sweet yet spiced flavour, alongside a traditional Hunters Chicken, which includes smoked bacon pieces in a rich barbeque tomato sauce with mozzarella cheese. Both are suitable for those requiring a gluten-free diet.

Two new vegan options cater for the growing demand for vegetarian and plant-based dishes – Vegan Sausages and Tempeh, Sweet Potato & Spinach Hotpot, the latter providing 15g of protein per portion, thus meeting the BDA criteria for Energy-Dense meals.

The dessert offering has also been extended with a dairy-free Summer Fruits Sponge.

The CarteChoix range also sees new dishes – gluten-free Quorn and Vegetable casserole, Shepherd's Pie, Chicken Chow Mein and an easy chew Smoked Paprika & Tomato Chicken.

New to the texture-modified range are an IDDSI Level 4 Purée Beef Hotpot and a gluten-free Level 5 Shepherd's Pie.

apetito.link/HC

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Hupfer UK is redefining general-purpose trolleys for catering environments with the launch of VARIOCART, a best-in-class solution with higher load capacity, improved handling, and better green credentials than comparative trolleys.

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NHS

NHS SUPPLY CHAIN



NICK VADIS WINNING THE PSC SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION AWARD

EMPOWERING EXCELLENCE

NHS SUPPLY CHAIN: FOOD HAS MUCH TO CELEBRATE FROM THE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF 2024, FROM A BRAND-NEW SKILLS ACADEMY, ONGOING SUPPORT AROUND THE HOSPITAL FOOD STANDARDS, THE HEALTHCARE CHEFS' KNOWLEDGE BOOK LAUNCH AND MORE!

Thank you to everyone who stopped by our stand at the Hospital Caterers Association Forum in April. It was great connecting with you on the latest at NHS Supply Chain: Food, including added value, collaborations and more.

We look forward to continuing our valuable conversations, in the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please get in touch with your Food Account Manager. Lastly, a huge thank you to the HCA for organising such an incredible event. See you in 2025!

SKILLS ACADEMY 2024 - READY, SET, LET'S LEARN!

Inspired by the success of our Chefs Academy events, our Culinary and Dietetics team are excited to deliver a brand-new culinary class, the Skills Academy, tailored to develop HCA's kitchen and general assistants. This innovative programme offers attendees a comprehensive curriculum which covers a range of topics including kitchen operations, nutrition, teamwork and more. With a focus on areas like food waste reduction, hospital food standards and presentation, the Skills Academy will help attendees gain valuable insights to elevate their craft and take back to their own kitchens. Attendees will also get the chance to put their skills into practice through hands-on cooking sessions with recipes from our diverse range of culinary concepts and support from our expert-led team. Additionally, the Skills Academy will provide opportunities to foster connections within the industry, offering a platform for culinary professionals to network and collaborate.

This May, the Culinary and Dietetics team will be piloting the Skills Academy at Lainston House, home to the Chef of the Year 2023 competition. If you would like to find out more about the event, please get in touch with your food account manager or email: Operations.foodteam@supplychain.nhs.uk. Aprons on, knives sharpened, ingredients prepped – we can't wait to see you at our Skills Academy!



CHEFS KNOWLEDGE BOOK

THE HEALTHCARE CHEFS' KNOWLEDGE BOOK LAUNCHES AT HRC 2024

We are proud to celebrate the launch of the Healthcare Chefs' Knowledge book, a collection of incredible insights from the many who have worked to revolutionise hospital food across NHS England. It contains over 100 NHS-approved recipes developed by our Culinary Ambassador, Nick Vadis, and our Lead Dietitian, Idrees Anwar, who even make an appearance in the book.

Copies have been printed and will be shared with 220 Trusts across NHS England.



CHEFS ACADEMY - NEW CULINARY CLASS LAUNCHING

UPHOLDING HOSPITAL STANDARDS FOR HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE

As healthcare continuously evolves, so too must our commitment to upholding the standards that define excellence in patient, staff, and visitor care. The National Standards for Healthcare Food and Drink, published in November 2022, cover areas such as food and drink, sustainable procurement, food waste and more. Adherence to these standards is not just a matter of protocol - it's a fundamental commitment to uphold safety, efficiency and effectiveness in healthcare settings which we must all make a conscious effort to stand by. At NHS Supply Chain: Food, our teams including Procurement, Account Management and Culinary and Dietetics are committed to upholding the standards and are on hand to support. If you would like to know more about how we can help, please get in touch with our Nutrition Compliance Manager, Abigail Attenborough, or contact your local Food Account Manager.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION AWARD FOR NICK VADIS

We are thrilled to share that our Culinary Ambassador, Nick Vadis, won the Special Contribution Award at this year's Public Sector Catering Awards for his exceptional service within NHS Supply Chain: Food.

