

# HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE

THE PATIENT / THE WORKFORCE / THE VISITOR

JULY/AUGUST 2024

## BREAKFAST & MORNING GOODS

Looking beyond the traditional for healthy and nutritious breakfasts

## BIG INTERVIEW

Paul Freeston talks to HFS about nutrition and a hospital-to-home approach

## ON SITE

Strong sense of community at the Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital

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# WELCOME

# INSPIRING AND ENGAGING

I'VE SEEN SOME GREAT IDEAS RECENTLY TO IMPROVE THE ENGAGEMENT OF ALL HOSPITAL CATERING STAFF IN THE KITCHEN AND INSPIRE THEM TO BE THE BEST THEY CAN.



I know it's difficult, for sites without extensive kitchen facilities, but when the entire hospitality sector is finding staff recruitment and retention challenging, ideas to keep the staff you do have happy, fulfilled and engaged have to be worth pursuing. The Independent Review of Hospital Food touched on this, and NHS England's Chef of the Year competition is a reflection of how encouraging catering staff to participate in a national competition, mentoring and helping with their development, and then recognising their achievements is one way of improving engagement and inspiring whole teams. Good luck to all the competitors in the 2024 event, the regional heats for which have recently started.

Other, often simple ideas, are possible at a more local level. For instance, I saw a post from Milton Keynes University Hospital on LinkedIn about celebrating Multicultural Day in its Eaglestone restaurant by asking each of its chefs to produce a dish to demonstrate their cultural heritage – fantastic idea. It provides some delicious, home-style cooked food on the menu for everyone to enjoy, but more importantly, it celebrates those chefs, allows them to express their creativity and recognises their skills and food knowledge.

Even more ideas are included in the pages of this issue. For example, in The Last Word (p37), Nuno Matias talks about making the working environment as pleasant as it can be for catering staff, and A Sustainable Service (p14-15) explains a challenge to celebrate this year's Love British Fortnight by designing a pie championing British ingredients. In On Site (p8-11) we visit a truly inspiring hospital catering service at the Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital and explore why it is so important for this team to aspire to meeting the patient's individual nutritional needs.

If you have any interesting or successful initiatives in play across your sites I'd love to hear about them. And as always, if there's anything you'd like to see featured in Hospital Food + Service, please do get in touch.

Amanda Roberts

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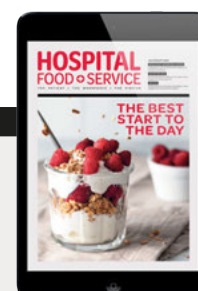
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## WES STREETING PROMISES TO FIX “BROKEN” NHS

THE NEW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE HAS PLEDGED TO WORK ALONGSIDE NHS STAFF AND “TURN OUR HEALTH SERVICE AROUND.”

In his first speech as Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, who has been the MP for Ilford North since 2015, and became Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in 2021, said: “From today, the policy of this department is that the NHS is broken.”

The Health Secretary promised to be honest about the challenges, serious about tackling them, and to work with NHS employees to turn the health service around. He has also ordered a new independent review, to be carried out by Lord Darzi, saying he wants: “a raw and frank assessment of the state of the NHS.”

This review should report in September this year.



## ‘CHANGE THE MENU’ CAMPAIGN RAISES AWARENESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN HOSPITALITY

The Burnt Chef Project, a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to improving mental health in the hospitality industry, has launched a new campaign designed to drive recruitment into the industry. ‘Change the Menu’ aims to highlight the significant impact The Burnt Chef Project is making through its free-to-access services and strong advocacy for improved working environments in the sector.

The Burnt Chef Project believes wellbeing must be placed at the top of the menu, and this campaign wants to change perceptions of the industry, positioning it as a career of choice rather than a stopgap. By highlighting the impact of its free-to-access services and tireless advocacy for better working environments, the campaign underscores the importance of prioritising mental health and wellbeing.

The Change the Menu campaign uses menus from two fictitious venues – The Struggle Inn and The Witts End – to vividly illustrate the mental health challenges faced in the hospitality industry. These initial menus highlight issues such as antisocial hours, lack of management training, anxiety and depression. In a powerful transformation, these problematic ‘dishes’ are replaced with a new and improved menu featuring supportive structures, mental health training and a better work-life balance.



## NOMINATE NOW FOR KP OF THE YEAR

2024 is the 10-year anniversary of Winterhalter’s Kitchen Porter of the Year competition, which is open to all sectors and aims to recognise the amazing work so many kitchen porters do to keep the UK’s foodservice industry in peak condition.

As well as the KPOTY trophy, the KP of the Year 2024 will be awarded £1000 in vouchers and a celebratory meal for friends and family in a casual dining restaurant of their choice. Furthermore, the winning KP’s employer will get a piece of Winterhalter equipment worth up to £10,000.

Along with this, three highly commended KPs will receive vouchers to hospitality experiences, and every nominee will get a bespoke KP of the Year apron designed by Oliver Hardy.

Nominations are open until August 30.



## NEARLY HALF THE POPULATION COULD BE EATING TOO MUCH SALT

A survey carried out by nutrition tracking app Nutracheck has revealed that at least 43%\* of respondents could be eating too much salt.

The survey, carried out in conjunction with the Stick to 6 Challenge campaign, was created in partnership with Season With Sense to demonstrate the need for further education around salt intake levels.

In the UK, the recommended daily amount of salt is 6g; but the results of the survey revealed this was unclear for almost half of those surveyed.

This misinformation is common in the industry as a whole, says Dr Ian Campbell MBE, obesity and weight loss management expert: “Keeping our salt intake to a minimum is a really simple way to improve our health. Too much salt in our diet can cause high blood pressure, leading to an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.”

\*Survey sample size - 482 respondents

## LET'S GET TO WORK

HCA Chair, Iain Robertson explains how his top priority now is to get around all Branches, either virtually or in person, to talk about the HCA strategy.



Launched in Aviemore at the recent Forum, the strategy sets out five categories for action: Membership, Education, Partnership & Promotion, Financial Stability and Governance. Some of these will be led nationally, whilst others will be driven at local level. Presenting the strategy to members at Branch meetings, Iain will explain how, and where, the association needs Branch support to ensure the strategy is a success, and encourage members to get involved.

Flip this issue to read the full message.

## HIGH STREET LEADERS CONFIRMED FOR LUNCH! SPEAKER LINE-UP

Co-located with Casual Dining, lunch! the definitive café, coffee shop and food-to-go event, now also incorporating Commercial Kitchen, has announced its initial line-up of headline speakers for 2024. The show returns to ExCeL London on September 18-19.

From keynote interviews to data-driven insights and panel sessions, lunch! will host three theatres packed full of inspiring content across the two days.

The initial line up of food-to-go legends includes Julian Metcalfe OBE, founder of itsu and co-founder of Pret; Emma Woods, Chair at Tortilla; Will Stratton-Morris, CEO of Caffè Nero UK and Shereen Ritchie, CEO of buns from home.

A regular visitor and speaker at lunch!, Shereen says: "lunch! is the best show of the year!"

Julian Metcalfe OBE, who is returning to speak at lunch! for the second time after drawing in one of the biggest audiences the show has ever seen, agrees adding: "lunch! is such a great show to see industry innovation."

## REGENERATIVE FLOUR COULD SAVE OVER THREE MILLION TONNES OF CARBON BY 2030

New figures from Zero Carbon Forum and Wildfarmed highlight how hospitality can reduce carbon footprints and build resilience against failing food systems and price fluctuations.

The new data finds that 3.6 million tonnes of carbon could be saved by 2030 if every operator across the UK hospitality and brewing sectors make the switch to regenerative flour and barley. That's the same as cancelling more than 5.5 million one-way flights between London and New York.

Zero Carbon Forum and Wildfarmed are urging operators to join their regenerative mission, pointing out that the new research underscores how simple changes in hospitality supply chains can make a significant difference to the future resilience of the food system as well as organisations' net zero targets.



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## NEWS

### SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OF FARM SUSTAINABILITY RECOGNISES FARMER KNOWLEDGE AND FOOD PRODUCTION

Hundreds of farmers across nearly 200,000 hectares have informed a scientific review of sustainability metrics, creating benchmarks that demonstrate the benefits farms deliver.

The science protocol for Soil Association Exchange, which provides an environmental impact measurement to any farmer, has undergone a six-month review using two years of in-field experience from the 500 farmers working with the platform. Led by independent scientists, the revision has nearly doubled the Exchange metrics across six core themes of soil, water, biodiversity, carbon, animal welfare and social impact.

The new science protocol – which is available open source – has been designed to provide robust and transparent sustainability data to supply chains. It aims to better inform decision making around climate and nature within supply chains and help to spark more progressive relationships that incentivise farmers to manage their land and produce food sustainably.

It can also provide the evidence to help corporate businesses who work with farmers with other reporting like the Taskforce on Nature Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and the Science Based Targets initiative.



KARA, LAURA, CLAIRE AND SIFO WITH FORUM HOST PETER EMMETT (CENTRE)

### CHANGING THE DYNAMIC

The 2024 HEFMA National Leadership Forum (Health Estates and Facilities Management Association), included a session featuring E&F matrons and a clinical and operations project manager, all qualified nurses, discussing their role in bridging the gap between clinical and non-clinical teams.

Claire Gibson (Stockport NHS FT), Laura McConnell (Manchester NHS FT), Kara Dulson (Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS FT) and Sifo Dlamini (Derbyshire Healthcare NHS FT), each discussed different elements of their role and its impact on catering, cleaning and estates services.

Look out for more on this in the next issue of Hospital Food + Service.

## SUPPLIER NEWS

### DRIVING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Healthcare meals provider, apetito has committed to electrifying its fleet with over 200 brand-new refrigerated EVs set to be rolled out this year across its consumer business, Wiltshire Farm Foods. A high proportion of these EVs also have the unique addition of solar panels, supporting with generating their own green electricity whilst the vehicle is in motion.

The £14.3m investment is a key milestone in apetito's wider mission to convert 75% of its entire Wiltshire Farm Foods delivery fleet to EVs before the end of 2025, a change set to save 1,358 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year.



### LOCKHART CATERING EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS NHS WITH TAILORED RESOURCES

Lockhart Catering Equipment has launched a new initiative to support NHS catering operations. The dedicated monthly newsletter, 'Spotlight', contains equipment guides, supplier showcases and discounts of up to 15% on a range of products. The tailored offer aims to round up everything hospital caterers need to know in one centralised place.



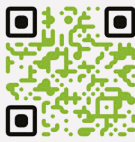
### MKN HELPS DRIVE KITCHEN EFFICIENCIES AT ROYAL BOURNEMOUTH HOSPITAL

A major new Central Production Kitchen (CPK) using MKN cooking equipment linked to the Sicotronic energy optimisation system has transformed catering operations across University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust, which includes the Royal Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch Hospitals.

As part of a major reconfiguration programme, the Trust has invested in a new, state-of-the-art CPK at Bournemouth, which is already delivering meals for the Royal Bournemouth Hospital, with Poole and Christchurch set to follow.

MKN has supplied two FlexiChef multifunctional cooking appliances, five FlexiCombi combi ovens, two 200 litre multifunctional mixing kettles and two Optima 850 induction hobs.





# REDUCE FOODWASTE COLLECTIONS

ISS REDUCE FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS BY 84% AT CHELSEA AND WESTMINSTER HOSPITAL WITH THE PRM BIO-PROCESSOR

## SAVING MONEY AND REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS

The PRM food waste digester has been working hard at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, turning unavoidable food waste into a valuable soil nutrient. The use of the digester has reduced food waste collections by 84%, Mark Leith, Assistant Logistics Manager for ISS who manage the site, explains “we previously had 32 food waste bins taken off site each week using 2 lorries, we have now reduced that to 5 bins a week with 1 lorry collecting from our site every other week. We’re thrilled to be saving money and significantly reducing our carbon emissions using the PRM Bio-Processor”.

Inside the digester the food waste is broken down using oxygen and friendly microbes. The result is a significant volume reduction and an end substrate which looks and feels like dry soil. This substrate can be

blended with compost to create a valuable soil nutrient or sent to AD plants to produce green energy. At Chelsea and Westminster much of the waste is taken away to an AD plant but some is used on land at their sister site, Middlesex Hospital.

## SIMPLE TO USE

Day to day use is just like tipping waste into a bin. Once the lid is closed there is no unpleasant odour and no exposed food waste to attract insects or rodents. The Chelsea and Westminster digester is fondly known by staff as ‘Keith’ and has been an easy system for staff to adjust to. Mark comments “The Bio-Processor is very simple to use. I made sure that I got my team involved from the very start, they understand the benefits the equipment brings and particularly enjoy not having to handle large amounts of smelly waste bins”

## MEETS NEW LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The new regulations of the Environmental Act 2021 are due to be implemented by 31st March 2025. The legislation requires food waste to be separated from general waste, with arrangements put in place for a dedicated collection or an on-site recycling system. The initiative applies to almost all businesses and industries, including hospitals.

The environmental benefit of this change is significant. It will prevent food waste from being sent to landfill, where it rots and releases huge amounts of harmful methane - a

greenhouse gas that is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

In order to prepare for the upcoming change many businesses are adopting a proactive approach, reducing and/or recycling their waste on-site using food waste digestors and composters.

One such digester, is the PRM Bio-Processor. It offers an easy and environmentally friendly way to recycle food waste as well as other organic matter, such as plant-based packaging.

## A CLOSED LOOP SYSTEM

Managing food waste can often be a challenge, and a messy one at that. With the tighter legislation soon to come into effect and sustainability becoming increasingly important to hospitals, now is a great time to consider your options on how to best manage your unavoidable food waste. Mark sums up his experience of the Bio-Processor “We think it’s fantastic, it ticks all the boxes from an environmental as well as sustainability point of view and has allowed us to create a closed loop system here at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. We provide our CW+ charity with some of the “good stuff” for land scaping projects on our other site West Middlesex Hospital, offer to staff and are reaching out to others. There is also the option of a telephone app which is live so that you can remotely monitor the machine’s activity. The reporting information can be used for accurate collaborated data.

The service level provided by PRM has been really good too”.

To find out more about the PRM Bio-Processor contact PRM Waste Systems:

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# HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

**HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE** FINDS OUT HOW THE DEEP SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO PATIENT CARE HELP TO UNDERPIN CATERING SERVICES AT THE ROBERT JONES & AGNES HUNT ORTHOPAEDIC HOSPITAL.

Sian Langford, Facilities Compliance & Sustainability Manager (winner of the HCA's Leadership Excellence Award this year) can often be heard to joke that RJAH is a hospital set in the middle of fields ... and it is, complete with its own cricket field – surrounded by a path that is wide and surfaced for easy manoeuvring of wheelchairs – plenty of wildflowers, a Horatio's Garden and lots of trees. RJAH even used to have its own resident peacock, nicknamed Percy, which has become the hospital's emblem.

Everything about this small hospital is a community. Its rural location means that most members of staff live in the surrounding villages. The catering team comprises six cooks, 25 catering assistants and 10 bank staff, led by Catering Manager, Dan Hoggett.

Dan, formerly a teacher of outdoor sports such as kayaking and rock climbing, joined the hospital as a cook during winter, intending to stay only until the beginning of the next season, but he didn't leave. During his 13 years at the Trust, Dan has covered most of the jobs within the kitchen and earned the respect of the entire catering team, which includes both his wife and his mother-in-law! Sian joined RJAH in 2010 as an apprentice, working in infection control, and she moved into her facilities management role some seven years ago.

As a community, RJAH supports its staff, with several wellbeing offers such as free toast and porridge every day in the restaurant, as well as a £2 meal deal, comprising a main course with a side dish.

The most important people within this community, however, are the patients. As a specialist orthopaedic hospital, patients at RJAH include those undergoing elective orthopaedic surgery, such as hip and knee





replacements, spinal injury patients and those with bone and soft tissue tumours.

Most spinal injury patients will be inpatients for many months, and even when they leave, many will return as outpatients for the rest of their lives. RJAH also has a dedicated Veterans' Centre and Service which functions as a hub of the community for ex-servicemen, running hugely popular breakfast clubs among other services.

