



# Make food the root of your wellness brand

As inflation, supply chain, staffing and lingering COVID concerns challenge an industry working to maintain the health of people and contain costs, everyone is scrambling. The solution for many healthcare organizations and senior living communities could be as simple as focusing on wellness.

Wellness is central to every healthcare and senior living operation. Healthcare providers have long recognized the value good nutrition has on well-being. In senior living, food combines with personal interaction to provide physical and social wellness.

Savvy organizations are already exercising their wellness muscles as a top strategy for health promotion and cost management. Health systems are increasingly adopting lifestyle medicine, a wellness-centered preventive care model. This trend is expected to continue in the senior living space. Almost two-thirds of respondents in an International Council on Active Aging survey said their senior living community will be based in a wellness lifestyle by 2025.<sup>1</sup>

## What is 'wellness'?

Wellness includes many factors. Humans need and desire many things to be "well." Consider these models:

- The National Wellness Institute promotes six dimensions of wellness: emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual and spiritual.<sup>2</sup>
- The Mather Institute takes a person-centered approach, defining wellness as "the process of engaging in behaviors and decisions that enable people to reach their full potential."<sup>3</sup>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) connects wellness with well-being and sums it up in its broadest sense as encompassing physical, mental and social domains of life.<sup>4</sup>

That is why organizations using a broad, multidisciplinary approach to wellness are most likely to succeed in enabling patients and residents to flourish. In fact, a forum of thought leaders from the senior living industry called out that "wellness influences all areas: hospitality, culinary, outreach/marketing, engagement activities, fitness, ADL assistance, memory care, health care, partnerships."<sup>1</sup>



*Food combines with personal interaction to provide physical and social wellness.*

## Why wellness offerings win

Healthcare and senior living organizations with comprehensive wellness offerings are showing results in two areas:

- Residents and patients are experiencing an improved quality and satisfaction in life.
- Organizations are seeing cost savings and revenue generating opportunities, especially in value-based reimbursement models.

For senior living organizations, benefits include stabilized occupancy, partnership opportunities with health systems and private pay revenue from programs such as enhanced dining.<sup>1</sup>

For healthcare systems, the benefits come from influencing lifestyle behavior changes that slow the healthcare spending curve.<sup>5</sup> Chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, are driving higher healthcare costs. These conditions and others are preventable and treatable with wellness-focused lifestyle behavior changes, the CDC says.<sup>6</sup>

## Food at the Root of Wellness

Good eating habits are high on the list when it comes to managing chronic health conditions. According to a recent PLOS Medicine study on health risk factors, “poor diet drives \$50 billion a year in healthcare costs.”<sup>7</sup> Additionally, The 2022 White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health reports growth in nutrition-related diseases, especially during the pandemic.<sup>8</sup>

This highlights an opportunity for lifestyle behavior changes, such as improving physical wellness through nutrition-focused strategies. Food and eating often involve social interaction. This means activities including wholesome food can enhance physical and social well-being, amplifying the impact food has on overall health of people and business.

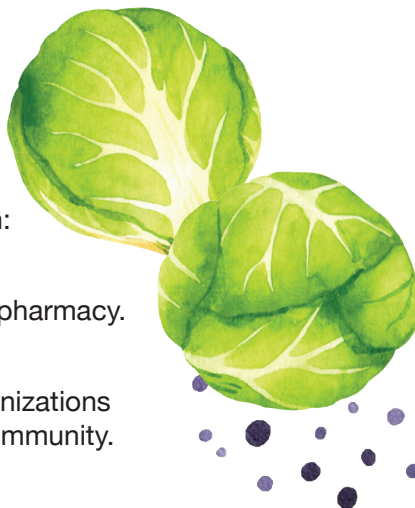
## Plan activities centered on food

As you strive to expand your wellness offerings, consider increasing culinary-focused activities that promote good nutrition and socialization:

- **Chef competition:** Host a chef competition with a panel of guest judges.
- **Community garden:** Plant a garden and feature the produce on your menu.
- **Cooking up a memory:** Prepare favorite recipes or share stories about them.
- **Display cooking:** Prepare a meal tableside or in the dining area to entice appetites and engage senses.
- **Food tastings:** Host an event to sample products or recipes. Allow voting and add winning recipes to the menu.
- **Nutrition support groups:** Hold virtual or live sessions with nutrition tips for chronic conditions. Include pre/post surgical nutrition therapy.
- **Pop-up stations:** Use mobile carts to increase touch food points, such as during activities.
- **Grocery store tour:** Visit your market or a nearby store to highlight good food choices.
- **Real time nutrition tips:** Add nutrition handouts to your dining area.
- **Teaching kitchen:** Demonstrate recipe preparation, while explaining the nutritional benefits. Demo it, or make it interactive. Package and sell the ingredients.

Make food accessible and affordable, here's some ideas beyond your kitchen:

- Host a farmers market.
- Open a healthy food pantry or food pharmacy.
- Provide healthy to-go meals.
- Form partnerships with aligned organizations to combat food insecurity in your community.



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## Bottom line: Food is important

Food is vital to our health, and it's a conduit of socialization. Food and nutrition leaders can connect with multidisciplinary teams on any of these food-related ideas. The result can enhance your wellness brand with winning programs geared toward patients, residents or guests.

Ask your Gordon Food Service Sales Representative for product solutions and ideas to strengthen wellness offerings through food- and nutrition-focused activities.

### Sources:

- 1 *Funding the new wellness model in senior living* International Council on Active Aging June 2022
- 2 *National Wellness Institute* <https://nationalwellness.org/resources/six-dimensions-of-wellness/> (2022, November 3)
- 3 *The Person-Centric Wellness Model*, Mather Institute 2021
- 4 *CDC* <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm#three> (2022, November 3)
- 5 *To Slow Health Care Spending, Look To Lifestyle Medicine* (2022, November 3)
- 6 *CDC* <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/infographic/chronic-diseases.htm> (2022, November 3)
- 7 *PLOS Medicine* *Cardiometabolic disease costs associated with suboptimal diet in the United States: A cost analysis based on a microsimulation model.* December 17, 2019
- 8 *Current Federal Programming And Coordination Efforts Related To Food And Nutrition Insecurity And Diet-Related Diseases* July 2022

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