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Having the Right Food Service Partner Is One Benefit that Can Entice Prospects to Your Senior Living Community and Increase Occupancy

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Prospective Residents Have Different Priorities When It Comes to Selecting a Senior Living Community – Let Professionals Make Your Dining Service Shine

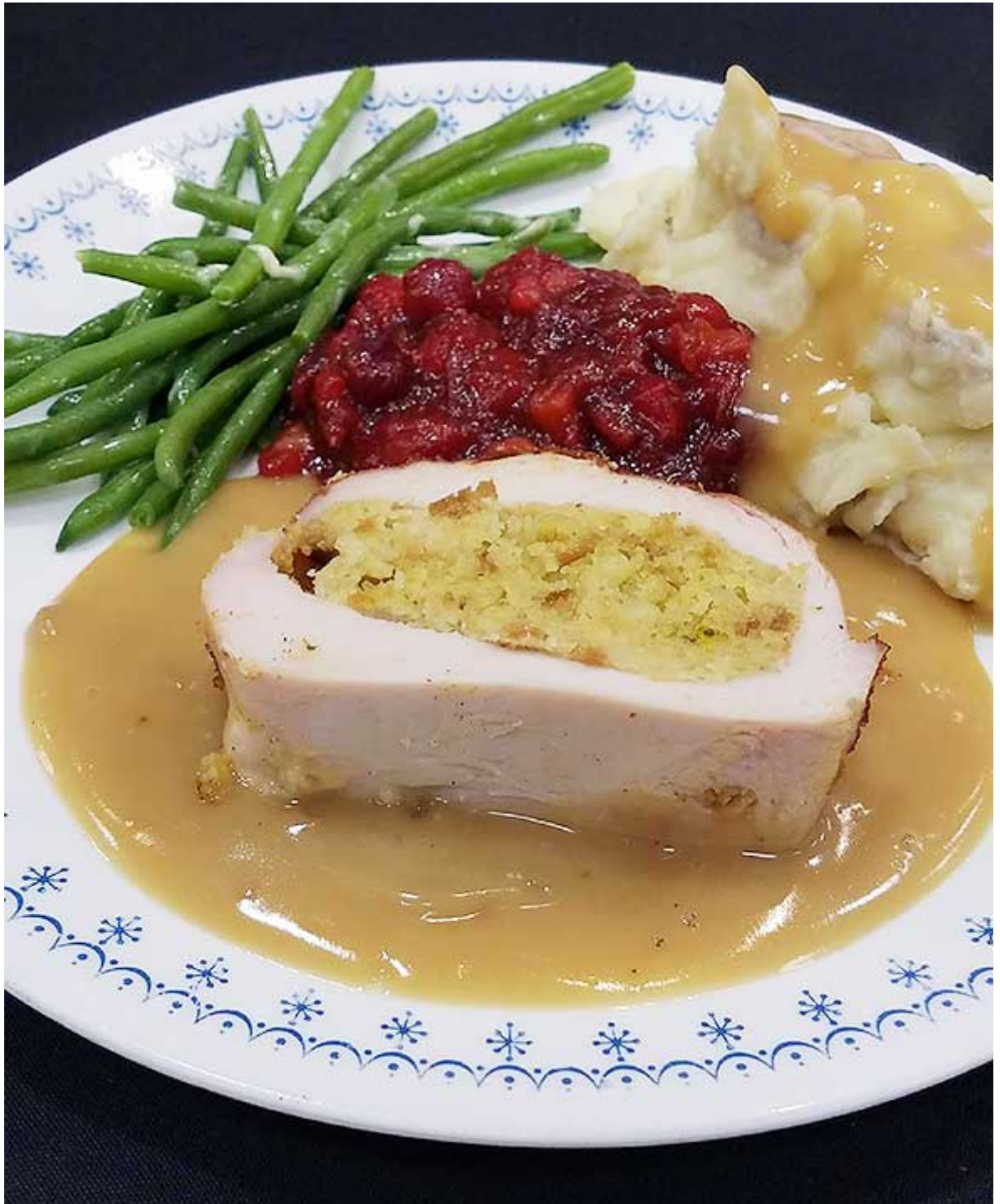
When it comes to selecting a senior living community, each prospective resident has a different list of priorities. What one person rates as most important may be fourth in line for someone else, but one item that always ranks in the top four is food. The right dining service provider can make a positive impression to residents and visitors to your community, which can lead to [increasing your occupancy rate](#).

