

# MOMENTUM

2022 Annual Conference & Expo

LeadingAge  
Washington

## Dining Management for the C-Suite



3rd

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# Today's Speakers



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Good dining  
starts at the top.



*In most communities, and especially CCRCs...*

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The dining department is:

- One of the largest items in the budget
- One of the largest factors for resident health, happiness and wellbeing
- One department that is held to very high standards by CMS with 15 F-Tags under Food and Nutrition alone
- One of the largest factors affecting census through reputation
- **...also one of the least understood departments in the management structure of senior living communities.**



FOOD IS MEDICINE

# Wellness

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## A wholesome and nutritious menu:

- Focus on liberalized menus if possible
- Go back to the basics and include fresh fruit, vegetables and locally sourced food
- Farm to Table
- Nutrition counseling is important at any age
- Involve your Registered Dietitian throughout the CCRC...not only in skilled nursing



In focus groups, most residents express dissatisfaction with their community's dining...

In focus groups, most residents express dissatisfaction with their community's dining

## *But why?*



## Why?

- Senior living dining is based on an institutional model from the 1960's and often continues in this way today
- The majority of C-suite executives are not trained dining professionals
- Community boards and finance departments often underestimate how much money it takes to offer a quality dining program
- The industrial food complex controls much of the products and resources

## Common reasons for food quality degradation:

- Poor quality ingredients
- Improper food storage, not following food-safety guidelines
- Improper food production
- Improper food holding prior to service—not hot or cool enough to keep the food safe
- Food held too long in warmers—dried out or soggy
- Highly processed foods
- Inconsistently trained staff in addition to high turnover



# *The Executive Suite's Role in Dining*

For Both Self-Operated & Contract Dining



# 1. Be Visible



**Visit the dining rooms and kitchens every day for a walk-through.**

- Be friendly and upbeat—let the team know you are on their side
- Follow protocols—wear the right shoes, a hair covering, etc.
- Get involved—pour coffee, refill waters, sample the menu, give encouragement
- Dine in the dining room at least once a week
- Create a schedule for your COO, VPs, dietitian and mid-level management teams to pop into the kitchen to say “Hi” and learn about the current specials

# 2. Know the Inventory



**Collaborate with your Dining Services Director to know what’s in the freezers, refrigerators and pantry.**

- During non-busy hours, tour through the freezers and refrigerators and storerooms
- Keep an eye out for highly processed foods, pre-prepared foods, canned vegetables—all indicators that the dining team is relying on processed foods rather than cooking fresh foods
- Evaluate the structure of storage organization
- Ask questions about anything you don’t understand

## 3. Carry a Thermometer & Checklist

Take interest in how workflows and processes can be improved and if food safety is being followed

- Get nerdy and add a clip-on food thermometer to your daily office attire
- Have fun “temping” food
  - Our easy instructions: [3rdPlus.com/foodtemping](http://3rdPlus.com/foodtemping)
- Check for recipes—are they available and being followed?
- Look for production sheets
- And remember, ask lots of questions!

## Rethink The Budget: How Much Does Good Dining Cost?



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## Find the \$\$\$ for Dining | Equipment

Review the capital budget. Would residents rather have a covered garage or better food 365 days a year?

- What equipment is critically needed right now and what can be proposed in next year's capital budget?
- Is there broken equipment that can be easily repaired? What is the cost vs benefit?
- Is there equipment that is not needed that can be sold? Eg. a 60-gallon steam-jacketed kettle may no longer be needed if you have downsized the number of apartments or beds



## Find the \$\$\$ for Dining | Equipment

**FACT: Most senior living communities lack the correct equipment to produce the expected menu with desired quality.**

Work with the team to look out for:

- Outdated equipment
- Kitchen design that was created before the menu
- Missing small wares important to table services (silverware, napkins, tablecloths, pitchers)



## Find the \$\$\$ for Dining | Equipment

Equipment is vital to safety and quality:

Equipment	Broken	Functioning
Plate Warmers	Cold food	Hot, palatable food
Blender	Inconsistent food, e.g. soup	Creamy soups and sauces
Broiler	Unable to quickly melt cheese or brown a product	Speeds up food prep
Dull knives	Risk of injury	Efficient cutting of food

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## Find the \$\$\$ for Dining | Labor

**Labor:** Analyze roles, watch work pace and styles.

- Having had the same number of staff “for decades,” does not mean that it is still needed
- Evaluate roles and responsibilities—is the department running efficiently?
- What modifications can you make without adding dollars to the budget?
- Is the BOH struggling while FOH staff stand around a lot? Job sharing – is this a possibility?



