

HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE

THE PATIENT / THE WORKFORCE / THE VISITOR

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

GRAB & GO

Trending flavours and formats to elevate retail and maximise sales potential

DISCOVERY DEN

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WELCOME

RIPPLE EFFECT

WINTER HAS FINALLY ARRIVED, BUT BEFORE WE ALL START TO LOOK AHEAD TO XMAS, ALL THOSE END OF YEAR EVENTS START TO WIND UP.



Sometimes deadlines in the publishing world are not logical. With a late publishing date on the last issue of Hospital Food + Service, it seems like no time at all between these final two issues of the magazine for 2024. It's been a busy few weeks though. The new Government published its first Budget, which was quite controversial with National Insurance rises and plans to introduce inheritance tax on farmland worth more than £1m grabbing the headlines. There was more money for the NHS – in fact, speaking to NHS Providers, Health Secretary Wes Streeting described the NHS as “the standout winner” but he made it clear that there are strings attached – reform is on its way.

Less controversially in October, the 2024 NHS Chef competition reached its final week. This event has grown over the four years since it was introduced. It is flourishing, as are the chef teams that participate. This competition is not about chefs going out on a series of ‘jollies’; it’s about encouraging and enabling their professional development in a way that can be shared, creating a ripple effect within the teams that they are part of, and the desire and capability to raise standards. There is more detail on the 2024 competition in Hospital Caterer on p10 – 11, and you can hear from the winning chefs themselves – Alejandro Hernandez and Manuela Miccoli in The Last Word on p37. Congratulations to them both.

Congratulations are also due to Phil Shelley and Louise Wagstaffe who have been rewarded for their dedication to improving the quality of public sector food, receiving the Chair’s Award from Matthew White, immediate past Chair of the Public Sector Catering Alliance. Jayne Jones from NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde has been named the new Chair of the Alliance. In Hospital Caterer (p12 – 13), Jayne talks to us about Scotland’s Good Food Nation plan.

In other reports in this issue we look at the UK’s food system, which a House of Lords Committee on Food, Diet and Obesity has described as “broken”, adding its voice to that of the Food Foundation for the Government to take mandatory action. Read about this on p30 – 31.

I had a very enjoyable visit to Barts Health NHS Trust, and a tour of Royal London Hospital for the On Site feature in this issue (p8 – 10). Elsewhere in this issue we have features on Warewashing (p20 – 23), Stocks, Soups and Sauces (p26 – 28), Grab & Go Retail (p12 – 18) and tackling Scope 3 emissions in A Sustainable Service (p24 – 25).

As this is the last edition of Hospital Food + Service and Hospital Caterer for 2024, I wish all our readers a wonderful festive season.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and as always, if you have any interesting or successful initiatives that you would like to share with our readership, please get in touch.

Amanda Roberts

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ROYAL SURREY HOSPITAL DUO WINS NHS CHEF 2024

FOLLOWING A GRUELLING WEEK OF COMPETITION AND A PROCESS THAT BEGAN WITH REGIONAL HEATS ACROSS ENGLAND SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ AND MANUELA MICCOLI FROM THE ROYAL SURREY HOSPITAL (MEDIREST) WON NHS CHEF 2024.

This event is more than just a cooking competition; it's also about chef development. The mentoring programme is designed to impart knowledge and information during a three-day event, with topics covered being of relevance to the healthcare sector, such as dysphagia and reducing food waste.

Speaking at the final, Simon Corben, Head of Profession and Director of NHS Estates and Facilities at NHS England said: "It's been a goliath challenge and a

privilege to see the skills on display. Please go back to your Trusts and showcase what you've done. Share with others so we can all collectively raise our standards."

For a full report from the final of this year's competition, including detail of the winning menu, flip this issue and turn to p10-11 of the Hospital Caterer.



IT'S ALL ABOUT CHEFS

The HCA's National Chair, Iain Robertson looks at the latest chef development initiatives, including the recent NHS Chef 2024, the 2025 HCA Showcase and plans to relaunch the Level 2 qualification for chefs working in healthcare. With the HCA and the National Association of Care Caterers maintaining control of this qualification, and a different delivery model, it will become accessible and affordable for all catering staff.

Flip this issue and turn to p3 of the Hospital Caterer to read the full welcome message.

CIEH RENEWS CALLS FOR MANDATORY DISPLAY OF FOOD HYGIENE RATINGS IN ENGLAND

Following the BBC's recent investigation into businesses displaying inaccurate food hygiene ratings, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) has renewed its calls for the introduction of a statutory food hygiene rating scheme in England, referencing its impact on driving up food hygiene standards and increasing compliance with food hygiene laws.

Such schemes are mandatory in Wales and Northern Ireland, and the CIEH believes England is missing this clear opportunity to secure consumer confidence and further protect public health. One of the consequences of the currently voluntary scheme is that in England, 69% of businesses display a food hygiene rating sticker, compared to 92% in Northern Ireland and 92% in Wales.

The Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) 2013 Act and the Food Hygiene Rating Act 2016 (Northern Ireland) makes it an offence to display an incorrect rating and gives local authorities the power to take action against businesses if they fail to provide the correct rating information when asked by a customer.

Chris Elliott OBE, Professor of Food Safety at Queen's University Belfast and Vice President at CIEH, says: "The new Government must act now to introduce this long-awaited ask and align the UK's statutory food hygiene standards."

FSA CONSULTS ON ALLERGEN LABELLING

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is holding a consultation to help develop a consistent approach to allergen labelling in the out-of-home sector.

In current law, food businesses such as restaurants, cafés and canteens, are required to tell customers if the food they are serving contains any of the 14 mandatory allergens, choosing how they provide this information whether in writing or verbally.

Under new advice, the FSA is proposing that written allergen information is always available and presented. In addition, people with a food allergy are encouraged to talk to servers about their allergen requirements.

This guidance will support both people living with a food hypersensitivity, ensuring they can get information in the format they prefer, and food businesses to be compliant with current legislation.

The Provision of Allergen Information consultation is open until November 27 online at: [food.gov.uk/news-alerts/consultations/consultation-on-best-practice-guidance-allergen-information-for-non-prepacked-foods](https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/consultations/consultation-on-best-practice-guidance-allergen-information-for-non-prepacked-foods).

LOCAL FOOD LEADERS ASK MPs FOR A GOOD FOOD BILL IN EACH NATION

Over 114 Local Food Partnerships converged on Westminster this month (November) to showcase their significant achievements in sparking a fairer and more sustainable food system over the past decade.

Leaders are asking the Government to support the establishment of a funded and resourced Local Food Partnership in every local authority, alongside a food strategy endorsed by the council, and a Good Food Bill in every nation (flip this issue and turn to p12 of Hospital Caterer to read about Scotland's Good Food Nation Bill).

In the absence of a unified food strategy from Westminster, and in the context of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, Local Food Partnerships, operating within the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) model, have grown in size and number to fill the gap.

Through these cross-sector food partnerships, local authorities and other public bodies are working together with third sector, business and academic organisations to transform local food systems.

PLANT-BASED MENUS BY DEFAULT

A coalition of NHS health professionals and other supporting organisations are calling on the NHS to make plant-based the primary option on food menus, without restricting choice.

Plants First Healthcare is leading the campaign and has written an open letter to all NHS hospital Trusts, Integrated Care Boards, other healthcare organisations and the Department of Health, across the four nations, asking them to commit to menus that make plant-based the norm to promote a healthier and more sustainable food environment for patients and staff. The letter has been signed by more than 1,000 health professionals.

Plants First Healthcare points out the growing evidence that shifting towards a plant-predominant food system can significantly improve national health outcomes, address health inequalities and is essential for meeting climate and nature targets. There is also growing evidence that it could reduce costs for the NHS. The campaign suggests that the approach should incentivise plant-based meals as the primary menu option, whilst still offering meat and other animal products on the menu.

MENOPAUSE COULD BE PUTTING WOMEN AT RISK OF NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES

According to a new report, 'Menopause Nutrition: Challenges and Opportunities', from HSIS (Health & Food Supplements Information Service), almost half of women are worried their diets aren't meeting their nutritional needs around the menopause.

HSIS expert panel member and dietitian Dr Carrie Ruxton says: "Around the menopause, women's nutrient intakes need to adapt to support their changing health status. It's more important than ever to have plenty of bone-strengthening vitamin D and calcium, for instance, as well as heart-healthy omega-3 fats and B-vitamins, which also support cognition and mood. But too many are simply unaware."



HEALTH BENEFITS HIDDEN IN THE BRITISH CUPPA

New diet advice published by the European Society of Cardiology* includes – for the first time – a plant bioactive found in the Great British cuppa.

The expert group of heart doctors recommends that people with existing heart and artery disease should aim for a "high flavonoid intake" to prevent further development of their health condition. The biggest dietary contributor in the UK to flavonoids – a type of polyphenol – is tea, and it is recommended that enjoying around four cups a day is optimal for heart health.

Beyond the new European heart guidelines, it's well recognised among scientists that bioactive substances like the flavonoids in tea, fruits and vegetables can positively impact blood pressure, blood vessel health, cholesterol levels and inflammation – all of which are important for heart health.

* 2024 ESC Guidelines for the management of peripheral arterial and aortic diseases



NEWS

NEW GOLD STANDARD ARRIVES FOR PLANT-BASED ACCREDITATION

Launched at the Plant Based Expo this month (November), the Plant-Based Trademark has been designed to be the gold standard of plant-based accreditation. It goes above and beyond the proposed ISO definition offering manufacturers and customers the assurances they are looking for. An international roll-out will follow its introduction across the UK.

Vanessa Brown, Head of Trademarks at the Vegetarian Society, says: "Developments in the marketplace see customers looking for terminology which feels acceptable. 'Plant-Based' is a term which resonates with them.

"The Plant-Based Trademark offers checking, registration and trademark services for products who would like to use Plant-Based wording, backed up by our trusted third-party certification to give customers the confidence to make informed purchases."

VEGAN SOCIETY RELEASES NEW DATA ON VEGAN TRENDS

Celebrating its 80-year anniversary, the Vegan Society is reflecting on the growth of veganism with new data highlighting that younger generations are pushing the movement forward.

According to a large survey carried out by Ipsos, 3% of respondents now identify as following a vegan or plant-based diet, translating to approximately two million people in the UK. Younger age groups, particularly those aged 16-44, are leading this shift, being twice as likely to identify as vegan compared to older generations, signalling a strong momentum for continued growth in plant-based living.

The survey also revealed that 10% of people in the UK now follow diets that reduce or eliminate animal products in some way, whether vegetarian, pescetarian, or plant-based, reflecting a broad, collective movement toward more mindful and sustainable eating habits.

ORGANIC BOUNCES BACK

A year on from launching 'Organic for All', an ambitious new approach for scaling organic production and consumption in the UK – Soil Association Certification reports that the organic market is coming out of the cost-of-living crisis with a renewed vigour and a shared determination to meet the challenges and opportunities for more rapid growth.

Soil Association Certification Commercial Director Alex Cullen says: "It has been a fantastic year of progress towards a shared vision for the future of organic. There have been some tough times, and challenges remain, but it is great to see the sector bouncing back from the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis as shoppers seek the wellness and sustainability credentials that organic provides."

ASA GUIDANCE ON REGENERATIVE FARMING

Amid concerns that the term 'regenerative farming' could be used to describe food ingredients and products for marketing purposes in a way that may be misleading, the ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) is offering some guidance to suppliers.

The term regenerative farming/agriculture – or just regen – is not new, however, there is "no legal or universally agreed definition," and therefore it is open to wide interpretation. As such, understanding of what it means remains low amongst consumers and food supply chains.

Read the guidance article in the news section of the ASA website: asa.org.uk.

SUPPLIER NEWS



COMPASS ONE ACQUIRES PEABODYS COFFEE

Compass One, part of Compass Group UK & Ireland, has acquired Peabody's Coffee, provider of quality food and beverages within healthcare environments.

Led by Managing Director, Claudia Mascino, Peabody's Coffee started its journey in 1997 in London hospitals, with food that is freshly prepared daily. It currently operates across England, at 10 sites within the NHS, employing 55 people.

LITMUS PARTNERSHIP NAMES NEW MD

Foodservice, purchasing solutions and facilities management consultancy, The Litmus Partnership, has announced Candice Finn as its new Managing Director with immediate effect.

Having held the role of Commercial Development Director at Litmus for two years, Candice has already played an integral part in the business' growth strategy.

HUPFER'S VARIOCART SUPPORTS MANCHESTER STAFF

North Manchester General Hospital has introduced Hupfer's VARIOCART general-purpose trolley to enhance its catering operations.

The trolleys were chosen to support the team of 65 staff who deliver up to 2,500 meals daily to patients. Designed for demanding environments, the VARIOCART is robust and features an optional ergonomic handle to encourage better posture for staff of all heights.

Made from 85% recycled materials and with flatpack delivery to reduce transport space, the trolley also supports NHS sustainability goals.





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DOING IT TOGETHER

BARTS HEALTH NHS TRUST IS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF A JOURNEY TO ELEVATE ITS PATIENT DINING WITH THE ULTIMATE AIM TO BECOME THE BEST FOR PATIENT CATERING IN THE UK.

In June 2022, the incumbent provider of catering, portering, security and domestic services (soft FM) to Barts Health NHS Trust gave formal notice that it was pulling out of the contract. The Trust made an ambitious decision to bring all soft services back in-house. Barts Health is one of the largest Trusts in England, and its soft services contract value exceeds £20m, making it one of the largest insourced NHS FM contracts in the country. The project was led by Eileen Phillips, Director of Soft FM.

Catering, along with domestics, was one of the final services to transfer in May 2023. Delivering change and driving innovation were clear ambitions from the outset, but these goals had to be put on hold during a period of industrial action that immediately followed. With a 'patient comes first mentality', all available resources were channelled into maintaining those services. The industrial action is now over and there is a drive and a passion among staff, managers and leaders to focus on putting into place the vision they have for patient catering services. "This is such an exciting time for Barts Health across its soft FM services," Mel Crawford, Associate Director of Patient Catering & Food Services, tells Hospital Food + Service (HFS). "We have an opportunity to bring about real change."

The energy, enthusiasm and cheerfulness of the workforce is immediately striking – whether that be office-based staff in the administrative base at Canary Wharf, or frontline catering staff. There's a sense of ownership and confidence that everyone's voice will be heard. The ward hosts that HFS met had their own views about their work, their challenges and improvements that could be made, which they were happy to share quite

"The energy, enthusiasm and cheerfulness of the workforce is immediately striking"



THE ROYAL LONDON IS A NEW HOSPITAL IN WHITECHAPEL, WHICH OPENED IN 2016 AND AFFORDS ITS PATIENTS SOME OF THE BEST VIEWS TO BE HAD ACROSS THE CITY OF LONDON



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITS RETAIL SERVICES PROVIDER, ELIOR, BARTS HEALTH RUNS A FRESH FOOD AND VEG STALL AT FOUR OF THE FIVE MAIN SITES - THIS ONE IS INSIDE THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE ROYAL LONDON HOSPITAL



openly, with a smile on their faces. This is part of the culture of belonging that is being fostered at Barts Health.

DIGITAL FIRST

Across the insourcing project, digital first was a key priority for all services. Electronic patient meal ordering has already been introduced, with a system that also enables carbon to be calculated and food waste to be recorded. It serves as a single point of information, such as storing food safety documents, all on a single platform. This single platform solution also extends to portering, domestics and security, enabling all soft services to work together as one team rather than in silos.

