FOOD AND YOUR MOOD
Why your diet may help you de-stress

Plus

Innovations in food transport
Healthy Food, Healthy Staff
The risks from acrylamide
Our premium instant range
Your peace of mind

Our Premium Instant Cheese Sauce and Premium Instant Gravy products have been developed specifically to meet the needs of the public sector. Easy to use and make up anywhere!

The latest edition to the ‘Premium Instant’ range, our Premium Instant Cheese Sauce delivers consistent results every time. This easy-to-use product is made with the finest ingredients for a rich and creamy base or condiment to your dishes.

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What you should be doing to protect against acrylamide.

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21 The rise of the meat-free market
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A year of success for Nottingham University Hospitals Trust’s memory menu.

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![plotlib chart](chart.png)

We love to be Social. Search for Majorint or Majorinternational. www.majorint.com
Welcome to the first edition of Hospital Caterer for this new decade. 2020 looks like being a landmark year not only for the country, as we leave the European Union, but also for the Association as we look forward to securing our long-term future.

If I might deal with Brexit first: we are not a political Association but we need to be mindful of the legislative changes that will come about by our departure from the European Union. We currently anticipate that there will be no immediate change in our local laws and hope that many of the safeguards that are currently in place around health, the environment and food safety will not be diminished, but as caterers we need to be ever mindful of the legislation that determines things such as hygiene and the quality of food we serve our patients, staff and visitors. As we face the uncertain period post 31 January, you can depend on the Association to keep you updated on the changes that affect us all.

The election at the end of last year meant that the civil servants working on the Hospital Food Review had to observe the ‘purdah’ period, resulting in timescales lengthening slightly; however, all the meetings and site visits that had to be cancelled have been rescheduled and are progressing well. The Senior Board has listened to the concerns of many HCA Members and has added additional visits to ensure that every type of hospital is visited and as many opinions considered as possible. This is a massive undertaking and I am very grateful to everyone who has taken the time to share their thoughts with me and the rest of the panel.

Governance review

Now to turn to our own issues. High on the agenda remains the need for us to safeguard our Members and assets and at the last Council meeting in November, we agreed a paper that was circulated to every Branch. This was highlighted in my article within the December issue, entitled Delivering Good Governance – The next steps, which urged all Members to take the time to read the recommendations. I am really pleased that so many people have already taken this to heart and have raised several questions – which we are working through – and we intend to place a live Q&A document in the Members’ Only section of the website, allowing everyone to see the responses.

I am grateful to Mick Forse for bringing me to task when I described the Association as a ‘mutual trader’. Mick produced documentation that clearly stated that we are a ‘Not for profit’ organisation but, it seems, both are correct: a Non-Profit Making organisation is a generic term covering any organisation that exists as a social enterprise, charity, members’ club or otherwise than to generate profits for distribution. A Mutual Trader is a type of Non-Profit Making organisation on the basis that any surpluses it makes are for the benefit of the members only. Mutual trading is a concept that only applies to Corporation Tax. VAT has no such distinction because it looks at the nature of the supplies being made so, therefore, for VAT purposes the Association is a Non-Profit Making body.

This is just one example of the delicate road we are taking, so I have been heartened to hear open debates as I travel around the different Branches. During the AGM season, I was privileged to have visited the London and South East, Merseyside and North Wales, Oxford, Trent, and West Midlands Branches and at each meeting there was plenty of interest in why we are looking to make the changes that we are proposing. Each Branch has been asked to come back with their responses by 29 February (yes, we are in a leap year).

Branch visits

Visiting each Branch during your tenure is a challenge that is set to every Chair and it is a privilege and a pleasure to accept it. As well as the Branches named above, I have diary dates to visit at least a further three in the very near future, so I am on track with quite a while to go yet before my tenure is at an end.