### STARTING POINT

You might expect any conversation about hospital catering to begin in the kitchen, but not at RJAH. Sian insists that it is the whole journey that is important. "The patient could be served the best cottage pie in the world, but if their experience of the hospital to that point has been poor, they won't enjoy it."

For that reason, our tour of the catering service began in the car park, where a greeter provides help and directions, and volunteers from the League of Friends staff a desk inside the main entrance to welcome patients and visitors with further assistance if required. Visitors might even be able to enjoy an ice cream from a local company which has a regular pitch outside the main entrance for the Scoop-alicious ice cream cart. "It's all part of the experience," Sian adds.

The prime retail spot inside the main entrance is occupied by one of two cafés operated by the League of Friends but owned by the Trust. The catering department supplies the sandwiches and other grab-and-go items. This, too, is part of the holistic approach to patient care that is embedded in this community. Whilst the hospital's main restaurant is busy at lunchtime, at other times of the day the offering from the cafés will be

most in demand – afternoon tea and cake for example. The League of Friends facilities also open at weekends when the main restaurant is closed, helping towards the site's provision of 24/7 food and drink for staff.

Dan and his team cater for many social events in the hospital's restaurant, from quiz nights to beetle drives. This year, Dan even hosted the catering team's Christmas party in the restaurant, personally cooking a traditional festive meal for all his staff, providing the drinks and lots of party games.

The catering team at RJAH cooks and caters for around 160 inpatients per day across 10 wards (one private and one children's), as well as staff and visitors in the restaurant, all function rooms and they also provide meals for Age UK's meals on wheels service. Hot breakfasts are available, especially important for patients needing a high protein diet. In addition to the main kitchen, the restaurant has a finishing-off kitchen and there is a chilled prep room to prepare sandwiches and salads, which brings additional flexibility when catering for patients who may have missed a meal – ward housekeepers, for example, can request a sandwich for these patients.

Since introducing the ward housekeeper, this role has developed beyond all expectations. Sitting under the facilities team,

*"Since introducing the ward housekeeper, this role has developed beyond all expectations"*

the ward housekeepers undergo food hygiene training and spend time with Dan, so they are familiar with the food service. With no clinical responsibilities, they have time to attend to the food and beverage needs of the patient. If the patient needs something that has not been provided, they can secure it from the kitchen, and because the ward housekeeper is part of the facilities team rather than nursing, they have the authority to do so.

### PATIENT-CENTRED

Even more important than knowing about a patient's dietary requirements and any allergens, is knowing their likes and dislikes. "We want to know what they enjoy, and with cooks on site, why not cook what those patients want to eat?" Sian says. "Food can become an ordeal, but we want the mealtime to be a pleasure and for patients to look forward to it."

This is particularly significant for the long-stay, spinal injury patients on Wrekin and Gladstone Wards. RJAH runs a four-week menu, but alongside this is a patient-centred approach that sees Dan often developing bespoke menus, working with the Trust's dietitian and speech and language therapists. Spinal injury patients may have complex needs. For instance, they might require texture-modified meals, or they might be on strong antibiotics and prone to infection. They might also be struggling to come to terms with potentially life-changing injuries. "You can't approach these patients with a one-size-fits-all attitude. They need individual care, and it might take a while to get it right, but it is worth it." Just simple things can make all the difference, like being prepared to deviate from set mealtimes for

# MORE AND MORE **NHS** HOSPITALS NOW DRY THEIR FOOD WASTE: **HERE'S WHY...**



- ✓ **Environment Act 2021 Comes Into Force In 2025**
- ✓ **Macerators and Liquidizing Digesters Banned**
- ✓ **All Food Waste Must Be Collected Separately**

**N**ew food waste disposal rules in England mean big changes for NHS hospitals. The changes, which had cross-party support in Parliament is expected by 2025.

## **Macerators and Liquidizing Digesters Banned**

Food waste will no longer be allowed to go into general waste or into machines which macerate or liquefy food waste before pumping it into the drain. It must be "presented separately for collection (Section 57, the Environment Act 2021.)

## **Is Your Food Waste Disposal NHS Net Zero Ready?**

Meeting NHS Net Zero targets means changing food waste disposal systems. But just switching from macerators and digesters to wheelie bins isn't enough. If you are using wheelie bins you already know about vermin, smells and pests (maggots for example!). Net Zero is about reducing emissions which means reducing vehicle movements - including waste collections.

## **Drying Food Waste - The Hygienic Alternative**

The most hygienic alternative is to dry food waste in the Eco-Smart Food Waste Dryer and dozens of NHS hospitals throughout the UK are already drying their food waste ensuring:

- **Compliance with the new food waste disposal rules**
- **Hygienic handling of food waste: the powder from the dryer is sterile**
- **Elimination of risks from vermin and pests and manual handling of heavy wheelie bins**
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a patient who isn't eating because they have no appetite at the time when meals arrive on the ward.

RJAH has a supported mealtimes policy, and wards have a dining area, or patients can eat at their beds, or even in the garden.

### **HORATIO'S GARDEN**

Across the UK there are seven Horatio's Gardens, located at hospitals specialising in spinal injuries. One of these is at RJAH. Horatio's Garden is a charity, named after an aspiring doctor who was completing work experience at a spinal treatment centre and was inspired by the lack of outdoor space to create a garden for patients. Sadly, Horatio's life was cut short during a science expedition when his camp was attacked by a polar bear, but his legacy has continued.

The outdoor space in a Horatio's Garden is designed to engage patients whilst also making a vital contribution to their wellbeing and rehabilitation. It's a therapeutic area, accessible for patients with outside bays that enable beds to be plugged in.

RJAH holds barbecues and film nights in the garden. Head gardener Alex Law, employed by the charity, is supported by volunteers. There's a garden room where patients can enjoy arts and crafts in a pleasant, non-clinical environment. Patients can also take part in gardening activities – the garden features raised planters and an accessible greenhouse – and workshops offer horticultural therapy to improve mental wellbeing. This appeals to patients who are new to gardening and also helps those who might have been active gardeners before their injury to understand how they can adapt and continue to enjoy this pastime.

The garden is also growing fresh produce that the catering team has ambitions to incorporate within dishes, particularly those under development for the 2024 NHS Chef of the Year competition.

A new outdoor area is also being developed specifically for children. Working with a landscape gardener, this area will feature children's adaptive play equipment.

### **NATIONAL CHEF EVENTS**

Last year, a team of two chefs from RJAH reached the final of NHS Chef. This year, experienced competitor, Gill, will be joined by a new partner, Connor, who has



recently joined the Trust from a restaurant background. The competition will be a good way for him to gain some wider knowledge and experience of healthcare, and Sian is looking forward to the intense team spirit that resulted from last year's event. "Everyone at the Trust was rooting for our chefs last year – even the Chief Executive was seen in the kitchen with them tasting dishes," she says.

Dan is also planning four Chefs Academies for this year. NHS Supply Chain: Food will come to the hospital to run pop-up events on a number of topics, to include carbon reduction and children's menus. In addition, one of the storeroom staff will attend the new Skills Academy in Manchester.

### **CHILDREN**

The children's menu at RJAH, named after the peacock emblem, has been created with feedback and input from pupils at the high school that Sian once attended. Pupils were asked to develop a dish for the menu and come up with a design. They were then invited to the hospital to see the food being served. Sian remembers it was quite eye-opening – the children were critical of the presentation of the menu, which they described as boring, demanding more colour. They also wanted more flexibility

– they didn't want a fixed plate of food but the freedom to 'pick and mix' their own elements from the menu – such as build your own wrap.

RJAH has long had a policy of providing food for the parents or carers of a child who is a patient. "We view each child as two patients," Sian says, admitting that she had not realised this was unusual until hearing about Sophie's Legacy. There is also a parent's lounge on the children's ward.

### **LEADING THE WAY**

RJAH is the first Trust in England to switch to 100% reusable takeaway containers in its restaurant – cups, soup and food containers. The hard launch was completed in April, and the majority of staff who buy meals from the restaurant to take away have bought into the scheme, including international nurses who are only with the Trust for three months. All staff are seeing the benefits of this policy, with no more office bins full of takeaway containers.

Part of being a trailblazer is sharing experiences – the good and the bad – with others, which is something Sian puts into practice. Above all, she appreciates how nice it is to do her job at RJAH within a culture where new ideas are supported, working with people who mostly are of one vision – doing the best for patients – and where relationships are good, and people trust in each other's judgement. "We don't want to meet standards; we want to set them," she adds. 

*"It's a therapeutic area, accessible for patients with outside bays that enable beds to be plugged in"*

# MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE

PAUL FREESTON IS CEO AND CHAIR OF APETITO UK AND NORTH AMERICA, A PRIVATE, FAMILY-OWNED GROUP WHICH IS MORE THAN JUST A FOOD SUPPLIER, IT'S A PIONEER OF SPECIALIST NUTRITION.

**Paul has been in the food industry for 40 years, starting out with InterCity, where his claim to fame is that he was responsible for de-listing the infamous British Rail sandwich and pork pie!**

He moved into the food production sector in 1989, and ten years later, in 1999, joined apetito. Under Paul's leadership, the apetito business has grown exponentially, expanding from around 400 staff to almost 2,000 and from £30m to £350m turnover.

Another significant difference, in 1999 apetito did not have a healthcare business. Today it is the UK's leading producer of meals into the healthcare and care home markets, whilst subsidiary, Wiltshire Farm Foods is the UK's leading home meals delivery brand.

Hospital F+S caught up with Paul during the recent HEFMA Leadership Forum (Health Estates and Facilities Management Association), the theme of which was 'All Change', highly appropriate for this discussion with a business that has thrived on change.

Throughout its history, apetito has been re-shaped and continues to develop. "We have a duty to embrace change," Paul says, adding that failure to do so is one of the biggest reasons for companies folding. As

*"Paul views apetito as being in the nutrition business"*



an example, he explains that the biggest customer for apetito's fledgling healthcare business was meals on wheels and look what has happened to that over the years. "Actively seeking out new markets and welcoming change is essential."

### MORE THAN A FOOD BUSINESS

'Making a real difference' is apetito's motto, which sums up everything the business stands for. It isn't just about producing tasty meals; it's about serving vulnerable people with the specialist nutrition they need to thrive and dine with dignity. Paul views apetito as being in the nutrition business. "We have sought out areas where we can use our nutritional skills to make a difference," he says.

Texture-modified (TM) food is a good example. Before entering this sector, apetito did a 'deep dive' to understand exactly what it is like for a person living with dysphagia. "You can't do this sitting in a room and

brainstorming ideas. You've got to go out there and experience it. Look at how things are in the real world. It's hugely motivating for the team to do something that makes a difference."

Paul has since had many conversations with people – including apetito's customers – about how TM meals have changed their life.

"Our task is to help hospital caterers to put food in front of patients that is hot, tasty, nutritious and appropriate for their needs," he insists. This is not always straightforward – for some patients it might be what is traditionally thought of as healthy food, so lower in fat, higher in fibre, and with a focus on the 5-a-day – whereas for others, for instance, those who are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition, the requirement might be for meals that are high in calories or nutrient-dense. Often, these patients are also appetite-suppressed, so apetito has put a lot of work, and devoted significant investment, into developing solutions that



pack calories and protein into a smaller portion. In Canada, it has recently launched a range of energy-dense soups and sauces for the appetite-suppressed.

The growing dietary requirements that must be catered for, such as allergen-free meals, is another complex area where specialist nutrition is necessary. For hospital caterers this often means extensive and multiple menus. It's a challenge, and apetito is targeting more developments that will help. Already, it offers a completely allergen-free range, as well as options that do not contain onion or garlic, as research has found there is a demand for dishes that do not include these pungent ingredients. In a nutshell, apetito tries to meet the widest dietary needs through specialist ranges to remove risk and provide peace of mind for hospital caterers working in an increasingly challenging environment.

#### HOSPITAL-TO-HOME

With feet firmly planted in both inpatient/residential care as well as domestic supply for the elderly and vulnerable, apetito is uniquely placed to recognise that food and nutrition should be a core component of integrating care and helping people to live a healthy, independent life in their own homes for as long as possible.

"I find the whole hospital-to-home aspect really interesting," Paul admits. "And it aligns with arguments to prioritise preventative health measures. The

average patient stay is quite short, and it isn't possible to change an individual's nutritional welfare in just three days. To keep patients well at home, nutritionally well, so they don't end up back in hospital, needs a more holistic approach."

Through Wiltshire Farm Foods, apetito does work with hospitals, however, not to the level of some other markets. For instance, in the USA, part of the health insurance includes 14 days of meals for patients on discharge. This is a preventative measure, and for an NHS tasked with driving costs down, making sure people do not come back to hospital should be a priority. "Think more holistically and approach it differently," he recommends. After all, food is an enabler to keep well, and patients are discharged from hospital with the medicines they require, so why not the nutrition they need too?

#### BACK TO CHANGE

Paul hates greenwash more than anything, and particularly the misplaced focus on what 'looks good' rather than what 'does good'.

"We need to focus on what does good. We all have a duty to do something to reduce carbon, conserve water and improve biodiversity. We need to focus on what will produce change."

In particular, if the NHS is to meet its carbon reduction targets, it needs its suppliers to follow suit. apetito is leading the way with several initiatives. It is investing in a new production facility in Trowbridge,


*"Food and nutrition should be a core component of integrating care"*



The renowned apetito purée range will soon be relaunched. "It's really exciting to take what are already some of the world's best products in this area even further," Paul enthuses. The new range will increase the focus on energy-dense and improving allergen-free meals. The consumer need is becoming more prevalent. The range includes new puréed shepherd's pie and cottage pie where there has also been a focus on visual appearance so they do not look bland, which can often be the case with puréed potato dishes.

which is being planned to meet the lowest carbon footprint possible.

The Project Boomerang tray collection and recycling scheme is already at 25 million trays in Wiltshire Farm Foods and is just hitting the one million mark in hospitals. apetito is also leading work on menu shifts to reduce carbon in the meals served. "We have to look at all aspects of the operation and be aware that there are always consequences of any decisions. We need to think these things through. We want to make a positive impact – not just reduce the impact but be positive – it's not good enough to just be less bad."

Paul has announced he will step down from his position at apetito at the end of 2024. Hospital Food + Service wishes him the best of luck with any future projects, one of which includes his recent appointment as Chair of City Harvest, the London-based charity which distributes free surplus food to those living in poverty in the capital itself, including the homeless. 



# WHY BUY BRITISH?

THERE ARE MANY WHO BELIEVE THAT BUYING BRITISH SHOULD BE THE DEFAULT STANDARD FOR PROCUREMENT ACROSS THE PUBLIC SECTOR. FORGET 'LOCAL', WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO DEFINE AND EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO ADHERE TO, ADOPT BRITISH AND USE THIS TO DRIVE SEASONALITY ACROSS MENUS, AND AT THE SAME TIME SUPPORT BRITISH FARMERS WHO ARE PRODUCING GOOD QUALITY, NUTRITIOUS FOOD THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO PATIENT RECOVERY.

**The Love British Food Hospitals and Care Catering Working Group is one of a number of working groups established by Love British Food to encourage schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and care homes to make British food the first supplier of choice on their menus. The members of each group share their expertise and advice with others in the industry to inspire and encourage them to build relationships with British suppliers.**

The Hospitals and Care Catering Working Group is led by founder of Love British Food, Alexia Robinson and co-chaired by Frank Fiore, Catering Manager, Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Sophie Murray, Harbour Healthcare and former National Deputy Chair for NACC.

The working group has instigated a series of farm visits with a view to enabling hospital catering staff to see for themselves at first-hand how food is produced on British farms. So far it has held nine visits attended by caterers and dietitians from 43 hospitals across 36 Trusts/Boards from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The farms have varied from dairy to arable, beef to vegetables, special breeds and a regenerative demonstration centre. Hospital Food + Service has joined and reported on several of these, which are quite inspirational. [See p30&31 of this issue for a report on the most recent two].

