

Chef Don Miller serves 'patient' Jennifer Pullias as Connie Lawson, IPMC diet aide observes. Miller takes pride in serving attractive and tasty meals, such as pasta primavera and bread sticks. His 'Destination 10' program emphasizes food quality as the top priority in an institutional cafeteria.

Do you call this
**Hospital
Food?**



'Chef Don' shares secrets for keeping each meal exciting

By PHYLLIS HOOPER
Times-News Staff Writer

Hospital food usually has been something patients and staff tolerated. It was to be eaten only when necessary.

That doesn't have to be the case, stresses "Chef Don" Miller, who recently visited HCA Indian Path Medical Center food services department.

Miller, an internationally known author, speaker, culinary workshop leader and special consultant to the food industry, was raised in an Italian family where "food was everything. I paid attention to food ever since I was 12 years old." His informal education has included visiting restaurants, talking to chefs and borrowing concepts from those veteran cooks.

He received his formal training in food and nutrition from California State Polytechnic University where he met his wife, Joan, a registered dietitian.

"Food service is show business. It has props (garnishes), actors and actresses (employees), and a show (the food). I like for the employees to pretend they're on a stage and to make their production a '10.'"

And that is the introductory number to Miller's "Destination 10" program, which is a 12-step process in improving an institution's food services, which usually takes about three years.

During his recent two days of intense "hands-on" training with the

IPMC food services staff, he helped start them on their way to "culinary success."

He analyzed current recipes, menus, and employee skill levels, and worked with employees to make things look and taste better.

We located him back in the kitchen, knife in hand, chopping and stir-frying fresh vegetables for the pasta primavera to be served in the cafeteria that day.

One of the first things that Miller likes to accomplish, when coming into a new institution, is to improve the communications within the food services department. "I next try to make food quality top priority. Until the employees in the industry get that mentality, the food will be mediocre. ... I'm trying to take a trend of 30 years of bad food in hospitals and to change it drastically."

Miller, one of three people in the United States to be both a registered dietitian and a certified executive chef, says that people, in general, are afraid of change. And food service employees are no exception. "My job is to 'sell' it to them and make them proud of it. When they start getting positive feedback then they will feel good."

"In order to do this, you can't be dictatorial. You must empower them to take ownership of their work. They must start thinking like a professional chef, not a robot. ... It's a matter of using the right

Patients treated to exciting menus

By PHYLLIS HOOPER
Times-News Staff Writer

Pasta primavera, breadsticks, bagels, fat-free yogurt, chef salad, pinto beans and cornbread, baked ham and lasagna.

Who said hospital food had to be bland and boring?

If you're a patient at HCA Indian Path Medical Center, there are just a few of the items included on their new "restaurant-style" menu.

Carrie Ann Olah, director of food and nutrition services at IPMC, says the new patient-oriented menu has been available since January. Its purpose was to implement changes that patients had asked for.

"We offer standard favorites everyday and a special for supper each evening."

For breakfast they offer things like orange juice, fresh fruits, stewed apples, rooked or cold cereals, eggs and bacon and sausage, bagels, etc.

Olah says there are different menus for patients with special needs, such as low-fat or low-sodium diets. They, too, have more choices, but they are all dietetically appropriate for their needs.

For example, those on a low-fat diet might choose between low-cholesterol eggs and regular eggs. "A registered dietitian looks over these menus and they use the patient's choices as a teaching tool, and help the patients make good selections."

For lunch, a patient might select oven fried chicken, a hamburger or a chef salad.

Please see MENUS, page 2C

Please see CREP, page 2C