I have also attended some of the planning meetings for this year’s Leadership and Development Forum, and the plans certainly look very exciting. One of the highlights must be the HCA Awards and nominations are now open. I know that there are some great people, indeed teams, up and down the country that really deserve to be considered, so I look forward to hearing that our National Secretary, Janice Gillan, is receiving sacks of mail full of nominations. I should also mention that our National Vice Chair, Brian Robb, is handling any applications for assisted places using the funds that we put aside for our Bursary Awards [see panel].

Best wishes

Craig Smith, Honorary National Chairman,
Hospital Caterers Association
Appetite is heavily influenced by the appearance of food. That’s why we are focusing on providing a unique training service to help hospital staff provide food to patients which looks as good as it tastes.

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## Wessex Branch

From **Chris Lay**

Autumn has been a busy time for us down here in the south. On 17 October we assembled at Salisbury District Hospital for a special ‘regional’ meeting hosted by Phil Shelley. Excellent attendance by caterers and patrons alike provided Phil with valuable feedback for the National Food Review he is currently undertaking.

On 11 December, the Branch held a very successful Branch meeting and AGM at Bournemouth and Poole College. We have fostered great links with the college courtesy of our own local Salon Culinaire. The college happily hosted our meeting where we filled all Branch officer posts at the AGM and then had lively debate on HCA governance issues (the picture shows Members focused on the matters in hand). Members and Patrons then retired to the college’s ‘Escoffier’ training restaurant for a sumptuous Christmas meal.

Our programme for the coming year is below and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our varied list of events.

A Happy New Year from everyone in Wessex.

### Wessex Branch News

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 February</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Salisbury District Hospital</td>
<td>Hoshizaki/Gram Andrew Shearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 March</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Hotel and Restaurant Show, Excel</td>
<td>Hospital Chefs Team Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Tatchbury Mount Hospital</td>
<td>Hobart, Richard Barwick</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 June</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Poole Hospital</td>
<td>Kitchequip, Burscough</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 July</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Summer Social, Hillcrest Campsite</td>
<td>Wrightington Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 August</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>St Anne’s Hospital, Poole</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 October</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Western Hospital, Southampton</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 December</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Bournemouth (college or hospital)</td>
<td>AGM</td>
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</table>

## Northern Ireland Branch

From **Deborah McNeill**

The Northern Ireland Branch held its Christmas soiree in Zen Restaurant, Belfast on 29 November. There was a good attendance and we all ate, drank and were merry; a great night was had by all.

Owing to ongoing industrial action, the Branch AGM was rescheduled for 3 January 2020. Members put forward areas of interest for the 2020 programme, and the Business and Development group will devise a programme based on their suggestions. Work continues on the implementation of Minimum Nutritional Standards, with a joint meeting scheduled to enable HCA Members and district council representatives to share experiences and assist in the rollout of the Standards to all public sector caterers, enabling a fitter future for all.

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>12 February</td>
<td>12 noon</td>
<td>Clearer Water Social Enterprise</td>
<td>Larne</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>tbc</td>
<td>Punjab Kitchen (joint meeting with Northern Branch)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 June</td>
<td>tbc</td>
<td>La Mon Hotel, Belfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 September</td>
<td>9.30am–5pm</td>
<td>Chef Flair, Stephens Catering, Broughshane</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 October</td>
<td>9.30am–5pm</td>
<td>Branch AGM</td>
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<td>18 November</td>
<td>tbc</td>
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## West of Scotland Branch

From **Robert McLaughlin**

The West of Scotland Branch celebrated its 70th anniversary year with the annual ‘2020 Catering Vision’ event, which was held on Friday 7 February at Seamill Hydro Hotel, West Kilbride. The Study Day focused on a food waste workshop, together with updates on the Root and Branch Review and the Association Governance Review. The event had an exhibition, with delegates all free to attend. The Study Day was followed by the alternative Burns Supper, which is always an experience.

In December we had our AGM, followed by lunch, at Brian Maule Chardon D’or restaurant in Glasgow. The officers approved were:

**Chairman:** Robert McLaughlin
**Vice-Chair:** Kate Murray/Gary Nicholl
**Secretary:** Margaret Valenti
**Asst Secretary:** Wendy Bone
**Treasurer:** Janice Gillan
**Asst Treasurer:** Wendy Bone
**Council Rep:** Nicola Mctvor

Finally, our Branch calendar is shown below (some dates and venues are still to be confirmed).

