

Best Practice & Nutrition Innovation



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The NNNG's national look at nutrition best practice and profiling nutrition innovation brings you a summer treat this quarter in the form of Raouf Mansour – Head of Catering at Ashford and St Peters Hospital (ASPH) and his EDU-Kitchen initiative. Some of you may recognise this initiative from Twitter, which is where the NNNG Chair came across this inspiring Chef.

As nutrition professionals, we focus on our patients' nutritional needs but often forget about the importance of good nutrition for ourselves and the impact this has on our working day. Although the pandemic brings many unwarranted memories, Ashford and St Peter's Hospital (ASPH) acknowledged that the increased work pressures during this time meant an intense focus on staff well-being was needed. ASPH were keen to develop a strategy that improved health and well-being, which would lead to better work performance, less employee sick days and increased motivation. One of the ways they carried this out was by insourcing catering services on 1st October 2020 and leading this was Head of Catering Raouf Mansour.

Raouf, bringing in his previous experience in the private sector of catering, kindly met with us to explain the initiative and the development of 'EDUKitchen'. They incorporated a huge renovation, which included the hiring of a professional chef and barista; new technology implementation such as click and collect; development of marketing, including their social media promotion; and the introduction of a variation of foods. This includes seasonal menus, home takeaway range, themed days and barbecues! No two days are the same at ASPH, ice cream one day, doughnuts the next. (*Insider tip: they even make up boxes of 12 for the staff to take back to the wards*). They host Easter and Christmas markets. Raouf is currently working on making the recipes shareable. He has a vision where you can scan the QR code for a recipe you like, and it's yours to keep!

Raouf talked to us about the herb garden. There is a variety of menu options, and what Raouf finds important is that each day the team have a briefing of all the food available that day, so every colleague is informed of the tolerances and nutritional impact of this food. He works closely with the lead dietitian, where they have feedback sessions regarding the food and concentrate heavily on nutritional balance. To quote Raouf: *"What the dietitian wants, she gets."*

This all sounds wonderful, but has it worked? ASPH report that uptake increased by approximately 16%, with staff satisfaction also increasing. Their meals are a maximum of £4, they have achieved an impressive 5 stars from their Environmental Health Officer visit and fresh food production is up to 90% – a 40% increase! Their transactions have tripled, sales revenue has doubled in more than a year, and at least 50% of their produce is from local suppliers. This is all without the addition of visitors – an impressive feat. This has also led to the planning of a new kitchen to cope with the increased capacity! And the cherry on the cake, they have been awarded NHS exemplar status.

Throughout the interview with Raouf, what shone through was his passion and determination to strive for more. He ensured daytime opening hours of EDUKitchen covered the night shift starting and finishing. They currently have plans to extend to a 24-hour catering service but, fear not, they have takeaway boxes at night for you in the meantime! Looking at the Twitter page right now, I'm seeing images of crispy chilli beef; Moroccan-style chicken; macaroni cheese with Jackfruit and the all-important ice cream station (*putting my shop-bought BLT to shame*).

Philip Shelley, Chair of Hospital Food Review, had this to say: *"Effective leadership of teams with topic expertise and experience has never been so important than over the last 2 years. Raouf and his team have managed to produce fantastic food with a quality that is rarely seen in healthcare catering. Being able to import his private sector experience has significantly increased the innovation and flair of service and, importantly, produced a strong income level within retail. As a catering exemplar trust we are incredibly proud of Ashford and St Peters and Raouf typifies leads by example."*

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