Senior living communities need to offer a dining experience that keeps residents happy. It's more than providing healthy, locally sourced, nutritious food or options such as sugar-free, gluten-free, and vegetarian. The dining experience also encompasses the various serving styles of a senior living community, such as casual, formal, café, and catered meals for any sized crowd. Partnering with a professional [food service](#) delivery company can take all the hassle and stress about consistently delivering a great dining experience off your shoulders.

An assisted living center, such as [Scandinavian Living Center](#), in West Newton, Massachusetts, has some unique food-service needs. The center's Scandinavian philosophy is community-centered living, so while half of the building has occupancy in its 40 apartments, the other 50% of the building is common space.

Joe Carella, executive director of Scandinavian Living Center said, "We have over 2,000 guests a month who come through our doors; that's in addition to residents'

family and friends. We also have 25 to 30 groups utilizing our building and three



organizations that rent space.”

Scandinavian Living Center is proud of their ability to bring people of all ages together in a natural way. For example, one of the organizations renting space is an outpatient physical therapy company.

Joe said, *“I’ve heard that sometimes the residents working out in the fitness room inspire the people doing physical therapy – which is different, and kind of cool.”*

When the Food Service Dining Partner Has Your Best



Interests in Mind, You Can Relax

When your



community has a partnership with a food dining provider focused on delivering the

freshest and healthiest meals, you can reduce the worry around a top priority.

Big corporate providers tend to be focused on making a profit. They may have inflexible purchasing arrangements that don't utilize local vendors and products, and insist on using institutional products, regardless of how they fit with what you'd like.

A food service provider who keeps people as their priority – and who focuses on providing a high-quality dining experience – will find the best local food at the best local prices and serve it to your community's residents and visitors as though they were family.

Joe said, *"It's great to know we're working with local vendors to source fresh product for our meals. All we have to do is ask for something and Glendale will make it a reality."*

Attracting Prospective Residents by Offering a Great Dining Experience in the Café, Dining Room, or Through a Catered Meal

Food service is available to anyone who stops in to visit for the day at



Scandinavian Living Center.

The Living Center also has a pop-up café that is open on Saturdays, September to June. Joe said, *"We call it the Kaffestugan. It promotes Scandinavian baked goods and half sandwiches."* The café is run by Scandinavian volunteers; Glendale supplies sandwiches and a few other select specialty items.

"It's open to residents and the public," Joe said. *"Many people are meeting friends or neighbors, not to see residents. It's amazing that people come to a café at an assisted living facility to have coffee or to meet a friend. That's the community-centered living magic. I even have residents who eat in the café; they eat and buy smoked salmon sandwiches or shrimp sandwiches provided by Glendale. The café is a nice community gathering spot. The secret of community-centered living is letting the public wrap their arms around an organization or facility."*

While the café features a lot of Scandinavian items baked and supplied by the volunteers, the dining room menu is one that focuses on the residents, where less than 30% are of Scandinavian descent.

"The cooks here are amazing and provide a lot of home cooking to residents," Joe said. Glendale's staff is always open to suggestions on what to add or feature on their menu, and they don't shy away from special requests. They always want the person to leave the dining room with a great and memorable dining experience.

Going Beyond 'Good Enough' to Positive, Memorable Dining Service Experiences for Residents Can Increase Occupancy

There are many touchpoints for a prospective resident when evaluating a senior living facility. Most commonly it starts with being greeted at the front desk, then being introduced to a staff member for a tour. The prospective residents can see and interact with the people, and see living conditions, but the one thing they can get the most from is the ability to touch and taste the food and experience the social aspect to dining.

Eating is one thing everyone has in common, regardless of dietary restrictions or personal preferences, everyone would love to have a meal that leaves them feeling satisfied and happy.