During the latest visit, to Holkham Estate in Norfolk, a film was made to inspire catering managers, procurement teams and Trust CEOs to consider the connection between how food is produced and its contribution to patient outcomes.

Alexia says: "We know it is not enough to ask catering teams to buy British. We need to explain why. So, the aim of these farm visits has been to enthuse catering teams to see 'buying British' as a 'carrot' rather than a 'Buying Standards stick', as I fear the perpetually consulted upon New Government Buying Standards

*"Love British Food has inspired caterers to think about the connection between how food is produced and its nutritional value"*

make it sound. I genuinely believe these visits have created excitement about buying British in NHS catering teams. Together with the farmers who have hosted the visits with me, we have answered the question 'Why buy British' and explained how doing so contributes to patient outcomes, sustainability, net zero goals and the role of Trusts as anchor institutions for supporting their community."

Love British Food has inspired caterers to think about the connection between how food is produced and its nutritional value, and empowered those attending to go back into their Trusts and look at where they could make change. For instance, by looking at where they currently source from and producing a provenance map to discuss with suppliers, or considering flexible menus that enable seasonal sourcing, and discussing opportunities with procurement teams and dietitians.

## **BRITISH FOOD FORTNIGHT 2024**

This annual celebration of British food and drink will be held from September 20 – October 6. Every year, all public sector organisations are invited and encouraged to run a British Food Fortnight menu – either promoting British food that is already on their menu or introducing






new suppliers. This is not a flag-waving exercise for the national food promotion; rather an acknowledgement that the event is a proven catalyst at encouraging people to take action. This doesn't have to be a dramatic overhaul – it could just involve changing a single supplier to celebrate British produce.

For 2024, Love British Food has launched the Great British Pie Challenge. Chefs and caterers from all sectors of the UK are being challenged to create a pie using British ingredients to include on their menus during British Food Fortnight. Open to all catering and hospitality sites, including hospitals, chefs and caterers will need to create the pie following their industry guidelines on cost and nutrition.

The winning chef will receive a British food hamper celebrating the best of British food. To enter, simply email your name and place of work with a photo of your pie, a copy of the menu that features the pie, plus the story behind it – for instance, any regional link and ingredients used – to [info@lovebritishfood.co.uk](mailto:info@lovebritishfood.co.uk) by October 10, 2024. Plus, share the photo of your pie on social media channels during British Food Fortnight, including hashtag #BritishFoodFortnightChallenge.

#### GET INVOLVED

There's a wealth of information on the Love British Food website for any hospital caterers that would like to learn more about the benefits of buying British, engaging with the Working Group or British Food Fortnight. 

[lovebritishfood.co.uk](http://lovebritishfood.co.uk)



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

PROMOTED CONTENT

## SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

### WHY GOVERNMENT BUYING STANDARDS FOR FOOD NEED A FURTHER REVIEW

**As we begin the tenure of the next Government, the questions and concerns raised over the proposed Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering (GBSF), remain.**

When Will Quince MP was appointed to conduct an independent review of public sector food procurement earlier this year, there was real hope that the concerns raised by industry may finally be recognised.

Whilst we welcome Will's engagement and applaud his efforts in publishing his work prior to his departure, there is a fundamental problem with the findings of this review - that it fails to tackle the very issue that needs addressing! In the words of Will himself (page 6), he says: "due to the limited timescale, this review does not discuss the Standards themselves".

What Will's review has done is focus on how to extend the reach of the Standards and improve accessibility and compliance, which is certainly important.

But it critically ignores the central issue – the fact that the proposed GBSF are flawed in the first place. It has become abundantly clear that there was not the time, nor the scope to conduct such a review in the depth required to find resolution to those concerns.

Nowhere within the report are the new proposals brought into question to challenge the misinformed notion of "local" which has no logic or supporting evidence – aside of playing to a 'looks good' policy.

With the risk that these proposals pose in destabilising food supply within hospitals and other public sector organisations, without delivering on the aims of improving health, quality, and sustainability outcomes, I encourage the new administration to conduct a more in-depth review that considers issues raised by industry and challenges the "local regions" mapped by Defra.

It's time for Government to focus on what "does" good rather than what "looks" good and focus on supporting the British food and farming industry, not this misinformed rhetoric around local.

[apetito.link/HFS](https://apetito.link/HFS)

**apetito**

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FOODS

# ONE SUPPLIER'S JOURNEY

FOR THE NHS TO ACHIEVE ITS AMBITIOUS NET ZERO TARGETS, IT'S VITAL THAT THEY WORK IN **COLLABORATION WITH SUPPLIERS** WHO ARE PREPARED TO REDUCE THEIR SCOPE 3 EMISSIONS – THOSE THAT ARE PRODUCED ALL ALONG THE SUPPLY CHAIN. **HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE FOLLOWS THE JOURNEY OF ONE OF THESE SUPPLIERS.**

**Daniela Triolo is leading the sustainability journey for Burlodge, a manufacturer of food delivery systems for hospitals. Burlodge is a few years into its carbon reduction work.**

The company started looking at scope 1 and 2 (direct) emissions in 2021, having realised the urgency and importance of the climate crisis and wanting to be able to support the NHS and other clients on their own net zero journeys. In its last financial year (to end of August 2023), Burlodge extended its carbon emissions calculations to cover Scope 3 (indirect emissions across the value chain), put in place an ambitious roadmap to net zero and published both a carbon reduction plan and a corporate social value document.

The commitment from Burlodge is to achieve net zero by 2045, with an interim target by 2030 of a 42% reduction in scope 1 and 2 emissions and 30% reduction in scope 3 (against a 2023 baseline). Targets

have been aligned with the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) criteria encompassing all the categories that are relevant to the business.

### SO FAR

Since starting on its carbon reduction programme, Burlodge has already achieved a 40% reduction in electricity usage at its UK operations simply through better energy management. Daniela adds that it is quite remarkable how much they have managed to save and improve on despite already being aware and conscious in the past. Initiatives have included rationalising or upgrading electrical appliances, switching to LED lights, reviewing the operation of heating systems, and greater efficiencies in scheduling warehouse work. Burlodge UK is on track for a further 5% energy reduction this year and is pleased to have achieved Level 2 on the NHS Evergreen Sustainable Supplier Assessment.

Burlodge is also well on the way to reaching its target of reducing plastics in the supply chain by introducing a new fully compostable food container as an alternative to the single-use plastic containers that it currently offers to customers. [See page 32 of this issue for more information]


### FIVE ACTION CATEGORIES

2045 is a long way off, but with that end goal in mind, the immediate focus is on the 2030 interim target, which Daniela describes as "ambitious" in itself. She remains confident, based on the experience of the past few years, that they can achieve what they have set out to do.

Work to achieve this has been set out across five categories:

- Energy-efficiency and low carbon buildings – switching from gas to electric heating and using on-site solar PV to generate zero carbon electricity
- Low carbon transport – the entire Burlodge-owned fleet will be hybrid by 2030, with a significant proportion being fully electric
- Product sourcing and suppliers – engaging with the supply chain, improving understanding of key materials, reducing single-use plastic and using more recycled materials
- Product energy use – the product development team, based at the factory in Italy, are prioritising circularity and energy efficiency of products starting with the introduction of next generation refrigerants
- Logistics – improving delivery efficiency and understanding and switching to low and zero carbon freight solutions.

### KEY CHALLENGES

Daniela recognises that not everyone shares her passion for sustainability and carbon reduction, but getting everyone at Burlodge on board is essential. "We can't do it without them. It can only be achieved by working as a team across departments and offices." This extends to suppliers too, a situation which NHS teams will be only too familiar with. "Getting everyone to follow the same journey is certainly a challenge, but this is a programme that is supported by our most senior people. They really do care about the journey to net zero and that helps a lot." 

**[burlodge.com](https://www.burlodge.com)**



*"Getting everyone at Burlodge on board is essential"*

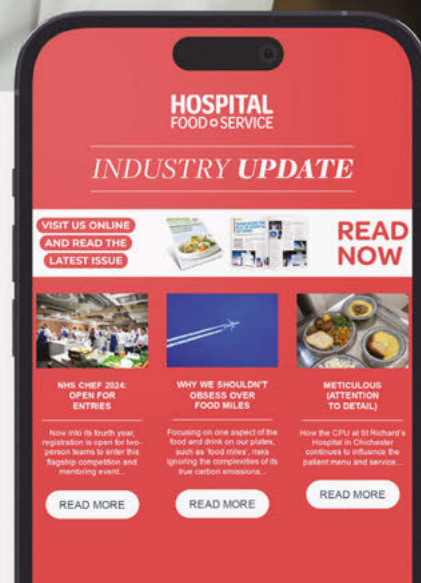
# HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE

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# BRIGHT & BREEZY



BREAKFAST, IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY, BUT WHAT IS ON THE HOSPITAL MENU, AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANT CONSUMER TRENDS FOR THE HOSPITAL CATERER TO BE AWARE OF?

**Breakfast for patients needs to be nutritious, tasty and suitable for all lifestyle and dietary requirements. Bruce Toon, Culinary Director – Healthcare at Compass Group UK & Ireland points out that it needs to be attractive too. “We put the patient at the heart of all our offers and we base the patient concepts on feedback from them, which helps refine menus and makes sure that people enjoy our food. Our dietitians and chefs work in collaboration to create nourishing and tasty meals which offer patients choice,” he explains.**

Compass currently offers breakfasts for patients needing special diets, as well as yoghurt, fresh fruit, toast and pastries, cereals and porridge, plus a range of hot and cold drinks. “We want to ensure that patients have something they want to eat, to support their other meals throughout the day,” Bruce adds.

Compass has also been having collaborative conversations about improvements that can be made in this

area. “Last year, our teams embarked on a pilot project to review breakfasts served and explore the opportunities to enhance the offers within hospitals. We recognise this is an ongoing process and will work with clients to create solutions that work for them.”

Meeting all dietary and lifestyle requirements is always going to be a challenge, but the good news is that by embracing one of the most significant of current trends – the growth of plant-based meal solutions – many others can also be satisfied. Vegetarian for Life Roving Chef, Alex Connell explains: “Providing a balanced, plant-based choice will get as close as any one menu could. It can cover halal, kosher, vegetarian and vegan. Within those diets there are of course personal and cultural preferences. Within the vegan framework we have traditional favourites such as cereals, toast, porridge, cooked breakfast with vegan sausages, beans, hash browns, scrambled tofu (a good alternative to scrambled eggs), breakfast wraps, fresh fruit, pancakes... the list goes on.”

The top seven recommendations for a nutritious and appealing breakfast from Ollie

Bragg, another Vegetarian for Life Roving Chef, includes fresh fruit, wholegrain cereals and oatmeal, Greek or vegan alternative yoghurt with toppings, wholegrain toast with avocado, hummus, or nut butters, boiled eggs or scrambled egg cups, smoothies with various fruits, vegetables and protein powders, and healthy, sugar-free muffins or granola bars.

Ollie further suggests: “Ensure there are options catering to dietary restrictions, including gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan or vegetarian choices. Regularly refresh and vary the menu to maintain interest and satisfaction.”

Of course, staff and visitors also appreciate a good breakfast, and Bruce Toon reports Compass breakfasts are growing in popularity, and are being enjoyed throughout the morning, due to working shifts and hospital visitor hours. Breakfast offers staff, patients and visitors the opportunity to seek out a nutritious morning meal or a small healthy snack or a treat, that can set them up for the day.

“Customers are always looking for that point of difference, and we believe offering a product that can be tailored gives that added sense of customer satisfaction and experience. Personalisation can be created

*“Grab-and-go concepts are also increasing ... as convenience continues to be a key driver”*

in many formats from building a traditional breakfast to creating a nutritious breakfast smoothie of your choice combining a variety of ingredients. The traditional English breakfast still remains very popular and we have found that you can add value, with messaging around provenance and presentation, which further enhances and tailors the menus. Grab-and-go concepts are also increasing across our healthcare estate, as convenience continues to be a key driver for customers."

### HIGH STREET TRENDS

Grab-and-go breakfast products offer ease and speed, which Bruce points out can be really useful in a hospital environment as people need to head off after an appointment or visiting. "We're also seeing the healthy and more sustainable options become more prominent and we do aim to nudge our guests towards these choices wherever possible. These include smoothie bowls and porridge made from seeds and grains."

Ollie Bragg reports that a number of trending vegan high street dishes can make nutritious and appealing breakfast options. He suggests:

- Vegan breakfast burritos. Packed with plant-based proteins and veggies.
- Avocado toast. Topped with seeds, microgreens and drizzles like balsamic glaze.
- Acai bowls. Topped with granola, fresh fruits and granolas.
- Vegan croissants and pastries. Made with plant-based butter and milk.
- Overnight oats. Pre-mixed with plant-based milk and fruit.
- Vegan smoothie bowls. Blended with superfoods like spirulina or matcha.

Gary Thacker, Sales Director at Fri-Jado UK, identifies that breakfast and brunch are increasingly becoming one of the most important trading periods on the high street and there are several ways that hospital caterers can embrace this opportunity, especially for staff and visitors. The hospital retail environment must meet the customer's



MAXIMUM VISIBILITY IN THE DISPLAY  
WITH THE FRI-JADO MCC



VEGETARIAN FOR LIFE'S VEGAN VERSION OF A TRADITIONAL ENGLISH BREAKFAST

expectations for quality and consistency, and caterers should look beyond the traditional offering of cereals, pastries and cooked foods. "It is imperative that foods are fresh and delicious to tempt a purchase," he explains. "Breakfast is no longer about stale pastries and lukewarm porridge, but freshly made farmhouse sandwiches, paninis and beautifully light, fluffy pastries. Whether homemade or bought in, breakfast choices should be delicious, use the very best ingredients and be as fresh as possible for the customer to consume on-site or on-the-go."

Gary provides some further advice about getting the breakfast right in a hospital retail setting, saying there are several elements to consider, starting with using the best ingredients at the right price and doing so in the most convenient way. Secondly, for hot

items on display in a retail environment, the right packaging is key. Designed to maintain the optimum microclimate for a specific food item, the correct packaging can mean the difference between a one-off purchase and repeat business. Finally, hot holding is crucial, to keep food at its best for longer, and reduce wastage in the process.

### EQUIPMENT TO HELP

Fri-Jado believes the ability to offer superior holding is a basic need that should never be compromised on. "Today's breakfast market is dominated by fresh, nutritious and delicious foods. By using an appliance that is not able to maintain the right conditions over a sustained period, a hospital food or retail site is sure to be impacted by limited sales," Gary advises.

“The second consideration is maximum visibility. It’s no secret that customers buy with their eyes, and therefore using equipment that offers the very best view of the food is essential to driving sales and impulse purchases. The third and final consideration is versatility. Display equipment naturally needs to be versatile to suit the needs of individual setups.”

Gary recommends the Modular Convenience Counters (MCC) as the perfect example of Fri-Jado’s commitment to achieving the best in both hot and cold display equipment. The cold version combines advanced airflow and eco-friendly R290 refrigerant, whilst the hot-holding units feature the patented Hot Blanket which combines mid-shelf heating with hot air recirculation per shelf, ensuring even heat distribution throughout the cabinet. “As a result of this innovative technology, the units achieve ongoing energy savings of up to 40%,” Gary says.

Scott Duncan, Managing Director of Unox UK, comments on the unpredictability and complexity of the hospital environment – such as strict shift times that are difficult to coordinate – that mean patients, staff and visitors will often eat at different times, and sometimes even miss the breakfast meal time. The EVEREO® helps hospital caterers to manage this challenge, enabling them to pre-prepare or hold dishes during quieter periods, and preserving hot food at its optimal serving temperature for up to 72 hours. The appliance holds dishes above temperatures at which bacteria thrive, whilst maintaining quality, texture and taste.