TRANSFORMATION PLANS

The patient dining service is currently bought-in meals – a mixture of plated and bulk depending on the site/ward. For instance, maternity wards have a plated service to provide more flexibility over meal times. With the exception of Mile End Hospital, which is a mental health facility, each hospital has a similar set-up, with its own kitchen where meals are picked and loaded into regen trolleys to be taken to

the wards. However, this is set to change as the next two projects for catering come to fruition. These projects are a review of menus, to introduce seasonality and enhance the plant-based meal offering, and the development of a new CPU.

The plans for a new Central Production Unit would restore the patient catering system to a system of freshly cooked and chilled or frozen meals which has not been in place at the Trust for many years. There are issues to be overcome; first and foremost, where the CPU would be located. Here too, the possibilities are exciting and will see the Trust's catering service fully embracing the principles of the NHS as an anchor institution. Already the Trust is engaging with local communities to identify and agree on a suitable space, and as Barts Health's sites span several different local authority regions there is plenty of scope – and interest in – a collaborative approach on space, recruitment opportunities and the potential to link with local colleges as well as the wider hospitality sector. As it is expected that Barts Health will not need to utilise the full capacity of the facility it is planning, there is also a huge opportunity for the catering team to reach out to local charities to see

“The menu review aligns with a procurement project, engaging with regional suppliers and seeking to reduce carbon”



THE SOFT FM CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IS A DEDICATED FACILITY LOCATED IN A FORMER COVID WARD AT THE ROYAL LONDON HOSPITAL

what it could do for the community. For instance, instead of supporting food banks, it could cook meals to support the homeless during the CPU's downtime. "It would be a massive piece of work for Barts Health, but would be outstanding for us," Mel says.

The menu review aligns with a procurement project, engaging with regional suppliers and seeking to reduce carbon and improve the sustainability of the catering service. This programme has just resulted in a new supplier being brought in, as West Country Milk (WCM) has been awarded a contract to supply fresh fruit and vegetables. WCM supplies a wide range of products (not just dairy) on a national basis through a network of regional, independent producers and supply partners. It's a partnership that is expected to bring significant carbon savings. "We're really excited to have them on board," Mel says.

The thorough review of menus will involve wide engagement between the catering team, patient representatives, dietetic and procurement colleagues, with interactive sessions to be held at each of the main hospital sites. This recognises that patient needs differ between hospitals within the Trust and one-size does not fit all. At the Royal London, these sessions will be held in the Soft FM Centre of Excellence. This is a former Covid ward on the fourteenth floor, which is now allocated to soft FM and used as a base for training and providing IT support for staff – with its own dedicated staffing resource. For the interactive sessions, four base menus have been devised by catering and evaluated by dietitians (the Trust has a soft FM dietitian who links with clinical dietitians on each site). These menus will be reviewed and evaluated by each group, with any concerns recorded. From this process it is hoped to move towards a base menu for Barts Health that meets nutritional standards but is also flexible to provide what patients

want. Mel is quite clear: "We mustn't dictate and food is medicine."

This collaborative approach aims to ensure everyone's voice is heard, and Mel is determined to ensure that includes children and young people, whose voices she feels are often lost. "It's not easy for anyone to be in hospital, but it's particularly tough for children. I want to see what we can do to make their experience better. Find out what they are looking for. What they want to eat." New menus will also strive to cater for very specialist dietary requirements, such as young people with an appetite who want to eat but are on dialysis, which has proven tricky in the past.

BEDSIDE MANNER

Ward hosts are embedded in each ward, and although it is nursing staff or healthcare assistants who will serve the patients, since the insourcing the emphasis has been on a collaborative approach to ensure the patient always comes first. Catering staff are encouraged to engage with the patient and talk to them about what they want to eat. Some patients receive few or even no visitors, so these few minutes of communication and non-clinical contact can be precious. This collaborative approach, the spirit of 'let's do this together,' is also evident when staff may need support to complete a service – perhaps a ward is short-staffed for instance, and there's a risk that food might spoil whilst it is waiting to be served. "Sometimes supervisors will 'down tools' and go to help. It's amazing when this happens. When people go out of their way. We should encourage that good practice and celebrate the positive," Mel stresses.

Embedding the ward host within the ward means they are viewed as part of the team, alongside the clinical staff. Their role is critical, and can be hectic, handling five beverage rounds every day, and meal

service for as many as 25 patients on some wards. This can be more if a new patient is brought onto a ward whilst the patient who has been occupying that bed is still in the process of being discharged. Whilst the pressures on staff continue, and the ultimate aim is to prioritise patient care and meet their needs, the catering team is considering other innovations to reduce that pressure and release resource. As an example, if hydration stations can be installed for wards where patients are able to get out of bed and help themselves, it could reduce the number of beverage rounds needed on that ward and free-up a member of staff to help elsewhere.

OPERATIONAL PRESSURES

When Barts Health embarked on the insourcing project, it set the levels and standard of existing services as its baseline, the minimum it would deliver, whilst raising the ambitions for what it wanted to achieve to a far higher level. Since then, the level of occupancy means the Trust's hospitals are busier than ever and everyone has had to step up to deliver a busier contract just to stand still. Undeterred, the catering team has risen to the challenge, putting the needs of the patient first. As an example, catering staff are now based within the Trust's three Emergency Departments



“Catering staff are now based within the Trust’s three Emergency Departments”

to provide food and beverage services to patients and any family members, friends or carers who might be with them, whilst they are waiting to be seen by a member of the clinical team. Sometimes this might mean supplying hot drinks, at other times it might be more substantial. There is an out of hours menu, but as Mel says, if you're stuck in A&E for 16 hours you want more than just a sandwich. Nursing staff don't have the time to supply food and drink for patients who are waiting, and they have welcomed this initiative from the catering team. Simply communicating with patients, providing them with food and drinks so they don't feel as though they've been forgotten, can help to remove anxiety and diffuse any potentially difficult situations.

NO MORE 'THEM AND US'

The emphasis at Barts Health is on working as a team, not in silos, and insourcing the catering and other soft FM services has helped with this. It's about the people, and bringing the team together within a supportive culture that encourages ownership with an open mind. The site pressures and operational challenges remain, but managing them is easier as one team, and the exciting programme of transformation is one that all are embarking on with enthusiasm and pride. 🇬🇧



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TAKE IT AWAY

SPEED, CHOICE, CONVENIENCE, QUALITY INGREDIENTS AND A DISPLAY THAT LOOKS GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT ARE THE KEYWORDS FOR A GOOD HOSPITAL GRAB & GO RETAIL OFFER.

There is little doubt that since the introduction of mandated 24/7 provision of food and drink for staff within the NHS, the diversity and availability of offers has increased, although not all sites have achieved the aspirations the ruling underpins. “We have seen food offers diversify and there is a real enthusiasm for consumer led choice,” notes Andy Jones, Managing Director of One Retail.

So what should be included in a grab-and-go offer and how should catering teams plan them?

One Retail offers different formats, and finds that generally a solution must be tailored to the setting and the consumer. Working in partnership with the client to understand what will work for them, this can often result in a number of different options within one site, working together, complementing each other and benefiting customers with a good range.

One Retail works with several well-known high street retail brands and can offer familiar choice. It recently acquired Peabody's Coffee, a well-respected provider of quality food and beverages within healthcare environments. Peabody's has a strong sustainability ethos. It has fantastic Fairtrade organic coffee and a thoughtful artisan food offering. The brand is currently operating in ten NHS sites and One Retail plans to launch new cafés at seven further hospitals in the coming months.

Its partnership with smaller organisations, including Change Please, will continue. Change Please is available in several One Retail partner hospitals, including Bevan's café within Southampton University Hospital's Wellness hub, which focuses on staff health and wellbeing.

“Don't forget the accompaniments and relishes, which bring the personalisation element”

POPULAR CONCEPTS

When it comes to popular grab-and-go concepts, Mark Kassapian, Managing Director of Litmus Retail advises: “Think ease of eating, quick service and street food – items like burritos, wraps and tacos work well. These can all be as tasty and spicy as your market wants. Think beyond just chilli and Tex Mex, and include a diverse range of filling options – so marinated chicken, pulled pork, veggie offers and beef birria – cheaper cuts of meat, cooked longer, with lots of flavour to create stand-out tastes.”

“Don't forget the accompaniments and relishes, which bring the personalisation element. Spiked salsa, guacamole, sour cream, various cheeses, fresh herbs which can be sprinkled on top and various sauces that can be drizzled on, mean each dish can be adapted to suit personal tastes. Even simple dipping options like gravy pots that can be paired with grilled sourdough sandwiches for dunking create simple twists that help your lunch offering stand out.

“For lighter options ramen, noodles and rice pots paired with various proteins that can be pre-prepared and served in moments, offer a hot option to tap into popular global cuisine trends.”

Pasties and other savoury pastry products are ‘forever’ favourites with the British consumer, especially during the colder months when hot snacks are in demand, as Paul Saunders, Managing Director of Proper Cornish points out. Perfect as food-to-go options, pasties and savoury pastries can easily be baked off in advance and kept hot, ready to serve. They can also be used to cater for a wide range of dietary preferences whilst considering both nutrition and convenience. “Our Proper Cornish range





of pasties and savoury pastries caters for meat eaters, vegetarians and vegans alike. Our advice would be to have a core offering and introduce other products and flavours according to seasonality to help keep the offering fresh and enticing."

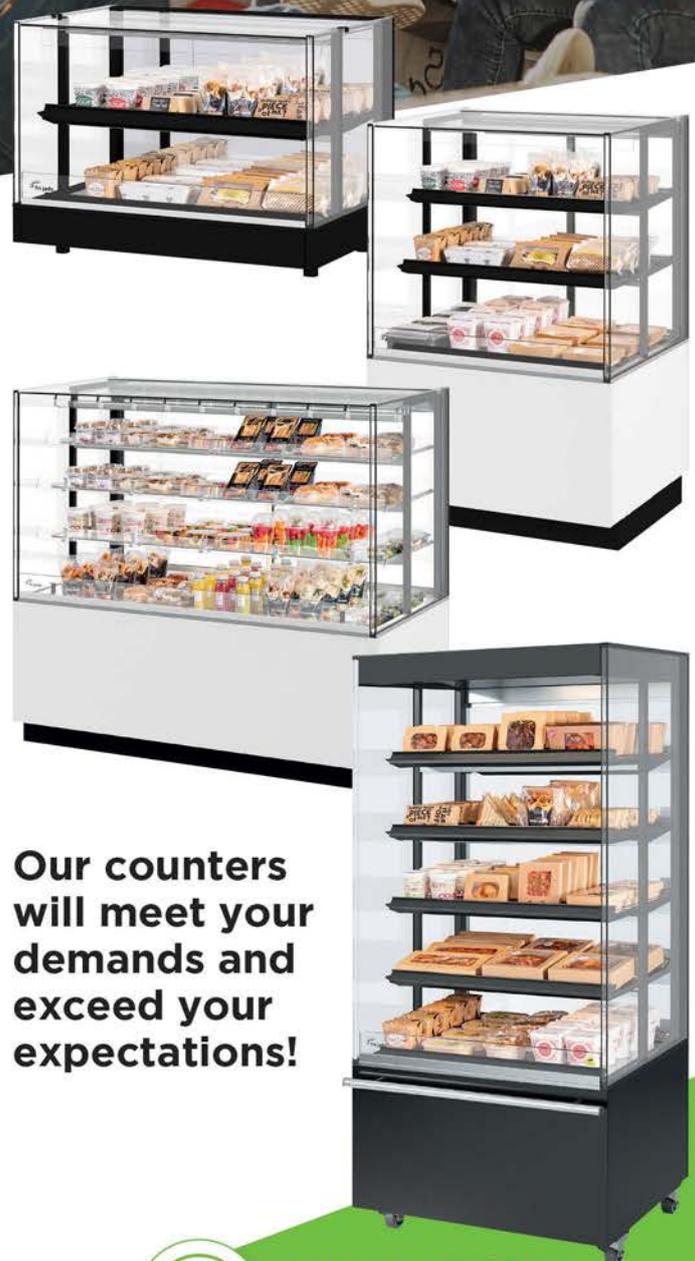
Paul Clark, Phat Controller at Phat Pasty, agrees: "They offer familiarity, comfort and are often a more affordable lunch option," he says. It's also important to consider the provenance of ingredients. Buy British is the message that hospital caterers and others across the public sector are increasingly under pressure to do. "Whilst visitors and staff are cost-conscious, they still want to know where their food is from, and they are happy to pay more if they know they are getting a quality product. All of our pasties, savouries, pies and sausage rolls use British farm assured meats and are made with natural ingredients. This is a real selling point on the menu, supporting the drive across the NHS in line with the Government Buying Standards. It's not just about welfare and sustainability, but helping reduce carbon emissions too."

The quality of ingredients is also vital, and Paul points out that the Phat Traditional Cornish pasty contains 17% British farm assured steak as opposed to the standard 12.5% meat content. The Phat Seriously Cheesy pasty contains West Country

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PROPER CORNISH PASTIES

Cheddar and Red Leicester combined in a creamy béchamel sauce. "This allows the caterer to offer the best products to drive repeat custom and a high level of customer satisfaction with visitors and staff."

Presentation is also key, and for Gary Thacker, Sales Director at Fri-Jado UK, that means effective display equipment. "Today's customers are looking for something fresh, packed full of flavour and served at the perfect temperature to eat on the move – whether hot or cold. Importantly, it's got to look great as well – as visitors will make impulse purchase decisions based on visual appeal."

MAKE IT LOOK IRRESISTIBLE

Gary believes the crucial element to tempting a purchase is making the food look irresistible, and Fri-Jado's portfolio of hot and cold holding equipment has been designed to do just that. In addition, the innovative, patented technology ensures the quality of food is preserved. Technology brings the peace of mind that customers can enjoy their food the way the caterer designed it. "Fri-Jado doesn't make food, but we understand exactly what tastes great when held in heated display units. We give our customers expert advice about the best cooking and preparation methods that make convenience food delicious."

As an example, Fri-Jado's new hot deli counter range offers improved visibility from all sides, putting the food in the spotlight. The units feature patented technology to ensure long, consistent and superior hold times,

thus maximising profits and boosting product quality for longer.

The Fri-Jado Multideck Display (MDD) range also enhances visibility to encourage impulse sales. The improved design and ultra-thin shelves give the MDD a display area that is 5% per square metre larger than the units it replaces.

"Another benefit of quality display equipment is the way in which it can keep foods fresher for longer. This in turn can have a substantial effect on the amount of food waste, is good for the environment and good for your business too," Gary adds.

MAXIMISE REVENUE

A simple tip from Gareth Newton, Managing Director of BGL Rieber is to limit the offer but make it great value, and don't forget to opt for reusable containers for service. "Ideally, use homemade elements such as soup and stews and offer combination deals that hit the targets of value and convenience such as soup or stew and bread, omelette or quiche plus salad for an attractive all-day choice," he suggests. Caterers could also consider 'member clubs': "The curry, cake or vegan food club can all help boost sales and make good use of the pool of talents found in the kitchen," he adds.

Think about options to "upsell" is the advice from Mark Kassapian, who suggests nacho pots and sweet treats like cookies or fresh fruit all work well. "Remember, your market is in a rush so ensure your menu

"The crucial element to tempting a purchase is making the food look irresistible"

offering is easy to understand, easy to order and easy to serve – so the additional upsales are no brainers – is key," he says.

