



# USC HOSPITALITY FOOD PHILOSOPHY

# OUR EXPERIENCE PRINCIPLES:

To provide the best USC experience through chef-driven, flavor forward menus. We aim to provide craveable, healthy and socially responsible cuisine for the Trojan Family. Our chefs constantly strive for the elevation of culinary strategy as a nutritional advantage. We meet guests' needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## **1. THE RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF DELICIOUSNESS**

We train our culinary staff to execute our menus and recipes, and foster an environment of collaboration. Infrastructure (such as menu calendars, fiscally responsible recipes, prep guides, line schematics and pre/post shift product checks) is crucial to a high quality and consistent product base. We develop culinary managers to become great chefs that can contribute to the hospitality industry and our Trojan Family. An environment that fosters continuing education for our culinary professionals will enhance creativity, employee engagement and increase guests' satisfaction. Sound cooking technique is the cornerstone of our chefs' philosophy.

Preservation of family traditions and centuries-old food cultures is as vital as our public health and environmental sustainability. Fortunately, these imperatives are compatible with principles of healthy, sustainable menus. Chefs collaborating with nutrition experts and public policy leaders are re-imagining the role of cultural based food traditions by limiting portion size, rebalancing ingredient proportions, or offering them less often.

## **2. CHEF DRIVEN MENUS, TRANSPARENT PRODUCTS**

Providing customers with information about production methods, sourcing, nutrient values, labor practices, animal welfare, and environmental impacts is a necessity in our technology-driven and networked era. Consumers can learn about what they eat regardless of what chefs and businesses share. Given that, our food operators can build trust by learning about environmental impact and social issues in the food system and sharing information about their own practices. Identifying the farms that grow key ingredients, for example, is a strategy that creates value and brand identity and one that is quickly becoming a standard practice.

Emerging demographic changes and greater global connectivity are making the American palate more adventurous, giving food service leaders a long-term opportunity for creative menu R & D.

## **3. FRESH AND SEASONAL, BOTH LOCAL & GLOBAL**

For chefs, peak-of-season fruits and vegetables can help create unbeatable flavors and marketing opportunities. When designing menus, we draw ideas and inspiration from local farmers and their crops during their growing season as well as the varieties and growing seasons of more distant regions.

The advantages of local sourcing include working with smaller producers who may be more willing to experiment with varieties that bring interest and greater flavor to the table. A focus on local food can also play an important role in building community, teaching others about the process of

growing food, stewarding the land and adopting healthier eating habits. Designing menus to draw on "in season" fruits and vegetables from more distant farms is also a key strategy for bringing fresh flavors to menus throughout the year.

## **4. THINK PRODUCE FIRST & FOCUS MORE ON PLANT BASED COOKING**

Focus on fruits and vegetables first with great diversity across all meals periods and snacks. Performance diets should feature green leafy vegetables and a mix of colorful fruits and vegetables daily. Fruit is best consumed whole or cut, fresh and in season, or frozen and preserved without added sugar or salt. Fruit juice often contains healthy micro-nutrients, but it also packs a large amount of fast-metabolizing sugar so it should be limited.

Scientific research suggests that the most effective way to help diners make healthy food choices is to shift our collective diets to mostly plant-based foods. Growing plants for food generally has less of a negative impact on the environment than raising livestock, as livestock have to eat lots of plants to produce a smaller amount of food. In fact, no other single decision in the professional kitchen—or in the boardrooms of food service companies—can compare in terms of the benefits of advancing global environmental sustainability. From the well-researched Mediterranean diet to the cuisines of Asia and Latin America, traditional food cultures offer a myriad of flavor strategies to support innovation around healthy & delicious cooking that rebalances ratios between foods from animal and plant sources.

## **5. PROMOTE HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INSPIRING & HAND MADE MENUS**

To sell healthy and sustainable food choices, lead with messages about flavor, rather than actively marketing health attributes. Research shows that taste trumps nearly all. Messages that chefs care and are paying attention to how and from whom they are sourcing their ingredients—such as by naming specific farms and growing practices (e.g., organic)—can enhance perceptions of healthier food choices.

## **6. A FOCUS ON WHOLE & INTACT GRAINS**

Menus should offer and highlight slow metabolizing; whole and intact grains, such as whole-grain bread, brown rice and whole grain pasta. Ideally, menu items should emphasize whole, intact, or cut—not milled—cooked grains, from wheat berries and oats to quinoa, which can be used creatively in salads, soups, side dishes, breakfast dishes and more. In baking, blend milled and whole grains to achieve healthier results.

## **7. RED MEAT: SMALLER PORTIONS, LESS FREQUENTLY**

Red meat—beef, pork, and lamb—should be enjoyed occasionally and in small amounts. Current guidance from nutrition research recommends consuming a maximum of two 3-ounce servings per week. Chefs and menu developers can rethink how meat is used by featuring it in smaller, supporting roles to healthier plant-based choices, and experimenting with meat as a condiment.