“If a nurse finishes a shift late, or a patient misses the breakfast rounds, they can still have the same morning meal or snack – which will be completely uncompromised – that was served earlier in the day. A baked croissant, or pre-portioned full English, for



**SUGAR-FREE SAVOURY MUFFINS ARE A HEALTHY BREAKFAST ALTERNATIVE  
SUGGESTION FROM VEGETARIAN FOR LIFE**

## *“Caterers should look beyond the traditional offering of cereals, pastries and cooked foods”*

example, will still taste and look the same after being left in the EVEREO’s® chamber for a few hours – like it’s come fresh from the oven,” Scott explains.

“In demanding environments, like hospitals, which have different shift patterns and unpredictable workloads, this hot-holding solution can assist caterers with patient care, by making sure that patients, staff and visitors can be served a quality hot meal no matter what time they can get a moment to eat breakfast.”

Jestic Foodservice Solutions has a range of equipment to help with various aspects of the breakfast service. Product Director Michael Eyre, suggests exploring flavour combinations by making breakfast drinks and smoothies using the Vitamix Commercial blender, either from scratch with fresh fruit or pre-packaged smoothie mixes blended with juice. “Fresh breakfast drinks and smoothies are becoming increasingly attractive for those looking for a healthier breakfast option that satisfies hunger whilst providing the desired flavours and nutrients,” he says.

For 24/7 provision of quality and nutritious food and drink for staff, Michael recommends hot-holding is the answer for perfectly cooked eggs, toasted sandwiches and more, held at just the right temperature. “Using the Duke ReadyFlex hot-holding cabinet, caterers can hold different dishes and toppings in perfect ‘just cooked’ temperatures and conditions and even pre-prepare a wide variety of dishes in advance to help ensure that food is always hot, fresh and available when and where you need it,” he says.

Breakfast sandwiches are a great solution for a tasty meal offering to visitors and staff

who may need to eat on the go, and Jestic’s XpressChef ovens offer versatility and flexibility with breakfast and brunch offerings such as toasted sandwiches. Michael adds. “Our diverse range of equipment delivers breakfast products with speed, efficiency and consistency, allowing operators to focus on products that can be served at pace and eaten conveniently by customers.”

### **LOOK OUT FOR**

If you’re seeking something new to add to your breakfast menus, there are plenty of innovative plant-based suggestions out there. Ollie Bragg suggests considering vegan yoghurts for instance, made from coconut, almond or soy milk and available in various flavours, or egg substitutes, vegan cheese, dairy-free milk for hot drinks, chia pudding cups and vegan sausages/bacon or baked goods.

Bruce Toon also points to vegan, plant-based and baked goods. “By creating a point of difference in home baked goods, we can create breakfast products by combining ingredients such as blueberries, oats, nuts and seeds. Layered yoghurt pots are always a favourite and by combining new non-dairy alternatives into the range, we are now offering a wider selection for our flexitarian and vegan audience. With the growing trend towards plant-based eating we have lines in development to meet the demand and utilise some of the growing number of innovations across our breakfast menu,” he confirms. 

**compass-group.co.uk**  
**frijado.com**  
**jestic.co.uk**  
**vegetarianforlife.org.uk/**  
**unox.com/en\_gb**

**WHATEVER TIME A PATIENT OR MEMBER OF STAFF  
REQUIRES BREAKFAST, THE UNOX EVEREO RISES  
TO THE CHALLENGE**



# REDUCE AS A TOP PRIORITY

PRIORITISING WASTE REDUCTION, WHETHER IT BE FOOD OR SINGLE-USE PACKAGING MAKES FINANCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SENSE AND IS A TOPIC OF MUCH FOCUS FOR HEALTHCARE CATERING TEAMS, PARTICULARLY AS THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK CONTINUES TO TIGHTEN AROUND UNSUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.

**The National Standards for Healthcare Food and Drink set out the requirement for organisations to monitor food waste, manage any waste produced and take action to reduce all food waste, whether it be plate, production or unserved food.**

In the report, 'Designed with Waste in Mind', commissioned by Meiko UK, Footprint Intelligence provides detailed advice to all commercial kitchen operators to reduce all types of waste related to the catering service. It urges the adoption of 'Target, Measure, Act' as the kitchen's mantra, reminding caterers that reducing food waste saves money and is integral to climate change mitigation. A Target, Measure, Act approach should set clear timelines, targets and measures to show impact, bearing in mind the aim of reducing food waste by 20% by 2025 and aligning with the Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 target of halving food waste by 2030 and reducing food losses across the supply chain.

Among its recommendations are simple, practical suggestions, such as designing menus to save food and minimising prep waste. Menu design, for instance, could include reviewing the number of dishes on offer, commonality of ingredients across dishes and finding creative ways to use leftover ingredients, offcuts and prep waste. For an example

of this in action within the NHS, the 2023 winners of the NHS Chef of the Year, Dylan Lucas and Darby Hayhurst from the Royal Blackburn Hospital made it their top priority throughout the event to design dishes around reducing food waste. Demonstrating this principle the pair served a cauliflower steak but saved the leaves to use in a salad, whilst the smaller pieces of floret went into a nutritional slice and a pepper sauce.

Prep waste too can be minimised by ensuring knives and peelers are sharp to get the finest possible peel, and then considering ways to use the peelings, perhaps in a stock or a fruit glaze or marmalade.

Across patient dining, the approach of Compass is to reduce food waste via its Steamplicity range, provided by the Cuisine Centre. This unique meal delivery system is steam cooked at ward level providing quality nutritious food, flexibility and choice. "We know that Steamplicity is proven to reduce food waste to below 2.5%, which is much more efficient than the industry standard," says Rees Bramwell, Sustainability Director at Compass One.

Steamplicity reduces food waste in a number of ways. "We use data and insights to create a menu featuring what patients actually want, meaning there is less plate waste," Rees adds. "We also operate a

*"Among its recommendations are simple, practical suggestions, such as designing menus to save food and minimising prep waste"*

patient ordering system, so we know we are giving the patient the meal they want as well as flexibility on when it arrives to their ward and bed."



IMPROVE FOOD STORAGE WITH WRAPMASTER

“We aim to stop food waste through preventing, recovering and recycling. Only when food waste is unavoidable do teams turn to redistribution and recycling. One example of redistribution is our partnership with Too Good To Go across Costa outlets within our estate. We have saved over 89,000 meals since the start of the partnership in September 2021 – equating to 240,538kg CO2e avoided.”

Good storage of food in the kitchen is also essential to reducing waste. Adrian Brown, Managing Director of Cofresco Foodservice, supplier of the Wrapmaster® range, explains that wrapping food is an excellent way to extend shelf life, as well as preserve the quality and flavour of ingredients.

“Wrapmaster is working in partnership with hospitals to help tackle waste with its range of professional chef systems and sustainable wraps, all designed to support sustainability goals whilst maintaining the highest of hygiene standards,” he says.

In addition, look for ways that hospitals and their contract catering partners can introduce more sustainable practices, including updating equipment to reduce environmental impact. For instance, Adrian recommends swapping standard wrap for a product that is recyclable as an easy way to take a positive step in reducing food and kitchen waste. Wrapmaster Recyclable PE cling film is free of PVC, BPA and plasticiser, and can be used to wrap and cover all types of food and ingredients. “Teamed with a Wrapmaster dispenser, hospital caterers can benefit from the ultimate sustainable wrap system and save as much as 20% on food wrap usage.”



MEIKO'S BIOMASTER FOOD WASTE RECYCLING SOLUTION

### WEIGH, MEASURE AND RECORD

The importance of this has been stressed repeatedly in recent years. There is little doubt that automation will improve this process, providing better consistency, accuracy and speeding up the process. Jon Walker, Joint Managing Director of BGL Rieber outlines how this can work. “The weight of the food waste can be automatically recorded using labelled GN containers that are check-weighted as they leave the kitchen and return. The labels can also be used for trayed meal service, and each tray can be automatically scanned as it returns.

“Measuring food waste is not popular with staff, and manually scraping out containers and using scales provides no consistency. Automatic systems speed up the loading and unloading process, improve record keeping, and help ensure that no containers go missing.”

The Rieber CHECK-WEIGH system can monitor and measure the weight of every GN container, tray and plate that leaves and returns to the kitchen. It automates the capture of QR code information, which means food waste can be measured accurately and consistently. QR labels can be attached to steel, paper or plastic trays, so no matter what type of meal delivery system the hospital uses, it can capture accurate data on food waste and who is not eating their meals, which might be useful for patient health. Using apps that work on smartphones means photos of waste can be taken for a simple visual reference that is uploaded to managers automatically.

“Waste must be measured and recorded accurately,” Jon asserts. “Technology allows us to do that better, more quickly, and more accurately. It also wins staff support because it improves



THE RIEBER CHECK-WEIGH SYSTEM TO AUTOMATE THE PROCESS OF WEIGHING, MEASURING AND RECORDING FOOD WASTE

*“Smart labelling and check/ weigh/report systems pay for themselves in ease of use and by improving workflow”*

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BERGMANN DIRECT HAS INTRODUCED A NEW COLLECTION SERVICE FOR THE DRY AND STERILE GRANULATED POWDER THAT ITS ECO-SMART FOOD WASTE DRYER TURNS WASTE FOOD INTO

their working lives. Smart labelling and check/weigh/report systems pay for themselves in ease of use and by improving workflow."

Compass is adopting the rollout of a new, enhanced waste recording system across its sites. "This will enable us to collect consistent data and further identify measures to help tackle waste," Rees Bramwell explains. "It highlights trends in types of food waste across the hospitals we operate in, for example are we over producing at certain times and how can we prevent that. This is supported by a wider programme of educating and informing teams on how to reduce food waste, with a focus on prevention."

In addition, for the day-to-day management of waste, Compass has produced guides, video tutorials and held engagement calls to help embed behaviours. Its operational teams are empowered to regularly monitor waste and to share the detailed data in its dashboard with clients. This keeps the issues front and centre of mind to drive small behaviour changes that scale into huge impact.

"We are very proud of our Stop Food Waste Day initiative, which has helped keep up information, education and awareness all year round. Stop Food Waste Day was launched by Compass Group USA in 2017 with the aim of raising awareness around reducing food waste. It is now an

*"Collecting the dried food waste once a month is no problem as the dried powder is sterile"*

international day of action and we mark it with clients, customers and colleagues to create awareness around this important issue," Rees adds.

### PROCESSING AND MOVING WASTE FOOD

The Eco-Smart Food Waste Dryer from Bergmann Direct turns wet food waste into a dry and sterile granulated powder, which is 20% of the original weight and volume, resulting in a reduction in disposal costs of 80%, and with fewer vehicle movements necessary, lower carbon emissions from transporting waste. With six different models available, offering varying capacities from 20kg to 350kg per day, a typical cycle takes 12-14 hours.

A system to weigh the food before it is loaded into the dryer can be set up to record where the waste has come from – for instance restaurant, patient catering or prep – and who is weighing it, which can be an individual's name or the department. This system automatically records the weight and time providing excellent insight to enable managers to target areas where there appears to be too much waste.

Bergmann Direct has now extended its service for hospital Trusts even further, with the introduction of a collection scheme for its dried powder. Currently, this goes into wheelie bins that are collected by a waste contractor, and probably sent to anaerobic digestion (AD), along with other wet food waste collected elsewhere. Some AD plant operators will pay for the dried food waste instead of charging to accept it, but only if it is delivered dry. The difference is that the dried matter is more valuable and enables them to regulate their formula to create the biogas from their process. Bergmann Direct is working with AD partners who pay them for the dried matter, which effectively pays for the transport from the customer using the dryer.

The service also replaces the wheelie bins for collecting the dried matter with 1000kg capacity pallet boxes which are collected monthly on a curtain-sider lorry. These vehicles are far more fuel-efficient (at around



BERGMANN DIRECT'S ECO-SMART FOOD WASTE DRYERS ON A HOSPITAL SITE

# Environmental Commercial Kitchen Solutions

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**BioMaster - the clever solution for food waste and food scraps**



BioMaster





MEIKO SUGGESTS MOBILE FOOD WASTE STORAGE AND COLLECTION BOXES

12.5mpg) than waste trucks (at 2mpg) and collect monthly instead of every day. Not only does this reduce the collection costs (typically by over 90%) it also has a massive impact on carbon emissions, reducing them by over 90%. Collecting the dried food waste once a month is no problem as the dried powder is sterile. "This is a very exciting development," Bergmann Direct's Associate Director, David Boyd tells Hospital Food + Service. "We are offering this to customers that have a minimum of around four tonnes of wet food waste a month, which is about 50 tonnes a year. It is still early days, but this is proving to be a very attractive alternative to standard wheelie bin collections."

Users of Meiko's BioMaster food waste recycling solution love the extra hygiene and the fact that BioMaster takes all typical hospital food waste including liquids, so no extra separating or sorting is needed. Once tipped into the BioMaster hopper it is gone forever. Homogenising food waste, storing it for collection and turning it into biogas is a labour-saving solution that also makes good financial sense in the long run. "This type of equipment will change the economics of the catering equipment industry," Paul Anderson says in the 'Designed with Waste in Mind' report. "With regular maintenance, these solutions effectively 'outlast' the caterer's conventional five or 10-year budget, potentially delivering benefits up to 30 years later."

## SEGREGATION AND REUSABLES

Paul also agrees that monitoring and measuring are crucial to understanding where waste comes from, which, he says, means having the relevant collection bins in place to assess and understand the waste properly. Mobile waste collection boxes are easy and ergonomic to handle and can be washed in

the dishwasher. In addition, look for a food recycling solution that accepts all typical catering food waste so it can be disposed of quickly and easily with a minimum of fuss and bother. As an example, Paul points out that some recycling solutions do not accept liquids, or need other foods separating, all of which adds complication, cost and labour.

Much hospital waste, including packaging, the growing volume of reusable cups and containers, as well as food, returns to the dishwash area, which was probably not designed originally for this level of waste sorting and separation. Paul recommends talking to dishwashing experts for advice. "Switching from single-use to reusables may be challenging from a hygiene point of view in the dishwash," he acknowledges. "Put the onus back on the experts and ask the dishwasher supplier for their recommendations. Knowledge is power, and big companies like Meiko have Europe-wide experience in how hospitals expand the capabilities of their dishwashers to deal with these issues."

Moving to plastic reusables, which is of course recommended from the point of view of reducing single-use items across the catering operation, means being much more careful about washing and drying. Existing under-counter dishwashers can wash all types of reusables, including bottles, using special racks, but the key to stacking and storing reusable cups or bowls is ensuring they are dry and cool when stacked. Otherwise, they can stick together

and there is a risk of mould growth when left damp. Whilst forced air drying units can be added to solve the issue, Paul suggests it is worth reconsidering the use of conventional crockery in these situations, to see if this is a viable, energy-saving alternative.

There is no doubt that hospitals are making progress on reducing food waste, (although the ERIC data collection will soon produce more insight on the true extent of this issue) and moving away from single-use packaging and containers, but getting from where the sector is now to where it needs to be will require much more hard work and effort. ①

**bergmannndirect.co.uk**  
**bglrieber.co.uk**  
**compass-group.co.uk**  
**meiko-uk.co.uk**  
**wrapmaster.global/en/**

To read more about the potential of coloured crockery to cut plate waste, please flip this issue and see the case study on p10 of the Hospital Caterer.



REUSABLES WASHING WITH A DEDICATED RACK IN AN UNDERCOUNTER MEIKO MACHINE

*"Mobile waste collection boxes are easy and ergonomic to handle and can be washed in the dishwasher"*

# HOME COMFORTS

IN SPITE OF THE GROWTH OF PLANT-BASED ALTERNATIVES, THERE IS NO DISPUTING THAT **DAIRY PRODUCTS** - MILK, CREAM, CHEESE, YOGHURT AND KEFIR – REMAIN **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** WITHIN THE HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT, PARTICULARLY IN THE PATIENT'S DIET.

