

# The Healthier Humphrey Café

## HHS Cafeteria Is First to Implement New Federal Guidelines

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The recent grand re-opening of the Humphrey Café celebrates not only the return of a convenient food option within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services but the first implementation of new health and sustainability guidelines designed for operators of concessions in federal office buildings.

Health and Human Services (HHS) worked with the General Services Administration (GSA) to develop the recommendations, which apply the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as well as set precise standards that foodservice operators should implement to increase healthiness and sustainability in the menu options served.

Corporate Chefs Inc. began managing the Café in January 2011 under a contract that was awarded in December 2010. The official grand re-opening of the Humphrey Café, complete with a traditional ribbon cutting, took place on March 24.

"The Humphrey Café menu offerings, teaming up with operator Corporate Chefs Inc., were specifically designed to follow the new Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Cafeterias and



The ribbon cutting at the opening of the new Humphrey Café at the Department of Health and Human Services with Ned Holland, assistant secretary of HHS; David DesRosiers, vice president, Corporate Chefs Inc.; and Julia Hudson, regional administrator for GSA's National Capital Region. (GSA PHOTO)

Vending Operations," said Paul Kalinowski, management analyst, HHS. These guidelines were formulated through the partnership of HHS's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control agencies and GSA.

"The vendor solicitation stage focused on obtaining a cafeteria operator that would meet strict expectations that were formulated based on these guidelines. This is a test subject of sorts for their implementation," Kalinowski explained. "They were developed to guide vendors to provide seasonal vegetables and fruits, whole-grain options, vegetarian entrees,

lean-meat entrees, low-fat milk, yogurt and cottage cheese, high-fiber, low-sugar cereals, 100 percent fruit juice, freely available drinking water, foods with less sodium and foods free of synthetic sources of trans fats."

Additionally, the Humphrey Café is also encouraged to meet the sustainability aspect of the guidelines by providing incentives for using reusable beverage containers; using green cleaning and pest-control practices; using compostable and bio-based trays, flatware, plates and bowls; offering food that is organically, locally or sustainably grown and labeled

accordingly; and offering seafood identified as “Best Choices” or “Good Alternatives” on the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch List or certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (or an equivalent program). In the near future, composting will be implemented at the Humphrey Café.

### CHALLENGES AND REACTIONS

The effort to supply a more healthful food offering, while well received by the Café’s patrons, is not without logistical obstacles that

come from satisfying the dietary requirements.

“There are some products out there that people are looking for that just don’t exist in the foodservice world yet,” explained Roxanne Ayres, district manager, Corporate Chefs. “Just coming on the scene is low-sodium turkey burgers. We’re getting them now, but it was hard to get them from vendors. There are certain items that we’ve had to do a lot of research on because not a lot of vendors are carrying everything now. For example, there are probably 15 different brands of cold cereal, but maybe only three to five of them actually meet the nutritional guidelines.”

While she estimated that patron response to the Corporate Chefs eatery has been “95 percent positive,” she noted that there was the matter of the other 5 percent, who still expressed an interest in fried and other not-so-healthy foods.

“We are filling those requests the best we can, but we are just not advertising them on our weekly menu,” she said. One concession to indulgent tastes is an ice cream



Healthy Balance, a Corporate Chefs dietitian-designed program, offers meals that provide nutritionally sound amounts of calories, fat, sugar, cholesterol and sodium. (HHS PHOTO)

sundae bar every Wednesday from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. during the summer.

The Humphrey Café is open to HHS employees, as well as any visitors that have permission to be in the building.

Executive Chef Adrian Pineda and the other Humphrey Café employees are led by Doris Cardenas, on-site manager, Corporate Chefs. Support staff includes Sam Ayoub, branch chief, Retail, Concessions and Specialty Services, GSA; and Kristin Gillham, director of programs, Wellness Team, HHS.

### INSIDE THE CAFETERIA

The main entrance of the Humphrey Café (whose hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.) features menus and specials for customers to familiarize themselves with before entering the cafeteria. In the middle area is an extensive salad and fruit bar. On the right side of the cafeteria are several beverage coolers. Next to the beverage coolers, patrons can pick up to-go items from the grill area or order any of the grill specials and made-to-order options. Next to the grill

is the deli area, where employees can get a made-to-order sandwich or the deli special.

Further down is the hot-entrée area, where employees can get the hot specials or the Healthy Balance meals, a Corporate Chefs program, designed by the company’s registered dietitian, Elizabeth Ward, that is regularly updated to reflect the latest healthy eating recommendations from organizations, such as the American Heart Association, and federal agencies. Each Healthy Balance meal offers 500 or less calories; 12 grams or less of total fat; 75 milligrams or less of cholesterol; 600 milligrams or less of sodium; and no added trans fat or added sugar. Some examples are vegetable chili served with a garden salad; Thai-style baked tilapia served on a bed of brown rice and a side of spinach; and orange herb pork roast with Bourbon sauce served with red and green pilaf and broccoli Parmigiano.

On the far wall, patrons will find the coffee and tea stations. On the left side of the cafeteria, there is a soda fountain, more beverage

coolers and a cooler housing pre-made salads and deli sandwiches. Beyond that is a pizza station and a display for Keeper Springs water bottles. Other water brands available in the Café are Green Planet and Poland Spring.

The registers are located beyond all of the food options. Currently, there are two cashier stations lined up one in front of the other. After exiting the cashier stations, patrons can pick up condiments and either exit left to return to their workplace, or move forward and enter the dining area that looks out on the Capitol.

## **PROMOTIONS AND PROGRAMS**

From Memorial Day to Columbus Day, the Humphrey Café features on Friday a farmers market offering a variety of fresh local and organic seasonal fruits and vegetables, allowing patrons to get a

head start on their shopping for the weekend.

The Humphrey Café also provides HHS employees with a catering service, which will accommodate everything from a continental breakfast to a buffet lunch to an evening party. Wait staff, linen, flowers and actual ice carvings can be included.

As part of its commitment to nutrition, the Humphrey Café grants patrons access to a dietitian in several ways. Corporate Chefs Inc. provides Elizabeth Ward as a resource, with the ability for patrons to e-mail questions at any time via the “Ask Our Dietitian” link on the cafeteria’s Web site. An author and nutritional consultant, Ward is contracted by Corporate Chefs to visit the cafeteria four times per year and meet with patrons. HHS also has a relationship with dietitian services through the FDA. The FDA’s Office of Disease Prevention

and Health Promotion is active in organizing information sessions for Humphrey patrons. During these sessions, patrons can ask questions concerning food safety and better nutrition.

“Most of the programs that drive customer traffic are connected to wellness. By marketing the health and sustainability guidelines, and putting them into practice, the quality of the food is the selling factor,” said Kalinowski. “Through the Healthy Balance meals, Corporate Chefs markets healthy meals through which an employee can buy 10 meals and get the 11th one free. Pricing on healthy nutrition items is also lowered in order to attract employees to the cafeteria. By far the biggest draw is the quality of the food. Humphrey Café food is prepared by chefs, giving it a higher quality look and taste than conventional cafeteria food.”

—GFS