

Emphasizing Training and Contemporary Menus



George

**Karin George, Navy Food Service Ashore Program Director,
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Government Food Service:
Please describe how the last year has unfolded. Discuss the challenges ahead, and any accomplishments or unrealized goals.

Karin George: In 2017, the CNIC [Commander, Navy Installations Command] galleys were once again able to provide nearly 30 million meals at over 90 locations around the globe. A new operation opened in Poland, and construction began for a much needed facility in Bahrain. Funding the operations is historically a management challenge; however, the past year was sustainable with no pending closures. Reviews and studies over the past five years have identified that food service operations are located where needed.

The greatest challenge for many of the ashore galleys is the infrastructure. Many buildings are old and not energy efficient. Electrical load capacities aren't able to support new equipment. The capacities of some dining areas far exceed the need, while others have not been renovated to keep pace with

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increasing missions. Facility design criteria reflect a cafeteria style, while the demand is driving single-station or campus-style dining.

We are seeing a change in the customer demands. They want healthier items, but are not willing to eliminate the traditional fast foods. Customers are requesting more choices in beverages, snack items and salad bar condiments.

Our cooks are seeking more challenging menus. The days of heat-and-serve pre-made foods are no longer acceptable. Culinary specialists are pursuing training opportunities to enhance their skills. They embrace the challenge of preparing a meal from scratch and take great pride in the items that they create.

One of the CNIC Guiding Principles is: "Live a Culture of Continuous Improvement." Food service is a customer-driven function. The focus is on meeting the customer needs, often at any cost. This year, not only will we continue to excel at meeting customer demands, but also focus on workforce development. Navy Ashore galleys are manned by military members, U.S.- and foreign-national civilians, and thousands of contract-support per-

CW05 (ret.) Kathy Wiseman, right center, teaching a culinary skills class to the cooks from NAS Jacksonville, Fla.





Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Andrew Macias looks on as celebrity chef Pete Blohme, center, also known as "Pannini Pete," Celina Tio and Sikey Vlahos prepare to serve a meal during a Messlords event at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor's Trident Inn Galley. The event, hosted by Navy Entertainment, included Blohme, Tio from her Kansas City restaurant Julian, and Voula's Offshore's Vlahos. The chefs, collectively known as the "Mess Lords", have been featured on popular cooking shows like Food Network's "The Next Iron Chef" and "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives." (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Vaughan Dill.)

sonnel. Every single employee plays a key role in providing the galley customer with a positive experience. In the spirit of continuous improvement, investment in the workforce will be the emphasis for the upcoming year.

Government Food Service: *The Navy finished implementing the Go for Green nutrition-education program and saltshaker symbol for sodium content last year. Has anything been learned from using it the past year or so, and are any changes or revisions being planned to improve it or raise its effectiveness?*

George: The Go for Green education program is part of DoD's overall plan to establish a healthier lifestyle for all service members. The program focuses on identifying food items that, in general, are better choices. The addition of the saltshaker indicates the sodium content of the item, which assists the customer in making better decisions.

Go for Green has been a success, but our customers and our military chefs want more information. We're hearing from our customers that they want nutritional content, not just the saltshaker. This information can be provided if the customer asks, but it is not readily available for all to see. Prior to this initiative, food labels were required to state portion size, calories, fat and carbohydrate information. Because DoD has mandated the use of specific labels, we aren't able to modify the information provided.

The military cooks are also looking for more detailed information. They receive minimal nutrition training during "A" school, where the focus is primarily on sanitation, safety and food preparation. Our cooks are requesting training on the science of food and how modifying ingredients can enhance nutritional content. Go for Green provided information to the customer; now we need to provide better information to the culinary specialists.

I would like to see the Navy take an extra step and tie the nutritional value of food to the individual's fitness and health routines. The Navy Occupational Fitness and Fueling

System (NOFFS) is already in place and is utilized by most sailors afloat and ashore. The goal of this program is to create a culture of "Fitness for Life." Educating the sailors on how nutrition and exercise work together for optimal performance is essential. The physical demands vary widely between field and office positions. Having all of the information available will help create an individualized performance plan to include the nutrition piece. Leveraging the expertise of the Navy fitness dietitian, I hope that the ashore galleys can develop a nutrition training program for the cooks.

Government Food Service: *The Tactical Advances for the Next Generation (TANG) event in 2016 developed ideas to modernize the dining experience in galleys afloat and ashore. Outcomes indicated interest in having more convenient options to the dining facility, such as mobile feeding or food trucks, and fresh-prepared station feeding. Are any changes planned in response?*

George: The TANG event provided a myriad of possibilities for how ashore galleys could reach their patrons. One of the most popular ideas was to bring back food trucks. Today's commercial food trucks are not the "roach coaches" of the past. These food trucks provide specialty items and are very popular with today's diversified Navy population.