Elevate the food offer to mirror the customer experience on the high street is Paul Clark's suggestion. Branding is key to this, to uplift the offer and provide an attractive and appealing range. This can go much further than just branded menus. "We offer a full range of designed branding from point-of-sale posters, to signage, menu boards and equipment that provides a full package to catering operators," he explains. "There are also branded greaseproof bags which have every product listed on the back with ingredients, allergens and Kcal information."

After branding, Paul recommends caterers study their range and ensure they are catering for every consumer so no potential sales are being missed. Phat Pasty has a full range of options to meet dietary needs whilst keeping menus vibrant and interesting for returning customers. As well as pasties, its range also includes breakfast turnovers, sausage rolls and a chunky vegan sausage.

Meal deals are the way forward for Paul Saunders. "These are a great way of increasing sales," he says. "For example, the pasty is seen as value for money and a wholesome meal in itself, and can be bundled together with a hot or cold drink to form the perfect meal deal. Providing themed menus to celebrate and acknowledge specific events and national days is also a good way to help raise popularity and drive sales. In addition, making the offer visible to consumers by way of advertising posters or with the use of a branded heater cabinet will help create interest. At Proper Cornish, we have worked with many customers where our range of

"Elevate the food offer to mirror the customer experience on the high street"



AND TO DRINK?

"Great coffee," says Andy Jones.

Gareth Newton agrees that specialist coffees and traditional, good quality teas are essential, but he points out there are other options as well. For example, Bubble Tea or 'Boba', which is the sweetened tea made usually with milk and added tapioca. "It's a new take on milkshakes, especially popular with youngsters and it could prove a useful tool to get more vitamins or energy into patients."

Another suggestion from Mark Kassapian is to explore the variety of low/no sugar or diet soft drinks, such as lemonades, smoothies and juices. "I had a really good sherbet the other day from an Indian offer, which was homemade and super refreshing. The options are endless and looking for products that pair well with your menu, and that you could combine into an offer to drive additional purchases, works well."

quality branding solutions has added value and increased sales and has brought an authentic and attractive look to the venue."

Malcolm Harling, Sales and Marketing Director of Williams Refrigeration returns to the importance of presentation. "Catching the customer's eye with a striking display is one of the best ways to boost sales and showcase different menu items," he says. "This is all about the look of the equipment, and Williams offers a huge range of customisation options to help operators make a standout display. On the aesthetics side, the Gem Multideck is available in a comprehensive choice of colours and finishes, to either match décor or create a statement. For operators looking for something completely different, the Gem Multideck range is also compatible with Williams' Chameleon vinyl wrapping system – which means the specifier can create a merchandiser that can look like it's a piece of art, or made of bricks, or wooden... the possibilities are endless.

"An eye-catching display, sited in a prominent position, will attract customers and bring in extra business."

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PHAT PASTY'S CHUNKY SAUSAGE ROLL

IMPROVING GRAB-AND-GO OFFERS WITH TECH

Technology really is vital for the most effective delivery of grab-and-go concepts. One Retail has embraced technology and pushed it to new levels, for example, with its frictionless stores and last year's launch of the world's first Amazon Just Walk Out technology in a healthcare location, at The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust.

Other examples of successful technology use recommended by Andy Jones include the Time2Eat app and click and collect service. "Our Time2Eat app is a great example of our in-house innovation, which enables people to look at an online menu and book a time slot to visit a restaurant or café and pick up their order. In some sites, it also offers the functionality of booking tables. Some of our franchise partners operate their own apps, and again, these have become more widely used during the last few years."

Click and collect is also growing in popularity, offering speed of service, and kiosk ordering stations are building momentum. Andy reports 40% of transactions being ordered that way within its coffee formats.

Another technology to facilitate cashless sales and online ordering is the use of QR labels that can be scanned by a mobile phone for pick up from staff entry points and desk delivery. These solutions are now sustainable with BGL Rieber's QR labels on reusable containers, which ensure the return of the containers and lids for the caterer, and remove single-use items.

Using digital screens to display menus and ordering online or via an app bring other benefits to the caterer. "The benefit of digital marketing is that it can be changed and updated quickly to reflect changes in pricing, food offering or promotions," Paul Saunders points out.

Phat Pasty is developing a self-serve vending unit with a smart fridge, payment system and a scan heat microwave. "This technology will enable hospitals to offer their staff and visitors 24/7 hot grab-and-go pasties and sausage rolls without the need to provide catering staff around the clock, as well as providing places to pick up hot food throughout the hospital away from the restaurant or coffee shop areas," Paul Clark explains.

Alongside its bake-off range, Phat Pasty also offers its Phat 'Wrapped' range. This fully

"The curry, cake or vegan food club can all help boost sales and make good use of the pool of talents found in the kitchen"

TOP TIPS FOR 'MUST-STOCK' SWEET AND SAVOURY ITEMS

- Sweet rice pudding with cinnamon, because it is ideal eaten chilled or warm, and it transports well! My must-stock savoury would be quiche balanced with a nice green salad. Gareth Newton, BGL Rieber.
- Homemade traybake, such as a good flapjack, but if you're looking for inspiration, the high street leaders in this are Greggs. This doesn't always fit with the aspirations of healthy diets though, so all things in moderation! For a savoury option, a chorizo scotch egg. Mark Kassapian, Litmus.
- A traditional Cornish pasty is always a best-seller, plant-based options are also popular, and sausage rolls are also a firm favourite. Paul Clark, Phat Pasty.
- Hot food to-go – consumers use their senses when making their purchasing decisions. Pasties and savoury pastries, including the Cornish pasty, are perfect. Easily baked-off for that enticing 'baked at home' aroma, and easy to eat on-the-go without cutlery. Paul Saunders, Proper Cornish.



PHAT PASTY BRANDED GRAB-AND-GO CABINET AT TORBAY HOSPITAL



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Source: ^{*1} Meal Trak Wave 127.52we 13th May 2024. ^{**2} Lumina Intelligence EOOD, 52we 18th February 2024. ^{**3} Based on average sales across trial sites.



PIES AND SAUSAGE ROLLS FOR GRAB-AND-GO BAKING IN A RATIONAL ICOMBI PRO

baked and packaged product can be heated in the packaging in under two minutes in a microwave or Merrychef oven. The breathable paper helps maintain quality and the products can be eaten direct from the pack.

“This solution works well for both out-of-hours operations and for locations with limited or no kitchen facilities. The products are all delivered frozen and can be re-heated from frozen or de-frosted with up to ten days chilled shelf life. This allows the caterer to either heat direct from the freezer or place products in sandwich chillers for customers to select, take to a counter and heat in a microwave themselves. The range includes a Steak Pasty and Cheese & Onion Pasty, a halal-approved Chicken Tikka Pasty and Jamaican Jerk Pattie, and a Jumbo Sausage Roll,” Paul says.

Advancements in technology, like the ConnectedCooking digital kitchen management from Rational, are also enhancing grab-and-go services by streamlining kitchen processes and improving communication across multiple locations. With ConnectedCooking, operators can create, store and share recipes across all units where Rational systems are used, facilitating a uniform and efficient approach to menu development. For hospital settings, this means that successful recipes can be seamlessly shared and implemented in multiple kitchens, ensuring consistent quality across sites.

Another feature to improve grab-and-go services is the iCombi Pro’s iProductionManager. This technology suggests optimal cooking sequences and strategies, allowing for efficient batch cooking during peak hours while conserving

energy and resources. By maintaining precise temperature controls and quickly switching between cooking modes, iProductionManager ensures that grab-and-go options are readily available without delays or wasted inventory.

LIMITED SPACE BUT NOT LIMITED OPTIONS

Indeed, space need not be a problem. Hot display cabinets, such as those offered by Phat Pasty and Proper Cornish, which can be branded, or the Fri-Jado Multi Table



Top Display (MTT) are among the options to consider, whilst the Rational iCombi Pro combi steamer, capable of handling a wide range of cooking processes, is a great all-in-one solution for small spaces. The iCombi Pro also includes features for quick reheating, allowing operators to maintain freshness and quality when restocking grab-and-go items throughout the day.

Whatever your choice, and regardless of space available, the most important factor is that equipment must work effectively and swiftly, so menu items can be served quickly. “Investing in decent kit is worth its weight in gold with regards how it can enhance the overall purchasing journey for your market,” asserts Mark Kassapian. 📌

- bglrieber.co.uk
- compass-group.co.uk
- frijado.com
- litmuspartnership.co.uk/services/litmus-retail/
- phatpasty.com
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WASH IT UP

STRIVING FOR IMPROVED EFFICIENCY IN THE WAREWASHING OPERATION MEANS TALKING TO SUPPLIERS TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES FOR IMPROVED SUSTAINABILITY IN TERMS OF ENERGY, WATER AND CHEMICALS, AS WELL AS ADVICE ON HANDLING FOOD WASTE AND REUSABLE CROCKERY, AND KEEPING UP WITH TRAINING AND MAINTENANCE.

“Even if you think your dishwasher is spot on, getting the manufacturer in for advice does no harm,” Paul Anderson, Managing Director of Meiko UK advises. “Meiko has committed itself to improving sustainability, and while this involves training support, we also advise on ergonomics and working practices because these have a carbon impact. Make sure the manufacturer sees everything connected to the dishwasher, including how you handle the food waste.”

“Improving food waste handling has a dramatic effect on optimisation as it reduces labour in both handling and cleaning and improves hygiene. Morale also gets a boost because nobody likes dealing with waste, foul-smelling bins, or leaky black sacks, so solutions that mean the staff only need to handle the waste once get a big thumbs up!

“Some onsite support can work wonders. A benefit of being a major European manufacturer is that we get to see how hospitals across Europe work and that broader experience and knowledge help us improve ergonomics, save labour and speed things up for hospitals everywhere.”

“Consider the lifetime cost of warewashers, which are big users of resources, rather than focusing on the initial purchase price”

Consider the lifetime cost of warewashers, which are big users of resources, rather than focusing on the initial purchase price, is the advice of Paul Crowley, Marketing Development Manager at Winterhalter UK. “As well as reducing your running costs, sustainable equipment that uses less power, water and chemicals can help reduce your environmental impact and future-proof the kitchen.”

TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

Meiko now manufactures the latest automated systems for loading crockery bowls and plates, which saves labour and ensures the wash belt is fully utilised. This also produces substantial savings in energy and water – depending on the size and shape of the hospital dishwash operation.

Asking suppliers for their advice is again key to optimising new technologies. “Automation combined with food waste

recycling systems, more sustainable chemicals, and developments in various dishwasher heat recovery systems will all impact the choice of dishwasher in the future,” Paul Anderson says.

Leading the range from Jestic Foodservice Solutions is the DIHR Electron range of premium-level machines offered at a value price point. Featuring double-skinned bodies for increased energy efficiency and reduced in-cycle noise, the Electron range also includes an optional automatic water softener and heat-recovery system. The heat recovery system means that while less energy is used and costs are reduced, performance remains high.

“Specifically designed for the Electron range, DIHR also offers a fully connected smart control platform that can monitor, maintain and manage a suite of equipment across everything from a single site to multiple locations. The connected system can remotely diagnose faults, control



**MEIKO MIQ MACHINE
WITH AUTOMATIC PLATE LOADING**



**COMPACT UTENSIL WASHER
FROM WINTERHALTER**

programme settings and update the equipment's internal software," explains Product Director, Michael Eyre.

Winterhalter has recently introduced new versions of its MT Multi Tank. Based around a versatile modular system, machines can be configured to very precise specifications and therefore constructed to exactly match the application, and designed to suit the shape and size of the room it is intended for. The basic structure of the machine consists of the pre-wash, main wash and rinse zones, plus an inlet zone, positioned upstream, and loading and unloading zones. Additional zones, such as extra wash zones, allow machines to be tailored exactly to individual requirements. If new wash items are added that are difficult to dry, due to their shape or material, the MT can be retrofitted with additional drying units. In addition, Winterhalter offers neutral zones that mean the MT can accept extra-large wash items, such as crates or containers. The neutral zones do this by extending the draining distance between zones. They also enhance the machine's performance. Furthermore, the MT can be modified if business requirements change, such as retrofitting extra wash zones to increase capacity.

COPING WITH REUSABLES

NHS catering services are making rapid progress on the switch from single-use to reusable foodservice containers. However, this process does impact on dishwashing, with solutions required that are designed to wash – and dry – reusable plastic cups, plates, bowls and other containers.

Paul Anderson's advice is to ask the dishwash supplier to test reusable cups, bowls, or containers before committing to purchase, because some wash and dry better than others. "The drying is crucial for hygiene and throughput," he advises.

"For example, Meiko's new QuickDry system is the first purpose-designed, small-to-medium volume combined washing and drying solution for reusable plasticware, allowing it to be stored hygienically. The system has a capacity of up to 500 cups/hour and a connected load of just 0.1 kW – an extraordinary low-energy solution that benefits from the intelligent pairing of equipment.

"The QuickDry table links with the Meiko M-iClean hood dishwasher, which does more than just washing; it contributes to the drying process with its own heat recovery system that removes moisture.

The whole drying process takes two minutes. There are larger-scale drying solutions for high volumes, for example, 10,000 cups per hour. Meiko's solutions involve a combination of vibration and forced air, and several installations are already in the UK catering equipment rental sector."

Winterhalter has put together guidance covering the four key points that caterers need to consider when washing reusables.

- **The rack.** Washing plastic tableware, especially cups, in a normal rack will lead to them flipping over and filling up with washwater, therefore a dedicated rack is required. Winterhalter's special rack uses a bracket to hold the cups in place, so

“Ask the dishwash supplier to test reusable cups, bowls, or containers before committing to purchase”



QUICKDRY FROM MEIKO WORKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH M-ICLEAN H HOOD MACHINE

they can't flip. A separate insert holds and cleans lids, too. Alternatively, Winterhalter offers a cup washing insert that can be used in conjunction with its standard 500mm x 500mm racks.

- **Drying.** Rinse aid specially formulated to make water run off the plastic, such as Winterhalter's B170 XD, will dry items more quickly.
- **Staining.** If plastic is left to dry using ordinary rinse aid, the water will probably leave stains. A rinse aid that's specially formulated for plastics should stop this.
- **Temperature.** This is critical with any dedicated warewasher. With plastic, the best tank temperature is 70°C. A special software washing programme, dedicated to plastic, is also ideal. For example, Winterhalter recently published a software update for its UC undercounter models (from 2018 onwards) that includes a reusable plastics washing programme with parameters set to achieve the best possible results.

For caterers who still need a faster drying time for plastic ware, Paul Crowley suggests a drying device, such as Winterhalter's DMX. Used in conjunction with, and sitting 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 device. There they are dried, within two minutes, with the water removed completely and ready to be handled by staff.

"For plastic catering ware, it's all about washing parameters, plus chemicals, plus the rack, plus the drying," Paul adds. "Once those



WINTERHALTER'S UNDERCOUNTER DISHWASHER

"Choose the right sized equipment to meet the needs of the site or kitchen"

elements are right operators will find their dishwasher or glass washer will deliver the same levels of performance as they get with non-plastics."