"I am humbled and honoured to win this on behalf of the whole NHS Supply Chain: Food team – the award win means a lot to me personally but reflects the whole team's efforts. Thank you to everyone I have worked with throughout the years, it's been a pleasure," Nick says.

Please join us in congratulating Nick on his award-win! 🎉



THE LAST WORD

THE LAST WORD

MARGARET VALENTI JOINED THE NHS IN 2006 AND TODAY IS BUSINESS SUPPORT MANAGER – CATERING SERVICES BASED AT THE INVERCLYDE ROYAL HOSPITAL, GREATER GLASGOW AND CLYDE HEALTH BOARD. SHE IS ALSO SECRETARY OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH AND NATIONAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE HOSPITAL CATERERS ASSOCIATION, AND UNTIL RECENTLY WAS A MANAGING EDITOR OF THE HCA'S MAGAZINE, THE HOSPITAL CATERER.

ACHIEVEMENT

I was very proud to have played my part in the huge organisational change that was necessary when the Health Board moved to a cook-freeze food service model feeding 6,000 patients every day. That was back in 2010. I was involved administratively with the programme which involved refurbishing two CPUs, implementing standardised menus and operating procedures. This was followed by the opening of the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital and the Royal Hospital for Children, where I was part of the team that supported the transition of catering services from five different hospitals into the two new ones.

DEVELOPMENT

My team is now involved in a project to move away from our third-party supplier of patient sandwiches and bring all of our production and distribution in-house. We've converted an area within a CPU into a sandwich production room, which will eventually produce as many as 2,200 sandwiches daily. The main aims are to reduce costs to the NHS, improve quality and regain control of our overall provision. We've had to work closely with national procurement on this, and we are using our existing bread supplier.

CHANGE

Currently, the delivery of catering services to patients across the Health Board involves different disciplines – catering, domestic and nursing staff. I would like catering to have complete ownership of the service, from ordering right through – and particularly – to serving the patient,



PRESENTING AT THE 2024 HCA LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT FORUM

the 'Last 9 Yards'. It would be a massive piece of work to achieve this though, and it would not be an easy process with every hospital operating slightly differently.

MOTIVATION

Apart from a cup of builder's tea and a high energy drink 😊 it's knowing I work with a great team of people who play a vital role in patient catering. Quality is important, and food safety is paramount. We aren't a specialised service, but we reach and interact with every single patient, every single day.

SUPPORT

NHS Scotland Assure has introduced so many initiatives over the years that I've worked in the NHS, but I would like to see more governance and provision of resources to enable us to implement them properly and achieve the results. For instance, Scotland as a whole has been set a food waste reduction target of 33% by 2025. The operational logistics of something like this can be very challenging and we need the governance and the resources to establish how that is going to be achieved, measured and monitored. I feel better consultation would also be useful, with a wider range of stakeholders that includes those responsible for making changes on the frontline of services, not just the experts at the top table. 🗣️



BEING SERENADED BY A SINGING WAITER AT THE PRESIDENT'S DINNER IN AVIEMORE



BEST IN CLASS MENU

- Starter:** Carrot & Red Lentil Soup with Ginger (plant-based)
Main Course: Roasted Cod, Crusted Baby Potato, Green Pea Mash with Smoked Tomato & Dill Sauce
Dessert: Raspberry Fool with Lemon Curd and Flake Meal Biscuit.



NICK VADIS & LISA GOODWIN-ALLEN



CONNOR GUTSELL & GLEN STONE



BEAUTIFUL PRESENTATION WAS PART OF THE CHALLENGE

supported by our managers, especially Karen McLaughlin, who was pushing us all the time. It was great working alongside Angela in the live theatre, showcasing our cooking skills for the Northern Trust in one of the most prestigious chef competitions in the world. To be awarded best in our class was just amazing. It shows the standard of catering in our healthcare services."

Karen McLaughlin, Northern Trust's General Manager for Catering and Domestic Services was thrilled by the success of her two chefs, saying: "I am so pleased that Darren and Angela's hard work has paid off, and this is much-deserved recognition for them both."

HIGH PROFILE SUPPORT

Not only was the event judged by some top chefs and industry professionals – with a different specialist judge allocated to each course – it was also watched over by Bake-Off's Prue Leith who has shown a consistent and supporting interest in the standard of hospital food and the development of NHS chefs since her involvement with the

Hospital Food Review, and Michelin-starred Lisa Goodwin-Allen, 2024 Chef Ambassador for the overall HRC event and guest judge for NHS Chef 2023.

Commenting during the event, Prue said: "I just think your chefs are amazing," and Lisa added: "Open your mind. It wasn't until I got involved with NHS Chef last year that I started to become aware of the challenges and the dietary requirements you have to meet. I am honoured to be part of this."

Nick Vadis, Chef Ambassador NHS Supply Chain, summed it up, saying: "Anything that lifts the profile of NHS chefs is a win-win."