**When the media is full of the growing instances of allergy or intolerance to lactose, and the benefit to the environment of consuming less dairy produce, you could be forgiven for believing that Britain's love of the white stuff is waning, whereas in truth this is not the case. Statista reports that the value of milk produced in the UK in 2022 was around £6.6bn – 5.1bn litres of which was sold as liquid milk.**

The inescapable facts are that dairy products are good for us. Whether we plump for the full fat variety or lower fat options, they provide a rich source of protein, calcium, B vitamins and vitamin D, all of which the body needs to keep muscles, bones, nerves, teeth, skin and vision healthy. Furthermore, dairy products help to reduce tiredness and fatigue, maintain healthy blood pressure and support normal growth, brain development and immune function.

On a hospital menu for patients, dairy products help to counter malnutrition for the nutritionally vulnerable, can be used to provide fortification of dishes and bring the comfort of familiarity.

Karen Heavey, Brand Manager at Kerrymaid says: "Dairy is incredibly crucial when it comes to patients' diets, providing essential health benefits – especially in building and maintaining strong bones. Incorporating dairy products across comforting menu items is also a great way to help enhance patients' mental wellbeing within the hospital environment, as they search for dishes that provide home comforts. One of the key factors in maintaining patient morale within hospitals is by providing uplifting dishes that can ensure a higher level of comfort."

*"Dairy products help to counter malnutrition for the nutritionally vulnerable ... and bring the comfort of familiarity"*



HAM & CHEESE TOASTIE; KERRYMAID SIMPLIFIES THE USE OF CHEESE IN DISHES FOR HOSPITAL CATERERS

The Kerrymaid portfolio brings the authentic taste of Irish dairy in a range of products that help the caterer to meet those demands, from warm custards to top a hearty apple crumble or easy-melt cheeses that can be added to a variety of welcoming toasties or soups. "These can be an effective and cost-efficient way to ensure that patients are well catered for during their stay," Karen adds.

### ALLERGY AND INTOLERANCE

Only 8% of people in the UK are truly lactose intolerant – lactose being a milk sugar that most of us can break down using the enzyme lactase that is made in the small intestine. Some people are deficient in lactase, which is why milk can cause them to suffer from a wide range of unpleasant intestinal reactions, ranging from stomach discomfort, bloating, wind, nausea, diarrhoea or constipation. Lactose intolerance is fairly common in children, although many do grow out of it, but equally, because the gut becomes less proficient at lactase production as it ages, older people can become lactose intolerant too, even after enjoying a lifetime of untroubled dairy-related indulgence. However, even when this occurs, all is not lost. While milk might need to be off the menu, cheese, yoghurt, butter, double and sour cream and kefir can often still be enjoyed. This is because as soon as milk is processed to make other dairy products, most of the lactose is removed and that which remains is fermented into lactic acid.

Lactose intolerance aside, milk is still the third major cause of severe allergic reactions, and these ill-effects tend to be much more immediate. They can include an itchy rash, skin redness, runny nose, itchy eyes, coughing, vomiting and, in the worst-case scenario, life-threatening anaphylaxis. People thus afflicted must avoid milk and all other dairy-related products at all costs.



*“When it comes to the nation’s favourite sandwich fillings, cheese rarely falls out of the top five”*

### DAIRY AND NON-DAIRY

Kerrymaid provides a wide portfolio of dairy ingredients that can be used across a variety of applications. This includes Cream Alternatives and Custard, Spreads and cheeses, in Grated and Sliced varieties.

"Kerrymaid Vegan Slices offer the same great taste, texture, melt and cohesion associated with Kerrymaid Original Slices, perfect for operators seeking to offer vegan meals with no compromise on taste. Additionally, Kerrymaid Sunflower Light is the perfect alternative to a dairy spread for vegans," Karen explains.

"Kerrymaid's range of luxurious dairy based products are finely tuned so that you can get creative with patients' dishes and be confident that they will be satisfied across every mealtime. It is vital for hospital caterers to use great dairy produce in their puddings, and by partnering with Kerrymaid they can easily do this. The brand's range of cream alternatives and custards use generations of dairy craft to guarantee the very best creamy taste, appetising appearance, and outstanding performance in kitchens."

### MORE CHEESE

When it comes to the nation's favourite sandwich fillings, cheese rarely falls out of the top five, sometimes featuring more than once in different combinations, such as with onion, ham, pickle or tomato, as a cream cheese combined with smoked salmon, or melted in a toastie or panini. In 2023, the Daily Mail Online reported that ham and cheese had been voted as the number one sandwich filling of all time, in a survey of British consumers.

It's also one of the most versatile ingredients in cooking. "Cheese usage is consistently high. Whether it's as an ingredient in a sauce, or to fill sandwiches and wraps, cheese is a kitchen essential," Karen insists. "Kerrymaid simplifies the category for caterers by offering a range of foodservice-specific cheeses with the taste of real Irish dairy, created for each of these purposes."

### THE FUTURE OF DAIRY

Whilst dairy undoubtedly receives a good deal of bad press when it comes to environmental and animal welfare concerns, plant-based milk enthusiasts are advised to check the provenance of the product they are buying, especially if it comes from South America. Soya, almond, oat, rice and coconut are among the most popular plant-based milk alternatives. In his book, 'Sixty Harvests left', CEO of Compassion in World Farming, Philip Lymbery advises that if the ingredients are from an unsustainable source, such as soya grown on newly deforested land, they could be doing more environmental harm than dairy.

In the future, science could hold the answers, specifically a process known as Precision Fermentation. This is based on the same symbiotic relationship between the cow and the microbes in her gut, but without the cow. Microbes can be trained to produce specific building blocks of food using yeast or fungi. It's early days for this, but around the world exploratory work is taking place, and the opportunities appear to be immense. 🌱

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ALEXIA ROBINSON WELCOMES GUESTS TO THE HOLKHAM ESTATE



JAKE FIENNES EXPLAINS THE HOLKHAM ESTATE'S APPROACH TO CONSERVATION

# PURSuing A VISION

IN JUNE, THE LOVE BRITISH FOOD HOSPITALS AND CARE CATERING WORKING GROUP HOSTED ITS MOST RECENT **FARM VISITS** IN WALES AND NORFOLK. **LOVE BRITISH FOOD FOUNDER AND CEO, ALEXIA ROBINSON** HAS HELPED **HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE** COMPILE THIS REPORT.

## **BWLCHWERNEN FAWR NEAR LAMPETER, WEST WALES**

Twenty-three people from across the NHS in Wales converged at Bwlchwernen Fawr, Patrick and Becky Holden's 300-acre farm, where a dairy herd of 80 Ayrshire cows produce the milk that is used to make the award-winning Haford raw milk cheese.

Patrick Holden CBE is one of the world's leading campaigners for sustainable food and farming, and one of His Majesty The King's most trusted advisors on the subject. He was a Director of the Soil Association before founding The Sustainable Food Trust in 2011 in response to the worsening human and environmental crises that are associated with the vast majority of today's food and farming systems.

Bwlchwernen Fawr has been certified organic since 1973, making it the longest standing registered organic dairy farm in Wales. Patrick and Becky have developed it into a self-sufficient, sustainable base from which they produce one of the finest Cheddars on the market today. It's the milk used in Haford cheese – a reflection of the unique ecology of the farm as well as the diet of the cows – that gives the cheese its unique quality and flavour. The farm also grows oats and peas, wheat for flour milling and carrots.

## **THE DAY**

Alexia facilitated the day, supported by Patrick, with Aled Guy, Head of Sustainability at NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership and Darren Hughes, Director Welsh NHS Confederation.

Patrick led a farm tour to demonstrate the farming practices and show visitors the Holden Dairy and a field of carrots being grown to supply schools in Carmarthenshire. He inspired everyone with his vision for a sustainable food system in Wales. In his words: "Feeding Wales from the ground up."

After lunch, a lively and hugely productive discussion focused on the opportunities and challenges for NHS Wales, farmers and food producers to work together to achieve robust supply chains of nutritious food, grown in harmony with the environment, and how buying that food will help NHS Wales meet its sustainability and net zero goals. Food that is grown in such a sustainable system is often more nutritious and therefore contributes more to patient wellbeing and recovery. Introducing flexible menus to accommodate seasonal produce was also discussed, as were ideas to counteract the cost debate – such as absorbing any increased unit cost through fortnightly menus – advice for working with

*"It was the most visionary discussion and an astonishingly happy and successful farm visit"*



INSPIRING DEBATE AFTER LUNCH AT BWLCHWERNEN FAWR

procurement teams to write tenders to attract SME producers and how to involve dietitians, the senior nurse and indeed Trust CEO in the move to more sustainable sourcing.

Aled Guy was very enthusiastic about the insight gained into sustainable and seasonal food practices and thanked everyone for their curiosity and enthusiasm. "What is so encouraging is that a true partnership between Love British Food and the Welsh NHS Confederation has been established, working together to promote sustainable food practices within NHS Wales," he says.

"There was even a discussion around whether Wales could become a global leader at putting sustainable food on hospital menus. With the leadership and determination everyone showed on the day, anything is possible! It was the most visionary discussion and an astonishingly happy and successful farm visit."

### **HOLKHAM ESTATE, NORFOLK**

NHS and public sector leaders from Norfolk and Suffolk attended this special visit, by kind permission of The Earl of Leicester, hosted by Jake Fiennes, Director of Conservation. It was the most senior gathering to attend any Love British Food farm visit to-date, and included the CEO of NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, the CEO of Healthwatch Norfolk, the then Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, Norfolk County Council, catering operation managers from most Norfolk and Suffolk hospitals and healthcare organisations and Norse Catering, one of the main foodservice organisations in the area.

Holkham Estate is one of Britain's largest historic country estates and the largest privately owned nature reserve with one million visitors a year. It leads the way in delivering exceptional food production together with pioneering conservation. Focused on soil health, connecting habitats, enhancing the environment, developing science-led innovations and making its farming operations leaner and greener, this estate is pushing boundaries at a pivotal time for agriculture and the environment.

Host for the day, Jake Fiennes has become one of Britain's most well-known conservationists and is renowned for his knowledge on restoring flora and fauna to the British countryside. As Conservation Director at Holkham, his radical habitat restoration and agricultural work has nurtured its species and risen its crop yields

*"Discussions have continued since the visit itself, around the connection between good food and patient outcomes"*



**CATERERS AND PUBLIC SECTOR FIGURES FROM WALES GATHER AT BWLCHWERNEN FAWR**

– bringing back wetlands, hedgerows, birds and butterflies over 25,000 acres of land.

### **THE ESTATE**

A wide array of crops are grown, including malting barley, wheat, maize, oilseed rape, sugarbeet, peas, potatoes and rye. Sheep and cattle graze the cover-crops as well as the Holkham National Nature Reserve, providing a supply of delicious, low-mile, local beef and lamb to nearby butchers, hoteliers and restaurateurs.


Holkham Estate has been advocating crop rotation for centuries. Alongside reducing artificial inputs and maintaining an eight-year rotation aimed at increasing soil health, crop quality and natural capital, there is rarely any bare soil across the estate. Cover-cropping, environmental stewardship, wide hedgerows, bountiful field margins and organic manures and digestate help deliver a beneficial and sustainable farming system.

Travelling around the estate on the back of a trailer, the discussion started at the base of The Coke Monument to Holkham's achievement as one of the birthplaces of the agricultural revolution before moving on to the fields where Jake showed off the estate's huge crop of potatoes, and then what he described as high-end conservation. Here, visitors saw the beautiful richness of the flowers, grasses and butterflies that thrive as a result of the estate's approach to farming and land management.

Over lunch in the Holkham café and visitor centre, the discussion turned to whether healthier food could result in lower length of stay for patients in acute hospitals, and the need for data to prove

this to make it easier for budget holders to request and justify increased food spend. There is some research in Australia, which suggests hospital length of stay could be reduced by 1.2 days<sup>1</sup>.

The James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust inspired everyone with its approach to shared catering for patients and staff to improve staff wellbeing and reduce sickness and absence. There was also broad agreement that NHS Trusts are anchor institutions for local producers and have a responsibility to buy local.

Discussions have continued since the visit itself, around the connection between good food and patient outcomes. Hospital malnutrition is a predictor of increased length of stay, impaired wound healing, increased risk of infections and complications, and increased morbidity and mortality. Malnourished patients have more substantial care needs with a greater reliance on hospital resources resulting in higher healthcare costs. Quality Improvement teams have therefore been asked to consider a project across all three acute hospitals in Norfolk (as well as community Trusts), which will also consider meal timings, interruptions for medication, procedure-related fasting, chewing difficulties and protocols for nutritional screening. Norfolk's Health and Wellbeing Board is also likely to consider wider opportunities as a result of the day's discussions. 

<sup>1</sup> Prevalence of hospital-acquired malnutrition and modifiable determinants of nutritional deterioration during inpatient admissions: A systematic review of the evidence - Cass - 2022 - Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics - Wiley Online Library



## NEW PRODUCTS



### 60% SPACE-SAVING KITCHEN PAN

German Gastronorm pan manufacturer Rieber has announced the UK and European launch of the GNauto – GN pans designed for automatic loading and unloading by robots. These pans also save space in kitchens, where every inch is critical.

Using Rieber GNauto pans instead of conventional pans can save up to 60% of storage space in production kitchens. The pans will not stick together when they need to be de-stacked, whether that's by a chef or a robot. This makes them ideal for a new generation of kitchens where food is deposited automatically into GN pans for cooking, chilling, or freezing.

GNauto pans can be used with Rieber's range of lids, including non-spill, and are initially available in four different GN sizes: GN 1/2 in 55- or 65-mm depth and GN 1/3 in 55- or 65-mm depth.

[bglrieber.co.uk](http://bglrieber.co.uk)

### NEW BRAND NAME FOR SHMOO

Aimia Foods has announced a new brand name for Shmoo, the UK's leading thick shake concept. Now known as Shmoo for Professionals, the subtle – yet clear – re-brand serves to amplify the direction that Shmoo for Professionals is looking to take amid brand diversification.

Whilst the name of the brand has had a shake up, the Shmoo for Professionals range remains the same, with four core flavours – Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry, Banana – as well as seasonal/limited-edition flavours which currently include Mint Choc-Chip and Raspberry White Chocolate.

From an aesthetic point of view, the lid colour of each Shmoo Professional tub now represents the flavour inside. For example, Shmoo for Professional Banana has a yellow lid, meaning caterers can visually identify the flavour easily.

Fresh, quick and thick, Shmoo for Professional shakes can be made-up in just 30 seconds, and are suitable for vegetarians, free from artificial colours, flavours and preservatives. When mixed to instructions, Shmoo Professional shakes are also low in fat.



[aimiafoods.com](http://aimiafoods.com)

### BURLODGE OFFERS FULLY COMPOSTABLE TRAYS AND LIDS

Sustainable solutions are not a passing trend, they're a practical response for today's busy food operations. To help combat the amount of waste produced, Burlodge is excited to now offer fully compostable food trays and lids.

These 100% compostable and plastic-free products offer a convenient, affordable alternative to single-use plastics. Free from harmful chemicals and heavy metals, these biodegradable trays and lids are constructed from a cellulose-based material sourced from well-managed and certified forests, subject to natural growth and preserving biodiversity.



### SELF-CLEANING INNOVATION FROM FRI-JADO

The new self-cleaning condenser, available now across Fri-Jado's all-new Deli Counter (DC) and Modular Convenience Counter (MCC) ranges, will ease the burden on busy caterers and ensure that the units perform better than ever whilst offering simpler service cycles and enhanced product safety.

All chilled cabinets feature a condenser in which refrigerant gas is cooled. This unit condenses the cooled refrigerant into a liquid to chill the storage and display areas of the cabinet, before repeating the cycle. This tried and tested technology has functioned for many years, but within just a few days of operation, even in brand-new machines, dust build-up can collect within the unit, inhibiting optimum performance and requiring regular cleaning alongside a planned schedule of preventative maintenance, and potential downtime inefficiencies.

An innovative self-cleaning condenser in this new range features a special motor and control unit which reverses during regular defrost cycles blowing air back over the condenser and helping clear it of the dust which can adversely impact performance.