### West of Scotland Branch News

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 February</td>
<td>9.30am–5pm</td>
<td>Study Day</td>
<td>Seamill Hydro Hotel, Ayrshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>March (tbc)</td>
<td>Branch meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>May (tbc)</td>
<td>Branch meeting</td>
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<td>Ayr Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>June (tbc)</td>
<td>Joint Branch meeting with East of Scotland Branch</td>
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<tr>
<td>September (tbc)</td>
<td>Branch meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dumfries Royal Infirmary</td>
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<tr>
<td>October (tbc)</td>
<td>Branch meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>December (tbc)</td>
<td>AGM</td>
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## Branch News

### Northern Ireland Branch

From **Deborah McNeill**

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<tr>
<td>18 November</td>
<td>tbc</td>
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Trent Branch
From Allan Gimson

Our AGM in November was held at Cafeology in Sheffield where we were welcomed by Toni Unkles, Finance Director for Cafeology, with a full-on barista service serving amazing coffee in their training area. This is hardly surprising to those in the know, because Cafeology is a specialist coffee importer and roaster, and stocks everything needed to run a coffee shop. Roastology is a specialist department of Cafeology and does its own roasting following a major investment in the necessary equipment – a Diedrich CR35.

Before our meeting, we went to the warehouse to see for ourselves.
At one end is the roasting machine, which looks like something out of a science fiction movie. The entire process is controlled by a computer, which is individually programmed for each customer. Roastology prides itself on being able to develop a ‘signature’ blend for each customer, and to be able to always supply further supplies of coffee to the same taste profile.

Roastology is happy to show any Branches around if you are looking for meeting venues. Our thanks go to Roastology and Freshfayre for their sponsorship of the meeting.

In common with many Branches, we sometimes struggle to get officers. Sadly, Lynn Jonson announced that she wished to stand down from the Treasurer role because the runaway success of her Eco to Go products means she is spending more time on the road and can not always attend meetings. Our thanks go to Lynn and we welcome Helen Butcher as our new Branch treasurer.

Our December meeting was held at the Ringwood Hall Hotel in Chesterfield and was sponsored by GW Price Ltd, one of our Patron Members. We were pleased to welcome National Chair, Craig Smith, to our meeting but unfortunately his wife was ill and could not accompany him, and so they missed the evening social event. We hope that Mrs Smith has since made a full recovery.

Thanks to GW Price, and John Plant, Managing Director, for their sponsorship of the meeting and the luncheon.

The Trent Branch calendar for 2020 so far is as follows:
Dates for the rest of the year will be released in due course.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 January</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>Bidfood, Wakefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 February</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>Diversey UK, Alfreton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 March</td>
<td>tbc</td>
<td>Lincoln County Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 May</td>
<td>2pm</td>
<td>Chesterfield Royal Infirmary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 June</td>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>Hobart UK, Peterborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 July</td>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>Northern General Hospital, Sheffield</td>
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</table>

Merseyside and North Wales Branch
From Carol Delves

Branch Members welcomed our National Chair, Craig Smith, to our AGM on 28 November 2019; Craig had also attended the Forum 2020 Management Team meeting earlier in the day. During the AGM, Craig updated Members about the work being undertaken around the governance of the Association and encouraged everyone to read the documents that have been circulated regarding this matter, advising that if anyone had any questions then they should speak to one of the Branch Officers. This topic was the main agenda item at our Branch meeting on 9 January 2020.

Craig also presented Neil Johnson from Caterware Ltd with his Patron certificate (pictured).

Our annual post-Christmas function was held on Saturday 25 January 2020 at St George’s Hotel, Llandudno, where guests joined in with the Burns Night celebrations being held at the hotel.

