

.66¢ Lunch Special

Where, outside of a third world country, is it possible to get a meal for about sixty-six cents? Well it is supposed to happen at the Massachusetts Correctional Facility at Norfolk when dietitian approved menus and recipes are followed. If followed and adhered to, a man can be fed for about \$2.00 a day and surprisingly the food is not too bad. 3% of the DOC's budget is allotted to feed the Massachusetts inmate population. The problem is that menus, and more specifically recipes are not being followed.

Each Institution's Food Services Director(FSD) is obligated to adhere to the dietitian approved menus and recipes. The DOC Food Services Policy(103 DOC 760), at 760.04(2) in part states that; "Each Institutional Food Services Director['s] ...duties SHALL include:"

Providing nutritionally adequate meals, properly prepared and attractively served in accordance with departmental cycle menus and corresponding recipes.

The recipes can not be any more specific as they are described down to the brand, quality and amount of ingredients to be used.

How is it possible that, what a registered dietitian approves is not being served? For example, the recipes call for non-processed real turkey, and yet a processed turkey-loaf high in sodium is served. Meatballs, made from scratch using 80% beef and 20% fat, are what the recipe calls for, but an overly processed faux meatball is served. Often, a breakfast cake, which satisfies daily fiber and grain requirements is called for. However, instead a cheap premade cake mix containing hydrogenated oils, bleached flour, and other preservatives is being served. What the dietitian does take into account, and the FSD neglects to, is that the body requires grains, fibers, and fats; good fats like the 80/20% beef and hamburger which is supposed to be served. Common sense would dictate that if the proper ingredients were used and where required the food is made from scratch, you would not only be saving money, but making and serving a healthier food. The examples continue on: incorrect bread which contains high-fructose corn syrup, breakfast juice which should be unsweetened, but is a vitamin spiked punch. Oatmeal that is supposed to contain raisins, etc.

It seems that at every corner nickles are being squeezed by the FSD to save or produce pennies; at the expense of men's long term health(97% of whom will be released). An excellent illustration of the lengths the FSD will go to is the chicken stew meal served a number of times per month. The recipe is based on 100 servings, and on any given day 1,600 servings are prepared at MCI-Norfolk. Chicken stew calls for 4 ounces of chicken(per man) to be used; so $1,600 \times 0.4 = 400$ lbs of chicken. What the FSD brings out of the freezer is 350 lbs of chicken, or so, the missing 50+ lbs is made up with potato the recipe already calls for. The recipe also calls for 4 ounces of vegetable to be served on the side. Instead the FSD mixes 300 lbs of vegetable into the stew. When a man receives the stew there is no vegetable on the side, instead he receives 6 ounces of the mixture served over rice--instead of what a registered dietitian has approved and factored into a man's diet and needs. This can be confirmed by a review of the records of daily servings which are supposed to be kept in accordance with 103 DOC 760.

So what happens to all this extra money? Is it being funneled into a slush fund to cure diabetes and hypertension? Or perhaps to repair roads and bridges across the Commonwealth? Well, an audit of the invoices paid to U.S. Foods(from MCI-Norfolk) might be telling. Some time ago, a deliveryman commented that we(inmates) appear to be eating better than him and his family. This was while boxes of frozen pizza, egg-rolls, chicken wings, 80/20% hamburger, etc. was being unloaded. The response to his comment was that the inmate population does not see any of these food items and this was his tax dollars at work. This is a sad fact that can easily be confirmed. These

gourmet foods are not finding their way to the Culinary Arts Program which is supposed to have its own budget. So who eats these foods?

Here is a not so original solution which would save \$80,000 a year without jeopardizing the long term health of men who are, and could continue to be a burden on society when they contract chronic ailments associated with obesity because of a poor diet and bad nutrition- remove the [MCI-Norfolk] FSD from the equation. The menu cycle is a 3-week cycle which changes twice a year. Any high school student with a knowledge of algebra and computers could write a fool proof program to place weekly orders, especially given that the dietitian identifies the ingredients and the brands of foods. Security staff, already assigned, would maintain enforcement and adherence to the dietitian approved menus and recipes. The removal of the FSD from MCI-Norfolk would also eliminate the discord and disharmony he creates. In his quick wit and retort his responses to complaints include responses like: "If you do not like the food- do not eat it." Also, "I am untouchable- they can't fire me." And, "I do not care what you do- go tell the Governor."

Well how about it Mr. Governor, save \$80,000 per year at Norfolk alone, and relieve society of the burden of caring for obese men leaving prison with progressed heart conditions, diabetes, hypertension, and other chronic ailments associated with a poor diet and lack of proper nutrition and processed foods?