[frijado.com](http://frijado.com)

### MENUSERVE DEEP DISH APPLE PIE NOW SUITABLE FOR VEGANS

Frozen food distributor Central Foods has tweaked the recipe of its popular Menserve Deep Dish Apple Pie to make it suitable for vegans. At the same time, a commitment has been made to use solely Bramley apples for the filling of the pies.



The pre-sliced deep dish apple pie was launched to the foodservice sector two years ago and has since become a big favourite on menus.

The Menserve Deep Dish Apple Pie is packed with juicy sliced apples encased in golden shortcrust pastry and pre-portioned into 12 generous slices which can be individually defrosted.

Ideal for autumn and winter menus served with hot custard or ice cream, and for spring and summer menus served with ice cream or pouring cream, the deep dish apple pie has a defrosted shelf-life of four days when chilled.

[centralfoods.co.uk](http://centralfoods.co.uk)

These versatile containers provide leak-proof performance, can withstand extreme temperatures from deep freezing to regeneration and are available with heat-sealable lids.

Compostable alternatives promote more efficient on-site waste management. Operators can choose to dispose of them directly with food waste, incinerate for reusable energy, or send to landfill where they will biodegrade within 90 days.

This is where performance meets practicality, and it's the perfect solution for eco-conscious operations.

[burlodge.com](http://burlodge.com)



## HUPFER LAUNCHES BUY-BACK GUARANTEE TO SUPPORT A GREENER FUTURE

Hupfer has launched a Buy Back Guarantee on its stainless steel and aluminium shelving and trolleys, giving UK customers the opportunity to earn rebates, support the circular economy and boost their sustainability performance.

Under the new scheme, the manufacturer will buy back eligible products at the end of their working life to be recycled, and deduct the scrap value of the equipment from its quotation for replacement products. If the customer does not require a replacement equipment quote, Hupfer will instead assist in finding a local recycling company to ensure recovery.

All Hupfer catering and medical equipment made primarily of stainless steel or aluminium is eligible for buy back.

[hupferbuyback.com](http://hupferbuyback.com)



## RATIONAL COMBI-STEAMERS INCLUDED ON THE UK GOVERNMENT APPROVED ENERGY EFFICIENT LIST

The electric iCombi Pro 6-1/1 and 20-1/1 models from Rational have been included on the Energy Technology List (ETL) under the Professional Foodservice Equipment (PFSE) category.

The ETL is a government-managed list in the UK that promotes energy-saving products and encourages businesses to invest in energy-efficient equipment. By adding the iCombi Pro electric models to the ETL, Rational demonstrates its dedication to sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of the foodservice industry, and solidifies its position as a leader in energy-efficient foodservice equipment.

[rational-online.com](http://rational-online.com)



## UNOX INTRODUCES NEW AI-POWERED POSSIBILITIES WITH OPTIC.COOKING

Hot on the heels of the successful launch of the X-Generation Combi Ovens (CHEFTOP-X™ and BAKERTOP-X™), Unox has introduced a new dawn of AI-powered cooking for commercial kitchens - OPTIC.Cooking.

Using a state-of-the-art optical sensor, OPTIC.Cooking takes the adaptive learning capabilities of artificial intelligence to recognise and cook a tray of food. Once the software has been trained to recognise individual items – from beef to vegetables, chicken, cookies, potatoes, fish and eggs – regardless of which rack the tray is placed on in the oven, the intelligent sensor automatically recognises the relevant item. By simply closing the oven door, the AI software will automatically start the correct cooking programme.

As an optional accessory, OPTIC.Cooking can be retrofitted to Unox's CHEFTOP-X and BAKERTOP-X further elevating the capabilities of the range's smart features including MULTITime and SMART.Energy.

[unox.com](http://unox.com)



## DRY MY PLASTIC: FAST, EFFECTIVE REUSABLE PLASTIC TABLEWARE DRYER



As more caterers switch to reusable plastic crockery, cutlery and containers, Winterhalter has developed the DMX plastic drying device to speed up the additional drying time that reusable plastic catering ware requires than standard tableware.

The DMX is designed to be used in conjunction with, and sit alongside, a passthrough or undercounter dishwasher, such as the Winterhalter PT and UC ranges. The washed plastics come out of the dishwasher in their rack, which is loaded straight into the DMX. There they are dried, within two minutes, with the water film being completely removed.

The DMX works by blowing air from both above and below the racks, so that even hollow items such as cups and bowls are dried inside and out. It has three drying programmes – Eco, Standard and Multirack. Using Standard and Multirack the upper drying unit's recirculation fan blows air at 75°C onto the racks, while the lower drying unit blows air upwards at 55°C, ensuring the plastics are perfectly dry in just two minutes. In the Eco programme, air is drawn in at room temperature, extending the drying time to five minutes and reducing energy consumption to a minimum.

[winterhalter.com/uk-en/](http://winterhalter.com/uk-en/)

## BLAST CHILL OR BLAST FREEZE? WILLIAMS' COMPACT WBCF10 DOES BOTH, EQUALLY WELL

Blast chiller freezers are no longer big and bulky with the latest incarnation of Williams' WBCF10, a compact unit that has the capacity to chill or freeze a full 10kg load. It's faster than its predecessor, uses less energy and has a sleek new design. Plus, it runs on natural hydrocarbon refrigerant, making it a greener option for the blast chill freeze market.

The WBCF10 measures just 887mm high and its footprint is a neat 707mm wide by 805mm deep, enabling even small kitchens to benefit from the productivity and food safety advantages that blast chilling and freezing bring. Another useful feature, when it comes to fitting it in the kitchen, is that its door can be hinged either left or right.

Traditional blast chiller freezers accept food up to 70°C, but Williams' models can handle food at 90°C. The WBCF10 exceeds food safety legislation, rapidly reducing the temperature of 10kg of hot food from +90°C down to +3°C in 90 minutes or less in blast chill mode, or +90°C to -18°C in 240 minutes or less when blast freezing.

[williams-refrigeration.co.uk](http://williams-refrigeration.co.uk)





NHS SUPPLY CHAIN

# FRAMEWORK DIRECTORY

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Linking the dairy chain

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NHS SUPPLY CHAIN

# CHILDREN'S CONCEPT BOOK LAUNCH INTRODUCING 'MORE PLEASE'

OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS, OUR **CULINARY AND DIETETICS TEAM** HAVE BEEN PREPARING AN EXCITING ADDITION TO THEIR **CHILDREN'S CULINARY CONCEPT** AND ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE **'MORE PLEASE' COOKBOOK, A GUIDE TO FEEDING OUR FUTURE.**

The book is designed to refresh children's feeding within NHS Trusts and empower chefs and catering members with over 40 recipes – for little ones to big kids – that are delicious, packed full of flavour, and most importantly, nutritious. The book also includes a range of insights on paediatric feeding including portion sizes, picky eaters, flexible meal patterns and feeding guardians and carers.

"More Please has been a joy to work on and it will play a part in driving consistency and fun into food. The recipes have been created with nutrition and dietetic involvement, supporting the recovery of children and making mealtimes an enjoyable experience," says Nick Vadis, Culinary Ambassador, NHS Supply Chain: Food. "We are committed to supporting NHS chefs in driving skills development and great food in all our Trusts, working in partnership with NHS England."

We truly believe that the 'More Please' book will be an invaluable resource in transforming children's feeding within NHS Trusts. Together, we can make a significant impact to children's recovery and overall wellbeing through the power of nutritious and delicious foods.

We are honoured to have worked on this book in collaboration with Sophie's Legacy and NHS England to make Sophie's wish of improving food for children in hospital come true – we hope we have made you proud Sophie!

'More Please' will initially be sent to Trusts with scratch cooking facilities and children's feeding. If you'd like to view a digital version or would like to find out more about our children's Culinary Concept, please contact the Food team: [food@supplychain.nhs.uk](mailto:food@supplychain.nhs.uk).

Read our full article to find out more about the 'More Please' book: [supplychain.nhs.uk/news-article/introducing-more-please-a-guide-to-feeding-our-future/](https://supplychain.nhs.uk/news-article/introducing-more-please-a-guide-to-feeding-our-future/)



## SUMMER SEASON PRODUCE - OUR CHEF'S TOP PICK!

The summer season is finally here, bringing with it an abundance of fresh, vibrant produce, offering a burst of colour and flavour, from British broad beans and courgettes to beetroot and sweet berries. To celebrate the summer season, we've asked our Head of Culinary Development, Leanne Turk, to share her favourite seasonal produce to inspire you to elevate your summer dishes and make the most of nature's freshest produce...

"My summer favourite would have to be Jersey Royal Potatoes! When best in season, they have a lovely earthy and nutty flavour. My favourite way to cook them is boiled, then tossed in butter, salt, pepper and chives from the garden – Bellissimo!!"

## UPCOMING EVENTS - COOK, CREATE AND INNOVATE THIS SUMMER!

Join us this summer for two incredible events hosted by our Culinary and Dietetics team. Our Chefs Academy offers NHS chefs and culinary team members the chance to learn and cook fresh new dishes based on our culinary concept range. Additionally, our Skills Academy provides a fantastic opportunity for NHS catering assistants to develop a wide range of skills through interactive activities and hands-on cooking as well as special supplier guests to take their skills to the next level.

### EVENT DATES:

- Chefs Academy – Edgbaston Cricket Ground – July 31, 2024
- Skills Academy – Edgbaston Cricket Ground – August 1, 2024

Book your space now by contacting your local Food Account Manager or filling out our enquiry form:

[supplychain.nhs.uk/categories/food/enquiry-form/](https://supplychain.nhs.uk/categories/food/enquiry-form/)





# THE LAST WORD

**NUNO MATIAS IS CATERING SERVICES MANAGER AT THE ROYAL BROMPTON HOSPITAL, A POSITION HE'S HELD FOR NEARLY FIVE YEARS. HE'S BEEN WORKING IN HOSPITAL CATERING SINCE 2006, INITIALLY WITH A THIRD-PARTY CONTRACTOR, WORKING HIS WAY UP FROM SUPERVISOR TO CATERING MANAGER, BEFORE A BRIEF SPELL IN DEFENCE AND THEN A RETURN TO THE NHS. THE ROYAL BROMPTON IS HIS FIRST POST AS A DIRECT EMPLOYEE OF A TRUST. AS THE LEGACY OF THE LATE MIKE DUCKETT, THE HOSPITAL ALREADY HAD AN ENVIABLE FRESH COOK SYSTEM, WHICH NUNO HAS KEPT, APPLYING HIS FREEDOM TO BE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE TO OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SERVICE, FOR EXAMPLE, CHANGING MENUS AND UPDATING THE ORDERING SYSTEMS.**



## ACHIEVEMENT

We've done a lot of work that I'm proud of, but I'm particularly pleased to have recently achieved NHS England (NHSE) Exemplar status for our catering services. This is testament to our commitment to be consistent in our provision of excellent catering services to our patients, staff and visitors. It's a commitment that extends beyond the catering team to everyone – from service directors to clinical staff and dietitians. Exemplar status pulls together everything the Trust is doing. It's also a great recommendation for our fresh cook site, and will help us to defend that as being the best for our patients whenever a change is suggested.

## DEVELOPMENT

There's a lot of work being done by NHSE and the Hospital Caterers Association (HCA) around sustainability within hospital catering services, specifically on reducing waste and carbon footprint, as well as promoting healthy and sustainable eating habits. As Vice-Chair of the London South East Branch of the HCA, I am working with colleagues at a neighbouring Trust – the Royal Free – and we recently carried out a site visit to share ideas and see what they are doing that we could adapt. Our own sustainability initiatives have included Food for Life Served Here Silver Award and we are on the verge of being confirmed to the Green Kitchen Standard – both Soil Association accreditations. We've also introduced venison to retail and patient meals, which is being really well received, especially since we can offer it at a good price because we can buy it at a more competitive price compared to beef or lamb.


## CHANGE

Very little. If something works well I try not to change it. However, if I could, I would modernise the main kitchen – replace existing appliances and improve the environment for staff. Making the life of staff better would enhance the quality of our service even further – keeping our chefs and catering assistants happy is critical to achieving the best results.

## MOTIVATION

Every day is a new day. We receive patient feedback at the end of each day and the next morning we talk about it. Our aim is to make every day special. I want to make sure patients are looking forward to their meals. They have a lot of time to think, and often that means wondering what is going to be on the menu for lunch and supper. Every morning we have to make sure we get everything right, and that the quality is perfect. The menu is different, but the process we follow is the same, checking the recipes and going over every detail to make sure every day, every meal, is special for our patients.

## SUPPORT

We've had great support from NHSE. We've entered chefs into the Chef of the Year competition, and we've welcomed people like Phil Shelley and Tim Radcliffe here on site. The Independent Review of Hospital Food is obviously out there and hospitals are looking at it, but some still think it's more of a recommendation. Within the London South East Branch of the HCA we are talking about it being mandatory. Hospitals should be following it, but some choose not to for financial or other reasons. If it was mandatory it would help to improve catering services and make every hospital a better place for all. 

# HOSPITALITY MEETS HOSPITAL CATERING AT THE WESSEX SALON CULINAIRE



**ON THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2024, CHEFS FROM NHS HOSPITALS ACROSS THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND COMPETED IN THE HCA'S WESSEX SALON CULINAIRE CHALLENGES, WITH INDUSTRY CHEFS JUDGING THEIR FINAL ENTRANT. HOSPITAL CATERER HAS THIS REPORT.**

**T**his was a great day, with chefs attending from a number of hospitals, including Bristol, Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Southern Healthcare, Salisbury, Gosport and Sussex.

Traditionally, this event is held at the Bournemouth & Poole Catering College and includes entries from the students. However, the college is undergoing major refurbishment, so Newlyn's Cookery School proved a more than suitable alternative. This school is famous for local sourcing of quality foods, which contestants were able to select for the Ready Steady Cook Challenge.

Ronnie Parrett-Harris, Chairman of the HCA Wessex Branch explains: "Newlyn's cookery school was an amazing location. The Wessex Branch Salon Culinaire is an annual event where hospital chefs are given the platform to showcase their skills and compete with other like-minded chefs. This is a great opportunity for them to step out of their normal surroundings and compete and produce high quality food. We hope this event will give the chefs a buzz to enter more competitions such as the NHS Chef of the Year competition."

"A massive congratulations to everyone who took part. The standard of what was produced on the day was first class."

## THE MAIN EVENTS

There were three live classes covering curries and Ready Steady Cook, as well as

butchery and presentation of the classic Sauté Chicken Chasseur dish where the ingredients are identical, but the final dishes were all different in taste and appearance.

In addition, there were four static classes, which saw chefs produce two fruit tartlets, a trio of desserts, a trio of tapas and finally the traditional 'time for pie' with some stunning examples of different pies.

The judges came from across the industry: Dominic Teague from One Aldwych, John Feeney from Griffiths Foods and Phil Yeomans of Lainston House were joined by NHS chefs Phil Shelley, Nick Vadis and Wayne Harris.

Nick Vadis, Culinary Ambassador - NHS Supply Chain says: "It was great to see the skill and energy of the NHS Chefs pushing themselves in the competition arena. All competitors are a credit to their Trusts, raising the profile of the great work that goes on within NHS kitchens."

Phil Yeomans, Executive Chef at Lainston House says: "It was good to see the chefs' passion and pride for their dishes. Some outstanding personal dishes full of flavour and textures presented nicely. The judging was very tight and the competition so close. Everyone delivered on the day and should be very proud of their efforts. I look forward to a mentor day with one of the winners."

Iain Robertson, HCA National Chair, acted as judge coordinator for four of the classes. He says: "The standard

of the entries was exceptional and the professionalism of the judges was fantastic. There was a real buzz around the place and it was clear that everyone involved enjoyed themselves."

Phil Shelley Senior Operational Manager at NHS England agreed, saying: "The skill and finesse from our healthcare chefs proves that we have the ability to drive positive improvement in NHS food services and be ambitious with our menu choices."