## Find the \$\$\$ for Dining | Labor During The Great Resignation



In surveys, besides good pay,  
**RESPECT** is the number one  
quality dining staff want in their job.

And sometimes, respect is first before salary.

## 6 Ways to Show R-E-S-P-E-C-T

1. **Acknowledgement.** Regularly recognize all levels of the dining staff for the jobs they do.
2. **Upwardly mobile pathways.** Provide a clear path from an entry-level dining position all the way up to your job!
3. **Esprit de corps.** Take a shift in the dining department. Volunteer to prep cook for a shift—slice and chop. Be a guest server. Demonstrate that we are all in this together.
4. **Financial rewards.** Intermittent monetary rewards based on performance.
5. **Uniforms.** Have summer and winter uniforms that are comfortable, fit right and easy to care for.
6. **A seat at the table.** Include your executive chef and culinary director in the executive suite meetings. Host a dining server and cook round table once a month.

## Recruiting

Dining professionals can be hired and start in the same day in restaurants. Senior living communities are competing against restaurants, fast food chains and each other.

### Hiring Tips

1. Analyze current dining hiring practice.
2. Revamp hiring for speed—make applying and interviewing easy
3. Hire for personality and enthusiasm—you can train for skill  
(Exception: chefs need existing skills and outside training)
4. Begin to communicate culture and expectations during the interview

# Culture

Invest in workforce tools:

1. Effective advertising
2. Culture booklet
3. Onboarding presentation
4. Retention program



# Training

Invest in a training regimen:

1. Train the trainers
2. Require daily training modules
3. Have ongoing education



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## Find the \$\$\$ for Dining | Food

**Food:** Take a closer look—can the menu be structured to increase quality and maintain budget?

- Review ingredients, dishes for popularity, convenience foods etc.
- Be imaginative—feature fun, less expensive dishes
- Add regional favorites and ensure that all cooks know how to prepare/serve the dish to expectations



## Find the \$\$\$ for Dining | Food

- Review food waste, spend down's and shrinkage
- Upsell and increase sales that bring profit to the bottom line—can be used for higher quality food
- Consider a cocktail and wine program to increase revenue.
- Increase catering sales

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## Expensive Processed Food

Pre-made Frozen Omelets



Imitation Crab Cakes



Pre-baked Frozen Potatoes



Plastic-wrapped Frozen Baked Goods



Pre-made Frozen Scrambled Egg "Product"



Canned Pudding



Frozen Chopped Eggs



**Executive Challenge:**  
Dine in your own dining room for a few weeks straight to understand what is being served and how it makes you feel.

## REVIEW

# *What Can The Executive Suite Do?*

- Evaluate the current inventory
- Review historical financial data
- Include your Dining Director and Executive Chef in budgeting plans for the upcoming year
  - And review financials together monthly
- Create a vision and establish written standards for food quality
- Ask for a menu refresh
- Enroll your team in the solution
  - If they are overwhelmed with work, hire a team to help

# Last, But Not Least—Positive Action

Create a safe space for honest conversations:

1. **Come together.** Gather a multidisciplinary group of people who have differing points of view. Jointly design the next steps and include culinary leadership.
2. **Be curious.** Ask questions and be open minded.
3. **Be honest.** Discuss tough issues that have been hiding.
4. **Lead with vision.** Start with dining program end goals.
5. **Focus on solutions.** Encouraging your dining team to ask for what they need. Listen for the barriers the team is experiencing and provide solutions.
6. **Assume good intentions.** Everyone wants to do the right thing, so proceed with the mentality that together you CAN do this.

## Questions?