ENERGY & WATER-SAVING

First of all, choose the right sized equipment to meet the needs of the site or kitchen. "It is important not to over or under specify the machine you select. Oversizing equipment will ultimately result in a less efficient machine which also costs more when potentially it's not required. However, under sizing could result in not having the time available to wash the products required," says Michael Eyre.

Sustainability is at the heart of Winterhalter's new MT, with a variety of features and options to minimise both environmental impact and running costs. These include heat pumps and exchangers that not only recycle the energy from waste water and water vapour, but also minimise the heat and steam emitted by the machine, enhancing the work environment and reducing the workload on the ventilation system.

The MT's high performance washing system produces first class results while the superior, multi-filtration process minimises running costs by lowering water use and thus reducing the energy needed to heat it.

Paul Anderson lists heat recovery, reverse osmosis water treatment, pre-sprays, pre-rinses and soak tanks as features that all pay for themselves many times over. However, there is something else that he believes is even more significant. "I am increasingly convinced that the single most important contribution to energy and water efficiency, especially in large hospital dishwash installations, is regular training support from the manufacturer," he insists.



JESTIC'S DIHR ELECTRON

TRAINING

"Look first at the quality of the supplier," Paul Anderson advises. "Meiko's commitment is to provide training support for the lifetime of Meiko equipment. Suppose you are buying a dishwasher because it has sustainable credentials. In that case, it is energy-saving and frugal in its use of chemicals and water – you really should want to maintain that sustainability for the lifetime of the equipment.

"Decades of seeing how caterers use their machines proved to Meiko that we could claim to be a sustainable supplier only by getting out there and supporting hospital caterers on site for the life of our machines. Half the time of our sales force is spent training. This is no lightweight marketing statement but the way we now run our business."

Whilst leading manufacturers invest heavily in developing systems that are easy to use, Paul Crowley cautions that caterers should avoid allowing that ease of use to lull them into forgetting the basics of day-to-day operation. Winterhalter has put together two infographics, 'Efficient Dishwashing and Glasswashing Dos and Don'ts' that are both training aids and handy reminders. They are available to download from the company's website.

Michael Eyres stresses the importance of ensuring machines are set up by the engineer

when they are installed. This means machines will be set to the correct levels for water hardness, which in turn ensures they are using the correct amount of detergent and rinse aid. "If this is done operators will get great wash results and the machine will operate at the most cost-effective level possible for their site."

MAINTENANCE

Victoria Carroll, Sales and Marketing Director of HOBART Service believes warewashers are often disregarded compared to refrigeration and cooking equipment when it comes to the importance of cleaning, servicing and maintenance for an efficient hospital kitchen setup. "It is surprising just how much they will impact a hospital if a warewasher is not working to an optimum level or worse still, out of action altogether. Implementing regular planned preventative maintenance visits and using specially formulated chemicals, such as those in the HOBART Hyline range of detergents and rinse aid will not only save time but also energy, cost and ultimately maintain hygiene standards in the long run."

Putting a planned preventative maintenance contract in place takes away the hassle of equipment service for the caterer – the service provider will take care of everything. "For us, service has always been the top priority. Our nationwide network of specially trained service technicians are the only technicians to be factory trained on HOBART equipment, carrying genuine OEM parts. The role of our service technicians is simple – to keep our customers' catering equipment running, limiting downtime and ultimately, saving them money," Victoria says.

To complement its service and preventative maintenance offering, the HOBART chemical range includes specially formulated, warewashing detergent, hygiene tablets and rinse aid. The detergents have been developed for use in both hard and soft water areas. The hard water range has been designed to prevent the build-up of limescale, helping to avoid damage to components and extend the life of the machine. HOBART chemicals are also highly concentrated, meaning a lower dosage is required to achieve a consistently

outstanding, hygienic clean. The lower dosage also takes less energy to clean, delivering ongoing savings for business owners.

With some careful consideration given to purchasing decisions and a close relationship with suppliers, optimising the dishwash operation can bring environmental and operational benefits. 

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NET ZERO SUPPLY CHAIN

MAXIMISING THE REDUCTION IN SCOPE 3 EMISSIONS TO ACHIEVE NET ZERO CAN ONLY BE DONE THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH SUPPLIERS. HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE TAKES A LOOK AT WHAT THIS MEANS FOR HOSPITAL CATERERS.

In the context of the NHS and its journey to net zero, food and catering services fall under Scope 3. This describes the indirect emissions that occur in producing goods and services, including the full supply chain involved in that process. When we talk about reducing emissions in catering, the focus tends to fall on the energy used in the kitchen, cutting waste, packaging and reducing carbon in the menu. What this does not necessarily factor-in is the carbon that is embedded in the supply chain.

The report, 'Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service', says: "The NHS can reduce emissions from its supply chain in three ways: more efficient use of supplies; low-carbon substitutions and product innovation; and by ensuring our suppliers are decarbonising their own processes. Ultimately though, delivering a net zero health service commits to having a net zero supply chain."

Hospital caterers cannot reach net zero unless their suppliers are on that journey with them. But how can caterers be sure that they are, and that net zero claims are not just 'greenwashing'?

The National Standards for Healthcare Food and Drink points Trusts to the Defra Balanced Scorecard that ensures broader aspects of service are weighed against cost. This aims to incentivise suppliers to go beyond the minimum, and procuring organisations to factor environmental and social considerations into decision-making.

Earlier this year, in association with healthcare meals provider apetito, the Health Estates and Facilities Management Association (HEFMA), hosted a round table event at which hospital caterers and facilities managers debated reducing carbon emissions in hospital catering. A key point to emerge from that debate is that suppliers have the responsibility to supply accurate, science-based information about their products to customers, leaving the caterer to focus on delivering nutritional care to patients to help in the recovery process. apetito, for instance has its targets for carbon reduction and supporting climate change by 2040 validated by the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), and, following new SBTi guidance, is in the process of recalculating emissions and re-establishing targets to align to the new Scope 3 Forest Land and Agriculture (FLAG) emissions reduction target, as well as making a commitment to no deforestation in its supply chain.

WHAT TO ASK

No-one is suggesting caterers should start grappling with the data themselves, but how transparent is this data, and what questions should they be asking?

PRM Waste Systems, supplier of the PRM Bio-Processor, a food waste digester, suggests eight points that Trusts should be addressing to their suppliers.

- **Emission Tracking and Measurement.** Do you currently track and measure your Scope 3 emissions? Do you intend

to track and measure your Scope 3 emissions?

- **Reduction Strategies.** What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to reduce your Scope 3 emissions?
- **Supplier Engagement.** How do you engage with your own suppliers to address Scope 3 emissions?
- **Targets and Goals.** Have you set specific targets or goals for reducing Scope 3 emissions? If so, what are they, and what is the timeline for achieving them?
- **Innovation and Technology.** What innovative solutions or technologies are you exploring to minimise emissions in your operations and supply chain?
- **Transparency and Reporting.** How transparent are you with your emission data? Do you provide regular reports or updates that align with recognised sustainability reporting standards?
- **Collaboration Opportunities.** Are there opportunities for us to collaborate on emission reduction projects or joint initiatives that could benefit both parties?
- **Continuous Improvement.** How do you ensure continuous improvement in your environmental impact management, particularly concerning Scope 3 emissions?

NEW PLATFORM

Food sustainability platform, Foodsteps, has launched its Scope 3 Assessments to help food businesses to meet rigorous sustainability reporting standards more

“Hospital caterers cannot reach net zero unless their suppliers are on that journey with them”

easily, thus providing customers with more transparent information around the environmental impact of activities.

Research shows that up to 95% of a food company’s carbon footprint comes from their own Scope 3 emissions, so the Foodsteps solution, designed specifically for the food industry, aims to give food companies granular carbon measurements that meet reporting requirements while also providing actionable insights for targeted decarbonisation.

Compass Group UK&I has used Foodsteps to analyse 1.7 million rows of its food and beverage data. Stephanie Pereira, Climate & Environment Impact Analyst says: “By working with Foodsteps on Scope 3 Assessments and recipe measurement, Compass has made evidence-based ingredient choices and utilised menu modelling to inform decisions, empowering stakeholders to drive change within their sectors.”

The solution simplifies regulatory compliance and reveals emission hotspots in supply chains.

Foodsteps Founder and Director, Anya Doherty says: “Decarbonising our food systems requires significant work, and Scope 3 data is key to unlocking this potential. With increasing regulatory demands for precise supply chain reporting, the food and beverage industry urgently needs accurate, comprehensive data.” 

[apetito.co.uk](https://www.apetito.co.uk)

[compass-group.co.uk](https://www.compass-group.co.uk)

[foodsteps.earth](https://www.foodsteps.earth)

[prmwastesystems.com/bio-processor](https://www.prmwastesystems.com/bio-processor)



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

PROMOTED CONTENT

ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS: WHY THE DEFINITION NEEDS TO BE CHALLENGED

In recent months the public debate around ultra-processed foods (UPFs) has been growing, particularly as public health concerns on obesity continue to rise.

There is no denying the severity of the obesity epidemic and the importance of trying to mitigate this through promoting healthier eating habits. However, my concern is that we risk rushing too quickly into public health decisions solely to be seen as addressing the challenge and without ensuring there is a basis of sound nutritional science and evidence-based approaches.

According to the widely used Nova classification system, ultra-processed foods are described as food which are “formulations of ingredients, mostly of exclusive industrial use, typically created by a series of industrial techniques and processes”. This definition of UPFs focuses categorisation based on the formulation and processing they undergo, without taking into consideration the individual nutritional profiling of products.

At current, this definition is far too broad for its purpose and risks unfairly harming some food options and meal solutions that are nutrient dense and affordable - having a positive role to play in society.

Enforcing a “one size fits all” approach to this categorisation creates needless negative perceptions around certain food groups – some that may well be unhealthy to consumers and therefore justified, but some which may hold a lot of nutritional value.

With most of the food available nowadays having gone through some level of processing, it seems illogical to have such a wide range of foods tarred with the same brush. Instead, we should be encouraging greater consideration for the nutritional integrity of food choices and promote a balanced diet that limits intake of sugar, salt and saturated fat, rather than simply focusing on the process of which food has been produced.

There is also a concern that this broad view on UPFs could unnecessarily limit the range of food choices available to consumers, causing issue for those that may be living with diverse dietary needs or in need of more affordable solutions.

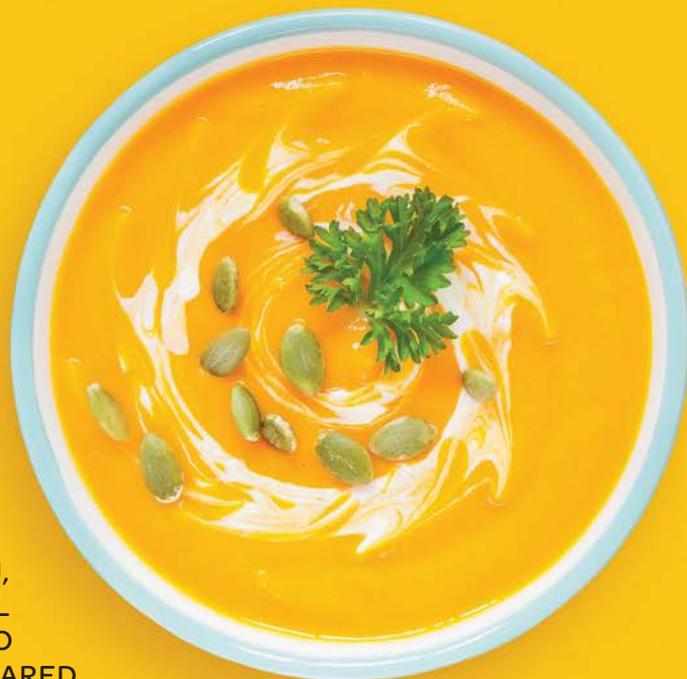
We all share a common goal of promoting long-term health, not just quick fixes. To achieve this, we must ensure that any measures taken are well-researched and focused on the true nutritional value of products, rather than simply how they are produced. Let’s get this right.

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

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WILTSHIRE
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FOODS

PACKING A PUNCH



STOCKS AND SAUCES CAN BE USED TO BRING CONSISTENCY TO DISHES AND VERSATILITY TO A MENU, MAKING IT EASIER FOR CATERERS TO EMBRACE SPECIAL OCCASIONS AND TRENDING FLAVOURS. THEY ARE ALSO USEFUL AS A BASE FOR SOUPS, WHICH, WHETHER PREPARED FROM SCRATCH OR FROM A QUALITY PRE-PREPARED SOLUTION, CAN BE THE MEANS OF PACKING NUTRITION INTO THE PATIENT'S DIET.

Warm and comforting, soup can be just what patients want when they are recovering. Nothing too difficult, doesn't look challenging to those with a reduced appetite, soup is often the perfect choice. If it is going to do its job and contribute to the patient's recovery, soup must be nutritious, wholesome and tasty.

For over 20 years, Bosse Interspace has been proud to collaborate with hospitals and NHS Trusts to create and supply a wide variety of nutritious and delicious food products. The Bosse Interspace range of high-protein soups contains an average of 5.7g of protein per 150ml and is available in ten popular flavours: Cream of Chicken; Creamy Tomato; Cream of Mushroom; Lentil; Oxtail; Potato and Leek; Spiced Parsnip; Sweet Potato; Thai Chicken; and Vegetable. These soups are designed in a convenient whisk-and-serve format. Easy to prepare at ward level, they are also gluten-free, and the individual sachets help with portion control while minimising waste.

"With a smooth mouthfeel and minimal waste, our soups are crafted to ensure patients receive high-quality nutrition without adding unnecessary strain to catering teams. High-protein options can support patient recovery, while adding vibrant vegetables and natural herbs elevates both the taste and nutritional profile of every serving," says Managing Director Jensen Bosse.

Working with base ingredients, such as quality stocks and sauces, can help caterers to elevate a soup offering, packing it with flavour

as well as essential vitamins and minerals. Paul Saunders, Marketing Manager at Major International explains: "Packing a soup with nutrients is important, but to ensure patients eat it, it's got to taste good. Quality stocks are therefore staples in hospital kitchens as the best way to inject flavour into a dish and guarantee a delicious taste. By ensuring they use quality flavoursome products, caterers can help guarantee vital nutrient requirements are met.

"At Major International, we offer a variety of stocks and sauces that can help elevate the taste of a variety of soups. We wholeheartedly believe that the flavours provided by these base ingredients are what transforms a soup from bland to flavoursome."

SPICE UP YOUR MENU

Pre-prepared stocks and sauces are perfect for introducing food for theme days, celebration days and cultural events. With ease, caterers can reinvigorate menus or easily adapt them to offer variety and interest. "Pre-prepared is a great way to trial new ideas or put on a theme day promotion. A bank of ready-made sauces or bases in the freezer means the chef has all the tools necessary to cater to the range of tastes and special meals," says Jon Walker, Joint Managing Director of BGL Rieber.

With limited time and labour, using Bosse Interspace's diverse range of pre-prepared bases, caterers can jazz up their offerings. "Think Creamy Tomato Tuesdays, Potato and Leek Wednesdays, Thai Chicken Thursdays, or Cream of Chicken Sundays," Jensen

suggests. "This not only adds variety but also contributes to patient satisfaction by making mealtimes more engaging and enjoyable."

Paul Saunders points out that as well as saving time, using pre-prepared stocks and sauces ensures consistency, allowing caterers to focus on the creativity and nutritional value of the dishes they serve. "Pre-prepared stocks and sauces can transform a standard menu into one rich in global flavours – American, Mexican, Thai, or a traditional British roast, increasing the opportunities for hospital caterers to focus on a different global theme each day.