## SOPHIE'S LEGACY

A raffle supported another HCA favourite, Sophie's Legacy. Sophie's mother, Charlotte Fairall was at the event and told Hospital Caterer: "We are deeply grateful to the Wessex Branch for choosing Sophie's Legacy as its charity and for the incredible effort in raising £675. It was a brilliant day filled with enthusiasm and generosity. We appreciate everyone who contributed to making it such a success, and the amazing prizes, including a night at Chewton Glen, Afternoon Tea at One Aldwych and at Lainston House Hotel."

## SPONSORS

Thanks go to the sponsors, without whom the day would not have been possible. A special mention also to Caroline Benjamin who marshalled the day. For further details on the classes, profiles of the judges and more visit: [foodallergyaware.co.uk/hospital-caterers-ass-documents](http://foodallergyaware.co.uk/hospital-caterers-ass-documents)



# CATERER OF THE YEAR

**ROB STRACHAN WAS PRESENTED WITH THE HCA CATERER OF THE YEAR AWARD AT THE RECENT FORUM. HE IS FOLLOWING IN SOME ILLUSTRIOUS FOOTSTEPS, SO LET'S GET TO KNOW ROB A LITTLE BETTER.**



ROB IS PROUD TO HAVE JOINED THE HCA NATIONAL EXECUTIVE, AND ATTENDED HIS FIRST MEETING RECENTLY



ROB STRACHAN

If you had visited Southampton General Hospital 25 years ago, you would have found Rob working hard in the vast kitchens. He was hankering to join the management team and decided that the future lay in his own hands. This led to him signing up for a day release course at his local college and studying for an HNC in Hospitality Management.

The course must have been enjoyable, because when one of the college team suggested that there was a vacancy coming up that might interest him, Rob jumped at the chance and six weeks later found himself teaching levels 1, 2 and 3 Cookery. To enhance his experience he went to university where he gained all his teaching qualifications before becoming a full-time lecturer. His quest for a continual learning programme then took him to qualifying to teach at secondary school level, but his heart was still in catering.

To ensure that his skill set didn't become rusty, Rob worked as a bank chef for Hampshire Hospitals during the weekends and school holidays. He already knew what a meaningful career

you could have in hospital catering, and when he heard that the deputy catering manager was leaving to work elsewhere he applied for the post. With his valuable experience he was an obvious candidate. Rob reflects on this time saying: "It took me 25 years to get into catering management with the NHS, but I had finally achieved it."

Nowadays, Rob is Head of Catering Services at Basingstoke & North Hampshire Hospital, part of the Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. He explains: "We are really privileged to be a fresh cook site for patients and staff. I oversee the provision of meals to patients, staff and visitors across three sites in Basingstoke, Winchester and Andover, serving approximately 900 patients. We also cater for a 60-bed nursing home on our Andover site."

So what is it that drives Rob? He is modest in his response. "I find that the most satisfying part of my job is knowing that I, and my team, are making a difference and hopefully enhancing the patient experience during their stay with

us. I want Hampshire Hospitals to be seen as some of the best anywhere, and we are in the process of trying to achieve Exemplar status with NHS England."

At the recent HCA Annual General Meeting, Rob was elected as the Branch Director for the Wessex Branch and has taken one of the three Branch places on the National Executive. This is a big step in his ambitions within the HCA but one he is taking in his stride. "I am very proud and privileged to have joined the HCA Board, and I'm really looking forward to having an influence and say in the future of hospital catering."

Away from the stresses of the day job, Rob unwinds by playing chess. "I would recommend it to everyone; I've played since a young age and it is a good way to unwind, although sometimes I do feel like flipping the board up if I make a terrible move!"

Rob's approach has been described as "astounding." He encompasses everything that the HCA stands for, and truly puts the patient front and centre of every decision he makes. He is a worthy winner of the 2024 Caterer of the Year Award.



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# MEET THE OXFORD BRANCH

IN THE FIRST OF THIS NEW SERIES OF BRANCH PROFILES, HOSPITAL CATERER CATCHES UP WITH **THE OXFORD BRANCH**, WINNER OF THE **CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE AWARD 2024**.



OXFORD BRANCH MEMBERS ENJOYING THE BRANCH NIGHT AT THE RECENT NATIONAL FORUM IN AVIEMORE

Over a period of some six or seven years, working throughout the pandemic, Oxford has transformed into a vibrant Branch with regular meetings – a mixture of virtual and face-to-face – trips, farm visits and events such as the regular Dragon's Den, tree planting and study days.

Inspired by the TV show, Dragon's Den is an initiative that started during the pandemic. It challenges suppliers to pitch a product or innovation to members, the dragons, who will ask questions and ultimately vote on whether it is something they feel would add value to their catering team or operation. Products are of a diverse nature – from clothing and footwear to storage systems, vegan/vegetarian menu ideas and frozen transport systems. Mabel, our Branch Secretary scoured the exhibition at the recent Forum to line up potential participants for future Dens.

Ten members made the journey to Aviemore for the 2024 National Leadership & Development Forum, accompanied by the Branch coo, Radcliffe. Unfortunately, Radcliffe enjoyed it so much he decided to stay in the Scottish Highlands, so the Branch is now in the process of choosing a new mascot.

## ACTIVE AND WELCOMING

Oxford is a small Branch, but it is punching beyond its weight in terms of the environment. In February 2023, it was quick to host a meeting at which speakers provided more insight on the transition from single-use to reusable packaging and food containers. Every year members travel to Mabel's farm in Northamptonshire to plant trees.

The Branch has hosted a number of farm visits – just recently a walk at Papley Grove in Cambridgeshire, guided by farmer Martin Lines, Chair of Nature Friendly Farming, and last year, as part of the Love British Foods Hospital Working Group series, to FarmEd just outside Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire. This visit was co-hosted with the London South East Branch, which Oxfordshire was supporting to enable new Branch officers to be appointed to re-build the Branch.

Our most recent study day, held at WhitCo in Thrapston was a huge success (see Branch News for more detail of this and the latest farm visit).

## VIBRANT AND GROWING

Under the guidance and enthusiasm of its Chair, Secretary and other Officers, Oxford is a vibrant Branch, with a growing membership. Join us and get involved.

## MEET OUR BRANCH OFFICERS

We asked the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer to tell us a bit about themselves.



### CHAIR AND BRANCH DIRECTOR:

STEVEN HALL

Hotel Services Manager at Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH) running the Catering, Cleaning, Support Services, Accommodation, Waste & Laundry.

I am interested in seaside pleasure piers and am a member of the National Pier Society. There are 54 surviving piers in the UK and I spend time visiting them – I've only five left to see this year.



### SECRETARY:

MABEL BLADES

Dietitian and nutritionist.

Passionate about good nutrition for assisting health and recovery.

I love trees and have three woods which I manage.



### TREASURER:

JAMES VARGHESE

Regional Sales Manager for Burlodge UK,

responsible for the south

– a patch from Norfolk to Cornwall. Passionate about playing a pivotal role in the wellbeing of patients in the NHS. To know that I am able to make a difference to the patient experience gives me the drive for each day!

I was in Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion and subsequent war in the 1990s. Scary times and something that I could write a book about!

**BOARD MEMBER:** STEVEN HALL

**Other Branch Officers:** Francesco (Frank) Fiore, Co-Chair of the Love British Food Hospital Working Group, Catering Manager at MKUH; Louise Sayell, Deputy Catering Manager at MKUH; and Nick Sanders, BDM Exclusive Brands at RH Hall.



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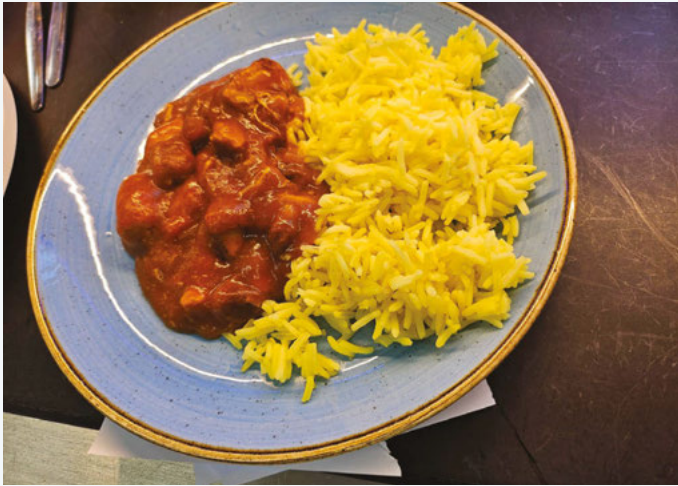
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# APPETITE-ENHANCING CROCKERY

FOLLOWING A SUCCESSFUL PILOT, MONITORED BY NHS ENGLAND (NHSE), **SOLENT NHS TRUST** HAS INTRODUCED COLOURED CROCKERY AT ALL OF ITS COMMUNITY SITES.

**S**olent is one of 15 Trusts to have joined the pilot scheme to test and assess the impact that could be made on food waste by replacing standard NHS white crockery with a coloured alternative. The results have taken many by surprise. At the HCA Forum, Tim Radcliffe NHSE Net Zero Food Programme Manager discussed a reduction in food waste of up to 29% for some sites. He told Hospital Caterer that the latest data shows an overall reduction of 10.5% has been achieved from all Trusts participating in the scheme.

Iain Robertson, National Chair of the HCA and Catering Operations Manager at Solent NHS Trust described the dramatic reduction in food waste during his trial as "incredible." He was particularly surprised with the results because plate waste was already low at Solent's community hospitals following a change in menus, the introduction of electronic meal ordering and new methods of food waste monitoring. Catering managers were confident they had made significant progress and weren't sure the trial would have much impact. In addition, as a community and mental health Trust, patients tend to be less appetite-suppressed than those who might be more seriously ill in an acute facility or

those with dementia, so Iain expected the results to be less dramatic and was genuinely surprised.

## THE TRIAL & RESULTS

The trial took place on two rehab wards at the Royal South Hants Hospital in Southampton. For the first four weeks it was business as usual for the ward catering staff, who dished out normal sized portions on the usual white crockery. Any leftovers were weighed as before, but the team also recorded the number of empty plates.

For the second four weeks catering staff served the same food and portion sizes, but this time using cornflower blue plates and bowls. Blue was chosen because there are no naturally blue coloured foods; meaning that the colour helps pale foods like chicken, mashed potato and porridge stand out. It is associated with peace and calm and is also the last colour on the spectrum recognised by dementia patients.

Within days, there was a noticeable improvement in the number of patients finishing their meals. At the end of the eight-week trial there had been a 20.6% decrease in plate waste and an increase of 14% in the number of empty plates.

"We were blown away by these

statistics due to the nutritional impact this will have on our patients, along with the improved patient experience," Iain says.

Feedback from patients was described as "phenomenal," with some saying the coloured crockery gave their hospital meals a restaurant feel.

"The research is based on the theory that coloured crockery makes food look more attractive and prompts the appetite," Iain explains. "It is such an easy change to make but the result is incredible. If hospitals across the country follow suit, the outcome could be staggering."

As well as the benefit to patients, feedback from staff at Solent has also been positive. Catering teams prefer serving the food on an attractive, blue plate and take more care with the presentation, a result that Iain describes as "fascinating," adding that caterers should do whatever they can to improve the overall mealtime experience.

Solent has now rolled out the blue crockery to all of its community sites. If a suitable, non-breakable solution becomes available Iain will also consider that for the Trust's mental health sites. Across England, two further Trusts are in the process of making the switch, with several others preparing business cases to bring the change.



INFORMATIVE EXHIBITION STANDS

how various styles and practices within an organisation can shape its success or failure, and why it is important to understand and implement a winning formula to create positive results.

She was fascinated by the approach taken by the social enterprise Raising Nutrition and early discussions at the Trust are considering how the expertise offered could be utilised to improve the health of the workforce.

**Frankie Angus**, Food Service Manager at University Hospital North Durham, County Durham and Darlington Trust told us: "I know how lucky I was to be given the bursary. I met new colleagues and realised we all have the same sort of issues, and we were able to exchange ideas about how we can overcome them."

**Alan Dougan**, CFPU Production Manager at Greater Glasgow and Clyde agreed: "I only joined the NHS three years ago and this gave me the opportunity to network with colleagues from the industry. Hopefully it will lead to more collaborations in the future. Attending also helped me in my personal development within my current role; boosting my confidence in communicating and sharing my concerns surrounding supply issues."

This was a theme that ran through all the bursary reports. **Helen Butcher**, Patient Services Manager for Sodexo at Chesterfield Royal Hospital agreed, saying: "The networking with both colleagues and suppliers is imperative to be able to share best practice and find innovation. You can meet many people that you would not ordinarily meet during your normal working day and environment. I have brought ideas back to our site as well as the wider organisation, and I have also made new connections which I will find of exceptional importance throughout the next year."

**Elaine Pringle**, a Catering Service Lead in Northern Ireland said she was "very grateful" to have received the bursary place. She thought that the programme was comprehensive and varied over the two days. She found it very motivating and returned to work with many ideas for changes she would like to implement, particularly the new foods and recipe ideas that she could introduce to her patient menus as part of an upcoming menu review.

Award-winning **Karoline Rowlands** concluded the contributions by saying: "I reflected on what I have gained from

the experience and it is considerable. This included sharing thoughts with like-minded colleagues from the other three nations of the UK, to gaining an update on current practices and procedures relating to important topics. Engagement with colleagues is so important and should never be underestimated. Being away from work in such an environment enables one to relax and open your mind to new ideas and concepts. I have certainly found the knowledge gained has been invaluable in operating back at Trust level. A particular highlight for me was the presentation on wellbeing which is so topical at present and I learned so much from it. My Trust has definitely benefited from my time spent at the Forum which has enabled me to look at things with a fresher eye and bring some new ideas."

Over the years, the bursary has helped so many members, young and old, to attend the Forum and will continue to do so with the generous support of Wilma's bequest. Knowing of Wilma's passion for training and development, the Board felt that by renaming the bursary in her honour was a fitting way of remembering her contribution long into the future.

# THE WILMA WILKIE BURSARY RECIPIENTS 2024 SHARE THEIR VIEWS OF THE FORUM

**THE WILMA WILKIE TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT BURSARY EXISTS TO ASSIST MEMBERS IN THEIR SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND WHERE APPROPRIATE ACQUIRE SKILLS THAT MAY FURTHER DEVELOP AND BENEFIT THEIR ORGANISATION.**



**T**he bursary is a popular route for members who have been refused funding from their Trust or Health Board to still attend the most important learning and development event of the year. This year ten lucky members were offered bursary places to attend the HCA's Forum in the Glen, at the Macdonald's Resort in Aviemore.

**Jijo Mathew**, Facilities Manager Catering at Greater Glasgow and Clyde, summed up the thoughts of recipients, saying that: "Attending the Hospital Caterers Association Forum was an enriching experience. Overall, the Forum has significantly enhanced my understanding and approach to hospital catering, ultimately benefiting our patients and staff."

**Becky Young**, Soft FM Service Manager at the Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust shared her thoughts on the event. "This was the first time I had attended a HCA Forum. I am the newly appointed Vice Chair of the East Anglian Branch, and I wanted to gain a better understanding of the association and how it can support our members, both now and potentially in the future. We need to improve engagement

and I wanted to bring some positive influence to the Branch.

"Aviemore was a beautiful setting, and I felt the whole event was organised superbly. I did not have a moment to rest, there was so much to see and participate in. It was great to hear from other Trusts and people in the industry, to learn from them and understand that a lot of us are facing the same challenges. It also helped me appreciate how much we are doing well, and gave me an opportunity to share some great working practices, especially in the workshop sessions. There are several Trusts doing exceptional work, both locally and nationally.

"What resonated most with me was Professor David Foskett's message that catering is an old-fashioned term. He much prefers the term hospitality, which reflects that it is all about the patient experience, not just the food, and we are all experts in the field of providing that service to our patients. It is an honour to serve."

Another area that struck a chord was the session on Health & Wellbeing. Becky added: "Staff wellbeing was big on the agenda and the patient experience can only be achieved by having staff who are appreciated, motivated and encouraged.

