



Your Partner for Culinary Excellence.

Now Is The Time for Fresh, Safe Dining...

As communities emerge and reopen their dining venues, we all have a fantastic opportunity to give the residents an exciting and safe return. They are so excited to get back to some socialization around the dining experience, let's give it our best shot!!

It takes purposeful, thoughtful planning to properly roll-out a new dining experience. A commitment to communitywide, detailed communication is necessary to be successful and to create the best comfort level, for residents and staff.

So, why are we saying NOW is the time for fresh, safe dining? While it's always been the right time for a great healthy, safe dining experience, now is the time to change the messaging. As an industry, we need to begin to tell the story that the safest and best place to be is a senior living community. We can provide a dining experience safer than any other potential experience, including home. We have staff trained in sanitation, (long before Covid). We have the facilities and space to execute safe, social distancing while enjoying a great dining experience, and we have access to creative and talented culinary staff. In addition, we have the mutually invested commitment to safety of all of our residents. We are in a unique position to provide an uncanny level of safety while providing a healthy,



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nutritious and exciting dining experience...it's time to start getting that messaging out.

While getting the message out we have to remind ourselves that we still have to execute to not only meet resident expectations, but set standards to exceed them. Let's talk a little bit about the opportunities that lie in front of us and the key areas of focus to make your dining program sizzle in this new environment.

Seating

Seating plays such a critical role in the overall success of a dining program and is often overlooked. We have the opportunity now for a reset and to establish seating plans that benefit both the residents and the quality of the program.

Controlled seating and reservations, or modified reservation systems, allow for controlled flow into the dining room and allow for the safe passage of residents while keeping social distancing guidelines in place. Additionally, seating to control the flow of residents is also crucial to the service experience. By establishing flow into the dining room, you allow service personnel to manage their timing so that residents can be seated and served immediately, with the full attention of the server. A game changer for some operations. The managed flow of residents into the dining room does more than raise service expectations. It also manages labor costs more efficiently by no longer having to staff for maximum or large movements of people into the dining room in very compressed times. The benefits of managed seating don't end there, the slower flow



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of tickets into the kitchen create opportunities for made-to-order meals and garnishing techniques that may not have been possible before. Better seating control can have a game changing effect on food quality. Make sure we change our kitchen habits to a much more made-to-order system. While this may vary from operation to operation, there needs to be a commitment to adapt to a new ticket flow and to *really* start cooking again during service.

Sanitation

While the overall sanitation expectations of the dining operation haven't really changed much in our new environment, they've heightened attention to detail. Not a bad by product of this unfortunate situation. You will want to make sure that you have detailed sanitation plans and programs written and clearly communicated to every member of the team. Also remember, this is about easing resident's concerns. Go ahead and make sanitation expectations public to all of your residents and staff. Cleaning in front of residents that are in the dining room is no longer taboo as it shows your commitment to detail and gives the team and the residents a sense of comfort that no detail is being overlooked. Small things, like using a different colored glove when cleaning in the dining room, show the residents that you have dedicated cleaning staff and we are not mixing between serving and cleaning. Asking residents to wait for a few minutes until you can sanitize the area shows your commitment to their safety.

Create Some WOW

With lighter loads in the dining room take advantage of this space to provide hands-on food demonstrations and showmanship. Something as simple as hand tossing a Caesar salad in a hollowed-out wheel of Parmesan can delight your residents. Spend the time to plan out a dining room showstopper each week. Carve homemade bread hot from the oven in the dining room, create soup service where the soups are poured in the dining room and residents can choose their ingredients, blending and garnishing their own soups, the sky is the limit.

Menu Size

Reduce the size of your menu and offerings. While reintroducing residents to the dining room don't try to do too much. Remember, variety doesn't come from the size of the menu, variety comes from the changes that you constantly make to the menu. Reduce your menu size to focus on *execution* and *quality*. A smaller menu really helps your team with execution. Beautiful plate garnishing and temperature control of meals is a huge benefit of the smaller menu. Of course, cost management will benefit as well by narrowing your scope you can purchase better and manage waste better.



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Nutrition

This is an important time to make sure that you're using fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables and using them in *everything*. The commitment to our residents' nutritional needs at this time is critical. Our immune systems need every benefit we can provide. Try to utilize salsas, coulis, relishes and condiments that introduce new items and flavors that residents may not order on their own. Remember, variety is the key here, exposing our residents to as many different nutrients as possible. Start using vegetables or fruits to thicken sauces and soups. This is a great way to get additional nutrients. Remember the longer the cooking time, the less nutrient value we have at the end. Try to keep things fresh, light and simple. You and your residents will benefit.

Service Standards

Establish service techniques to limit service time at tables. Let residents know you may be getting drink orders as well as complete dinner orders at one time. Consider providing more details on your printed menus then you may have in the past. This can help limit the amount of description time needed at the table.

This is a unique time, but it does offer opportunities for us to reset dining programs to increase safety, improve quality and make residents happier while at the same time reducing some costs. And, the senior living industry has a safe dining story to tell. Let's get out and tell it...and start selling.

For more information on how to create, commit to and leverage your safe dining story, contact Ronnda Peters at Strategic Dining Services. Call **888-406-1902, ext. 3** or Email: ronnda.peters@strategicdining.com



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