"Moreover, using high-quality pre-prepared bases can ensure that meals meet the necessary nutritional standards while being more flavourful. This approach can also accommodate specific dietary requirements more effectively, ensuring no patient is left out."

For Louise Wagstaffe, Senior Culinary Advisor for Premier Foods, it's the opportunity to tap into growing trends of comfort and nostalgia through incorporating pre-prepared sauces into menus that is so important, particularly in a healthcare setting. "Food can bring joy and lift the spirits of those facing stressful situations in hospitals,"

"Soup must be nutritious, wholesome and tasty"

she says. "And from our own research, we know that 69% of patients find solace in familiar, well-known brands while in hospital*, emphasising the importance of incorporating recognisable flavours into the menu."

The Sharwood's and Homepride ranges from Premier Foods are fortified with vitamins C and D, and added fibre, are easy to use and ideal for gluten-free and vegetarian diets. The range includes Sharwood's Korma, Tikka Masala and Sweet and Sour; and Homepride Tomato & Basil and Bolognese. All the sauces are plant-based except for Sharwood's Korma and Tikka Masala, which contain milk. They are versatile cooking sauces that allow hospital caterers to easily create comforting, timeless classics such as curry and lasagne.

CHOOSING WHAT TO WORK WITH

Louise recommends prioritising comfort, ease of consumption and nutritional value. "Given that many patients face specific dietary concerns – such as diabetes, dysphagia, or general ease of eating – caterers must choose options that accommodate these needs while still delivering on flavour," she explains.

"72% of patients consider healthy food crucial for their healing process. Therefore,

comforting meals should be well-balanced with healthy ingredients that promote recovery. By focusing on these key factors, caterers can create a nurturing food environment that promotes recovery and enhances patient wellbeing."

For Paul Saunders there are three factors that should be non-negotiable: flavour, versatility and quality. "The richness and depth of flavour can make or break a dish, a well-crafted stock can elevate a simple soup or sauce to the next level.

"Versatility is another crucial factor. The best pre-made stocks and sauces should seamlessly complement a variety of dishes. From enhancing the umami in a hearty stew to subtly spicing up a stir-fry, versatility ensures you get the most out of every product. This characteristic transforms a good kitchen staple into an irreplaceable catering tool.

"Lastly, the importance of quality cannot be overstated. Opting for high-quality ingredients not only boosts the nutritional value of your meals but also ensures every dish is as delicious as possible."

Jensen Bosse agrees that quality should always come first. He stresses that food for patients in hospital is about care, comfort



MUSHROOM RISOTTO WITH MAJOR MARI BASE

and supporting patients on their healing journey. Flavour profile is also a must. A rich, comforting taste can turn a simple meal into a moment of comfort, which in turn can offer patients something to look forward to and help them feel more at home, even during a challenging hospital stay.

Nutritional content is clearly equally important. Products that have balanced salt levels, added vitamins or high-protein options can help aid a patient's recovery.

TRENDING FLAVOURS

Perhaps not surprisingly, the flavours that our suppliers identify are from around the world, reflecting trends on the high street that hospital caterers should strive to reflect in their menus.

Bosse Interspace identifies a growing interest in globally-inspired flavours with influences from Asia, the Mediterranean and Middle East. "These trending flavours can be easily introduced to hospital menus using pre-prepared stocks and sauces – adding variety and excitement without additional labour-intensive preparation," Jensen adds.

For Major International, street food is the one to look out for. Paul Saunders says demand for authentic street food "has gone through the roof," and adds: "An inspiring

"Pre-prepared stocks and sauces are perfect for introducing food for theme days, celebration days, and cultural events"





MAJOR'S FAJITA MARI BASE SKEWERS



menu will encourage patients to eat, especially if it promises a taste experience they will enjoy.”

Authentic street food offers big, bold, punchy flavours; packed full of layers which give a real taste sensation. Street food inspired by the traditional flavours of Americana can come from a marinade, rub or sauce, giving a dish the characteristic nod to the American culture.

“The most popular global cuisines can easily be incorporated into menus – including plant-based choices. Flavours from Latin America are always popular, for example – from deep south Barbecue, with its sweet and sticky notes; to a delicious, fruity Caribbean Jerk.”

Major International’s range of bases facilitates this, including Gluten Free

Barbecue Mari Base for an oak-smoked flavour with a rich, sweet and tangy taste, and Caribbean Jerk Mari Base for authentic spices and citrus fruits. As well as being gluten free, both bases are also nut free, and vegan and vegetarian society approved. The full range comprises 12 flavours.

“With the ever-increasing demands on time, combined with a requirement to cater for multiple allergen and dietary requirements, especially in a hospital setting, many caterers are looking for products that deliver convenience, consistency and quality in one. This is where ready-made stocks, gravies and sauces are perfect. Using the latest manufacturing innovation and combining exceptional flavours, ready-made products can deliver

both time and cost savings, while also producing the consistency in flavour and texture that caterers are looking for and providing inspiration for new menu choices,” Paul concludes.

Jensen adds: “At Bosse Interspicce, we’re proud to support the incredible work of hospital kitchens, empowering catering teams to deliver high-quality, comforting meals that make a real difference to patients’ care.”

* Premier Foods Foodservice Research (2023)

bglrieber.co.uk
bosse-interspicce.co.uk
majorint.com
premierfoodservice.co.uk



EQUIPMENT FOR SCRATCH COOKING

“The best way I have seen for tailoring soups for patients without using excessive labour or time is to use a bulk base preparation, such as an unseasoned base tomato sauce. This can be stored frozen or chilled in individual or bulk portions to create a tailored nutrition-packed soup,” says Jon Walker, Joint Managing Director of BGL Rieber.

Scratch cooking in a self-stirring, non-stick combination cooking kettle is the only sensible way for public sector chefs to prepare bulk quantities of soups and soup bases. Any other method, without the magic of self-stirring, non-stick temperature control and tilting decanting, inevitably involves more chef time and more risk for staff. Plus, the output is amazing. For instance, it’s possible to make as many as 1,333 portions (@150ml) of vegetable soup in less than an hour in a Metos Proveno 200 litre kettle.

A single 200-litre Metos Proveno 4G 200E kettle has a footprint of just 1360 x 920 x 900. These kettles can be grouped to save space, providing



METOS PROVENO COMBI KETTLES IN A PRODUCTION KITCHEN

substantial bulk cooking with minimal labour but maximum flexibility.

Kettles now have features like Metos Pro-Temp or Delta T to ensure even temperatures; no more burning or sticking, even for dairy-based sauces. The latest self-stirring combination cooking kettles will also automatically purée soups and stocks using a hands-free blender lid for the kettle, leaving the chef free to work on alternative options.

Metos kettles can also feature automatic cooling to chill the contents rapidly. This is very economical, using cold tap water recirculation inside the kettle jacket, and is a bonus for decanting bulk sauces, soups and bases quickly and safely. “In the time it takes to make and drink a cup of tea, a chef can cool down a kettle full of soup enough to make decanting totally safe and much less steamy,” says Jon.

“Storing base sauces chilled or frozen means the kitchen always has stock to hand. When well organised, this is also a superb way to get the most productivity from kitchen labour.”



part of Givaudan



MOUTHWATERING PRODUCTS THAT INSPIRED

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To discover the latest products and trending recipes as well **FREE SAMPLES** available delivered to your door, register at www.majorint.com/want-a-sample

Web: www.majorint.com Email: UK_foodservice.info@givaudan.com Tel: 01908 242424

* Includes products that do not contain any food allergens as designated by EU Legislation



FIXING THE FOOD SYSTEM

IS WHAT WE EAT LITERALLY MAKING US ILL?

The stats are alarming. Henry Dimbleby's review of our food system highlighted the obesity crisis that the UK is facing. One in three people is clinically obese, with the low price and high availability of unhealthy foods a contributing factor. Obesity costs the NHS £18 billion annually, is responsible for 1.5 million hospital admissions per year and reduces life expectancy by 2.7 years.

The 2024 State of the Nation's Food Industry report from the Food Foundation highlights the performance of major UK retailers, out of home foodservice outlets, and food manufacturers. It focuses on 11 metrics and benchmarks 36 companies against a range of criteria to assess who is leading the way and what more needs to be done to help fix what it describes as the unsustainable, unhealthy and unfair food system. Some of the results make uncomfortable reading. For example, five companies are responsible for over 80% of TV ads for snacks and confectionery aired before the watershed – despite claiming not to advertise to children (Haribo, Mars, Mondelez, PepsiCo and Kellogg's).

Only one in four major UK food businesses has a healthy sales target and discloses data on the healthiness of their sales. Out of home is falling behind other sectors of the food industry in moving to disclose data transparently and set targets for change, and since last year has slowed almost to a standstill.

One of the problems is that the way the food system is governed does not incentivise companies to sell healthy and sustainable foods. In addition, food companies and their trade associations have a very loud voice in the corridors of power, meeting with Defra

ministers a total of 1,377 times between 2020 and 2023. That's over 40 times more meetings than those held between food NGOs and Defra ministers.

The Food Foundation report concludes that bold action is needed by the Government and food businesses to shift dietary patterns so they are healthier and more sustainable. It further urges that progress on healthy and sustainable food cannot be left to the market and wants the 'mission-led' Government to step in, saying there exists "a unique window of opportunity to intervene and enable a new model of business to succeed."

TAKING ACTION

The House of Lords Food, Diet and Obesity Committee has demanded that the Government should develop a comprehensive, integrated long-term new strategy to fix the food system, underpinned by a new legislative framework. Its report, 'Recipe for health: a plan to fix our broken food system' concludes that obesity and diet-related disease are a public health emergency that costs society billions of pounds each year in healthcare costs and lost productivity.

Committee Chair Baroness Walmsley says: "Food should be a pleasure and contribute to our health and wellbeing, but it is making too many people ill. Something must be going wrong if almost two in five children are leaving primary school with overweight or obesity and so many people are finding it hard to feed healthy food to their families. That is why we took a root and branch look at the food system and analysed what had gone wrong over the past few decades."





KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT

- **Reporting.** Make large food businesses report on the healthiness of their sales and exclude businesses that derive more than a defined share of sales from less healthy products from any discussions on the formation of policy on food, diet and obesity prevention.
- **Oversight.** Give the Food Standards Agency (FSA) independent oversight of the food system.
- **Tax revenue.** Introduce a salt and sugar reformulation tax on food manufacturers, building on the success of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, and use the revenue to make healthier food cheaper, particularly for people living with food insecurity.
- **Advertising.** Ban the advertising of less healthy food across all media by the end of this Parliament, following the planned 9pm watershed and ban on paid-for online advertising in October 2025.
- **Research.** Commission further research into the links between ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and adverse health outcomes, and review dietary guidelines to reflect any new evidence.
- **Children.** Immediately develop an ambitious strategy for maternal and infant nutrition and drive-up compliance with the school food standards to help break the vicious cycle by which children living with obesity are five times more likely to become adults with obesity.
- **Increase funding.** Enable auto-enrolment for Healthy Start and free school meals and review the costs and benefits to public health of increasing funding and widening eligibility for both schemes. This is essential to help families living in poverty afford healthy food and to begin closing the gaping inequalities in unhealthy diets and obesity rates.

The report also notes that after tobacco, diet-related risks comprise the biggest contribution to years of life lost. The annual societal cost of obesity is at least 1–2% of UK GDP. Unhealthy diets are the primary driver of obesity, with people in all income groups failing to meet dietary recommendations. Successive governments have failed to tackle this crisis, and in spite of nearly 700 wide-ranging policies designed to tackle obesity announced between 1992 and 2020, rates have continued to rise. At the same time, the food industry has strong incentives to produce and sell highly profitable unhealthy products and voluntary efforts to promote healthier food have failed.

Many people struggle to pay the bills and have neither the time nor the facilities to cook meals from scratch. Healthier food is often more expensive than less healthy food.

The House of Lords report reaches the same conclusion as the Food Foundation, that mandatory regulation has to be introduced.

Baroness Walmsley concludes: “Over the last 30 years successive governments have failed to reduce obesity rates, despite hundreds of policy initiatives. This failure is largely due to policies that focused on personal choice and responsibility out of misguided fears of the ‘nanny state’. Both the Government and the food industry must take responsibility for what has gone wrong and take urgent steps to put it right.

“We hope, given the recent comments from the Prime Minister, Lord Darzi and the Secretary of State for Health, that there is now an appetite to shift towards prevention of ill health. We urge the Government to look favourably on our plan to fix our broken food system and accept that not only is it cost-effective, but that it would lead to a lot less human misery.” 

“The Government and the food industry must take responsibility for what has gone wrong and take urgent steps to put it right”





NEW PRODUCTS

GO NUTS FOR THE NEW MILFRESH SPECIALITY HOT CHOCOLATE RANGE

Gear up for hot chocolate season with the Speciality line of Milfresh Hot Chocolate from Aimia Foods for Professionals in two delicious new flavours – Caramelised Peanut and Coconut.

Despite the nutty taste and name of Milfresh Caramelised Peanut Hot Chocolate, this blend is free from nuts, meaning even customers that have a nut allergy can indulge. Offering a blend of sweet and salty flavours, it is ideal for tapping into the soaring nut trend, with creations such as Caramelised Peanut Mocha or a cool Peanut Brittle Chocolate Frappe.

Available in 1kg tubs, the Milfresh Coconut variety marries together two perfectly suited flavours – chocolate and coconut. This creamy and subtly-sweet option is ideal for baristas that want to tempt coconut-flavour lovers and can be used to flavour hot chocolate, mocha or even iced beverages.



aimiafoods.com

GS1 DIGITAL LABELLING ON RIEBER GN PANS SETS NEW STANDARD FOR COMMS

Using a state-of-the-art Trumpf laser machine, BGL Rieber is setting new communication standards for the catering industry by adding GS1 Digital Link digitised labels to each GN pan. This new way of adding QR codes to GN pans enables caterers to have state-of-the-art digital reusable organisation including precise traceability along the entire process chain.

The GS1 digital label is multipurpose. Different apps can respond differently to the same QR code, directing users to different destinations and using different languages, if needed. This means consumers using Rieber's stainless steel grab-and-go food containers for their meals or snacks have immediate access to product information, allergen data, recipes, storage, regeneration or reheating instructions and answers to FAQs.

Kitchens and food distributors can read the same code but can access different data, or even enter data relevant to them or for customer use, such as ordering information, HACCP checklists, cooking tips or product videos.



bglriber.co.uk

HUPFER CARBON FOOTPRINTS SHELVING RANGE

Hupfer UK has published carbon footprint calculations for all shelving products under the TM65 methodology, as part of its evolving sustainability strategy.

TM65 from CIBSE (Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers) provides manufacturers with a framework for calculating a product's embodied carbon through all lifecycle stages, including material extraction, manufacture, repair, disassembly and disposal. As a result, it offers a trusted and reliable source of information about a product's environmental impact, supporting more sustainable product choices.

The figures for all shelving products can be viewed on the Hupfer website.



hupfer.com/en

MEIKO'S UPSTER XD UNDERCOUNTER DISHWASHER SOLUTION

Meiko's new UPster U500 XD small-footprint undercounter dishwasher washes everything from delicate glassware to crockery, serving dishes, trays, reusable food delivery crates and baking trays, which can be washed stacked next to one another.

