

Top chef



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Mark Wilson faced a challenge that would have TV chefs shaking in their Crocs. If you think MasterChef contestants have it rough — having to create, cook and present culinary masterpieces live on air, all while Gordon Ramsay is breathing down their necks — you ain't seen nothing yet.

Imagine this challenge: A chef with a tiny team has to come up with a brand-new menu of 50 recipes in quantities to feed 300 people, taking into account allergies, food intolerances, low sodium and fat requirements and physical disabilities — within an industry not known for serving the tastiest food. And the chef's "secret ingredient" to work with? A budget of \$7.46 per person per day for three meals and three snacks.

It's not reality TV; it's chef Mark Wilson's reality. And he loves it. Wilson is working with the Nutrition and Food Services Department at Providence Healthcare to improve the menu, variety and presentation of food, as well as the overall dining experience for the residents of its long-term care home, the Cardinal Ambrozic Houses of Providence. "Mealtimes are the centre of the residents' day," says Jean Labranche,

Providence's director of nutrition and food services. "We cook in huge quantities and we try our best to serve nutritious food that tastes great.

I have good chefs, but it is hard to add flair with limited time and resources. The residents wanted more variety in the foods, so we needed somebody who could up the ante." Trying to create recipes that address as many dietary needs as possible was challenging, Wilson admits, and yet, in just four months the U.K.-born chef has conceived more than 50 recipes to whet the appetites of Providence residents. He says his experience consulting in another industry that lacks food kudos — airline catering — helped.

"Some of the residents' appetites have changed as they've aged," says Wilson, "so if we can make the food look great, taste great and be nutritious, we can inspire them to regularly eat balanced, healthy meals."

Providence plans to also roll out the new menus to patients in the hospital and Adult Day Program.

A day's meals for \$7.46

The Providence food team works virtual miracles. Here's a sample daily menu (not including three snacks!):

BREAKFAST: Juices, rolled oats, cold cereals, boiled egg, cheddar cheese, whole-wheat or white toast, banana muffin

LUNCH: split-pea soup; yam, apple-ginger soup, fish polonaise with lemon, pizza, potato puffs, asparagus, salad, ice cream, pineapple tidbits

DINNER: coq au vin, vegetarian chili, roll, steamed rice, ratatouille, Caesar salad, apple crisp, cantaloupe

Good morning!

In addition to a delicious new menu, staff at the Houses of Providence have created a fun way to entice residents out of their rooms and into the dining rooms for breakfast.

"Breakfast — as an activity — sets a positive tone for the rest of the day through recreation, socialization and rehabilitation," explains the administrator for the Houses, Astrida Plorins.

"The new breakfast experience — replete with a staff greeter, morning newspapers for early risers, new tablecloths and flowers on the table — encourages residents to socialize, keep in touch with world events and eat well."

The nutrition and food services staff also offers a continental breakfast for those who wish to sleep a little later in the morning.

WIPPIng up a great meal

Thanks to Joan Maggisano and her fellow Women in Philanthropy for Providence (WIPP) donors, residents in the Houses of Providence are now being served cuisine prepared by an executive chef.

“A chef coming in to prepare tasty, healthy food for Providence really appealed to us as women,” says Maggisano, vice chair WIPP’s Advisory Group. “Good food and good nutrition are all about feeling well and living life to the fullest.”

The WIPP Circle is made up of over 130 women making an annual \$1,000 donation to support Providence Healthcare. Each year, the group pools its cumulative fundraising and each donor casts her vote in support of a Providence funding priority. In 2012, members voted overwhelmingly to support innovative menu improvements for the Houses.

Become a decision maker in our community — join WIPP today!
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