SILVER MEDALS AWARDED TO:

- **Darren Taggart and Angela Dickson** NHSCT Causeway Hospital (Northern Trust), Northern Ireland
- **Dylan Lucas and Darby Hayhurst** (2023 NHS Chef winners), East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, England

BRONZE MEDALS AWARDED TO:

- **James Dougan and Alan Dougan** (last year's 'Best in Class' chefs), Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Scotland
- **Erica Bell and Shelley Pearson-Smith** (2022 NHS Chef winners), Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, England
- **Laila Dartington and Ryan Corbett**, Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust, England
- **Connor Gutsell and Glen Stone**, West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, England
- **Shane O'Neill and Gemma Bell**, South Eastern Trust, Northern Ireland

NORTHERN IRELAND DUO TAKE 'BEST IN CLASS'



JUDGES TALK TO 'BEST IN CLASS' TEAM ANGELA DICKSON & DARREN TAGGART

AT THE HCA'S 4 NATIONS SHOWCASE IN MARCH, SEVEN TEAMS OF NHS CHEFS THRILLED SPECTATORS WITH THEIR SKILLS AND BEAUTIFULLY-PRESENTED DISHES, ALL CREATED TO STRICT FINANCIAL AND NUTRITIONAL CRITERIA.

This prestigious event took place as part of Salon Culinare, which sees chefs from all sectors of hospitality compete in a range of classes. The HCA 4 Nations Showcase celebrates the talent of NHS chefs, whether they be from England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales. 'Best in class' was awarded to Darren Taggart and Angela Dickson from NHSC Causeway Hospital (Northern Trust) with a Silver medal.

The challenge at this year's 4 Nations Showcase was to cook and serve three courses (two portions of each course) in just one hour to a budget not exceeding

£6 per head. In addition, one dish had to be plant-based, the main course had to be nutritionally-balanced and the dessert had to be fruit-based. The judges were also looking for dishes and presentation that could be adaptable for a standard NHS patient menu, including choice of crockery. Other criteria included demonstrating a high level of hygienic working practice, and giving consideration to sustainable procurement and food waste.

Aside from the winning menu, other dishes served up by teams on the day included: venison with red cabbage, cauliflower, potato and blackberries; pear,



TASTING THE 'BEST IN CLASS' DESSERT

mango & ginger crumble with coconut cream & mango coulis; goat's cheese, apple and bacon lollipops; and pan-fried pollack on kale with tomato and basil.

From the 'best in class' duo, Darren Taggart told Hospital Caterer: "We had a brilliant day at the 4 Nations Showcase,



them to aid recovery. This is a cook-freeze CPU, and the team are able to cater for complicated special diets within 24 to 48 hours, enabling the patient to eat as normal, as soon as possible. This small team of eight, including CPU Manager Dave Barber, Supervisor Adam Sheppard and Head Chef Mitch Waudby demonstrate excellent team spirit, innovation in menu planning and continually seek to develop their service to improve the patient experience.

The **Rising Star Award** was won by Clodagh Hastings, Assistant Support Services Manager at the Gransha Hospital, (Western Health & Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland). Clodagh's ability to swiftly advance through various roles, coupled with her hands-on approach to management and learning, has set her apart as a true leader in the healthcare catering field. She is dedicated to continuous improvement, possesses exceptional communication skills and inspires and motivates her team to achieve objectives by leading through example. Clodagh has a hands-on approach, an open-door policy, and demonstrates resilience and adaptability in facing barriers to change.

Sian Langford, Facilities Compliance Manager at The Robert Jones & Agnes

Hunt Hospital won the **Leadership Excellence Award** for her visionary leadership, dedication to excellence and commitment to her team's success, which sets her apart as an exemplary role model. Sian consistently exceeds expectations, delivering outstanding service and culinary experiences that leave a lasting impression on patients. She fosters a culture of collaboration, innovation and mutual support within teams, and her leadership extends beyond catering to positively impact the wider hospital community.

Other awards included two **Special Contribution Awards** – Karoline Rowlands, of North Bristol NHS Trust and Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, who is this year standing down as HCA President. The Oxford Branch won the **Chairman's Choice Award**, NH Case was named **Best Trade Stand** and the **Wilma Wilkie Outstanding Service Award** went to HCA National Secretary, Janice Gillan. National Chair, Brian Robb says: "I congratulate all the winners, and those that made this year's shortlist. They are all shining examples of what is good within hospital catering."

Speaking after the awards, Janice Gillan said that she was "overwhelmed and humbled" with the recognition. This was echoed by Karoline Rowlands, who said:

"This was so unexpected; all I have ever wanted was to do my job as best as I can. I have never received such a reward so it will probably sink in over the next few days, but I could not be happier."

Congratulations to all of our winners.