Finally, our Branch programme for 2020 is as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 February</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>The Bistro, Leighton Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 May</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Glen Clywd Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 June</td>
<td>tbc</td>
<td>Bidfood, Speke, Liverpool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July [tbc]</td>
<td>tbc</td>
<td>Joint BBQ with North West Branch at Kitchequip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 September</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Wrightington Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 October</td>
<td>tbc</td>
<td>Olympic Oils, Whiston, Liverpool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 November</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>The Bistro, Leighton Hospital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
South West Branch

From Jane Wills

The Branch hosted its AGM and social event for the second year at the Saunton Sands Hotel in Devon. On route, a number of Members participated in an interesting tour of the Hobart factory, followed by afternoon tea. It was also a special occasion because it marked the imminent retirement from Hobart of David Grundy, a well-known and highly regarded individual.

The social event in the evening was up to the same excellent standard as the previous year and was enjoyed by all. There were 26 attendees, which was excellent considering the distances most people had to travel, with 22 of them attending the AGM the following morning. The AGM was a lively affair with reflections over the year’s events and discussion on key objectives for 2020, including the continued planning for the 2021 Forum.

Our Branch calendar is shown below (dates and events for later in the year are still to be confirmed). We are looking forward to a busy but productive and successful 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>Branch meeting</td>
<td>Yeo Valley HQ, North Somerset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 May</td>
<td>Branch meeting</td>
<td>Taunton and Somerset NHS FT, Musgrove Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July [tbc]</td>
<td>Branch meeting and boat trip</td>
<td>tbc</td>
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<tr>
<td>October/</td>
<td>Branch meeting</td>
<td>tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November [tbc]</td>
<td>AGM and festive social</td>
<td>tbc</td>
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Trevor Chacksfield climbs Kilimanjaro

The Branch is very proud of former Royal Marine – and Branch Member – Trevor Chacksfield, who recently climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to raise money for the Royal Marines charity. He sent the following message:

“You will be pleased to know I reached the summit at 19:58 local time on Thursday 30 January,” said Trevor. “We had an eight hour climb starting at midnight. It rained for the whole six days whilst on the mountain... but as they say ‘it ain’t training unless it’s raining’. I was the oldest in a team of 15 by eight years, with the team comprising eight Brits and six Canadian, plus our team Doctor. He had summited Everest twice and said our final accent was tough going. We had a 17k yomp through the rain forest this morning... and yes it rained. There is time to donate if you wish.”

North West Branch

From Ita Hicks

Our recent Branch meeting at Lancashire Cricket Club was attended by 47 Members – just under half of which were catering members – which was an excellent turnout. Thank you to Jo Warburton and Julie Dodd for hosting the event; it was a tremendous location.

The meeting included a passionate exchange of information and ideas around Natasha’s Law and changing food fashions. The talks identified a desire to continue this discussion at our May Branch meeting, where Members will gather and share best practices and ideas that our catering colleagues can follow and share with their own department and Trust Board members.

Finally, our Branch Programme for the year was confirmed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 February</td>
<td>Sandwich Factory Visit, Single Use Plastic</td>
<td>Abbey Foods, Walton Dale, Preston</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 May</td>
<td>Branch Meeting</td>
<td>Countess of Chester Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 June</td>
<td>22nd Anniversary Summer Ball</td>
<td>The Village Hotel, Warrington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 August</td>
<td>Joint Branch Meeting, Summer BBQ</td>
<td>Kitchequip, Burscough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Sept</td>
<td>Educational Exchange Day</td>
<td>Wrightington Hospital</td>
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Aberdeen hospital in gluten-free first

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary’s hospital kitchen has become the first in Scotland to be certified gluten free by preparing food separately at night. The hospital was previously buying in gluten-free meals but the dishes are now being made on site at night to avoid risk of contamination from certain ingredients used during the day.

Catering manager Stuart Donald said, “We are now making all of our gluten-free meals fresh on site using local suppliers, where possible, with fresh ingredients. They are all made at night by a separate team of chefs to ensure there’s a total segregation of processes.”

