

Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Gets Sailors Back Into Ashore Galleys



Give Customers Consistency

Navy Mid-Atlantic Region galleys, such as this one at Naval Air Station Oceana Dam Neck Annex in Virginia Beach, Va., follow a standard menu.

Ashore galleys are competing better with the many mealtime options available inside and outside the gate after taking steps to build a reliable, consistent identity with sailors.

Navy Region Mid-Atlantic realized that its galleys needed to clearly represent what customers should expect on every visit and set out to standardize the menu, add variety and introduce convenient operating hours. "Our biggest challenge was to find ways to get our sailors back into our facilities," said Bill Dorris, regional galley program manager for Navy Region Mid-Atlantic.

Standard menus have several advantages, Dorris explained: it assures having a consistent level of product quality and variety for sailors; achieves cost savings; and increases throughput, or utilization, the number of customers able to be served.

Featuring a wider variety of food choices beyond mainline entrées also contributes to building the Mid-Atlantic region galleys' identity with customers. Up to four entrées can be featured, and of those, two are required to be healthy choices approved by Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP). Then, there is Speed Line service, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., which features sandwiches, hamburgers, pizza, etc., as well as some healthy choices.

Galleys ashore also add to the variety available by featuring full salad bars, soup, and potato and pasta bars.

"We've been able to really increase the variety of our products," Dorris said. "Our sailors know what to expect when they come in to one of our facilities."

Further contributing to customer loyalty with the Mid-Atlantic region galleys are the unique operating hours. Mid-Atlantic is the only ashore region with a foodservice program that is open for feeding almost 12 straight hours, from 6 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Customer flow is spread more evenly compared with the traffic peaks associated with opening and closing for restrictive meal period. "It gives our sailors more flexibility to come in and dine and enjoy themselves," he said.

Continuous operating hours also contribute to reducing manpower. Worker shifts are split into two groups: one works Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday; the second group works on Wednesday and Thursday. Both shifts then alternate this schedule, which is commonly referred to as a "5 & 2" schedule. Both shifts also muster for quarters every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and participate in the physical readiness program.

ASHORE FEEDING

UTILIZATION

To Dorris, the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic galleys' managing to establish reliability with sailors and other food-service customers is like building a brand name or identity, and that was not possible before menu standardization.

Sailors' knowing what to expect from galleys helps to maintain viable and cost-effective foodservice operations. Dorris estimates galley utilization is between 30 percent and 50 percent of authorized users, and that level has been steady even as the number of service members has declined since 2001. Also, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic has closed five galleys since 2004 at NAS Brunswick, Maine, and NAS JRB Willow Grove (both a result of the Base Realignment and Closure Act), plus SCSC Wallops Island, Va., Cheatham Annex, Va., and Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Va.

The Navy Region Mid-Atlantic ashore stretches up the East Coast from North Carolina to Maine, and west to Sugar Grove, W. Va.

Utilization is difficult to calculate as the Navy has different foodservice categories. Customers coming into a galley are a mix of sailors eligible for meals on Subsistence in Kind and cash sales to others who are authorized under the Basic Allowance for Subsistence, which offsets the cost.

Ashore galleys are funded through and regionalized under CNIC in Washington, D.C. Afloat and ashore galleys follow guidance for Subsistence in Kind accounts, which comes from Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) and NAVSUP in Mechanicsburg, Pa.

KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

Following a standard menu also simplifies the kitchen equipment required for cooking. Rational self-cooking center combi-ovens are versatile enough to replace five pieces of equipment formerly used in the galleys, resulting in less to purchase and maintain.

"We're at the point now where industry has products that are acceptable and cost-effective," he said.

Another cost benefit of the versatile cooking equipment used is that meal preparation requires less manpower while still allowing culinary spe-



cialists to sharpen their skills. "The equipment and the [standard] menu give us the ability to do that given the manpower," he said. "It's important for our folks to maintain skill sets as a culinary specialist."

Similar equipment and reheat preparation methods are an industry trend being followed by national chain restaurants that contributes to product

consistency while also greatly reducing labor cost.

Back-of-the-house staff at almost all galleys is nearly exclusively military. Culinary specialists follow Armed Forces recipes and develop some ideas if unique products are available locally from prime vendors.

REGIONALIZATION

The Navy moved toward regionalization in two phases. The initial step was taken in 1998 to reduce costs. A second phase in 2004 moved Navy ashore feeding under Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC), which mandated moving to serving only military customers per the original galley charter, also known as "essential feeding facilities."

Movement toward a standard menu ashore began about 10 years ago, before the time that menus afloat became driven by the master load list, Dorris explained.

CNIC saw advantages in moving ashore galleys toward a standard menu prepared from a common set of food items, much like at-sea counterparts, but considered that too restrictive, Dorris recalled. Galleys ashore are less limited in access to food items compared with ships at sea, he explained. "It's all about the delivery and available stowage process."

Navy Region Mid-Atlantic became the first galleys under CNIC to follow a standard menu. Meals are prepared under a core menu set by the now nine regional galleys. All Mid-Atlantic ashore galleys prepare the same item on a particular day, but each selects the recipe to follow. When chicken is on the menu, for example, it may not be chicken tetrazzini in every Mid-Atlantic ashore galley.

The CNIC Galley Program enterprise is working on a standard ashore core menu across all regions.

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