ANNOUNCING OUR 2024 AWARD WINNERS

READ ON, TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE FANTASTIC WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR 2024 AWARD WINNERS, PRESENTED DURING THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT FORUM IN AVIEMORE DURING APRIL.

The annual awards presentation is always a highlight for the HCA. This year, the awards were presented before the President's Dinner got underway, at an Oscars-style event, hosted by Scottish radio presenter Ali Wright. You could have heard a pin drop in the auditorium as guests waited to hear the names of the winners announced, before they were welcomed to the stage to collect their trophies from HCA National Chair (now Immediate Past Chair) Brian Robb, and Vice Presidents Alison McCree and Stewart McKenzie.

Rob Strachan, Head of Catering Services for Basingstoke & North Hampshire Hospital was named as the **Caterer of the Year** in recognition of the significant contribution he has made to the wellbeing and recovery of patients, the patient experience and to staff and visitors who use the services. Rob's approach is described as "astounding," and an "open book" sharing learning in a two-way process. He encompasses everything the HCA stands for, and truly puts the patient front and centre of every decision he makes. Rob's ambition is simple; he

wants Hampshire Hospitals to be the best and has his sights set on becoming an exemplar site that others can learn from.

Catering Service of the Year went to the Gosport War Memorial Hospital, a team which is said to "tick all the boxes of the NHS Principles," that is, a commitment to quality of care, compassion, improving lives, working together for patients and everyone counts. This team goes out of their way to ensure patients receive the best nutritional care, and often take time out to visit patients who might be struggling with food and to work with





BILLY CUNNINGHAM



PREPARING FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY

laid out Scotland's vision for a nation who take pride and pleasure in, as well as benefit from the food they produce, cook and serve. Ms Gougeon is responsible for changing the Act into an action plan and she explained how this will help benefit NHS Scotland and hopefully encourage the other nations to follow suit.

The keynote speech was then followed by a panel session with representatives from each of the Four Nations' Procurement Services – Phil Shelley (NHS England), Loraine Hartley (NHS Scotland), Rodney Smyth (Health & Social Care Northern Ireland) and Romano Proveni (NHS Wales). The differences in approach to procurement from one nation to the other were clear, but it was also evident that the issues faced are similar across the board. Under questioning from the audience there was recognition and hope that more could be done jointly, with improved knowledge sharing. Phil and Loraine debated how comparing the procurement of non-food items in a couple of hospitals in both Scotland and England could produce learning to be shared across the system. Panellists agreed that better engagement across the Four Nations could make it easier to navigate some of the regulations and challenges together.

DRAWING TO A CLOSE

Later in the day, there was an entertaining talk from Billy Cunningham who has over 25 years' NHS experience as both head of catering and a service improvement consultant. He looked back over the past 100 years of catering within hospitals before discussing recent developments and national reviews. He welcomed NHS England's Review of Hospital Food and the subsequent expert panels, who are clearly driving improvements in all aspects



DR HANS HARTUNG

of NHS catering. This led to a lively debate with the audience keen to share their opinions too.

Following feedback from the two workshop sessions, presented by Forum Management Team members Margaret Valenti and Robert McLaughlin, the delegates were treated to an interview by Facilitator, Rachel McTavish with Scottish Rugby legend, Kenny Logan before Stewart McKenzie, Vice President brought the Forum to a close and the outgoing National Chair, Brian Robb passed on the chain of office to the incoming National Chair, Iain Robertson.

Speaking at the opening of the Forum, Brian had previously paid tribute to the hard work and efforts of everyone at the HCA and the achievements made during the three years of his tenure as National Chair. An emotional Brian invited all delegates to read his final slide, which said: "These last three years have been an incredible journey for all of the Executive Team, Directors and you, our members. We have shared as a team through this organisational change

a fantastic learning experience, and each of you have been invaluable during our process of modernisation. It has been my absolute pleasure and privilege to have worked with such dedicated individuals, who have given their time voluntarily, to serve you, the membership."



WORKSHOP SESSION



PRESENTING THE WORKSHOP FEEDBACK



FOUR NATIONS PROCUREMENT PANEL – ROMANO PROVINI (ON SCREEN) JOINED REMOTELY, SEATED ARE RACHEL McTAVISH, RODNEY SMYTH, PHIL SHELLEY AND LORAIN HARTLEY

HCA'S GLORIOUS FORUM IN THE GLEN 2024

DISTANCE DID NOT PUT OFF MORE THAN 350 DELEGATES AND EXHIBITORS TRAVELLING TO THE MACDONALD'S RESORT, AVIEMORE, IN THE HEART OF THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS, FOR THE 2024 LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM OF THE HOSPITAL CATERERS ASSOCIATION. FACILITATED BY TV JOURNALIST RACHEL McTAVISH, THIS WAS A HUGE SUCCESSFUL FORUM.