We currently have three food trucks in our ashore portfolio of operations. Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash., has had an operational truck for many years. This operation is really an extension of the galley. All items that are available in the galley are available on the truck. The high operational tempo of the Air Station limited the time that the sailors were able to get away from their workplace for meals. The truck provides the ability to reach the target patrons (those not receiving a meal allowance), so they do not have to miss meals.

The other two trucks are located at Naval Air Station Fallon, Nev., and Naval Air Station Lemoore, Calif. Both

of these trucks are part of the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Rations-In-Kind program, so the menu is not the same as a traditional galley; however, as part of the galley program providing meals to eligible patrons, the menu options must include healthy choice options at each meal. These food trucks were purchased and are operated by MWR, so there is a bit of flexibility in how/where they can be managed.

We are working with the Combat Feeding Directorate, Natick Research, Development and Engineer Center, at the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center, to develop a new mobile dining option. This new food truck will be designed for on-board meal preparation, rather than bringing food from the galley. The concept has been in development for the past year to include a varied and unique menu implementing the Go for Green concept. This project is part of the DoD acquisition process and could be fully funded in the next two years.

More than 10 years ago, all of the galley food trucks, except the one at Whidbey Island, were discontinued due to excess costs. At that time it was determined that it was more cost effective to provide the sailors with a monetary food allowance, rather than operate duplicate or multiple dining options. With the new focus on healthy dining options on the installations, food trucks are once again considered a viable option.

We're doing what we can with fresh-prepared food stations. Unfortunately, most of the existing galleys were designed as cafeterias, where the patron passes through a serving line. Most of the dining facilities don't have the functional capacity to provide station preparation. Many of the galleys were able to create "Let's Get Blended" smoothie bars incorporating ingredients already available at the drink stations and salad bars. Some locations have been able to rearrange the dining rooms to incorporate food stations for stir-fry, wings and waffles, and pasta bars; however, due to the existing electrical and other facility configurations, most galleys have not been able to provide this type of fresh-cooking experience.

The Natick Research Center has identified a vent-less grill that we plan to test in the next year. This could be another option for providing made-to-order meals, provided the electrical capacity of the facility can support the added equipment,

and the dining area does not have to forfeit required seating capacity.

As with all good ideas and new initiatives, funding is a concern. The concept of station dining was one of CNIC's proposals in the future budget, but it was not approved for additional funds. The concept was accepted, so if we can find resources within our existing budget, we can move forward. Our regional directors have pared down excess expenses, thus reducing the galley requirements over the years, so it may be very difficult to reallocate funds to support these new initiatives.

Government Food Service: *Another outcome of the TANG was interest among culinary specialists for access to professional training that would prepare them for a civilian food service career, such as attending a culinary college or interning at a restaurant. Please discuss any planning in this area.*

George: To achieve the type of training that was requested at the TANG event culinary specialists will require overall Navy support, not just from CNIC. I believe that everyone would agree that this is a great proposal and an outstanding opportunity for the culinary specialists. The challenge will be managing the existing manpower available. There is an increasing demand for fleet support. The rotation for sea/shore duty was never designed for the shore to be manned at 100 percent. We have not assessed the return on investment for vacating a required shore billet for extended training.

Internally, we have provided various training opportunities. At many of the CONUS galleys local chefs are willing to provide training at the galley. Some metropolitan areas are located near a culinary school, allowing opportunities for the culinary specialists to utilize their tuition assistance or Navy COOL dollars for formal training outside of their normal duties.

A year ago the Mid-Atlantic Region hired CNIC's first corporate chef, who is now fully engaged in menu development and culinary skills training at the 23 galleys within the region. The region has also repurposed unused meeting space and has created a demo-kitchen/training area where the chef can conduct needs-based training. CNIC's future goal is to have a training chef available for all ashore galleys.

Government Food Service: *In last year's Commander's Update responses, you mentioned that Navy culinary specialists are eager to participate in more culinary competitions and expressed interest in opportunities to work and train with professional chefs. Is there anything happening in this area?*



Naval Base Kitsap, Wash., (NBK) Culinary Specialist (CS) Chief Jonathon Miller (right) displays optimal flank steak cutting techniques to CS2 Mac Fernandez during the Messlords Celebrity Chefs visit at the Trident Inn Galley, NBK-Bangor. Tio, and fellow Messlords "Panini" Pete Plohme, and Sikey Vlahos, mentored the NBK culinary specialists on an assortment of advanced cooking techniques, which helped them prepare an array of world-class dishes. Navy Entertainment sponsored the chefs' visit. (Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Athena Barber, USN)

Chef Scott Cooper, center and holding a yellow pad, oversees the food preparation of Team Mid-Atlantic Region from Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, Va., during a Culinary Training Event held at Naval Station Great Lakes in July 2017. Pictured from left to right are team members: CS1 Kiana Gadsden, CS2 Tony Burnett and CS2 Jason Burlew.



