



Michael Roddey,  
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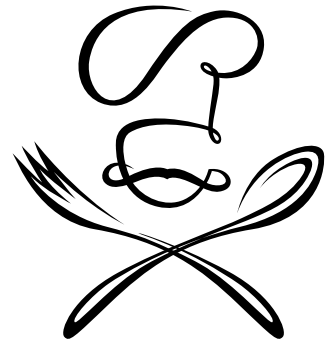
# Finding Common Ground

for the CDM and  
the Chef

by | Michael Roddey, CDM, CFPP

*It takes all of our efforts to achieve  
optimum customer satisfaction*

**Since more operations** than ever have both a CDM and a chef on their team, there's an increased need to understand each other's role within the operation.



THIS ARTICLE will draw from your contemporaries' experience and insight to present various perspectives on role delineation. Ultimately, the theme of these perspectives is aligned. They all relate to satisfying those who we have the privilege of providing meals to on a daily basis.

Since no two operations are the same, the following might not hold true for all readers. But by understanding the unique dynamics of the CDM and the chef, ultimately the two will be better when aligned and operating jointly.

So how do you create this synergy in your operation? The most important point to remember is that we all have a job to do. Whether one is the CDM, chef or RD/DTR for that matter, it takes all of us to complete the picture.

If we look at the CDM's role from the marketing standpoint of the credential, we are expected to have some of the basic skills and knowledge of both the chef and the dietitian. CDMs have always engaged with the RD/DTR at some level. Now that chefs are becoming part of the team and assuming some duties related to the foodservices area, the CDM may have time to focus more on the clinical and patient side of their knowledge base.

Since the staff may not be used to working with a professional chef, the transition phase of making them part of the team is critical. Clear expectations should be laid out, likely by the CDM. If the CDM is not the chef's supervisor, the foodservices manager or the joint superior should spell out expectations. This will prompt the chef to communicate with and begin to develop the culinary team.

Following are additional points to consider when releasing some of your duties to the new chef:

- The CDM and chef should create an operational plan to clearly define who has the primary concern for various areas.
- The CDM should share with the chef any nuances and dynamics of the operation.
- Arrange a team meeting to provide an opportunity for employees to meet the chef and vice versa. This is a good time for the chef to share insights on their approach, philosophy, expectations, areas of oversight, and goals for the operation.

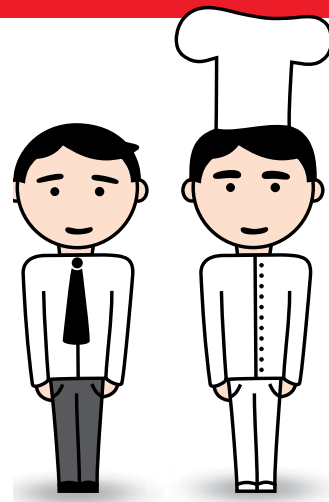
- The chef should learn the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals on the team.
- It will benefit the entire team if the chef can engage all shifts equally in the beginning to ensure that clear information is being delivered to the various shifts.
- The CDM should, as much as possible, be prepared to spend time with the chef and the other employees during these learning and training sessions. This is a perfect opportunity for the CDM to gain insight on how the chef operates, and learn what the chef is teaching to the kitchen crew.
- Schedule standard and recurring meetings between the CDM and chef to promote collaboration and open lines of communication.

**Greg Nicklas, JD, CDM, CFPP** is the Dining Services Supervisor at The Davis Community Healthcare Center in Wilmington, N.C. An ANFP Culinary Task Force member, Nicklas provides his operational perspective for the CDM and chef standing on common ground.

“Our administration sees our CDMs and our chef operating in mostly separate spheres; our CDMs mostly come from nursing and are therefore primarily responsible for charting and MDS compliance, while our executive chef doubles as the director of our Dining Services Department. As a supervisor for that department and a CDM, I wear both hats, but my responsibilities for each hat are fairly distinct. Our common ground, therefore, is primarily in philosophy – our CDMs want to encourage good intake of meals and prevent weight loss, while our chef wants to produce the best quality meals we can. The easiest way to ensure good intake is to make great food, and serve it hot and fresh.

“The answer to weight loss in long-term care and skilled nursing, where I operate, is not supplements and fortified products, it's serving meals people want to eat. So much of our institutional models are working against us here; tray lines and centralized kitchens ensure everyone gets the same meal (whether they want it or not), that it was made hours ago and has been sitting on a plate for at least 30 minutes.