Rachel McTavish introduced a range of speakers covering many aspects that affect hospital caterers as they strive to deliver a first-class patient experience in healthcare establishments, large and small, across the Four Nations of the UK.

After the opening ceremony, Professor David Foskett OBE reminded everyone that catering teams are all part of the wider hospitality industry and that we should help every staff member to value their importance in the NHS – without catering staff involved with preparing and cooking food, and their colleagues at ward level, the hospital would cease to function very quickly.

Dr Hans Hartung, a Consultant in Respiratory Medicine and Staff Wellbeing & Support Clinical Lead at NHS Ayrshire & Arran led a session on staff wellbeing, focusing on the physical, emotional and mental health of the whole catering team.

This session acted as a foundation for a workshop later in the day.

Angela Tregear, Professor of Marketing at the University of Edinburgh Business School, and Tim Radcliffe, HCA Board Director and Net Zero Programme Manager at NHS England, contributed to a session focusing on how caterers need to manage their carbon footprint to meet the overall NHS commitment. This session led to another workshop, where delegates were able to share their own experiences and listen to other ideas and practices proving successful elsewhere.

Day two opened with the focus on nutrition and an interesting presentation focusing on how to get people to understand better nutrition. Jenna Mosimann and David Titman from the specialist social enterprise Raising Nutrition, believe that an integrated approach to food – combining nutrition science, culinary arts and health

psychology – is needed if caterers are to support health and wellbeing.

Northern Ireland's hospitals have introduced a Food Safety Pause programme, designed to encourage catering staff to engage with the patients they're serving and to identify any concerns before the food is served. Gill Murphy, Deputy Director of Nursing for the Northern Health & Social Care Trust talked about the way the scheme works and how it can be introduced into other hospitals. Gill is also passionate about leading the contribution of nurses in improving outcomes for users of our healthcare services.

POLITICS & PROCUREMENT

The Forum was proud to welcome Mairi Gougeon, MSP Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands, Scottish Government for the keynote speech, 'The Good Food Nations Plan'. She talked about the Good Food Nation Act 2022, which

ENDING THE STIGMA

WE ALL KNOW THAT THE CATERING DEPARTMENT BECOMES MORE LIKE AN EXTENDED FAMILY; WORKING TOGETHER IN SUCH A PRESSURED ENVIRONMENT HELPS BOND INDIVIDUALS INTO A TEAM THAT IS ALWAYS THERE TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER. EVERY NOW AND AGAIN WE HEAR STORIES ABOUT HOW THAT 'FAMILY' IS TESTED TO THE LIMIT.

Earlier this year, the facilities team at Aldeburgh Community Hospital, part of the Suffolk Community Healthcare and the East Anglia Branch of the HCA, had to face the incredibly sad news that one of their colleagues, Josh Fisk had taken his own life.

Samantha Girling, Facilities Manager, Soft FM (Community Services) at the Trust explains: "Josh Fisk was 21 and had worked with the team for five years. He had recently accepted a post as a catering assistant and was a firm favourite of both staff and patients with his warm open attitude and his ability to put people at ease. His first question to all he met was: "How are you?"

To help cope with this tragic news, Josh's family were pointed to 'Andy's Man Club', a men's suicide prevention charity, offering free-to-attend peer-to-peer support groups across the UK and online. They, like all of us, want to end the stigma surrounding men's mental health and help men through the power of conversation. #ITSOKAYTOTALK

There are a number of different organisations who offer support, so it might be worth checking who your Trust is in contact with.

HELP AND SUPPORT

"There is no magic pill, every organisation is different. There are a few simple recommendations that can be put in place, without costing the organisation much money, which can drastically improve the welfare of the staff." These are the encouraging thoughts of Kris Hall, Founder of the Burnt Chef Project. The Burnt Chef



Project is a non-profit social enterprise fully committed to making the workplace healthier and more sustainable.

He is a firm believer in holding 1-to-1 catch-up meetings. These chats need not be long and should cover things outside of the workplace. You could be asking how they spend their evenings, what they do on their days off, how their home life is going and if there is anything more you can do to support them.

Kris continues: "It is vital that all members of staff feel valued and respected when at work. Regular communication with your team is essential and goes a long way to make staff feel valued."

He often recounts a story of a previous boss who still sends him a text message

on his birthday, and how this small and thoughtful gesture can make a dramatic difference to his attitude and satisfaction in a work environment. Small meaningful actions like this don't cost anything, but help to build a workforce with a sense of respect for their leadership team.

There are a range of wellbeing tools on the market, for example, the Trust/Health Board could consider offering all staff a headspace membership or access to the 'Thrive' wellbeing app - <https://thrive.uk.com>. Thrive is an NHS-approved app-based solution containing a mood journal, meditation, relaxation and breathing exercises and a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)-based programme. Users fill in the app daily and a fully qualified therapist has access to it and can reach out to someone they may identify as struggling, rather than putting the onus on the user.