Joe said, *"You want prospective residents to experience the dining room's atmosphere and food. If you're going to impress somebody, they have to feel they are connecting. In our case, they are connecting to the community and their friends. Part of the entire dining experience is the food service, so it needs to consistently impress with its variety, options, and taste."*

The dining experience is a team effort that involves residents from the moment they step into the dining room until they leave. Glendale's food service staff is great at



interacting with residents, getting to know a little bit about them, and starting conversations with them whenever they enter the dining room.

Joe said, "It really helps me to have good food from a great food service dining provider whose staff loves what they do. That part of the operation is stress free, which enables me to focus on other things."

Catered Events: A Great Food Service Dining Provider Pays Attention to All the Details and Keeps the Worry Off Your Shoulders

Joe has no hesitation when it comes to requests for catered events. He feels Glendale Senior Dining's chefs and staff are more than capable of providing top-notch catered events on-site and off, for any number of people.

Joe said, "We did a big gala celebrating 100 years in the city of Newton and Glendale was there, of course. They handled all the dining and hospitality arrangements, including logistics of an off-site outdoor venue with no cooking capabilities, fantastic food production, professional staffing and supervision. Everyone who attended was blown away by the food."

Glendale Senior Dining facilitated every detail and all



arrangements for temporary sanitation stations, refrigeration, cooking equipment, rentals, linen, table settings, transportation, and more, which allowed Joe to focus on the gala and its successful outcome.

"Additionally," Joe said, "because of Glendale's strong staffing resources, the normal day-to-day activities of the Scandinavian Living Center dining program went on as planned with no interruption of the resident's dining program."

Experience Matters with a Senior Living Food Service Provider, but So Does the Personal Touch and Ability to Become Part of Your Community

Before Glendale, Joe dealt with a large corporate food service provider. *"I was having an awful experience with the corporation. It was all about numbers with them,"* he said.

Scandinavian Living Center was one of Glendale Senior Dining's first clients. Joe said, *"I knew Jim [Hecker, president of Glendale] from way back. I knew his reputation and I knew what Glendale could and would become. So when he opened Glendale, I was onboard as quickly as I could be, and he hasn't let me down. Before Glendale, I felt like a tiny stone in the ocean. With Glendale, it's like family. We really work together,*

*it's a
really
great*



relationship that way."

A Stress-Free Transition from the Prior Food Service Provider to Glendale Senior Dining

When Glendale takes on a new account, they do their best to take on the prior staff as a way to keep change to a minimum for residents, but also as a way to provide job security for food staff. Joe said, "I didn't worry about a thing. The transition was a piece of cake – and just the beginning of how it needed to be."

Glendale was a breath of fresh air for Joe. "I knew Glendale cared about its people and that mentoring and training existing staff was a priority."

The food staff at Scandinavian Living Center is small, but when required, it can easily count on more assistance to be available, such as with big catered events.

"I don't have to stress about food service at all," Joe said. "I trust Glendale with the food, with staying within the budget, with all food service responsibilities."

You Gain a High Level of Comfort When Your Food Service Provider Is Available to You Whenever You Need Them

Working with a corporate food provider can involve red tape, many voicemails, and a lot of unanswered emails. With the prior food provider, Joe had to call West Virginia whenever he had a question, and it was not always easy to get in touch with who he needed, or to reach someone in a timely manner.

"Now I call New Hampshire, but, it's not like there are multiple layers. There is just one, and a real person answers the phone at their office. If I need someone, I call, and I get a response – quickly."

Glendale Senior Dining is very supportive of small organizations. Joe said, *"And it's all about doing it right and having high quality, which is important. We get a family and human touch with Glendale that we hadn't had before."*

Every Assisted Living Community Has a Food Service Provider – You Want the One Who Listens to Your Needs and Delivers a Top-Quality Dining Experience Every Time

Glendale's business model and mission is to help organizations with food.

"Jim is one of my favorite people," Joe said. "I think the industry should be glad that Glendale is doing food service because the big companies can't offer the same personal, customized programs. I'm happy for the places that are discovering Glendale."

Glendale Senior Dining fits in well with Scandinavian Living Center's community-centered living philosophy. Joe said, *"They make natural human connections with everyone they serve. I never worry about food service."*

THE CHEF'S PLATE