Multiple wash programmes suit the different ware, and a self-cleaning programme and fully insulated chambers and doors minimise heat loss and maximise efficiency. Optional GiO reverse osmosis ensures sparkling clean, spot-free results every time.

An extended door means the machine can wash trays and Euro crate boxes despite its small size, bringing a solution to locations without sufficient space for a conventional pot washer.

UPster machines come with the new Meiko 'AktivPlus' fine filtration system, which filters the wash tank water several times over. Cyclic backflushing actively and reliably ejects food particles and dirt from the wash water. There is also a 'toothpick trap' to protect the drainage pump.

Blue colour-coded components make cleaning easier for staff.

meiko-uk.co.uk



BONCULINA UPDATES HEALTHCARE PRODUCT RANGE

Under the tag line 'For Patients, By Patients', BonCulina UK has continued the roll-out of its revamped meal offerings.

In July, 42 new and improved dishes joined the range and in October a further 31 were launched. This latest update brings 37 dishes with an emphasis on festive themes for Christmas and New Year. A final update of recipes and flavours is planned for April 2025.

With these product launches BonCulina has concluded the major part of its culinary project, following the 2023 customer survey asking its customers for feedback on food quality. This initiative included working in partnership with NHS Trusts and listening to patients, as well as recruiting Michelin trained chef Thomas Hempstead.

Highlights of the new dishes include Venison Cobbler and Venison Stew, as well as plant-based favourites such as Butternut Squash & Lentil Pie and Quorn Katsu Curry.

bonculina.com/en/



WINTERHALTER'S PT SETS A GOLD STANDARD IN GREEN CLEANING

Winterhalter's Pass through Workhorse dishwashers feature upgrades and innovations that reduce energy and water consumption, as well as enhancing usability and reliability.

The latest PT Workhorse (known as the PT Series) includes a range of features designed to reduce energy and water usage as far as possible, without compromising wash quality.

Fitted as standard, the PT's EnergyLight heat recovery system recycles heat from the wash water to help heat incoming cold water, reducing energy consumption by up to 10%. Effective insulation, with double walled construction, keeps heat (and energy) in the machine, helping to keep costs down.

Further energy savings can be made through optional features such as the EnergyPlus air heat recovery system, which recycles the steam generated during washing to heat incoming water. As well as improving working conditions, stopping steam being released when the hood is opened after the wash cycle can reduce energy costs by up to 15%.



These savings can be further increased with the driven rinse system, which cuts water use by up to 15% per wash cycle, lowering the overall operating running costs by 12%. Combining all the savings these systems produce can reduce running costs by up to 32%.

winterhalter.com/uk-en/

FLAVOUR-FILLED PASTIES FOR THE NEW YEAR

Proper Cornish has announced the launch of two new handmade pasties for 2025. The popular Steak & Clawson Farms Stilton® Pasty returns by popular demand, whilst vegetarians and vegans can enjoy the Sri Lankan Curry Pasty.

The steak & Stilton pasty contains tender pieces of steak combined with diced potatoes and onions, infused with a rich and creamy Stilton cheese from Clawson Farms. The filling is both strong and meaty but with the taste and aroma of Stilton.

The curry pasty celebrates on-trend Sri Lankan flavours combining sweet potato, lentils, chickpeas, tomato and onion. The glossy sauce brings flavours of coconut and spice with a mild heat that develops slowly.

Both pasties are encased in Proper Cornish's hand-crimped pastry case.

propercornish.co.uk



EFFICIENT HOT HOLDING WITH NEW HENNY PENNY HC5

Jestic Foodservice Solutions has launched the Henny Penny HC5 Hot Holding Cabinet. The new cabinet is designed to ensure food safety and quality by holding it at the right temperature and condition to preserve its 'as cooked' taste and texture.

The HC5 is a half-size heated holding cabinet designed to provide excellent holding for a lower investment. Featuring an innovative LED lighting option for glass door cabinets, with fully insulated cabinet and tight-sealing door, operators can enjoy the benefits of high-quality holding while using very little energy. Partial pan removal, self-closing door and magnetic closures contribute to convenient workflow and energy savings and operators can time up to five shelves separately with available Count Down Timer control.

Hot holding enhances food safety by ensuring food is not only maintained at safe temperatures but retains optimum taste and texture, thus minimising wastage.

jestic.co.uk



APETITO LAUNCHES FESTIVE MENU FOR PATIENTS

As the countdown to Christmas begins, apetito has unveiled its brand-new festive menu filled with warming dishes and delicious desserts.

Redcurrant Chicken Casserole has all the flavours of a true winter warmer and is gluten-free. Meat-free Chickpea & Apricot Tagine is available in the core and CarteChoix ranges. New festive desserts include Premium Christmas Pudding and an indulgent Hot Chocolate Brownie.

These limited-edition dishes are joined by a selection of returning favourites, such as Sliced Turkey in Gravy; Broccoli, Cauliflower & Stilton Crumble; Pigs in Blankets and Sticky Toffee Pudding. The CarteChoix range offers further choice, such as Sliced Turkey; Fish in Parsley Sauce and Jam Sponge & Custard.

In addition, two wild venison dishes are joining apetito's menus in time for Christmas – a rich Venison Pie topped with golden, flaky pastry and a sliced potato-topped Venison

Hotpot. Venison is a sustainable alternative to traditional red meats, which is also nutrient-rich.

For patients with dysphagia, apetito's Specialist Nutrition range offers a two-course Christmas meal across all IDDSI Level 4, 5 and 6 ranges for the first time ever. This includes a Level 4 Turkey with Stuffing, and Turkey in an Orange and Redcurrant Gravy option in both Levels 5 and 6.

New for this year is a Mince Pie dessert in Level 5, and Mince Pie and Custard in Level 6. Those requiring a Level 4 diet can also indulge in a Spiced Pudding & Vanilla Sauce.

apetito.link/HC





NHS

NHS SUPPLY CHAIN

FRAMEWORK DIRECTORY

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NHS

NHS SUPPLY CHAIN



APPLE, PEAR AND DATE MUFFINS

CELEBRATING FOUR EXCEPTIONAL YEARS OF CHEF'S ACADEMY

After identifying a gap in training and resources for NHS chefs, Nick Vadis and his team launched the Chef's Academy in October 2020 and over the last four years they have gone on to provide exceptional training courses across the UK. The team have shared delicious, innovative recipes based on their curated culinary concepts. They've given chefs the opportunity to network with their peers, whilst equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to elevate their catering offerings at their own Trusts and progress their personal and professional development.

To celebrate the Chef's Academy turning four, we are proud to present a very special NHS Supply Chain: podcast episode, which brings together two exceptional NHS Chefs, Andy Berry, Chef Supervisor at University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust and Gill Owen, Chef at The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust, who share their Chef's Academy experience and wonderful culinary journeys, hosted by our very own lead Dietitian, Idrees Anwar.

To tune in to the podcast, please go to: supplychain.nhs.uk/news/our-podcast/. We would also like to thank everyone who has taken part in the Chef's Academy over the last four years. Your continued support and enthusiasm have been a key ingredient to the Chef's Academy's success, and the team can't wait to cook up more events in 2025!

CHEF OF THE YEAR 2024

Last month, we celebrated another incredible year of NHSE Chef of the Year. The event empowers chefs, elevates the status and pushes the boundaries of hospital food, all whilst spotlighting the profound and gratifying impact of NHS chef careers.

Our culinary team participated throughout, with Michael Sharp, Culinary Specialist and Leanne Turk, Head of Culinary Development, offering invaluable mentorship and Nick Vadis, our Culinary Ambassador as a judge, offering inspirational guidance and feedback, a testament to the collaborative excellence in partnership with NHSE. A huge congratulations to all those that took part and for your hard work and dedication. The winning team for 2024 is Royal Surrey Hospital, a big well done to Alejandro and Manuela who displayed great culinary skills to secure first place. You are a credit to your Trust!

LOOKING FORWARD INTO 2025

As the year draws to a close, NHS Supply Chain: Food is putting the finishing touches on another successful year. The team at NHS Supply Chain: Food wishes you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful new year and we are excited to serve up a whole menu of delicious food and products, innovations, and exciting projects for 2025. See you next year.

OUR CULINARY AND DIETETICS TEAM ARE EXCITED TO CELEBRATE FOUR YEARS OF THE INCREDIBLE CHEF'S ACADEMY.

AUTUMN SEASONALITY – OUR CHEF'S TOP PICK FOR NOVEMBER

The autumn season has fallen upon us, bringing with it an abundance of fresh produce, offering a burst of autumnal colour and flavour, from apples and pears to courgettes and cauliflower. To celebrate the new season, we've asked our Culinary Specialist, Millie Morgan, to share her favourite seasonal recipe to help inspire you and your kitchens. "Coming into the winter months, the Apple, Pear and Date Muffins from our Cakes and Bakes Culinary Concept makes the perfect autumn recipe; with lots of fruits and spices, it's a great-tasting treat bursting with those autumn flavours. It's great to eat whilst still warm from the oven too." 

To view the recipe, please contact your local Food Account Manager.

To sign up to future NHS Chef's event: supplychain.nhs.uk/categories/food/enquiry-form/





THE LAST WORD



ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ & MANUELA MICCOLI



MANUELA CRAFTING THE TIRAMISU DESSERT

THE LAST WORD

TWO MEDIREST CHEFS, FROM THE ROYAL SURREY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST, ARE CELEBRATING AFTER SECURING THE NHS CHEF OF THE YEAR AWARD, HAVING COME THROUGH THE REGIONAL HEATS AND THE MENTORING PROCESS TO REACH THE GRAND FINAL IN YORK. CHEFS MANUELA MICCOLI AND ALEJANDRO BEDOYA HERNANDEZ COMPETED AGAINST SEVEN OTHER FINALISTS DURING THE FIVE-DAY EVENT. HOSPITAL FOOD + SERVICE FINDS OUT WHAT THEY LOVE ABOUT WORKING AS CHEFS IN HOSPITAL CATERING.

ACHIEVEMENT

Royal Surrey County Hospital was one of the first to be awarded Exemplar site status for food – something we are extremely proud of. Plus, in 2023, the Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE) report from NHS England ranked Royal Surrey in the top five for its food offering.

DEVELOPMENT

We are currently one of the pilot sites to implement Sophie’s Legacy. This is in memory of Sophie Fairall, who wanted to change things about hospitals and food service for children undergoing treatment. One element was that parents should be provided with food, so that they don’t have to leave their child when getting something to eat. Sophie’s mother, Charlotte was at the competition, talking to us about her campaign and we were so inspired by her.

CHANGE

Our service runs really well, and we love our jobs! The great thing about the competition was linking with other Trusts, mentors and people who are experts in their roles. This enabled us to share ideas and best practice. There is certainly a move around more of this across healthcare, but there is so much opportunity and we would love to see even more.

MOTIVATION

We love working here and the competition was really motivating! Working in a hospital, we make a difference to the people that are here,

this gives us a sense of purpose. Cooking in a hospital can really make someone’s day when they are having a tough time.

SUPPORT

Keep growing this competition – it is amazing. We have learnt and gained so much from it.



ALEJANDRO & MANUELA PLATING UP THE VENISON BAO BUNS STARTER

MEET THE TRENT BRANCH



IT'S BEEN A JAM-PACKED YEAR FOR THE TRENT BRANCH, WHICH APPOINTED A NEW CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR DURING 2023, AND NOW HAS A FULL COMMITTEE IN PLACE OVERSEEING A BUSY PROGRAMME.



During 2024, the Trent Branch has welcomed several suppliers to meetings so members can learn about new, innovative and interesting products. Elisabeth Brown and Vicky Sterling joined a meeting at Royal Hallamshire Hospital to showcase Coco Labelle products. Elisabeth did a live demonstration of creamy garlic prawns for the members who were there in person, with virtual members wishing for smell-a-vision through MS Teams, prior to a product tasting of the full range of patient and retail culturally appropriate halal products.

At a Branch meeting at Chesterfield Royal Hospital in summer, members learned about the plant-based product Toffoo, and the IDDSI thickened drinks vending machine from Refreshment Services (RSL).

Then of course, there's the annual Trent Branch Study Day in October. This is a significant, and well-established event, offering networking and learning opportunities on a carefully-chosen theme. This year's theme was 'Topics off the Norm', and as it suggests, presentations brought to the fore some subjects that members might not have given much consideration to. (See p6 for a full report on this year's event).

The Trent Branch is very proud to have Nicola Strawther as a member. Nicola is currently Trent Branch Director, but she will be stepping down to focus on her role as National Vice Chair next year. Having Nicola as part of the Trent Branch is invaluable, and motivates Trent to be a Branch that shares knowledge and supports its members and colleagues during the tricky times we are currently facing in the NHS.

MEET OUR BRANCH OFFICERS

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



CHAIR:

KUSHBOO NAIK

Specialist Catering Dietitian at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals. Kush is enjoying raising the profile of catering and facilities with clinical colleagues. "I did not have the appreciation for these services when I worked as an acute ward dietitian," she says.

Planning holidays is one of my passions (apart from food!). Whether that be a weekend in the English countryside, or touring Italy's history of art, I always have a project on the go.



SECRETARY:

LEE ROBINSON

Catering Services Team Leader at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals. Lee loves the smile and satisfaction when a patient or work colleague compliments the system and effort you have put in to provide, or make something work.

I've just enrolled on a three-year apprenticeship management degree at Sheffield Hallam University. I also follow Nottingham Forest and continue to play football when I can.



TREASURER:

HELEN BUTCHER

Patient Services Manager for Sodexo Patient Dining at Chesterfield Royal Hospital. Helen has been in this role for nearly seven years, and was previously Performance Liaison Co-ordinator. Her reward is knowing catering is part of the patient experience, aiding their recovery, and managing a great team.

In July 2022 I received a British Citizen Award for service, exceptional contribution to the workplace. I was so honoured and had the most spectacular experience at the ceremony in London, meeting other recipients. It was very inspirational and memorable.

OTHER BRANCH OFFICERS:

Vice Chair Isobel Foster, Catering Manager for Derbyshire Healthcare Services Foundation Trust; and Nicola Strawther, Chief Dietetic and Catering Technician at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, who is stepping down as Branch Director because she is now HCA National Vice Chair.

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARD

SIAN LANGFORD, A MEMBER OF THE NORTH WEST BRANCH, WAS THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENT OF THE HCA'S LEADERSHIP AND EXCELLENCE AWARD.

Sian works at The Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RJAH) in Oswestry, a specialist unit with 200 inpatient and critical care beds across nine wards. During her 14-year career at the hospital she has held a number of roles, and she is currently the Facilities Compliance and Sustainability Manager.

Sian has been instrumental in leading several projects at RJAH, including reducing single-use plastics. She has guided the transition to reusable foodservice containers in the busy staff restaurant, fostering an understanding and commitment among staff. This has resulted in a tremendous financial saving for the Trust, and also indicates a real change in behaviour across the whole hospital workforce, its patients and visitors.

HCA Board member, Tim Radcliffe proposed Sian for the award, citing that she had "demonstrated exceptional qualities as a leader," and describing her as visionary, dedicated to excellence, and with a commitment to her team's success that sets her apart as an exemplary role model.