Whatever route your Trust/Health Board follows, the HCA community will always be here for members and their teams. Remember, whilst you may be working in isolation within your local area, you are only a call or an email away from an HCA colleague who can be a useful sounding board for your current issues.

ON AVERAGE ONE MAN EVERY TWO HOURS TAKES HIS LIFE IN THE UK. WHAT'S OFTEN SAID TO BE A FACTOR IS THAT MEN DON'T TALK.
SOURCE: ANDY'S MAN CLUB

USEFUL LINKS

Prevention of Young Suicide - website contains links to many helpful organisations - papyrus-uk.org/suicide-bereavement-support/

Samaritans 24/7 - call 116 123

Survivors of bereavement by suicide - 0300 111 5065 or uksobs.org

Andy's Man Club - andysmanclub.co.uk

The Burnt Chef Project - theburntchefproject.com

Website for live chat: well-online.co.uk - username: esneft/password: wellbeing



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HCA UNVEILS NEW STRATEGY

Released at the National Leadership & Development Forum in April, the HCA has published its new strategy to 2027. The strategy represents a clear, post-Covid vision for the association, building on the innovation of the last few years that has seen it modernise and become a company limited by guarantee.

The strategy sets out five priority areas, with objectives, actions and measurability clearly set out for each. The priority areas are: Membership, Education, Partnership & Promotion, Financial Stability and Governance.

Branches are being asked to feature the new strategy as an agenda item at forthcoming meetings to ensure all members are aware of it and the role they will play in achieving its objectives.

HCA NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2024/25

Following the recent AGM, the following are confirmed as HCA's National Officers and Branch Directors for the year.

NATIONAL OFFICERS:

Honorary Vice Presidents:

Alison McCree and
Stewart McKenzie

National Chair Director:

Iain Robertson

National Vice-Chair:

Nicola Strawther

National Secretary Director:

Janice Gillan

Honorary National Assistant Secretary:

Margaret Valenti

National Finance Director:

Caroline Darvill

Honorary National Editor:

Craig Smith

Immediate Past Chair:

Brian Robb

BRANCH DIRECTORS:

East Anglia: Stewart Nimmo

East Scotland: Brian Robb

London & South East:

Larry Rosenthal

Merseyside & North Wales:

Amanda Cartmill

Northern: Graham Whitworth

Northern Ireland:

Deborah McNeil

North West: Tim Radcliffe

Oxford: Steven Hall

South West: Laura Harvey

Trent: Nicola Strawther

Wales: David Wisman

Wessex: Rob Strachan

West Scotland:

Margaret Valenti

West Midlands: tbc

Yorkshire: Richard Priestley.



THE HEALTHCARE CHEFS' KNOWLEDGE BOOK LAUNCHES

Out now in paperback and in ebook (Kindle), The Healthcare Chefs' Knowledge, produced by The Chefs' Forum in partnership with Prue Leith and the NHS Food Review, catalogues everything a chef working in healthcare needs to know about hospital catering.

Featuring 100 dishes every hospital chef should know, complete with full nutritional breakdown and possible allergens, the book also contains interviews and features with NHS colleagues and topic experts.

Speaking at the launch event, Prue Leith said: "It's an exciting step for our NHS catering teams, providing chefs the tools and confidence to lead change."



ALLAN GIMSON

It is with great sadness that the Hospital Caterer has to inform HCA members of the passing of Allan Gimson, a long-standing member of Trent Branch.

Allan's NHS career began in 1964 as a Kitchen Porter. He retired as a Catering Advisor. A passionate believer that caterers need to return to the bedside, he often said: "Once you have seen the patient face-to-face, this stays with you forever, and nothing is too much effort."

This was a sentiment he often put into practice, with his team cooking something special to encourage a patient to start eating.

Allan was a stalwart of the HCA, a past council and Executive member who supported a number of national Chairs and always offered a balanced viewpoint to any discussion. As Trusts developed, he was aware that the catering manager could often become a lone voice, and he championed the role of the HCA to provide support and facilitate knowledge-sharing with other caterers. He was proud to say that the HCA provides us all with a voice nationally, and in collaboration with our colleague organisations, such as the Royal College of Nursing and the British Dietetic Association, we influence government policy.

We are sure that the whole Association will join in remembering this lovely, kind and gentle person, a true gentleman. They don't make them like him any more.

(There is a more detailed tribute on the HCA website).



WEST OF SCOTLAND MEMBERS AT THE 'HIGHLAND FLING' BRANCH NIGHT



WEST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by Margaret Valenti

The last Branch gathering was held at this year's Forum where the West of Scotland was the Hosting Branch. It was lovely to catch up with friends and colleagues once again in person.

The Branch Forum Team would like to thank all delegates, exhibitors and speakers for travelling the extra mile up to Aviemore and helping to make the National 'Forum in the Glen' 2024 such a memorable success, not to mention singing waiters and tartan-clad members being flung around the dance floor.