Saturated fat is one health concern associated with red-meat consumption, but it's not the only issue. Chefs should strive to limit bacon and other processed and cured meats, which are associated with even higher incidence of chronic disease than unprocessed red meats. Chefs can help to shift eating patterns by building a sense of theater and value in menu concepts that don't rely on animal protein as a starring role. For example, they might offer delicious meat/vegetable and meat/legume blends, or smaller tasting portions of red meat as part of vegetable-rich, small-plate formats.



## 8. REDUCE ADDED SUGAR

Consumers crave sugar, and the food service industry responds by selling processed foods and sweets that are loaded with it. But sugar's role in spiking blood-sugar levels and increasing rates of Type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases mean that professional kitchens should substantially restrict its use. Various strategies include: Choosing processed foods with little or no added sugar; favoring healthy oils over sugar in products such as salad dressings; featuring smaller portions of dessert augmented with fruit; and substituting whole, cut, and dried fruit for sugar in recipes. There is nothing wrong with an occasional dessert; but pastry chefs and dessert specialists can also create new experiences with a focus on whole grains, nuts, dark chocolate, coffee, fruit, healthy oils, yogurt, small amounts of other low-fat dairy and eggs.

## 9. CUT THE SALT

Our chefs focus on a range of strategies to deliver flavor including, sourcing high quality, high flavor produce; working with spices, herbs, citrus and other aromatics; and employing healthy sauces, seasonings and other flavor building techniques from around the world. These strategies result in implementing across-the-board sodium reduction (10-20%).

## 10. RIGHT PORTION SIZES & LIMITING FOOD WASTE

Moderating portion size is one of the biggest steps food service operators can take towards reversing obesity trends and reducing food waste. This is different than offering multiple portion sizes, as many diners "trade up" to bigger portions, which they see as offering greater value.

Consider menu concepts that change the value proposition for customers from an overemphasis on quantity to a focus on flavor, nutrient quality, culinary adventure and the dining experience (thereby mitigating potential downward pressure on check averages). Calorie quality is also as important. Dishes should feature slowly metabolized whole grains, plant proteins including nuts, legumes and healthy oils that promote lasting satiety as well as create great flavors.

## 11. FOCUS ON WHOLE, MINIMALLY PROCESSED FOODS

In general, consumers and chefs should first focus on whole, minimally processed foods. Such foods are typically higher in micronutrient value and less likely to contain high levels of added sugars, saturated or trans fats and sodium. (Nearly three-quarters of the sodium in the U.S. food supply is estimated to come from processed foods).

Minimally processed foods are also typically slowly metabolized, preventing sharp increases in blood sugar that over time may lead to insulin resistance. That said, some processed foods—low-sodium tomato paste, wine, nut butters, frozen fruits and vegetables, mayonnaise, dark chocolate, canned low-sodium beans, 100 percent whole-grain crackers, fresh-cut vegetables, spice mixtures, yogurt, reduced sodium sauces, many kinds of canned fish and shellfish, among other things—can be incorporated into healthy meals. Processing can also be used to extend the season of local and sustainably grown produce and to make use of cosmetically imperfect foods, especially produce.

## 12. DRINK HEALTHY-A COMMITMENT TO HEALTHY OPTIONS

Water is the best choice to serve your customers, either plain or with the addition of cut-up fruit, aromatics or

other natural flavors—and no sugar. Served plain, coffee and tea are calorie-free beverages containing antioxidants, flavonoids and other biological substances that are good for health.

A drastic reduction in sugary beverages represents one of the biggest opportunities for food service operators to help reverse the national obesity and diabetes epidemics. Sugary beverages add no nutritional value and contribute negligible satiety. They are a prime source of extra calories in the diet and a principle contributor to the development of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and other chronic conditions.

## 13. SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

Seafood is an important part of a healthy diet, and most Americans don't eat the recommended one to two servings per week of fatty fish, which contain higher levels of health-promoting Omega-3s. However, the focus on just a few species is emptying parts of the oceans of popular species such as cod and tuna. Serving more seafood from responsibly managed sources is a priority. Chefs can have a positive impact on the environment and public health by expanding their understanding of how to source and use a greater variety of responsibly managed and underutilized wild-caught and farm-raised fish and shellfish.

## 14. DESIGNING OPERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE FOOD

Designing operations are not the only ways to advance sustainability in food service. Choices that—which affect the way restaurants and other food service operations are designed, built and operated are also important. These include imagining kitchens that support the optimal preparation of fresh, healthy foods and selecting energy and water-efficient equipment and environmentally friendly building materials. As behavioral economics studies have shown, dining-room operations and food service eating spaces also deserve more attention: design, set-up, service and communication strategies can all lead consumers towards healthier, more sustainable choices.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at <http://hospitality.usc.edu/> or contact the marketing department at 213-821-5707