

CHEF DON MILLER ANSWERS OPERATOR QUESTIONS:

## 'Creating WOW foodservice with your existing resources'

**How can I operate a successful foodservice operation when my facility requires me to attend numerous meetings and serve on many committees which absorb about 50% of my work day?**

Generally speaking, it is very difficult to produce consistently fantastic food and keep employee morale high when you're absent 50% of the time. While other departments may be able to pull this off, foodservice will generally suffer. That's because foodservice has 10,000 quality control variables for every one variable in other departments. Consequently, overall it is generally more difficult to be really successful in foodservice compared to other departments.

- It is important to be a team player, and be involved in outside meetings and committees. However, don't go overboard. Many of us have a difficult time saying "no". This is a word we must use when it is best for us and the foodservice department. Learn to say no when you have the option.

- Also, think about delegating meeting or committee attendance to others on your staff. For example, maybe the Dietitian can attend the Infection Control meetings, or assign your assistant or supervisor to go to the Safety Meeting. In most facilities, administration likes the foodservice department to be on the Employee Events Committee because we usually provide the food for the events. This would be a good committee for any member of your staff to serve on. Delegating meeting attendance to others will save you valuable time, and also help your staff feel more involved.

- One last thought: Be careful about volunteering for committees unless you are sure that you have the time. If your food is not fantastic, then your priority should be to improve the food, not to volunteer for non-foodservice duties.

**I know that you see and work with hundreds of different healthcare facilities throughout the U.S. On a scale of 1 to 10, could you please tell us how you think we're doing overall as a group with regard to food quality?**

Overall we're doing good, and certainly much better than 10 to 20 years ago. However, most facilities (95%) still have lots of room for improvement. With 10 being the top of the scale, most healthcare facilities rate themselves from 5 to 7.

Generally it takes about three years to go from a 7 to a 9 or 10 in overall quality and service.

**I have heard you use the 1 to 10 quality scale before. What does a foodservice at the 10 level look like, in your opinion?**

1. Patients, staff, visitors and all customers rave about the food and service.

2. The foodservice employees have high morale and enjoy their work.

3. The overall operation runs efficiently, smoothly and within budget.

4. The morale of the entire facility has been lifted as a direct result of quality food and service.

5. Even modified food looks and tastes great.

6. The cooks and chefs wear chef coats and chef hats. Non-cook food service employees wear uniforms that look sharp.

7. The news media has probably run stories about your food and service because it is so good.

8. The foodservice department may be referred to by the administrator as a model for excellence.

**How can I produce quality tasting and looking food without spending more money on food and staff?**

You don't have to spend more money to improve your food quality. For example, most people are overcooking boneless, skinless chicken breasts by 400%. I often refer to the final product as a "hockey-puck." To cook the chicken the correct length of time doesn't involve spending more money. It does involve paying attention to proper food preparation techniques.

**My staff doesn't seem to have time to do the little things necessary to produce quality food and service—any suggestions?**

Yes. Simplify everything you possibly can without "shooting yourself in the foot." Look for wasted steps.

- Simplify the menu. Make sure that your employees have the right equipment to do the job.

- Get computerized. Utilize the prime vendor concept.

- Do you have enough can openers in the right location?

- Buy fresh vegetables already processed and ready to use. Carefully evaluate the work schedule.

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### 1. JAZZ UP THE FOOD SHOW

Add color (such as colored cotton napkins) along the trayline and mix in props like live or synthetic plants, baskets, vases or porcelain parrots. And, build as much variety in your offerings as possible—with items like popcorn, specialty ice cream bars, home-made (self-serve) pretzels, hot dogs, candy and muffins.



### 2. PAY ATTENTION TO THE SIDE-SHOWS

To de-institutionalize the deli bar, use kale to "cover up" some of the stainless steel. Use fresh flowers and live vegetable props to add eye-appeal at the salad bar. And make sure the hot breakfast show stands out by using brightly-colored napkins to set off biscuits and muffins.



### 3. MAKE YOUR TRAYS 'STARS' EACH DAY

Notice the difference garnish makes on these two trays (above). A touch of kale, a cherry tomato on top of the green salad and some pimento and parsley "touches" mixed in the rice bring the tray to life. Tip: Make sure the pork chop is set in the right place—at '6 o'clock' on the plate, so it's right in front of the customer.

### 4. GIVE DESSERT A PAT...AND SMILE

Perk up canned peaches with a maraschino cherry as a garnish—it's one of the most used and versatile pick-me-uppers for food of all kinds. And lastly, always deliver service with a smile. Nothing turns a customer on faster than a helpful, happy worker who wants to make their meal special.