Andrew Archer and the team at Dewberry Redpoint did a great job with their wonderful support. The feedback and kind words received from so many has been overwhelming.

We bid a final farewell to all the little Coos who have been so busy over the last year. Thank you to all the Branches for their support and brilliant Coo updates.

Special congratulations go to Janice Gillan, our Branch Treasurer and National Secretary Director who was awarded the Wilma Wilkie Outstanding Service Award.

The next Branch meeting will be held on Friday, June 7, hosted by Billy Menzies at Instock's depot in Livingstone. The meeting will be held in the innovation kitchen followed by lunch and product demonstrations.

NEW HCA NATIONAL CHAIR ANNOUNCED

On Friday, April 26, 2024, Iain Robertson succeeded Brian Robb as HCA National Chair. Previously the HCA Vice Chair, Iain is a former NHS chef, who has been Catering Operations Manager at Solent NHS Trust for the past four years.

Among Iain's key focus areas are to make the Association more inclusive and, in particular, attract younger catering leaders to ensure it is truly representative of the health and social care sector, which has seen huge changes over the past decade. [Read more in Iain's welcome to this issue of Hospital Caterer].

Iain says: "Since I joined the NHS in 1999, I have passionately believed that tasty wholesome food plays a crucial part in a patient's recovery from illness or surgery, yet all too often it is either overlooked or undervalued. I intend to change that. The HCA believes in promoting catering excellence, and I am looking forward to working with like-minded colleagues to drive up quality where needed and showcase some of the amazing work already going on in NHS kitchens across the country."



NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH

Report by Karina Watterson

The HCA Northern Ireland Branch had an enjoyable and educational talk on dysphagia and food waste by David Coyne, Area Manager Ireland and Jamie Clews, Key Account Manager from Robot Coupe on March 28 at the Causeway Hospital.

The Branch learned about the different levels of dysphagia and how these can be catered for in-house, so patients with the condition are not made to feel different to those on a regular diet. We learnt that most foods can be modified when processed in the new Hobart Blitzer, which has been specially designed to make the food safe for dysphagia patients. Menu choices that were demonstrated included level 4 beans on toast which looked very like the regular diet (level 7). Jamie explained that using different techniques with foods can change the taste when they are modified, such as serving mashed potatoes with salt and vinegar which can give the dysphagia patient the sensation of eating chips, enabling them to enjoy fish and chips alongside those on regular diets.

Jamie also discussed food waste, outlining the volumes generated across the UK and the impact it is having on the planet due to the gases released when it is disposed of into landfill and not processed correctly.

Jamie provided brilliant ideas about how we can all help to reduce food waste in our own homes. Furthermore, if we then continued these practices at our workplace it would have a massive impact on the environment. One of the ideas was dehydrating the stalks of cauliflower, turning them into a powder, which could be used as a flour to make breads – cauliflower and cheese bread was one suggestion – and in other dishes.

The Branch was shocked by the amount of energy and resources that are wasted in food wastage taking into account the air mileage, water and other resources involved in the production and supply chain. As an example, throwing away half a loaf of bread equates to approximately 2,500 litres of water wasted.

Overall the Branch enjoyed a very educational morning and hopefully gained a better understanding on dysphagia and tips on how to minimise food wastage.

Making small changes can make BIG differences.



SOUTH WEST BRANCH

Thursday, September 19, 2024 is the date for the South West Branch Study Day & Exhibition. The event will take place at the BAWA Health & Leisure Club with the theme being 'Change – What is the new Normal?'

More details of the programme will be released shortly. The day will also include an exhibition.

For more details and stand bookings, please email Anna Warman: anna.warman@somersetFT.nhs.uk

EAST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by Loraine Hartley

Our first committee meeting for 2024, on January 9, was followed by the Branch dinner which was held at Vittoria On the Bridge in Edinburgh and was an event enjoyed by all. Our next committee meeting was a virtual event via Teams on February 6. Later in the month (February 20), we had our first business meeting, with a great presentation on the Eating Out/ Eating Well guide and pilot scheme. On February 25, Branch members joined the FDFS at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, Celebrating Reformulation and Innovation for Health.

April 16 – 18 saw members of the Branch attend the National Forum in Aviemore which was a great and informative few days with many fantastic networking opportunities. Our Branch Coo, McFudge made it to the Forum where he was very smartly dressed and his behaviour was exemplary (unlike some of the other members!!!)

Our next committee meeting is on May 7 via Teams and we have a business meeting with presentation and tasting session to look at plant-based options to be held at Fife Creamery, Fife.

There are no events planned for June/July with the next committee meeting (via Teams) to be held on August 6.