National Chair receives accolades for contribution to Public Sector Catering

Our National Chair, Craig Smith, was recently presented with the Order of Merit from the Catering Equipment Suppliers Association (CESA) in recognition of his contribution to the catering industry. The award was presented by CESA Chair, John Whitehouse CFSP, at CESA’s annual conference, which was held at the Renaissance Hotel, Heathrow Airport.

Craig has also been named among the top 20 most influential caterers in the Public Sector by the publication, Public Sector Catering, along with past Chairs Phil Shelley and Andy Jones. To have three Members named in the Top 20 is a fantastic achievement.

Speaking of the Order of Merit, Craig said, “I am honoured to receive the accolade, which is the first award I have received for my work in the public sector, which now spans more than 40 years. For all that time I have been proud to be a member of the Hospital Caterers Association, and it is for that work that I accepted the honour. I am also very grateful to ISS for giving me the opportunity of working in so many different and interesting sectors. I have been very lucky.”

New Chief Executive and name change at CESA

Keith Warren has been appointed chief executive of CESA, having been director of the Association for 18 years. The change is part of the restructuring as CESA prepares to transform into the Foodservice Equipment Association, the FEA, on March 1 2020.

“With the Association’s new structure, such as the product group forums and the enlarged secretariat, the board felt we needed to ensure that the terminology accurately reflected our roles,” says Warren. “The structure gives us better access to the wealth of knowledge and expertise we have as an Association, and increased bandwidth in terms of how we communicate with and influence our members and our wider audience – including government and the foodservice industry as a whole.”

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Essential cuisine for vegans

With vegan and plant-based recipes now increasingly appearing on menus, Essential Cuisine is launching a range of vegan stock mixes made with the finest ingredients to enhance the flavour of vegan dishes.

The range includes the authentic flavours of beef, chicken, lamb and vegetable. Each is supplied in an instantly dissolvable, powdered format that can be added at any stage of the cooking process, offering quality and consistency, whilst giving chefs the opportunity to get creative in the kitchen.

As well as being suitable for vegan and vegetarian diets, the range is also 100 per cent gluten free and has been approved by the Halal Food Authority to give caterers complete peace of mind.

To discover more call 01606 542490.

The evolution of snacking in healthcare

As one of the UK’s largest vending companies, The Vending People is interested in what people are buying from its machines. To better understand today’s trends, the company has looked at more than 900 of its machines across the UK, including within the healthcare environment, comparing the products sold during the first half of 2018 with the first half of 2019.

By looking at vending trends – and how they’re changing – The Vending People hopes consumers can eat and drink more healthily going forward. The new pop-up vending machine can assist with this because each one has sugar-free drinks and snacks under 150 calories. They’re also fully CQUIN-compliant.

To learn more about the findings visit www.thevendingpeople.co.uk/news or visit them at this year’s HCA event.

Commercial Kitchen – the UK’s only dedicated kitchen equipment, services and design show – is heading to London ExCeL for its ‘biggest edition yet’ on 3–4 June.

Following the relocation announcement last year, visitor registration to Commercial Kitchen’s fifth anniversary show in London is now open. More than 100 exhibiting companies are lined up for this year’s event, showcasing the complete range of innovative equipment, services, devices and utensils required to run, refurbish or build a commercial kitchen, including cooking equipment, refrigeration, storage, warewashing, fit out and design.

Visitors to this year’s show can expect to find a host of new innovations and solutions designed to help make their kitchens greener and more efficient. And the HCA – long-standing supporters of Commercial Kitchen – will once again have a stand at the show and be involved in the free two-day seminar programme.

For further information and to register for your free trade ticket (saving you the £20 door fee), please visit www.commercialkitchenshow.co.uk and quote priority code CK8.
New training from apetito

This year apetito is going the extra mile to provide customers with the training and skills they need to serve food that looks and tastes delicious. Patients naturally need healthy and nutritious meals to help them make a full recovery but from experience, the appearance of food is extremely important for recovery as well because appetite is heavily influenced by the appearance of food. As a result, apetito is focusing on providing a unique training service to help hospital staff serve food that not only looks delicious but also tastes great.

