

## Help sheet no.10

### Special occasion catering – increasing variety at mealtimes

While the dining room provides a safe and relaxed eating atmosphere, a change of environment or style of eating adds interest. Add some of the following events to your yearly planner to increase food variety and social experience for residents. Remember to involve carers, family and friends in planning and celebrating events.

#### Religious celebrations

- Christmas day – traditional British fare, seafood or a BBQ.
- Shrove Tuesday – pancakes.
- Good Friday and Easter Sunday. There are many different meal traditions, for example, Greeks celebrate with red hard-boiled eggs, Easter lamb soup (Magerista), Easter bread, lamb-spit roast, vegetables and baklava.
- ‘Hanukkah’ is celebrated by Jews over eight days in December. Fried foods are popular including latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (doughnuts). Hindus celebrate ‘Navratri’ which involves feasting for nine days.

#### Birthday celebrations

Enjoy a birthday cake and candles to celebrate residents’ and staff birthdays.

#### Barbecues and picnics

Eating outdoors is an Australian tradition. Try cuisines from other countries to provide a different style of BBQ or picnic. BBQs and picnics are important for the social experience and also for sunlight exposure to make vitamin D.

**Vitamin D** is important for bone and muscle strength (NHMRC, 1999). It is obtained from the action of sunlight on the skin and from the diet. Older people are at high risk of developing Vitamin D deficiency making them more prone to bone fractures. Inadequate sunlight exposure, poor diet and age related changes in Vitamin D metabolism, all increase the risk for deficiency. Encourage residents to go outdoors each day. It is recommended that people receive about 1–2 hours of sunlight exposure a week. To avoid the chance of sunburn, spend less time in strong sunlight or go outside early or late in the day or on cloudy days. Ensure there is access to shade and sufficient fluids for hydration.

Follow your Food Safety Plan. See **help sheet 2 Food safety issues in residential care**.

#### Regular events

- Cocktail parties – finger foods
- Sunday roast lunch – serve alcohol with the meal
- Special afternoon/morning teas.

Weekly happy hours are extremely popular in many facilities. A mix of finger food, soft drink and alcohol can be served. Relatives could be encouraged to attend.

A facility with a number of Italian residents regularly holds Bocce picnic days. This is an entertaining way to promote nutrition and activity for residents.

### Take-away options and finger food

In our multicultural society there are often many options for take-away foods:

- fish and chips in paper
- chicken in a basket
- Chinese meals
- pizza.

### Special event days

- New Year's Eve/day - champagne and chicken, BBQ.
- Australia Day - bush tucker, Pavlova, BBQ, toast and vegemite, Peach Melba.
- Easter parade - hot cross buns, Easter eggs, fish.
- Anzac Day - ANZAC biscuits.
- Queen's birthday - Devonshire teas, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.
- Show day - fairy floss, hot dogs, show bags with different foods.
- Football finals - meat pies.
- Cup Day - picnic, chicken and champagne.
- Other significant sporting events.
- Feast days from other cultures - Chinese New Year, Dutch St Nikolaas Day.

At an SRS a relatives committee decided to hold a Melbourne Cup Day BBQ. Relatives brought a plate of salad or sweets and the facility provided the meat. Similar events can be organised with the help of relatives or friends. These events provide valuable social opportunities, variety in food and meals environment. It is also an opportunity for relatives to get to know each other.

### Nostalgia foods

Ask the residents about their favourite meals from childhood or early married days - brains in white sauce, lambs fry and bacon, rabbit stew.

Adapted from Stewart A., (1999), *Nutrition guidelines for residential aged care facilities* (unpublished) Contact Alison Stewart, Consultant Dietitian.

### Useful references

*From Big Ben to Chow Mien - strategies for the development of ethnic food services*, Migrant Health Unit, Hunter Area Health Service 1991 State Health Publication No (HAHS 91-111).

Gallegos, D. & Perry, E. (1995) *A world of food: a manual to assist in the provision of culturally appropriate meals for elderly people*, Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health.

NHMRC (1999), *Dietary guidelines for older Australians*, Canberra.