Tim continued: "Sian's leadership is characterised by a relentless pursuit of excellence. She consistently exceeds expectations, delivering outstanding service and culinary experiences that leave a lasting impression on patients. Her attention to detail, creativity and commitment to quality inspire her team to strive for greatness and push the boundaries of what is possible in catering."

A vocal advocate for equality and inclusion, Sian actively challenges bias and discrimination in the workplace. Her management team consistently champion diversity initiatives, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued regardless of background, gender, ethnicity, or any other characteristic. By fostering an environment of acceptance and respect, Sian has helped create a space where every individual feels



empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents.

Sharing and celebrating good news is something Sian is also known for. She has played a pivotal role in promoting personal and professional development among her colleagues, taking proactive steps to mentor and support team members, offering guidance, encouragement and constructive feedback to help them grow and succeed in their roles. Whether through formal training programmes, informal coaching sessions, or simply leading by example, Sian has demonstrated a genuine commitment to helping others reach their full potential. This is exemplified by team members being recognised for other national awards.

Sian fosters a culture of collaboration, innovation and mutual support within the team. She leads by example, embodying the values of hard work, integrity and empathy, and instilling a sense of pride and ownership that translates into exceptional results.

Her visionary leadership, dedication to excellence and commitment to her team's success make her a deserving recipient of the Leadership Excellence award.

HONOURED

Sian told Hospital Caterer: "I was so honoured to be nominated. As part of my role, I meet so many passionate, effective leaders both within and outside of our organisation, and so to be recognised in this category was very humbling.

"I'm very lucky here at RJAH. Our catering team are a perfect example of something that's replicated throughout the Trust; they just want to do the absolute best they can – both for patients and other members of staff. The team are engaged in improvement, and not afraid to come along on a journey to try something new out!

"The Trust is relatively small, which means often wearing 'many hats'. Personally, I was apprehensive taking on sustainability, but having teams who can be brave when it comes to change makes all the difference.

"I always leave the HCA Forum filled with positivity. It really is an annual event that for me, underlines the expertise, knowledge and passion we have within our field. To bring home an award really was the icing on the cake!"

WIDER BENEFITS

Jayne Jones is Assistant Director (Facilities and Production) at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. She has recently moved to the NHS from a Local Authority background, in which capacity she was involved with the development of the legislation. For her, the Good Food Nation Plan has the potential to bring with it a shift in thinking for hospital caterers, away from an insular approach where decision makers often see their role as simply delivering food to patients, and towards a view that values the important part they play in the wider food system, as well as how they can contribute to influencing change.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

There is a view that the ambitions of the Good Food Nation Plan could be diluted when the final iteration is published. Until then it's difficult, if not impossible, for Health Boards to make much progress with their own plans. Once it is published, all public bodies will have 12 months to publish their own plans, however, these do not have to be 'set in stone' and will be able to evolve over a period of years.

What this might mean for procurement cannot be determined yet. Loraine Hartley is Commodity Manager for National Procurement at NHS National Services Scotland. She told Hospital Caterer that it's difficult to speculate about what they might need to deliver until there is more concrete information to work from, but she isn't worried. Procurement and catering will continue to work together, and at least Scotland does not have to debate the definition of "local", since it is simply anything produced in Scotland. "We're about as Scottish as we're ever going to be," she says!

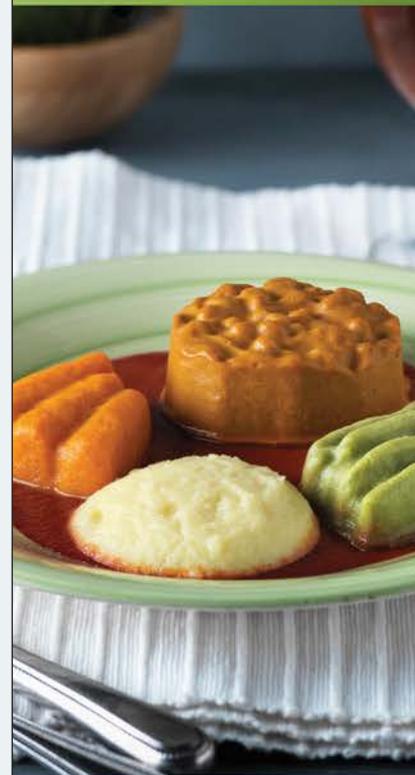
Whilst the aims of this Act are laudable, how those aims will be achieved remain unclear.



DRAFT GOOD FOOD NATION ACTION PLAN OUTCOMES:

- Everyone in Scotland eats well with reliable access to safe, nutritious, affordable, sustainable, and age and culturally-appropriate food.
- Scotland's food system is sustainable and contributes to a flourishing natural environment. It supports our net zero ambitions and plays an important role in maintaining and improving animal welfare and in restoring and regenerating biodiversity.
- Scotland's food system encourages a physically and mentally healthy population, leading to a reduction in diet-related conditions.
- Our food and drink sector is prosperous, diverse, innovative and vital to national and local economic and social wellbeing. It is key to making Scotland food secure and food resilient and creates and sustains jobs and businesses underpinned by fair work standards.
- Scotland has a thriving food culture with a population who are interested in and educated about good and sustainable food.
- Scotland has a global reputation for high-quality food that we want to continue to grow. Decisions we make in Scotland contribute positively to local and global food systems' transformation. We share and learn from best practice internationally.

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SCOTLAND'S GOOD FOOD NATION PLAN

THE GOOD FOOD NATION (SCOTLAND) ACT WAS PASSED BY THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT IN JULY 2022 AND THE FINAL ITERATION OF THE PLAN IS EXPECTED IN SPRING 2025. THIS ACT IS AMBITIOUS IN ITS SCOPE AND OVERALL AIMS, BUT WHAT COULD IT MEAN FOR HEALTH BOARDS AND THEIR CATERING TEAMS?

The first point to note is that this cannot be a catering-led, or even an NHS-led initiative. The ambitions of the Good Food Nation Plan extend beyond the remit of the NHS into much broader issues, such as removing child poverty and food insecurity, improving food education and influencing agricultural practice. To achieve these will require multi-disciplinary initiatives across the widest sphere of public health. However, Health Boards – in common with other public bodies – will need to develop, consult on and publish their own plans.

These plans will need to include several outcomes, indicators and measures, and link to policies that will deliver the ambitions. They will also need to align with the plans set out by the Local Authority and other public bodies in the region. Therefore, what the Good Food Nation Plan means will be different for every region.

Plans will need to be clear about how they will support actions, such as improving the environment, animal welfare and addressing biodiversity, underpinning social and economic

wellbeing, and supporting communities and their physical and mental health. For some, the scale of this ambition is too great, especially in the current fiscal climate. "It's phenomenal," Elinor McCann, Head of Catering at NHS Grampian and Chair of the Catering Services Expert Group in Scotland, tells Hospital Caterer.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Funding is, as ever, a thorny topic, and at the moment there is none on the table. As Health Boards are being squeezed to keep delivering savings on food, it is difficult to see where the financial resource is going to come from to drive this forward. An optimistic view is that Government funding will come, through a recognition that resource will be necessary to research, write and deliver plans that are meaningful and achievable on this sort of scale. Others are more cynical.





FINAL TEAMS COMPETE IN THE SUPERB VENUE OF THE COOKERY SCHOOL AT THE GRAND HOTEL, YORK - ALEJANDRO AND MANUELA IN THE FOREGROUND



LOTS OF SKILLS ON DISPLAY



NHS CHEF 2024 FINALISTS

CHEF TEAMS AND MENTORS

- **Alejandro Hernandez and Manuela Miccoli (Royal Surrey Hospital, Medirest) – mentor Keith Turrell (HIT Training)**
- Tom Baker and Tremaine Gibson (East London, OCS) – mentor Rodney Lankester (Rational)
- Michelle Robinson and Slavka Vaysilova (Stepping Hill) – mentor Martin Wright (Medirest)
- Kerrey Healey and Hollie Harman (Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS FT) – mentor Stuart Finn (Bidfood)
- Karolina Morawiec and Kenneth Moth (Greater Manchester Mental Health) – mentor Evan Welsh (Hobart)
- Daniel Hampton and Gopakumar K Bhaskaran (Royal Hampshire County Hospital) – mentor Simon Price (ISS Food Services)
- Christoffer Dopico Alles and Alexander Cavallaro (University Hospitals Southampton) – mentor Wayne Harris (NH Case)

WHAT HAPPENS NOW

Since returning to their hospital kitchen, Manuela has decided to start an apprenticeship and has been promoted at work to Wellspring – Chef Manager – to keep learning and developing as she works and implement learnings from her competition win. They will both be working with Medirest’s Cuisine Centre team, to implement some of their dishes into menus.

One of the aims of this competition is to drive up standards of hospital food served at Trusts across England. This takes time, but Phil Shelley reflects that as this competition continues to grow, year-on-year it is having an impact. Trusts must play their part too.

“These chefs have all matured as the week has gone on. Now they will go back and share the brilliant things they’ve been learning with their teams within their own hospital and other sites within their Trust. They are now our ambassadors.”

colleagues. They were able to perfect their dishes for challenges that were detailed in advance, but for others, using ‘surprise’ ingredients, they discussed themes and options before the competition, so they had a sense of what they could do should certain ingredients or themes come up.

Mentoring was an important part of the competition and was something they found incredibly helpful. “Keith Turrell was our mentor, and it was brilliant to get ideas and talk through things with him.”

INSPIRATION BEHIND THE WINNING MENU

Everything that Alejandro and Manuela prepared and served was made from scratch on the day – nothing was pre-made – and everything was simple and inexpensive.

Alejandro loves to make Asian inspired food, which was reflected in the starter of bao buns with venison. “As an added bonus, when sourced properly venison can be a really sustainable option in the UK.”

The competition final requires two main courses to be served – one being a plant-based option. For this they served a lentil patty with roast potato, celeriac fondant and mushroom gravy, but it was their ‘traditional’ main course of gnocchi with hake, granola and cherry tomato sauce which stole the day. “We had perfected this, and it got the most points across all the entries. In the build-up to the competition, we made it over and over and got feedback from lots of people, which meant we were able to evolve the dish.”

The winning dessert was Tiramisu, a dish that Manuela makes frequently, as

it is close to her heart and heritage. “We wanted to include coffee somewhere, as we’re Italian and Colombian, so it was great to weave it in here!”

Previously in finals week, the children’s menu challenge appealed strongly to Manuela, who was incredibly touched by the Sophie’s Legacy campaign. She worked hard to create a menu that would appeal to children, for example a biscuit in the shape of a magic wand, with some flowers. “It was a really colourful dish; a meatball in the shape of a bird, with a nest of pasta and then a frittata in a spiral shape, again very simple,” she explains. “We served these with an activity card, which encouraged patients to share emotion and wishes.”

This passion from all chefs in the final was noted by Lead Judge, Lisa Goodwin-Allen, Executive Chef at the Michelin-starred Northcote restaurant. Lisa told Hospital Caterer that last year’s event was an eye-opener for her, learning about the complexities that chefs face when working within healthcare. This year she says the competition “has really stepped up again,” on presentation, flavour and demonstration of ability.

“They are cooking with their hearts, using ingredients well and thinking outside of the box. When we are ill, we turn to classic dishes that give us comfort, make us feel well, that have memories from childhood, or that mean something to us. Whether it’s the Italian chef cooking gnocchi because that’s what his granny used to make him, or a fresh take on a traditional favourite like an apple pie. These chefs have stamped their personality on their dishes.”



PAUL GALPIN (THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF COOKS), ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ, MANUELA MICCOLI, SIMON CORBEN (NHSE) AND LISA GOODWIN-ALLEN (LEAD JUDGE)



STAR CHEFS

ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, FOLLOWING A GRUPELLING WEEK OF COMPETITION AT THE END OF A PROCESS THAT BEGAN WITH THE REGIONAL HEATS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ AND MANUELA MICCOLI FROM THE ROYAL SURREY HOSPITAL (MEDIREST) WON NHS CHEF 2024.

This competition is more than just a cooking competition; it's also about chef development. The mentoring programme is designed to impart knowledge and information during a three-day event, with topics covered being of relevance to the healthcare sector, such as dysphagia and reducing food waste. The cookery challenges that the finalists undergo add practical skills and underline these themes, for instance, producing a no-waste dish in which every ingredient incorporated is used to the full.

Speaking at the final about the aims and progress of the NHS Chef competition, Phil Shelley, Estates & Facilities Senior Operational & Policy Manager told Hospital Caterer: "We want chefs to be inspired and develop. We need to reflect the day job in the challenges, so we've looked at dysphagia, catering for children, the nutritional value of food and the plant-based agenda. Having a balanced meal approach has been a big part of taking them through this final week."

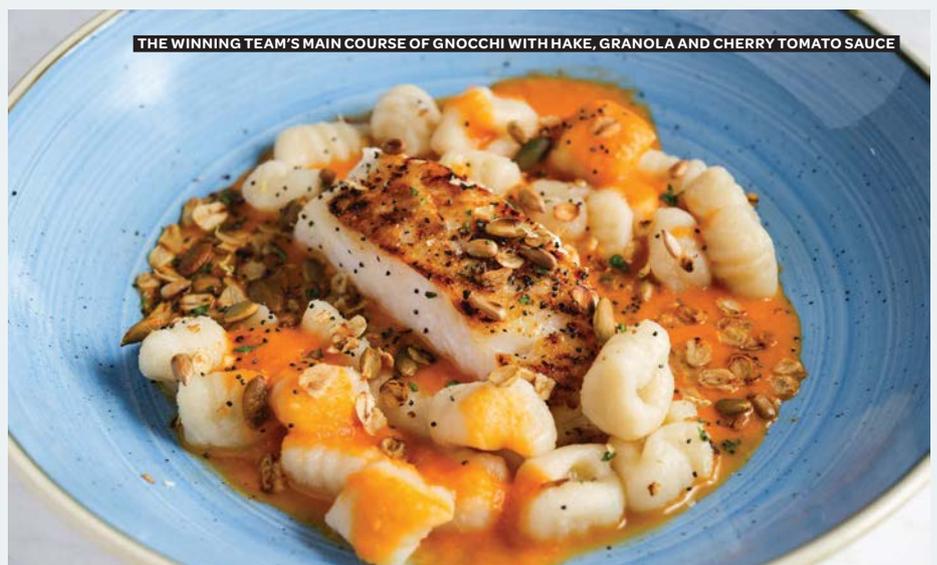
Nicola Strawther, National Vice Chair of the HCA, was attending the event for the first time and was impressed by what she saw. "I was blown away by the professionalism, commitment and dedication from those taking part, the mentors, suppliers, supporters and the organisers. There was nothing but praise and respect from those in the room for all the teams that had taken part in the competition.

"The event truly highlights how important our caterers are to the patient's wellbeing, both mentally and physically with the amazing food that they produce and the skills they demonstrate. Everyone should be proud of themselves for taking part, but a huge congratulations to the winning team from Surrey. Congratulations on a fantastic event."

2024 CHAMPIONS

Alejandro and Manuela described winning this competition as a dream come true. "We worked so hard to achieve this. It was really tough, but we were so glad to be in a team together. We have a joint passion for food, and we are so pleased that we were able to show this together and represent the Trust," they told Hospital Caterer.