To find out more, visit the apetito stand at the HCA Forum in Liverpool from 2–3 April.

HCA governance update

Since the last issue of this magazine, our Vice Presidents and National Officers have been busy working on the next stage of the development of incorporation. As explained before, we have already issued a brief through the Council representatives and having read through the minutes of the meetings held over the last couple of months, I am pleased to see that the situation is being discussed at local level. It was through these conversations that the question arose about our current status. Rather than repeat myself, please refer to my introductory column for clarification about this issue.

In the meantime, we must keep the momentum going if we are to meet our original deadlines of having something concrete to discuss at the Leadership and Development Forum in April. I believe that the need for change has been established but people need to be clear on what the future may look like. To this end, the Council approved the proposal from the Vice Presidents to ask Andy Burman from SEBCO to commence on a second piece of work, which will lay out the various options that are available to use – some will be more favourable than others, some may have more appeal than others and some may be more practical than others.

Andy Burman has considerable experience in this field, and we expect that he will not only guide us safely through the legal maze but also provide us with a guidance document that will ensure everyone is fully informed in the steps that we are taking.

We will continue to add to the Questions and Answers section on the website but if you have any burning questions please contact either myself or the Vice Presidents using our usual email addresses.

Craig Smith, HCA National Chair
The Hospital Chefs’ Team Event

at the Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Show, 5 March 2020

Another opportunity is around the corner for our healthcare chefs to demonstrate their ability at one of the premier showcase events. Phil Shelley looks ahead.

They say that all good things come to those that wait, so if that’s the case we should be in for a memorable competition when our chefs take to the stage for the Hospital Chef’s Team Event in the Live Theatre at ExCeL London on 5 March.

There are a number of new entrants this year, proving that the competition is still very much ‘alive’ and the opportunity to be on the winners’ platform at London Excel is still revered. And the HCA has a new prime spot on Thursday 5 March at 8am, providing a fantastic launch to the live cooking area on the final day.

The competition is open to teams of two chefs who work in healthcare or NHS premises and will be judged on the team’s ability to devise, prepare and present a two-course meal (main and dessert) with appropriate accompaniments for two covers within one hour. The meal must:

- be suitable for generic NHS patients
- have an emphasis on reduced saturated fats, sugars and salts, and be nutritionally sound
- not exceed £2.60 per head
- be hot (at least the main course)
- be suitable to produce 50 portions for both courses
- include sustainable fish in the main course, with a strong British influence, and include a fruit-based pudding containing less than 10g of added sugar per portion, and
- be taken into the theatre in a raw, unprepared state, with all ingredients provided by the competitors. No prior preparation or manufactured foods are acceptable, except for stocks.

The competition is open to teams of two chefs who work in healthcare or NHS premises.

As we go to print, our teams (and their menus) are still being finalised, so you may still be able to enter. If you would like to take part, please contact Phil Shelley as soon as you can to check the current status of entries. We hope to have a wide range of competitors from around the UK to illustrate the HCA’s 4 Nations approach to catering. Food is Medicine and the quality of food prepared by our hospital chefs through their crafted presentation proves that hospital chefs can achieve hospitality standards.

So things are heating up nicely for the competition and once again we offer our grateful thanks to our co-sponsors, Hobart Cooking Solutions and The Worshipful Company of Cooks. We couldn’t do it without them.

We hope to see lots of HCA Members and other supporters cheering on the teams and hospitals as our brave staff battle it out for the medals, honour and top billing. Don’t miss the opportunity to support our colleagues.

Final details of the teams entering Hotelympia (plus their menus) will be posted on the HCA website in the next couple of weeks.
Healthy Food, Healthy Staff

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has introduced a fresh approach to providing healthy and affordable meal choices for NHS staff and visitors. Andrea Basu, Service Lead for Public Health Dietetics for NHS Wales, explains.