George: CNIC sponsors a culinary training event at Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill., each year in July. We chose Great Lakes as the host because of the available kitchen space and enormous support we receive from the installation and local community. This is the only formal event for competitions within CNIC other than any local or regional competition leading up to this event. Last year we added a day to the training curriculum so each member receives three full days of training, setting aside the first day for administrative and general information. On the fifth day, each team has the opportunity to demonstrate the skills and culinary techniques acquired during the training sessions.

We have continued to grow and improve on this event. Many chefs offer to volunteer their time to work one-on-one with our culinary teams. Local chefs introduce their products and demonstrate new uses for common ingredients. Equipment manufacturers also send their chefs to demonstrate how to more effectively use equipment that is currently used in our galleys.

A great deal of planning and coordination goes into this event each year and to replicate this more often would be beyond our current means. Other competitions do exist and are sponsored by Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP).

Although not formalized, the food service managers will often coordinate special chef visits from local restaurants to share culinary expertise with the military cooks. The galleys also look forward to visits from the Navy Entertainment Messlords, who bring not only skill training, but fun and excitement to the cooking experience.

Government Food Service: *The tight federal budget and the need to keep operating expenses low are recurring themes of Commander's Update responses the past few years. How does the year ahead look with regard to funding and accomplishing goals?*

George: Funding for the operation of ashore galleys remains the same. We have funding to support the general operation; however, updates to equipment and facilities are routinely deferred until later in the year. Often procurement policies prevent end-of-year spending, so when funding becomes available, it is not executable.

This year will be particularly challenging with the extended continuing resolution. Overseas contract costs have increased and we have a new galley scheduled to open at Naval Support Activity Bahrain later this year. We cannot afford to reduce sanitation or safety standards, so when funding is not sufficient to meet all requirements, usually it is the customer that will suffer. Menu choices are reduced to adjust for less labor and/or working equipment. Fewer cashiers and custodians increase wait times.

Training is one area that is non-negotiable for funding cuts. It is imperative that the culinary specialists have the skills they need to perform their jobs. Ashore we have the luxury of hiring skilled labor through contracts as required to support the operation. At sea, the culinary specialists are on their own to perform. If they didn't learn the proper sanitation, food service preparation and food safety while in "A" School or at the shore command, the entire crew on-board the ship will suffer.

Government Food Service: *A new galley was due to open by the end of fiscal 2017 at Naval Support Facility, Redzikowo, Poland. Please update us on that facility and anything it may indicate for future construction or renovations.*

George: The galley facility construction was delayed and is now forecast for an April 2018 opening. Food service is currently provided at a temporary site. The original plan was for this to be a remote facility serving just the few military on the base. Limited options in the local area have increased the numbers of planned patronage. For now,



Team Northwest Region, from Naval Base Kitsap, Wash., is critiqued by CSC Matthew Susienka (back to camera, wearing a tan ball cap). Team members, from left to right, are: CS2 Kyle Crane, Naval Base Kitsap; CS2 Kyle Day, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island; and CS3 Jesse Grijalva, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.

the region manager will monitor the utilization. The local community may grow as a result of the base population, which will then ease the burden on the galley.

Government Food Service: *Navy Ashore in 2018 enters the third year of the partnership between Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) and Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC). Please update us on this relationship.*

George: NAVSUP and CNIC have a continued strong partnership. The goal of both of our organizations is to provide the best service and food quality available within our means. Our organizations partner together for menu reviews, training opportunities, equipment synchronization and general food service trends. NAVSUP conducts bi-weekly teleconferences with all stakeholders to discuss any concerns, new issues or suggestions. Through this collaborative exchange, everyone benefits by learning from the others. Best practices and lessons learned are shared so future operations can be even better than today.

Government Food Service: *Navy Ashore Food Service is becoming more aware that the expectations younger sailors have for food service have changed over the years. Would you explain a little about what is being learned and how that is shaping the Navy Ashore Food Service program?*

George: Except at training commands, the most challenging aspect of food service is getting the customer through the door, and keeping them as a repeat customer. Galleys were designed to feed the sailors on the base three meals per day, seven days per week. That may have been the standard when bases were not located near metropolitan areas, or when everyone lived on the base. Those factors are no longer true.

The TANG event was designed to explore what the sailors

of today want in terms of food service. What we learned is that they want a multitude of options. They want food to go; they want smoothies; they want healthy food; and they want deep-fat fried food. They want food delivered; and sometimes they want a cozy environment to relax. What we've learned is there is no simple answer. It seems a standard menu with fixed meal hours and 20 minutes to eat and leave is NOT what they want.

