

The New Face of Food



A resident helps chefs at The Bridges at Bent Creek, Mechanicsburg, Pa., plant and care for vegetables that will later be used in meals.

Senior living facilities are redefining the way residents dine.

GRACE HOYER

Today's long-term care administrators are challenged to provide person-centered care that focuses on re-creating residents' home comforts and daily living routines, and provides opportunities for socialization. Food services are no exception.

Many senior living communities are doing away with traditional tray service in a large dining room and replacing it with rehabilitative settings where elders can receive assistance and support while they enjoy their meals with dignity in a home-like environment. ▶



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Food Service

ALTERNATIVE KITCHENS

At Phoebe Richland Health Care Center, Richlandtown, Pa., administrator Mary Kay McMahon, RN, MHA, NHA, established three home-style dining and activity rooms for short-term, long-term and dementia residents. Entrees are prepared in the main kitchen and delivered to a pantry kitchen in each dining room. The food is kept hot in the pantry kitchen, then plated and served to residents as they request their meals. Beverages, desserts and other cold selections are easily accessible from the pantry kitchen refrigerator. Residents have the opportunity to socialize while they enjoy fresh, delicious, home-style food in a new and cheery environment.

The new dining areas also serve as activity centers. Tables and chairs break down easily to allow for recreation, and residents have Internet access and flat-screen TVs.

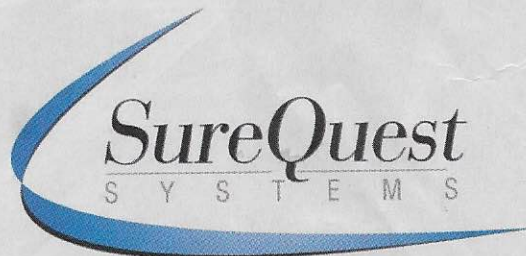
Hanna HealthCare Center at Longwood in Verona, Pa., replaced its tray-line system with free-standing country kitchens. A country kitchen is larger than a pantry kitchen and includes appliances. Entrees are kept hot in steam tables that are surrounded by a large



Proper management tools and dining management software can help long-term care facilities reduce the work of restaurant-style selective menus and tableside service. With the right tools, facilities can deliver personalized, home-like dining and stay within budget.

—Tim Sudderth, President, CEO, SureQuest Systems Inc.

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counter top, while soups, sandwiches and quick-serve items, such as hot dogs and grilled cheese, are prepared to order. Residents, with the assistance from recreational services staff, also may use the country kitchen to prepare food.

"Residents look forward to eating in the country kitchen because of its openness to living and activity areas. This increases socialization, mobility—as they need to walk to the dining room—and overall well-being," says Michael K. Haye, executive director of Longwood at Oakmont.

OFFERING CONVENIENCE

At Sherwood Oaks in Cranberry Township, Pa., residents requested grab-and-go options. So they created a cart that offers fruits, soups and sandwiches twice a week. The cart concept was so popular that the dining room now features a grab-and-go section with fresh-cut fruit, yogurt with granola, desserts, fresh salads, sandwiches on homemade breads and assorted beverages every day. All food is packaged in bio-based greenware.

GROW YOUR OWN

Many older adults want to know where their food is grown and harvested. In May, residents of The Bridges at Bent Creek, Mechanicsburg, Pa., participated in the first Grower's Day. With the help and instruction of a local greenhouse owner, residents learned how to plant and care for vegetables including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, peppers, arugula and tomatoes. The Bridges executive chef uses the harvest to prepare meals, and marks the menu so residents know when they're enjoying the fruits of their labor.

To further enhance sustainable efforts, the Bridges purchased a composter so vegetable waste and wood material (cardboard, leaves and woodchips) can be composted on-site and returned back to the garden to fertilize naturally.

WELLNESS ELEMENTS

Wellness complements good nutrition and continues to take center stage with seniors. Educate residents to help them make informed decisions about healthier food choices, keep fit, prevent disease and maintain a greater degree of independence.

Wellness workshops may tackle trans-fatty acids and heart disease, exercise and nutrition, diet trends and fads, organic foods, and living with diseases. Dining services can create customized nutrition plans and menus, and organize wellness events that give residents and patients the opportunity to take charge of their health.

While there's no singular dining option that fits every facility, one thing is certain: Seniors are asking for a hospitality experience reminiscent of home and savvy providers are making it happen, catering to the residents' personal and daily needs. ■

Grace Hoyer is public relations manager, Cura Hospitality, Orefield, Pa.

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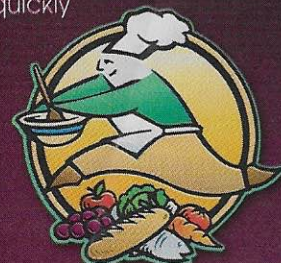
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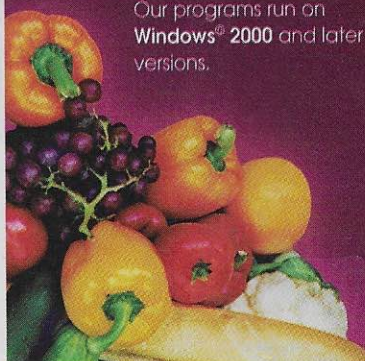
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