Wales, like other home countries across the UK, is increasingly challenged with how best to support and enable people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, whilst simultaneously tackling the routes of food poverty faced by many families across our communities. The NHS is the UK’s largest employer, so focusing attention on supporting our own staff to access nutritious and affordable meals provided a vital focus for our collaborative of caterers, dietitians, occupational health and fellow health board colleagues at Wrexham Maelor Hospital. We brought together our respective skills, knowledge and resources to proactively engage staff in eating well at work and home.

In support of the health board’s ‘Wellbeing Wednesdays’, we introduced an eight-week pilot offering staff and visitors a main meal in the canteen at a significantly reduced cost of 60p, alongside a portion of fruit for 15p. Meals for each of the eight weeks were selected from the All Wales Food Menu Framework, with the majority being plant-based to encourage staff to include a meat-free option during the week, therefore contributing to wider health and environmental benefits. Recipe cards were developed and provided with each meal purchased to encourage cooking the meals at home. The nutritional value for each meal was included, alongside a cost analysis for producing the meal per serving and for a family of four, based on purchasing ingredients from local retailers in close proximity to the hospital site. As a further incentive, the catering team prepared spice starter packs, enabling staff to quickly and easily prepare the dish at home without having to buy the spices or condiments required.

Meals were selected from the All Wales Food Menu Framework, with the majority being plant-based to encourage staff to include a meat-free option.
The weekly menu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Meal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chickpea and spinach curry (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vegan chilli and rice (Ve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vegetable stir fry (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thai green chicken curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Moroccan chickpea stew (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bean goulash (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tomato, vegetable and basil pasta (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Spiced chicken with butternut squash and beans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff response and engagement

The initiative created such a buzz in the canteen each week, with staff returning to purchase the meal and collect their recipe card and spice pack. Approximately 200 meals were sold per week, with most weeks selling out entirely. We noticed an increased footfall in the canteen, including staff who hadn’t used the facility previously. ‘Healthy Food Healthy Staff’ quickly became the talk of the office, with staff commenting they were trying foods they hadn’t eaten before. Several people said they hadn’t eaten chickpeas before and were pleasantly surprised how great they were in a curry and stew. Teams and departments were seen enjoying lunch together and commented that getting out to the canteen was a refreshing change from eating at their desk.

Staff shared their stories about making the previous week’s meal at home and how well it was received by fussy spouses and/or children. Some said they also brought in leftovers for lunch the next day.

We saw lots of Twitter activity too at #healthyfoodhealthystaff.

To gather feedback, we ran a mini prize draw each week, with staff completing five short questions and then placing their feedback slip in a box. One winner was picked each week to receive a piece of kitchen equipment for home, for example a wok or casserole dish.

Approximately a third of staff/visitors who purchased the meal each week gave us their feedback, consistently rating their enjoyment of the meal as a 4 or 5 out of 5. Many agreed this type of initiative would encourage them to eat more healthily at home too.

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To maintain the high level of staff engagement, the initiative was extended for a further month where we selected the most popular dishes and offered them at the competitive price of £1 per meal. Fruit was still available for 15p. We plan to run the initiative across our other two main hospital sites – Glan Clwyd Hospital and Ysbyty Gwynedd – this year and are exploring how we can sustain the initiative long term and continue to support the ethos of ‘Wellbeing Wednesdays’ across the organisation.

Nutritious food and social interaction are cornerstones of physical and mental wellbeing. We have been delighted that a relatively small initiative like this has created such interest. Last year saw the launch of the Welsh Government’s ‘Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales’ strategy (https://gov.wales/healthy-weight-strategy) within which a key theme is to promote healthy settings and a healthy NHS.

Key factors in achieving our success have been (1) working as a team across departments, (2) having a ‘can do’ attitude’, (3) gaining the support of senior hospital management and (4) gaining the expertise of our corporate communications team.

I would like to formally thank Paul Clarke, Facilities Manager, Andrea Townson, Assistant Catering Manager, and the whole catering team at the Wrexham Maelor Hospital, plus Emma Jackson, Dietitian, for their commitment, hard work and dedication.

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