PASSING THE FLAG

To close the 2024 National Leadership & Development Forum, Janice Gillan, Forum Secretary, passed the flag to Tim Radcliffe, 2025 Secretary. The North West England Branch will host the 2025 event on April 1 and 2 at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW CORPORATE PATRONS



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OXFORD BRANCH

Report by Dr Mabel Blades

The Oxford Branch was thrilled and honoured to have been selected for the Chairman's Choice award by our national Chair, Brian Robb (now immediate past Chair) at the HCA Leadership and Development Forum in April.

We could not believe our ears as we all went onto the stage to receive it.

The Chairman noted we had regular meetings and kept minutes, produced articles, hosted events like our Dragons Den and supported the membership. The Branch is also interested in environmental issues and sustainability and has planted a few trees (300 last year in fact!).

NORTHERN BRANCH

Report by Stuart Wray

Darlington Memorial Hospital had the pleasure of hosting the Northern Branch meeting on April 24, 2024 which also coincided with a presentation from Calder's Kitchens. This business was formed by the Calder family in 2015 after discovering Grandad Charlie's original Piccalilli recipe, making it in his memory, and uncovering something amazing! Charlie was a milkman and lived most of his life in South Shields, Tyne & Wear, serving his country in the Second World War. A passionate cook and family man, Calder's Kitchen now makes each flavour in the range in Grandad's memory using vegetables he used to grow in his back garden and cook with himself.

Once again a packed agenda was discussed which included:

- National E&F Day 2024
- Northern MTFs Collaboration with NHS Supply Chain
- HCA Forum 2024 feedback
- Updates from both members and suppliers.

Our May Branch meeting will be held via Teams on May 22, and on June 26 we meet in the Piano Room at RVI (Royal Victoria Infirmary) in Newcastle.

NORTHERN BRANCH MEMBERS AT THE APRIL MEETING





BLUEPRINT

IN HIS FIRST WELCOME TO THE HOSPITAL CATERER SINCE BECOMING NATIONAL CHAIR OF THE HCA, IAIN ROBERTSON EXPLAINS HOW THE NEW STRATEGY, LAUNCHED AT THE LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT FORUM IN APRIL WILL BECOME THE BLUEPRINT FOR HIS TWO-YEAR TENURE.

The HCA might have a new Chair, but in many ways it will be 'business as usual' as the Executive Team continue to press forward with the excellent work that was set in motion under Brian's chairmanship. The fortnightly meetings will continue, as we carry on with reviews that were already in hand – of the website for instance, and the membership management process to ease the burden of work on Branch Treasurers.

For some time now the Executive Team have been working on the new HCA Strategy, which we launched at the Forum. I was involved in the production of this, and my focus as Chair is on delivering it. The strategy is divided into five categories: Membership, Education, Partnership & Promotion, Financial Stability and Governance. It's clearly laid out, with objective, actions to deliver, and how success will be measured set out for each category so the membership can see progress and hold us to account.

The strategy has some really exciting parts to it, and for me, the most exciting of all is around membership. I firmly believe that the HCA has to become more

inclusive. If you work in hospital catering and have a passion for it, membership of the HCA should be open to you, whether you are a chef, a catering assistant or a manager. Indeed, it is those in more junior positions and who may be just starting out on their careers who have most to benefit from membership, and by helping to nurture and develop that talent and enthusiasm, we will be putting in place succession planning for the Association, as well as supporting Trusts and Health Boards to develop the NHS workforce of the future.

So, one of the aims is to set up a working group to review current, and explore new, membership criteria. But this is only the beginning of the journey. It's not enough to want to welcome more junior members of staff into membership. We have to understand what they want, what will be useful to them, and then deliver it. Take chefs for instance. It's no good attracting them to a meeting that has nothing on the agenda to interest them. They will come to one meeting and never be seen again. Chef networks are already beginning to develop, through events like our 4 Nations Showcase, NHS

Chef and the Chefs Academy. There is the potential for similar networks to develop within the HCA, as well as for programmes whereby younger and more junior members of catering teams can learn from the senior and experienced leaders we have within our membership. These are things for the working group to develop.

At the AGM, I urged all Branches to add the strategy as an agenda item to their next meetings, and I am particularly keen to attend these meetings and talk to Branches about the role they will play in making it a success. I also want to celebrate what Branches are doing. There's some incredible work going on at a local level – study days, summer balls, Dragons Dens – we need to share these successes more widely to help to grow the membership. For someone new joining, what interests them is not the Executive Team's agenda, important though that is, it's what is happening that they can engage with at a local level.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the coming months.

Iain Robertson
National Chair Director

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HOSPITAL CATERER

FORUM IN THE GLEN

Our full review of the HCA's National Leadership & Development Forum

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

The HCA's 2024 Award Winners were announced in Aviemore

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Exploring some of the resources that are available to support staff

HCA's 4 Nations Showcase

Seven NHS hospital teams competed for 'best in class' during Salon Culinaire