Our staff on the ground who are that listening ear to the patients are vital and I personally intend to show more appreciation for our colleagues."

For **Emma Wilson**, Head of Catering at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS FT, it was Gill Murphy's team's inspiring work on minimising risks to patients through the careful planning and introduction of the Food Safety Pause Strategy that caught her attention. "It made me think about how our Trust approaches this same issue as a result of a 'never' event. It brought home the level of complexity involved in first understanding what is required to ensure that patients are kept safe through a robust, risk-assessed process with responsible, appropriately trained individuals/co-ordinators to deliver a high standard of care – right first time. It's a job that we undertake daily, extended across the whole healthcare system and is a continuing journey of learning for us all."

Emma also wrote warmly about the Health & Wellbeing session given by Hans Hartung, who took us through how we need to adapt and change to fit the business purpose whilst providing a safe and nurturing space for improving culture and productivity. Emma reflected on

## NORTHERN IRELAND BRANCH

*Report by Karina Watterson*

Nine members of the Branch packed their suitcases and headed off for the 2024 Development Forum in beautiful Aviemore in April for three very busy days talking to suppliers and listening to interesting speakers.

On our way we were lucky to be invited by David Nesbitt from Meiko UK, to a visit to see a Meiko pass through dishwasher in operation in Glasgow Airport at Gate Gourmet – the land side catering operation which supplies food and beverages to local, national and international flights.

We were warmly welcomed by David, who explained the features of the machine before we saw it in full operation. It was a very informative and useful visit.

A few weeks later in May, as part of the Love British Food series, 12 members of the Branch visited Carraig Dubh Farm in the beautiful area of Broughderg at the foot of the Sperrin Mountains.

Here, Sean O'Neill and his wife farm Dexter cattle; they find that their small frames and hardy constitution are most suitable for the rough grazing that makes up the majority of this farm. Sean showed members the different types of grassland, describing the best uses for each type. The cattle are wintered outside, which Sean explained helps produce the great marbling that makes Dexter beef so sought after.

To maximise the price for such high quality meat, Sean sells directly from the farm and through local markets. His 65-head herd is a perfect fit for his customers. A few members bought some beef, which was delicious.

Seeing the farm and hearing of the route to market reminded members of the importance of buying local, and we discussed how best to ensure this through writing specifications for future contacts.

In June, members were invited to Stephens Catering, which is located in Broughshane in Ballymena. Stephens wanted to showcase several catering products, and provided cooking demonstrations to highlight the value of the products and the delicious food that could be provided.

Two pressure steamers were used to create traditional dishes and build beautiful, creative dietary menus. A portable mobile food service station trolley was also on show which was ideal to transport hot or cold food through a hospital or remote site. Guests were shown examples of active food preparation with dishes which can be made quickly and batch cooked for large or small quantities.

Members appreciated the demonstration and the beautiful lunch, following which a Branch meeting was held in the boardroom.



## SOUTH WEST BRANCH

Report by Jane Wills

Nathan Simms, Catering & Retail Operational Manager from Torbay Hospital organised the venue and presentations for the Branch meeting in May at the China Fleet Country Club in Saltash, Plymouth.

Chris Trenerry, Commercial Director of Tamar Fresh gave a very informative and interesting presentation on the history of this fourth-generation family business which is passionate about providing fresh ingredients and products along with excellent customer service. The company's ethos is to treat staff like family, and to ensure customers receive their deliveries at peak freshness. Products supplied to the local area include fresh and prepared fruit and vegetables, sandwiches, sandwich fillings, bakery goods and handmade deli items.

Tamar Fresh employs 95 staff, all from the local community, and sources its fresh, local and seasonal products from farms and growers within a 60-mile radius. The company is also very aware of the need to be more sustainable and has invested in its delivery fleet as well as solar panelling which provides 70% of the electric used. Paper bags have replaced plastic and Tamar Fresh is now plastic free with all packaging being 100% recyclable.

Following the presentation we held our Branch meeting and extended our best wishes and thanks to Carol James who has recently retired from apetito. We also congratulated our Chair, Karoline Rowlands\*, the well-deserving winner of the Special Contribution Award at Forum.

The meeting closed following a sandwich lunch kindly provided by Tamar Fresh.

The next Branch meeting will be online, followed by the Study Day at the BAWA Club on Thursday, September 19; book early for this one to avoid disappointment!



## WEST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by Margaret Valenti

The last Branch meeting was held in June at the Instock Depot in Livingstone. Billy Menzies very kindly hosted the meeting in the development kitchen and well-equipped meeting facilities.

The face-to-face meeting provided good interaction with members and we discussed future Branch exhibitions and what matters to them.

Some excellent product demonstrations from Unox and Rational concluded the day.

Lunch was kindly provided by Rational. The Branch would also like to thank Instock once again for their hospitality.

The next meeting will take place in August by Teams.



\* Speaking after the awards, Karoline, who is Facilities Manager People & Performance at North Bristol NHS Trust told Hospital Caterer: "I was overwhelmed to receive this prestigious award which was totally unexpected but at the same time much appreciated. I am delighted and honoured, and the trophy plus the framed certificate have pride of place at home.



"I have been a member of the Hospital Caterers Association for many years having been first introduced to it by a founder member, Anne Shore. My thanks go to Anne for her encouragement and support over those early years.

"I value the HCA greatly; it is an amazing Association and I would highly recommend it to anyone. It has certainly supported me throughout my career in so many ways. Hence receipt of this award has been extra special for me. I owe a big thank you to the Association and long may it continue and thrive."

## NORTHERN BRANCH

Report by Stuart Wray

The Branch held a meeting at the Piano Room at the RVI Newcastle with a presentation from Coco Labelle. Owner, Elizabeth, gave members some background to the company and a number of dishes were tasted from a wide range of both tropical and cultural cuisine.

It was also a sad meeting as the Branch said a fond farewell to two members who are retiring. Stephen Scragg (BGL Rieber) has been a great support to the Northern Branch over many years and has been involved with Branch study days, but his time has come to sit back and relax with



NORTHERN BRANCH CHAIR COLIN CHAPMAN WITH CAROL BIRCH

his wife and dogs and enjoy plenty of coastal walks.

Carol Birch has been an active member of the Northern Branch for over 25 years. During this time she has held the role of Branch Secretary, which involves keeping us all organised, being in charge of the Branch education programme, as well as social events. Carol played a key role in organising Branch study days, and kept the finances in check as Conference Treasurer when the Branch hosted the National Conference in 2009 in Glasgow.

Carol has also served on National Council for 12 months as the Assistant National Secretary and has dedicated the past 41 years to the NHS, commencing as an Assistant Cook in 1983 at the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, and progressing to her current position of Associate Director of Facilities at Synchronicity Care Limited (SCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.

On top of a demanding role leading facilities services in one of the largest



NORTHERN BRANCH CHAIR COLIN CHAPMAN WITH STEPHEN SCRAGG

integrated Trusts in England, Carol has been a member of the national working group for the NHS Premises Assurance Model (PAM), Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE) and the 2021 Healthcare National Standards of Cleanliness.

Throughout her career Carol has consistently demonstrated her commitment to both the NHS and the HCA on many levels and she will be a great loss to them both, but now is her time to chill out and relax with her husband Paul Birch.

A number of hospitals celebrated Healthcare EFM Day on Wednesday, June 19 with multiple events taking place to celebrate the great work that goes on behind the scenes. A large number of suppliers also donated some wonderful gifts which were well received from the winners across all sites. Going forward it was agreed that EFM Day will be an agenda item in all future meetings so members will be able to learn from each other to have the best 2025 EFM Day.



CELEBRATING HEALTHCARE ESTATES & FACILITIES DAY

## OXFORD BRANCH

Report by Craig Smith and Amanda Roberts

A recent study day was hosted at WhitCo in Thrapston, Northamptonshire, where Sales Director Isabella Anello-Jewry welcomed a large cohort of Branch members and national officers, including the new National Chair, Iain Robertson, and NHS England's Phil Shelley to the Customer Experience Centre. The day saw members enjoy tasty vegan and vegetarian food, cooked in some of the latest equipment, with presentations from suppliers, Lincat, Electrolux, LightFry and Eat Curious.

Iain Robertson, attending his first face-to-face Branch event as national Chair, spoke about HCA activities, including the new strategy, launched at the Forum.

The meeting was also joined by Phil Martin, Curriculum Manager for Culinary Arts, Travel and Tourism from Northampton college for an interesting discussion of how closer working relationships can be forged between the NHS and education establishments to help to develop the catering workforce of the future.

The Oxford branch has long been interested in environmental issues and sustainability; we have planted more

than 300 trees over the past few years. In June we had our latest farm walk, visiting the Papley Grove Farm near St Neots in Cambridgeshire.

The family farm, which is now on its fourth generation, is run by Martin Lines, CEO of the Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN). Martin had joined the Branch twice during lockdown to give us 'virtual' walks around his fields but this time we were able to see for ourselves how a modern farm can increase its productivity whilst returning a lot of the land to nature. The group saw how embracing modern farming techniques can mitigate climate change, reverse biodiversity and safeguard the future of UK farming, something that has to be good for every hospital caterer.



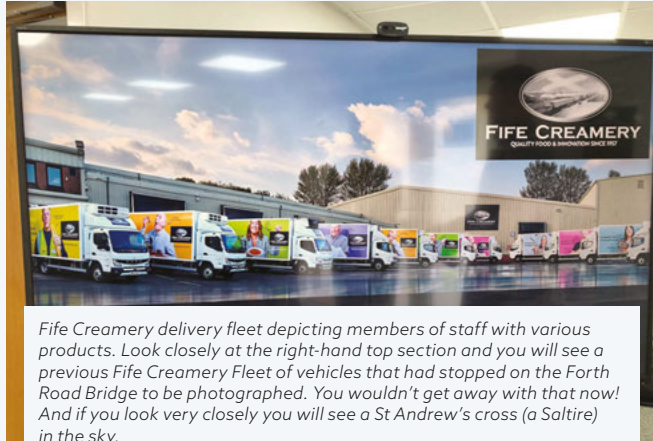
MEMBERS AT THE STUDY DAY

## EAST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by David Williamson

The Branch recently visited the Fife Creamery Innovation Hub in Kirkcaldy where Graham and Kenny delivered an interesting demonstration of various vegan and plant-based products. These included cold pressed fruit juices, vegan meatballs and cook-in sauces, vegan mayonnaise and

bouillon, various vegan cheeses, desserts and vegan pizza suitable for use both for patient and staff feeding. After the demonstration and tasting we were kindly encouraged to use the hub for our Branch business meeting and then a light lunch.



Fife Creamery delivery fleet depicting members of staff with various products. Look closely at the right-hand top section and you will see a previous Fife Creamery Fleet of vehicles that had stopped on the Forth Road Bridge to be photographed. You wouldn't get away with that now! And if you look very closely you will see a St Andrew's cross (a Saltire) in the sky.



## YORKSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Ellen Clayton

The March Branch meeting was kindly hosted by Victor Manufacturing based in Keighley West Yorkshire. The Branch had a full business agenda and it was disappointing that more full members were unable to attend.

After the meeting Steve McGiven, Sales and Marketing Director from Victor gave a presentation. The company is 80 years old this year and manufactures commercial and foodservice equipment, with the capability to design and manufacture bespoke equipment to meet customer requirements. Members were treated to a factory tour and saw the temperature testing chamber in action.

An online presentation from Dr Ed Maile, Associate Director of Sprink, covered the Challenges for the Global Food System and Sprink's Healthy Food Environment Online Training Programme.

The Branch also received a presentation from Elizabeth Brown, Director of Coco Labelle about the marvellous Mauritian and Caribbean food she produces and her company's partnering with NH Case. The samples she provided were enjoyed by everyone.

In June, the Branch was treated to a fantastic, informative day at Nestlé in York. This meeting was packed full of insightful presentations from a wide range of Nestlé brands: Nescafé, Starbucks, and Nestlé Confectionery. We also had a Forum feedback presentation from members of the Branch who were awarded sponsored places: Shelley and Howard. During the business meeting, we held a vote for a new Branch Chair, and Gareth Williams was voted in as our latest member of the committee. Matt Charlton has agreed to take the position of Treasurer when Pam Miller retires later this year. It's fabulous to welcome new enthusiasm to our committee, and we are all looking forward to working together to create more meetings and opportunities for our valued Yorkshire members.





# LET'S GET TO WORK

**IAIN ROBERTSON TELLS HOSPITAL CATERER HIS TOP PRIORITY IS TO GET AROUND TO ALL OF THE BRANCHES, EITHER VIRTUALLY OR IN PERSON, TO TALK ABOUT THE HCA STRATEGY.**

**T**he strategy sets out five categories for action, some of which will be led nationally, whilst others will be driven at Branch level. Presenting it to members at meetings will give me the opportunity to explain how, and where, the association needs Branch support to ensure the strategy is a success, and encourage members to get involved.

New working groups are being set up to progress the parts of the strategy that will be led nationally. For instance, Nicola Strawther, our National Vice-Chair, is leading the membership category. This is one that is very close to my heart. I've spoken before about how I want to open the membership up to a broader base by being less restrictive. If you care about hospital food and you want to do the best for the patient, nutritionally, I don't believe it should matter what your job title is, you should be welcomed into the HCA. Reviewing membership categories will therefore be one of the first tasks for this working group. I'm also aware that we need to look at what potential new members want from the HCA, and make sure we develop an offer that is attractive to them.

All of this was discussed at my first Board meeting as national Chair. It was a poignant occasion at which the Board also held a moment of reflection to mark the sad passing of our colleague, former

Council and Board member, Allan Gimson. At his funeral it was very evident that the HCA and hospital catering had been a huge part of his life, and he gave so much to both. I didn't know him well, but at the Forum in Aviemore he went out of his way to congratulate me and wish me well in the national Chair role. He will be missed by many.

## OTHER BUSINESS

The Executive team has returned to fortnightly meetings. We met for the first time since the AGM, face-to-face in the North West, following which the entire Executive attended the Branch Summer Ball. This coincided with the first day of Euro 24, and was appropriately themed.

Janice Gillan and Caroline Darvill have been leading a programme to centralise our membership administration and launch a new website. This has been a huge piece of work that is now gathering momentum as the invitation to tender has been circulated to interested parties. It will remove a lot of pressure from Branch Treasurers, who will no longer need to raise membership invoices and chase for payment at a local level.

We've established another working group to look at resurrecting the HCA webinars. Post pandemic the market for webinars was a bit saturated, so we haven't held one for a while. However, there is still a value in them; they are an accessible vehicle

for communication and adding value. Our aim is to hold two per year on topics that are really important to members.

## EVENTS

The last couple of months have been busy with events. Top of the list for me is the recent Healthcare Estates & Facilities Day. Our former national Chair, Brian Robb led on this and it was bigger than ever this year. At Solent we celebrated the day in style and I could see from social media posts that this was replicated across the country. It's so important to have a national day of recognition for the work that our catering teams and other E&F colleagues do.

I've also represented the HCA at the HEFMA Forum, LACA Main Event and the Craft Guild of Chefs Awards Dinner, and I've joined two Branch events – the Merseyside and N Wales Branch meeting on Teams and the Oxford Branch Study Day in person.

As I write, the 2024 NHS England Chef of the Year Competition has just got underway, with the first regional heats in London, and we have also started our own planning for the HCA 4 Nations Showcase for 2025. Good luck to all who are competing.

I look forward to meeting as many members as possible at a Branch meeting near you soon.

**Iain Robertson, National Chair Director**

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# HOSPITAL CATERER

## ENRICHING AND MOTIVATING

Wilma Wilkie Bursary recipients share their views of the recent HCA Forum

## BEING THE BEST

Rob Strachan – Caterer of the Year, new Exec Team member and chess enthusiast

## BRANCH PROFILE

Hospital Caterer finds out more about the 2024 Chairman's Choice Oxford Branch

## Coloured Crockery

Trials prove its potential for reducing food waste and improving nutrition by encouraging the patient to eat more