*Continued on page 34*



“Budget-friendly canned goods and pre-fabricated meals lack nutrition and flavor, or are packed with fat and sodium to make them palatable. With all of that operating against them, most food doesn’t even look good, much less taste good after production. Our solution has been not only to cook from scratch with fresh ingredients, but to de-centralize, to build smaller kitchens out at the point of consumption where residents can pick their meal from the various options available, and where our staff has the ability to even make some items to order if nothing on the main menu appeals to that resident.

“By decentralizing, our CDMs have had to take a more active role in making sure doctors’ orders and therapeutic diets are honored, while our chef has had to provide training to front-line staff on various aspects of short-order cooking. While the two have distinct roles, it’s the common goal that unites us: make good food, and good nutritional health will follow.”

**Richard “Nick” Nickless, CDM, CFPP, CEC, CCA** is the Supply and Services Director at DDSN Coastal Center in Summerville, S.C. Nickless serves on ANFP’s Culinary Task Force as co-chair. Nickless builds upon Nicklas’s comments about flavorful, applied food service being at the forefront of our responsibilities.

“Finding common ground for CDMs and chefs can be as easy as co-mingling what each group truly represents. Remember as a CDM or chef, your immediate job focus can be reduced into two critical functions—first is to create flavors, second is to make or save your facility money. In both cases, it’s crucial that you see it from both a dietary manager and a chef point of view.

“With all the duties that we are required to do in a single day, it’s easy for you to get buried under the weight of your own paperwork while ignoring the shortcomings that are going on in your kitchen. Imagine developing more intense flavors out of your current food? You can start by rediscovering and implementing the honored time-tested cooking techniques. Take time out of your busy schedule to re-discover a few basic cooking fundamentals. You may want to start with proper roasting techniques, and then move on to sautéing that will enhance your flavors, and then finish with simple stock productions. By focusing on these three techniques, you will not only enhance your flavors, but also find more savings by using every scrap of food that’s in your kitchen. Your newly-found flavors will pay immediate dividends with your customers.

“Every owner, local or corporately owned, looks to you to produce savings or profits. The best way to approach getting the

**The CDM** and the chef roles are both important in the successful function of a quality operation.

results you seek is to simply keep track of what and how your kitchen cooks its food, how much customers they serving, how much is being eaten. In other words, watch your portion sizes.

“Think of it this way:

If you portion one extra ounce of protein (size of a quarter)  
x three meals a day  
x 200 meals served daily  
x 365 days a year  
= 219,000 oz. or 13,688 lbs. that was over purchased, produced, and portioned in a year.

With a low average of \$3.50/lb. for protein, the minimum potential savings is \$47,908.00 annually

“As you can see, by watching the smaller details, the larger savings will reveal themselves. By combining both the cooking skills of the chef and critical thinking skills of a CDM, you can’t help but have a successful 2014.”

Both Nicklas and Nickless, albeit from different perspectives, convey from experience how the CDM and the chef roles are both important in the successful function of a quality operation. They both amplify that by providing quality meals, approached first with good ingredients followed by sound cooking methodology and finally by proper service techniques, a dietary/food department can elevate many areas. Not only can they have a resounding impact on the health and morale of those who dine in your operation, one can also display improvements and increased profits within the department.

As with most any change, there will be growing pains. To help minimize these pains, consider the following:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Maintain an open mind.
- Identify when to be proactive and when to react as necessary.
- Learn by asking the best way to communicate (email, phone, text, face to face, etc.).

- Follow up to clarify your understanding of a conversation or meeting. So many things are lost in interpretation.
- Think about the final customer, your residents, guests, patients, etc.
- Lastly, if I forgot to mention, *communicate*.

The Culinary Task Force wants to provide worthwhile content for you. Our group was assembled so ANFP can better serve the culinary needs of our membership. As a Task Force, we welcome your feedback. Please email either Chef Nickless, [nickless00@aol.com](mailto:nickless00@aol.com) or me, [chef@chefroddey.com](mailto:chef@chefroddey.com) with your comments and suggestions. ☺

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## Culinary Corner

Following is a sneak peek at the topics we'll be covering in *Edge* magazine in the coming months:

**March**—Benefits of whole grains and easy ways to incorporate them into your menu

**April**—Legumes, beans and lentils - what's old is new again

**May**—Sustainable approaches that can help trim your utility bills

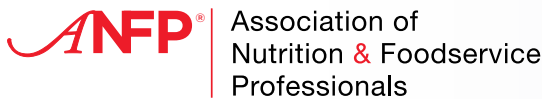
**June**—Marketing your operation to the community for increased revenue

**July/August**—Using resources to enhance your employees' culinary skills

**September**—How prep and cooking techniques can enhance plate appearance

**October**—Fresh vs. frozen—tips to make vegetables the centerpiece of the meal

**November/December**—Technology & buyer's guide



*Nurturing careers,  
Setting standards,  
Sharing best practices.*

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