Our current menus are fixed with little change month to month based on supply chain methodology. Facilities are outdated; most do not have Wi-Fi capability. In large operations, made-to-order foods are not available because of the volume of patrons and the time limits for meals.

So what have we done? Most galleys now have a grab-and-go option allowing the sailor to have a quick snack or meal without having to dine in. With a focus on providing healthier options, additional fresh items have been introduced for salad bars. Better signage encourages the patrons to consider healthy selections. Some locations offer all-day dining versus set meal hours. Mobile food or delivery service is available at some sites. The bottom line is, whenever we can improve service and food quality without increasing the cost of the service, we will attempt to meet the customers' demands.

Government Food Service: *Has Navy food service ashore been influenced by or implemented any of the dining facility design ideas presented during the three-day NRA training program in its operations?*

George: Facility design for ashore galleys is generally determined by Naval Facilities Engineering Command. Commercial design ideas can be taken into consideration when there is flexibility in the design concept. Most of the projects for Navy galleys are renovations to the structure or system upgrades. Unfortunately, through the military

construction process, modern and contemporary designs are not incorporated into the architecture.

Government Food Service: *In 2016, Navy Ashore considered completing advanced culinary arts “C” school training in galleys rather than at a single, central location. Is training accomplished in multiple sites or a single, central location?*

George: Currently, advanced “C” school training is only conducted at a few designated training commands. In 2016, CNIC was able to fund instructors to come to one of the shore galleys to conduct the training. In 2017, we were able to provide this training again. In order to make this Mobile Training Team (MTT) a permanent fixture there will need to be coordination between the Naval Education and Training Center (NETC), Center for Support Services (CSS), NAVSUP and CNIC. NETC and CSS plan their school seats and instructor needs years in advance. NAVSUP manages the Supply Rating inventory and determines the numbers of culinary specialists that require advanced training. While it may seem more cost effective to bring the instructor in-house when there is a need rather than to pay travel expenses for all of the students to attend class in a designated area, there may not be a significant number of students at the galley requiring the training. The concept of a MTT will work best at Fleet Concentration Areas where there is a larger population of culinary specialists from both shore and shipboard commands. Schools already exist in the Norfolk and San Diego area, so other sites that could benefit from the MTT could be located OCONUS.

Government Food Service: *Naval Base Kitsap became the seventh hybrid dining operation, or RIK feeder, which combines Morale, Welfare and Recreation and galley functions into one site. There were no plans to expand these operations. Is this still the case?*

George: Yes that is still true; currently there aren’t any plans to combine any other MWR operations with existing galleys. The two purposes for considering this type of joint venture are for customer convenience and savings to the taxpayer. If there is not a savings to the Appropriated Fund account, converting to an MWR operation may not be the best answer if the consideration is only to provide additional outlets for the RIK diners. MWR RIK [rations in-kind] operations are successful where there is a strong MWR Food and Beverage operation already in place and there is a steady cash customer base to cover the food costs.



Government Food Service: *Are any revisions or updates to the Navy Food Service Management system being prepared or released?*

George: NAVSUP is continually monitoring the Food Service Management (FSM) system to determine where improvements can be made. This system services all ashore or afloat galleys, and universal updates have been challenging as each command has unique situations. NAVSUP has routine recurring calls with all of the stakeholders to address any specific requirements, and every attempt is made to revise or update the system in a timely manner.

Government Food Service: *The E-Track system, which scans Common Access Cards to determine ration-in-kind eligibility, was implemented CONUS last year. OCONUS some technical network security issues were being worked out. Is that closer to being resolved?*

George: The former E-Track Common Access Card reader system is being replaced by REVS: Ration Entitlement Verification System. Operation of the new system should be transparent to the customers and the users. Equipment updates and installs are scheduled to begin later this year. Both CONUS and OCONUS sites should be outfitted with the new system.

Government Food Service: *Similar network security issues had to be resolved for credit card use OCONUS. How is that progressing? And, how is the system working CONUS? Is use growing?*

George: Network challenges continue for the credit card operations. DoD has very strict rules for transmitting Personal Identification Information (PII). Credit card transactions are considered PII and therefore do not pass the risk acceptability for transmission over internet lines.

Traditional telephone lines have been used; however, the transmission time is so slow that the customers are choosing to opt out of card payments. The galleys want to provide the convenience to the customer and also reduce the workload of stringent cash handling procedures. We are currently looking at possible solutions through the Navy Exchange or MWR to help provide secure connections for the sale of meals.

—GFS

Navy culinary specialists are responding to the Go for Green program’s focus on foods that make better choices by requesting training on the science of food in addition to basic sanitation, safety and food preparation.