In common with previous winners of this competition, Alejandro and Manuela practiced their dishes at every opportunity – at work and at home. They tried out different ideas and tested them on work



THE WINNING TEAM'S MAIN COURSE OF GNOCCHI WITH HAKE, GRANOLA AND CHERRY TOMATO SAUCE

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LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2025

APRIL 1-2, 2025 – HILTON BIRMINGHAM METROPOLE



NO APRIL FOOL WILL WANT TO MISS OUT ON THE 2025 HCA FORUM, AS THE NORTH WEST BRANCH BRINGS A WHOLE NEW APPROACH TO INSPIRING AND INFORMING MEMBERS.

Food at our Core is the theme, and food is central to the content of the programme with inspiring demonstrations being paired with content that will update you on the current challenges we all face, and hopefully some solutions.

PROGRAMME

We are excited to announce that the Forum will be facilitated by the incredible Mark Durden-Smith. Apart from having a huge portfolio of TV and radio work, he has also been involved in hosting work in the hospitality industry, including Toque d'Or and the World's 50 Best Restaurants, so he brings knowledge and understanding of food alongside his professional delivery of Forums and Awards.

The programme is split into two distinct days. Day one will focus on craft and the link to challenges such as serving children and parents, delivering a more sustainable service via lower carbon meals and the reduction of food waste. We will also be celebrating our great NHS chefs, as winners from industry competitions cook to a related brief.

The second day is more conventional as we tackle subjects such as:

- Procurement
- Workforce development
- Staff retention
- Achieving Net Zero

It will be a packed two days. Further

information regarding the programme will be available at www.hcaforum.co.uk.

EXHIBITION

Over 90 exhibitors will share new products and service initiatives. The hospital sector is fast moving and always subject to pressures and strains of delivery, but the fantastic supply chain that supports our work is always developing ideas that will help improve the service. The exhibition is your chance to catch up and find out what is new.

NETWORKING

Tuesday, April 1: The President's Dinner also hosts the Association's annual awards ceremony. We will soon be calling for nominations, so look out for emails and information on websites and social media about how to enter.

Wednesday, April 2: The Branch Dinner is likely to involve a bit of 'Rover's Return', a dash of 'Littler' and a 'hot pot' of excitement. We can tell you no more, but information will be shared on the Forum website shortly.

We look forward to welcoming you to a touch of the North West hospitality in Birmingham.

So, visit the website (www.hcaforum.co.uk) and get booked in. If you have any queries speak to Jo or Laura, by calling 0203 398 0204 or emailing HCAForum@dewberryredpoint.co.uk. Or contact any of the Forum Management Team.



MARK DURDEN SMITH

food at our
core

HCA LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT FORUM
Tuesday 1st - Wednesday 2nd April 2025 - Hilton Birmingham Metropole

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT

The 'Early Bird' booking discount for those that book before January 31, 2025 is now available! It proved so popular in 2023 and 2024 that we have the offer available again with discounts saving over 10% on the regular two-night stay price.

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

WEST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by Margaret Valenti

The last Branch meeting was held on October 31 via Teams and was well attended.

We welcomed our guest speaker Shaun Taylor from the Scottish Government who joined us to talk about the launch of the consultation around the minimum charge on single-use beverage cups.

This consultation will help to drive responsible consumption and re-use as part of our wider efforts to build a greener, more sustainable Scotland. Details of the proposal and implementation timelines were presented and discussed further.

The next Branch meeting and AGM will be held on December 5 in central Glasgow, immediately followed by our festive Christmas lunch. We are very much looking forward to catching up with everyone in person.



FOCUS ON PATIENT SAFETY

On Wednesday, January 22, 2025 the HCA will host the first in its new series of webinars, focusing on the development of the food and drink service within healthcare. Each event will have a broad, overarching theme to give the greatest flexibility around the subject matter for speakers to explore. For January's event the theme has been built around the Focus on Patient Safety. Speakers will cover malnutrition and hydration, food hygiene and listeria and allergens accreditation, plus there will be an update on plans for the National Forum, which will be held on April 1-2 in Birmingham. [See the Forum update on p8 of this issue.]

This is one of two webinars planned for 2025, with the other scheduled for September. For more information and to book your place, please go to: hcawebinars.co.uk.



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TRENT BRANCH

Report by Kushboo Naik

On September 26, the Trent Branch welcomed hospital catering colleagues and suppliers to this study day which had an exciting and unusual agenda, themed 'Topics off the Norm'.

Experts shared their knowledge on sustainability, workforce and mental health, and how to meet the specialist dietary needs of our patients.

It was an opportunity to network with fellow members of the Hospital Caterers Association, British Dietetic Association and National Association of Care Catering. The day received great feedback from delegates and exhibitors, with comments that it was both informative and enjoyable. HCA National Chair, Iain Robertson did a great job hosting and keeping everything running to time. A separate room full of exhibitors showcasing new food products, equipment and software was the backdrop for great conversation between delegates and suppliers. Lunch was handheld fish & chips, perfect to keep the conversation going and a nice way to ease into the weekend. The event was sponsored by Burlodge, Synbiotix and RH Hall.

Three hot topics were addressed by dietitians, starting with Jason Simpson-Theobald, who spoke about nutritional considerations in the LGBTQIA+ community. Learning about the social stigma and associated exclusion people can face and how this can impact on nutrition status, was both eye-opening and insightful for the caterers in the room. This was followed by a lively presentation by Idrees Anwar, who debated the pros and cons of Ultra Processed Foods. Noor Al-Refae presented on her speciality; an understanding of the unique challenges and health inequalities experienced by autistic individuals and people with learning disabilities. She gave tips on how we can cater appropriately and confidently for those who visit healthcare settings.

Other interesting presentations were from Coeliac UK and Jamie Clews, an inspirational Burnt Chef ambassador who highlighted the journey that some chefs face in the industry, as well as how this growing charity can support our colleagues and friends who may require guidance. Lee Robinson and Gary Sweeney reinforced our understanding of sustainability, looking at the challenges and offering advice around introducing reusable cups in the healthcare setting. Development Chef Matthew Thornton and Lottie Alves, from Nature Friendly Farming, closed off the day with moving presentations about what their day jobs involve, and how we can put patients at the heart of everything we do to ensure they receive high quality meals whilst under our care.

Allan Gimson, a long-standing member of the HCA, sadly passed away earlier this year. The Branch managed to raise £300 for Prostate Cancer UK via a raffle, a charity close to Allan's heart. Thank you to all the delegates and exhibitors who helped us raise this money.



OXFORD BRANCH

Report by Amanda Roberts

Our October meeting, via Teams, saw the return of the popular Oxford Branch Dragons Den, at which three suppliers pitched their products and faced the scrutiny of members.

First up was Chris McNally from Staple Food Group, who presented a Mediterranean staple – Ribella hummus, available in a variety of flavours and in a 130g snack pot with crackers for dipping. Next up, members heard about Magneté's Big Dipper grease trap solution to take the stress out of FOG. Last up, Biotiful Gut Health's Marc Burns explained the benefits of Kefir yogurt and now high protein drinks on gut health.

The Branch is now looking ahead to planning a number of events for 2025.



WESSEX BRANCH

Report by Fiona Sinclair

Throughout the year the Wessex Branch has enjoyed a wide variety of monthly meetings.

Face-to-face Branch meetings have included our August summer meeting at St Ann's Hospital in Poole, with fish and chips afterwards at the hospital's beach huts ... with some retired members even taking a dip in the sea on the beautiful sandy beach! Kindly hosted by Paul Harvey and team – what a treat! Presentations from IceSupp and Idrees Anwar, Lead Dietitian from NHS Supply Chain were well received with interest.

More recently, Emily Muirhead, Account Manager for Comax UK kindly hosted our October meeting in Ringwood. Our team meetings always include some good discussion around current topical issues.

Wessex Branch is also pleased to confirm that our Salon Culinaire competition will be back next year, as will the Food Safety Study Day for hospitals, which is now a national event that the Branch conceived and proudly sponsors.

Save the date announcements coming soon!



WESSEX BRANCH MEMBERS ENJOYED FISH & CHIPS AT ST ANN'S HOSPITAL'S BEACH HUTS

SOUTH WEST BRANCH

Report by Jane Wills

The South West Branch continues to support the RNLI Lifeboat Station at Lyme Regis.

In October, Petrina Muscroft F2F Deputy Manager – South Devon, West Dorset & Somerset Crew Member and Visits Officer for Lyme Regis Station, very kindly gave Branch

members a tour of the station, an overview of its history and how it is run, which was fascinating.

The Branch is still accepting donations, especially of 5p coins, and I was pleased to hand over another £105.50, which brings the total donated to the station by the Association to £6,455.50.

Following that station tour an enjoyable evening was spent in Seaton over dinner and a few drinks.



SOUTH WEST BRANCH MEMBERS ON A TOUR OF LYME REGIS RNLI STATION



HCA MOVES INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

As reported in the last edition of Hospital Caterer, we are embarking on an exciting project that will see a brand-new integrated website and members' management system. After a full tender process, an initial five-year contract has been awarded to Dewberry Redpoint.

The award was unanimously ratified by the Board and now the work is underway to create a platform that will be centre of everything we can provide to the members. Three working groups have been established: Website build and content – headed up by Iain Robertson, Margaret Valenti and Craig Smith, Membership and Finance – headed up by Caroline Darvill and Janice Gillan. The other members of the Executive Management Team are being updated at the fortnightly meetings.

Now the contract has been awarded, the arduous work can begin as we review the existing website, decide what should be transferred and what should be archived. The fresh look screens also have to be developed to accommodate the new elements, which will include online membership applications and renewal of existing subscriptions. This will relieve so much work currently undertaken by Branch Secretaries/Treasurers.

The Dewberry Redpoint (DR) team is being led by Andrew Archer, a well-known face for anyone who has attended the Forum over the past few years. He has nearly 30 years' experience in web development, including for well-known organisations such as The Guardian Newspaper Group and the Craft Guild of Chefs. Andrew will be joined by Rebecca Saunders, who has experience in managing databases with members' content. She is also experienced in utilising social media and marketing. You may well have seen her work, not only during our Forums but at exciting events such as LACA's Main Event.

We will also be able to call upon the wider experience of the DR team for training and management of the site, financial issues and the production of a weekly digital newsletter.

The actual creation of the site will be undertaken by a team from Eton Digital – a web development organisation with a proven track record of building and managing all of the current DR managed sites, including the HCA Forum site. Andrew and his team have worked in collaboration with Eton Digital, delivering cutting edge digital solutions for over 10 years. Eton Digital has a distinguished portfolio that includes work with prestigious clients such as the NHS, Ricoh and Nissan.

Based on the current timeline, the new website should be available before the beginning of March 2025. We are conscious that this will be after this year's annual renewal of subscriptions, but going forward this process too will be managed directly through the website, and members will also be able to update their own personal details, such as changes in their job role and contact details.

A list of frequently asked questions is being compiled and will be shared through the Network News distribution. This is an exciting opportunity to get the strength and values of the HCA out to a much wider audience than we have been able to up until now, and represents a significant investment for the Association that it is believed will be welcomed by everyone.

EAST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH

Report by Loraine Hartley

The Branch held committee meetings in August and October via Teams.

September saw boards participating in the Scotland Food and Drink Fortnight, offering a wide variety of Scottish products from venison and haggis to Taylors Crisps.

On October 22, the Branch held a business meeting with a presentation from Carolyn Bell from Fife Council – Food Coordinator for Food4Fife, Strategy and Action Plan. Carolyn gave a great overview of the approach, achievements to-date, the published strategy and the next steps. This also leads into the Good Food Nation Act, public sector food plans and how they will support this as we move forward. Anyone interested can read more about it here: our.fife.scot/food4life

As this issue goes to press, Friday, November 22, is the date for the Branch Christmas Lunch at DINE in Edinburgh. On Friday, December 6, the Branch will hold its Annual General Meeting. Any changes to Branch officers will be updated in the new year.

Looking ahead to 2025, January 7 will see the first Branch committee meeting, and the Branch dinner will be held on Friday, January 17, venue to be confirmed.

The East of Scotland Branch would like to wish everyone a great, happy and successful 2025.





IT'S ALL ABOUT CHEFS

SEVERAL HCA PROJECTS COME TO FRUITION, AND MORE ARE SET TO LAUNCH...

A very big congratulations to all of the teams from across England that competed in the 2024 NHS Chef competition, especially those who made it to the final week. An even bigger congratulations to Alejandro Hernandez and Manuela Miccoli, the winning team representing the Royal Surrey Hospital (Medirest). I was not able to attend this year in person, but Nicola Strawther, our National Vice Chair, represented the HCA at the final.

You can read more about this event on p10-11 of this issue. I look forward to welcoming Alejandro and Manuela, along with other chef teams from across the four nations, to demonstrate their skills and creativity at our own HCA Showcase, which will be held during the HRC event at ExCeL in London on March 17, 2025. The criteria are being finalised now and the application process will open soon.

CONTRACT AWARD

I'm also very pleased to confirm that the contract for our new website and centralised membership management system has been awarded to Dewberry Redpoint. This has been communicated to members, along with an FAQ document to explain how we expect this to progress, and work has now commenced. This has been a significant project, involving three working groups – one focusing on the website, one on membership and one

on finance – and I expect to see this work come to fruition in February next year. I would like to personally thank Janice Gillan and Caroline Darvill for the tremendous amount of time and effort they have put into leading this project, and the Exec Team for their continued support.

UPSKILLING CHEFS

Another piece of exciting news is that the HCA is working in collaboration with the NACC (National Association of Care Caterers) to relaunch the Level 2 qualification for chefs working in healthcare. This qualification is designed to upskill chefs and give them the practical knowledge of the wide spectrum of dietary needs they have to cater for within healthcare, such as IDDSI and other special diets. This course was launched originally around eight years ago, but the take-up was not as great as we had hoped. Hence, in relaunching this qualification we have made two significant changes – to the course delivery and how it is managed, to make it both accessible and affordable for all catering staff. Firstly, the course will be controlled by HCA and NACC, so the costs for training will be contained to ensure affordability. We will promote and advertise it through our combined communication channels. Secondly, the delivery model will be a hybrid of online/virtual theory with practical training on one day only at a regional hub. These hubs will be located around the country, reducing the

need to travel long distances, and there will be no requirement for staff to attend college on a regular basis.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The HCA will be well-represented at the 2024 PSC Forum in Hinckley, and Nicola and I will represent the association at the HCSA (Health Care Supply Association) conference in Telford. Then, on January 22, 2025, we have the first in our new series of webinars on the theme of Patient Safety. You can book a place via our website (hospitalcaterers.org/). The early bird booking system for the 2025 National Leadership & Development Forum is also open via the website. This event will be held on April 1-2, 2025, at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole – more information on p8 of this issue. During this event I will have the pleasure of recognising the achievements of our hospital catering teams and individuals at our annual awards ceremony. We will soon be sharing the details of the categories and award criteria with members to invite nominations, and I would encourage you all to think now about who deserves a nomination within your own team or Branch. These awards are so prestigious, and I would love to see a record number of nominations.

As we prepare to enter the festive season, it falls to me to wish you all a happy and healthy Xmas and New Year.

Iain Robertson, National Chair Director

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HOSPITAL CATERER

FOOD AT OUR CORE

The programme for HCA's 2025 Leadership & Development Forum is shaping up

GOOD FOOD NATION

What could the ambitions of the Scottish Government mean for NHS catering teams?

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

Sian Langford from RJAH won the HCA's 2024 Leadership Excellence Award

NHS Chef 2024

Venison Bao Bun starter served by the winning team
from Royal Surrey Hospital

