



The Florida Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
Innovation Exchange

Submission Form

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Date of Submission:	May 12, 2003, updated September 29, 2009
Title of Innovation:	“Gourmet Puree”
Topic for Submission: (Please choose a topic from the list included in the attached submission guidelines which best describes the innovation you are submitting.)	Topic: “Quality of Life”
Audience: (Choose one or more, as appropriate.)	<input type="checkbox"/> HUD Housing Communities <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement Communities (CCRC or fee for Service) <input type="checkbox"/> Assisted Living Facilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nursing Homes

1. **Description of Innovation:** Please succinctly describe the innovative program or service, creative idea or best practice and the resulting benefits to your organization or the consumers you serve. Limit the narrative to 3 pages, excluding attachments such as forms.

We identified a problem that is extremely prevalent in most SNF and is at the top of the list in regards to survey deficiencies. The problem is weight loss. When dealing with senior populations weight loss is always an issue that concerns all healthcare providers. We realized that in order to be successful in combating weight loss we needed to be proactive and meet the problem head on. We looked at the area in which the greatest numbers of residents were susceptible for weight loss. The areas identified were residents on mechanically altered diets. So the problem was identified, what next? Why were these residents at such a high risk? Well the answer was easy. The eye appeal and dining experience for a resident on a puree diet is one that leaves something to be desired. We all know, that you taste your meal with your eyes, long before you do so with your taste buds.

What we did was set out to make the most appealing, to the eye, nose and taste buds, puree possible. We spent a lot of time experimenting with different combinations of flavors, spices,

gravies and sauces. We experimented using loaf pans, muffin pans, molds, cake pans, layering vegetables (i.e. peas & carrots), swirling 2 or 3 different items together, anything that would shape the puree, we used. After about 6 weeks of experimenting and practicing, what we came up with was a finished product that looked, tasted, smelled and presented beautifully. We targeted a start date and began that day. It was incredible. Nursing staff, who were in-serviced prior to the start date, still thought we gave the wrong diet (regular) to a resident requiring puree, because it looked so much like a regular diet meal. It was to the point where initially, the product intimidated family and residents because it looked as good, if not better, then what the residents on regular diets received. It turned out to be a big success. Family members were so pleased that their loved one was eating “normal, regular” food again. Residents felt a sense of pride and dignity because their meal was no different than anyone else’s.

What we found immediately was that residents no longer fought us on accepting a puree diet. They were more agreeable to be placed on a puree diet because they received the same items as all other diets. We fought and defeated the perception of different diet, different food. We overcame the stigma of puree food looking, smelling, tasting and presenting terribly. We found the key to mechanically altered diets and it was being accepted with open arms. Within the first 3 months we experienced a decrease in weight loss of almost 25%. The next 3 months we reduced weight loss by an additional 15%. This quarter we anticipate similar results. It was tremendous to see residents who were barely eating 25-50% of their meals were actually asking for more.

Getting started. The first and probably most important step is to sit your staff down and share with them the vision of the program. They must understand what it is that you want to accomplish, why you want to accomplish this and the impact that it will have on the quality of the life of *their* residents. They must buy into the program for it to truly be successful. Once this is accomplished it is important to decide how far you want to take this program. It can be done in a very limited fashion or can be done on a full-blown scale including all menu items. I wanted to go all out and include every item we have. That is what we did:

- We included everything, including garnishes. But you can alter this program for a specific meal, or a specific part of the meal (i.e. entrees, vegetables, etc.). Once the staff is prepared and the extent of the program is determined, reviewing your menus for applicability is next. What items can and do you want to include. I found that everything is doable.
- Next it is important to meet with a representative of one of the companies that manufacture food thickeners. There are many types that offer many different results. Find what works best for your specific needs. Use the rep from the company you choose. That is their job. Have them come and work in your kitchen with your staff. They need to become a partner in this under taking.
- It is very helpful to create a recipe book for all your items. This is a good system to use for all prepared items, but especially for your puree program. Questions and anxiety will arise for your staff. Take the guesswork out for your staff and create well-detailed and specific recipes.
- In conjunction with the recipes, simultaneously, you need to start experimenting and working with the product/program. Very important here is have the cooking staff

completely involved. It must be a program they hold in high regard. This program was one that I held close to my heart, but I realized if the staff did not share my passion for this program it was doomed to fail. Get them excited about the potential results.

- Work with every kind of pan, mold, and item they can think of that will shape the items to look natural. Let the staff get very creative and use their imagination. I found that the best ideas came when I let the staff take this and run with it on their own. When peas & carrots are on the menu, take a loaf pan and have a layer of peas, then a layer of carrots and then another layer of peas. When finished it can be cut and displayed to look terrific and better than the regular diets.
- At this point it takes some time to work with the program and see how it can work for your residents. The most important factor in the entire process is be patient. Do not start until you are absolutely ready and confident that staff is comfortable. In-service Nursing staff so they understand the program. You can go through all this work, but if a Nurse brings the meal to a residents then takes a fork and breaks it up, then you are right back where you started.
- In-service Marketing, Administration, etc. It is a program the entire facility should share in and feel good about. Make sure when you are ready to un-veil the program everyone is ready, confident and comfortable. Remember the only limits to this program are the ones that you place on them. The potential is endless. We have been using this program now for about 9 months and we are still finding new and exciting ways to present our residents with a puree diet they can feel good about and are not embarrassed or ashamed to eat.

Obviously it is a program we are all very proud of and we feel that we have taken a big step in addressing weight loss. But most importantly what we have done, is given back to our residents, the excitement of going to the dining room and enjoying a meal. With weight loss being reduced as it is, this makes for a healthier and happier population of residents.

2. **Budget:** Provide information about the annual budget or total cost of your innovation (if a one-time expense) and the number of staff or volunteers used to implement it. If your innovation did not require a budget or staff, please indicate.

There was very little extra cost once the program began. We utilized all types of pans, etc. that we already had. It required no additional labor. The only cost involved was the experimentation phase, which warranted a few dollars spent over the first 4-6 weeks and those costs were minimal. Beyond that, no added costs.

Please scroll down for a sample recipe:

VEAL PARMIGIANA (PUREED)

Yield: 30 Servings

5 lbs.	Cooked veal cutlet
3 quarts	Hot beef broth
5 cups	Puree Thickener
1-1/2 quarts	Hot Tomato Sauce
3-1/2 cups	Shredded Mozzarella Cheese

1. Puree veal, add thickener.
2. Place veal mixture in burger patty mold and refrigerate over night.
3. Place sauce in shallow pan and refrigerate over night.
4. Refrigerate cheese.
5. On day of service, 15 minutes prior to service, remove veal from mold and heat veal and sauce to proper temp.
6. Arrange veal on plate. Cover with sauce and top with cheese. Garnish with pureed garlic bread.