

## Union Hospital: Combining Farm-to-Fork with Cook-Chill

**Holly Emmons, Food Service Director**

In addition to providing fresh and nutritious meals, many of today's foodservice operations are also focused on eliminating waste and implementing sustainable practices. Union Hospital in Elkton, MD, is successfully accomplishing these goals in a very unique way: combining farm-to-fork food with a cook-chill foodservice operation.

The 122-bed hospital, located in a rural community, serves 800-1,000 meals per day to patients and customers. They also operate an in-house catering program. "A major goal with our sustainability efforts is to provide healthy foods for our patients, visitors, and staff," says Holly Emmons, the facility's foodservice manager. She is a registered dietitian and a member of the Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The hospital's sustainability initiatives began in 2009, after Emmons met with a patient, who is a local farmer. He was not happy with his meals. "At the time, we weren't using many fresh ingredients," says Emmons. "I, then, went to the local farmer's market to buy ingredients for his meals, and that was the start of it. I thought, why can't I source food products for all our hospital's meals from local farmers?"

Union Hospital created a new food policy that defines local foods as those originating within a 250-mile radius. The amount of fresh, local food they purchased – including a variety of meat products – began to greatly increase. Their goal was to purchase sustainable meat sources raised without the routine use of antibiotics and reduce the amount of meat on the hospital's menu.

### **Sustainability Policies Create Multiple Benefits**

The hospital's new farm-to-fork program, incorporating locally grown, exotic, and organic produce, has led to the recruitment of high-quality chefs who prefer to use fresh, natural ingredients and scratch-cooking techniques. "We've been able to incorporate new and seasonal fruits and vegetables in our menus and as part of our chef specials, such as Asian pears and bok choy," says Emmons.

Now, they purchase in-season produce at economical prices and process it for year-round availability. In 2016, for example, 7,000 fresh ears of corn were processed for later use. It helped the hospital reduce its food costs throughout the year.



*Aerial view of Priapi Gardens, a local organic farm that's a primary supplier for Union Hospital.*

*Union Hospital uses Convect-Rite III® to combine farm-fresh ingredients with cook-chill technology. It has generated expanded menu offerings, higher food quality, and greater patient satisfaction.*

Prior to implementing scratch-cooking, the hospital used a conduction system to reheat foods for patient meals, which presented some challenges. "There were certain items, like chicken quarters and grilled cheese that we couldn't make because the food wouldn't heat properly with this method" Emmons explains.



The new Convect-Rite 3 INSIGHT system has an intuitive touchscreen controller.

### **Convect-Rite III® Enhances Patient Meals**

In 2013, the hospital installed Aladdin's Convect-Rite III® system to reheat patient meals. "Aladdin's system is much more adaptable since it's able to reheat a larger variety of foods, allowing us to expand our offerings," says Emmons.

She adds that the temperature modulation is much more efficient, and both hot and cold foods have been enhanced. This has led to an overall enhancement in food quality for patients.

# CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

Union Hospital | Convect-Rite®



Left to right: Foodservice RD Supervisor Brenda O'Connor; Foodservice Manager Holly Emmons; Chef Noelyn De Roxas.

## FACTS OF NOTE:

Convect-Rite® systems use convection technology to provide active heating and cooling for patient meals. For cook-chill retherm and cook-serve boost operations, our patented air-flow design provides the best temperature performance in the industry.

Convect-Rite® systems can bake bread and desserts right on patient trays during the heating cycle, increasing menu flexibility.

An active chill-cycle maintains cold food items below 41°F. Once the fully-insulated carts are undocked, hot and cold food temperatures are maintained for 45 minutes, to ensure meals are served at optimum temperatures for flavor and food safety.

The NEW Convect-Rite® 3 INSIGHT system includes a state-of-the-art touchscreen controller, ergonomic motorized cart/dock pairing system, and robust remote monitoring and programming systems.

"For example, we can reheat our chicken quarters beautifully," Emmons says, "getting away from the boneless, skinless and tasteless chicken we were limited to before."

She praises the Convect-Rite III® system for its ability to hold the proper temperature of cold foods, such as salads and milk, keeping them at their peak of crispness and flavor. Hospital Chef Noelyn DeRoxas adds to that assessment, "Aladdin's Convect-Rite III® is very convenient and easy to use."

Emmons likes the fact that rolls are baked right on the patient's tray during retherm, which creates a mouthwatering aroma and flavor. "We use it for everything that's heated because it's so consistent."

## Getting Noticed!

Within the community, Union Hospital's sustainability practices have attracted a lot of attention from local restaurant owners and farmers.

This has enabled them to expand their partners and resources just by word of mouth. Locally sourced food products are also available for hospital employees to purchase during work hours.

The increase in patient satisfaction with meals rethermed by Aladdin's Convect-Rite III® system, combined with nutritional advantages and improved food quality, are very compelling benefits.



"Convect-Rite III® is able to reheat a larger variety of foods, which has allowed us to expand our menu offerings."



Chef Noelyn DeRoxas processes fresh corn in the hospital kitchen. Marinara sauce is made from scratch.

To sum it up, Chef DeRoxas says, "I'm so impressed with the way we process our farm-to-fork food here and proud of what we serve our patients and customers."

## Higher Patient Satisfaction Is Just a Call Away

For more information about how Aladdin's Convect-Rite® systems can help you improve your foodservice challenges and enhance patient satisfaction, call us at:

**800-818-8018, or visit our website and online store at: [www.aladdintemprite.com](http://www.aladdintemprite.com).**

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