

An Open Letter and Invitation to the Governor,  
and Legislative Branches

There exists a relatively unknown, long established eatery of sorts within the confines of a Norfolk gated-community, a facility of the Massachusetts Department of Correction. This, if you will, eatery has had numerous proprietors(also known as Food Service Directors(FSD)) since the early 1930s when it first opened, and was once renown for the restaurant quality of the food, as well as the accomplished level of training afforded to the incarcerated individuals. It may be easier to obtain reservations at Carbone, Gordon Ramsey, or the 1-11, however, members of the Mass. Executive and Legislative Branches need no reservation to enter MCI-Norfolk premises. Pursuant to Policy(1) members are afforded unhindered access to correctional facilities at any time.

Though this establishment offers some ten different menus(due to religious preference, or medical need) the two most utilized are the General Population diet, and the Consistent Carbohydrate diet (CCHH) prescribed to the ever growing number of pre, type 2, and type 1 diabetics. A precursory review of these menus (2) gives the furtive illusion of an above-average attentiveness to health concerns- sadly not the case. Though, menus, corresponding spreadsheets/worksheets (3) and recipes (4) are written by actual dietitians, and Policy(5) obligates that these are followed, they are consistently ignored or circumvented by kitchen staff and powers-that-be. For example, the spreadsheets are a nutritional breakdown of each meal and food item. Instead of purchasing and serving the commissioned items, kitchen staff substitutes lower quality and less expensive items. The dietitian approves the use of(Carolina®) turkey which provides 78.94(mg) of sodium, but what the kitchen orders and serves is an Oscar Meyer® brand, bulk purchase containing arguably a menacing 880(mg) of sodium for the 4 ounceserving. This is the common practice as pertains to a number of "Opportunity Purchases"(6) including beef(7) which contains three times the sodium content the dietitian approves and factors into the "Heart Healthy(8) diet. The recipes, which detail the methods of how the food is 'supposed' to be prepared and cooked, as well as the amounts of spices included, are apparently followed only to the convenience of who is running the kitchen on any given shift. An example of Recipe non-compliance is Recipe # D-2(Mashed Potatoes) which calls for potatoes to be peeled, quartered, and the eyes removed. What actually happens is 50 pound bags of potatoes are dumped into kettles, some milk added . . . Done. Serve. This portion of a meal is not so delicately referred to as "Dirty-Mashed-Potatoes" which are pretty good, if you enjoy your side-dish abundant with dirty skins, bitter potato eyes, and a distinct dusting of dirt affording the dish that earthy flavor. Other facilities are able to peel potatoes old-school style, with a potato peeler. The menus, corresponding Spreadsheets/Worksheets, and recipes are obliged to be followed pursuant to Policy(9). If the correct foods are ordered, and prepared accordingly, the food is actually digestibly appetizing, although, still "very, very, very bland."

As it were, specific deplorable conditions in the kitchen should be noted, and addressed, such as leaking pipes over cooking areas and keetles, rodent infestation, broken windows, but to name a few. Past violations of this kitchen can be seen in the Department of Health Inspectional Reports sent to both the Executive and Legislative Branches twice a year. Insignificant? Overlooked? Any establishment in a health and hygiene conscious [free] society would be shuttered and fined having such [repeated] violations.

The most recent proprietor, or F.S.D., who was appointed about 18 months ago, vowed to correct the outdated recipes which he admitted were broken and left the food "very, very, very bland!" The recipes were revised in February and March of 2024, but resulted in the food being even more unappealing and created further adjustment for more "Opportunity Purchases(10). Instead of simply correcting these recipes to make dining more reasonably pleasurable, kitchen staff continue to inform the inmate population that such ill conditions[the food] are the fault of inmates who complain and advocate for better food conditions, while such slander causes climate issues of aggressive bodily risks to champions of truth.

Upon a visit to the "2 Clark Street Bistro" it would behoove anyone with an honest desire to get the truth and a feel of the "joint" to speak to inmates about the waste and the quality and blandness of the food. It has been suggested, ad nauseam, that ingredients such as saltless-salt, and other flavor enhancing spices could be added to the recipes through the simple approval of the team of registered dietitians. As a result of the laissez-faire, and the intentional deaf-dumb-blind culture which is allowed to persist in Food Services, instances of climate issues are increasing. The most recent occurring on January 14th(Day 3 of the cycle menu) when a "non-approved" turkey product was cooked in a chicken stock gel(not in recipe) and served, resulting in a number of Housing Units having Shift-Commanders summoned who then ordered the kitchen to send different food after inmates refused to eat the questionable and smelling food.

MCI-Norfolk has an inmate Food Services Committee pursuant to the Norfolk Inmate Constitution(11) whom up until the appointment of the newest proprietor, would meet with him to address complaints reported to the Norfolk Inmate Council, and work for resolutions, such as correcting or making suggestions to correct food issues and recipes. This F.S.D. has only met with the Food Committee 3 - 4 times in an overall period of 18 months. Prior to his appointment meetings were monthly. The Food Committee would be more than willing to meet with, or respond to correspondence, of anyone with an interest.

Another unfortunate circumstance of the Food Service culture is waste. Even though it continues to be pointed out to Food Services the exorbitant amounts of waste, mostly due to the meat and burger being replaced with a product high in soy, the lack of any noticeable seasoning, or care put into preparation of food, an enormous amount

is thrown away. In addition to food waste, expenditures is an issue. Food Services pays a pig farm to pick up slop buckets (12) of food waste and pays upwards of \$1,475.00 per month. For the month of October 2024 "262 barrels at 300 lbs. Equals 78,000 lbs. of swill" collected from MCI-Norfolk. With the average population[MCI-Norfolk] of 1,100, this roughly works out to 2.29 lbs of food waste per person, per day. With the average person consuming about 4 lbs of food per day; for every pound of food consumed per incarcerated individual, over 1/2 pound is fed to the pigs.

If one is ever unfortunate enough to have to visit the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital and eat there, it would be noted that the food is quite good, and it is apparant the care put into preperation, and that most everything of a meal is consumed.

The kitchen at MCI-Norfolk, once a coveted position men aspired to work, has become the easiest job someone can get. The reason being that men who take pride in their work are discouraged by the lack of integrity that pervades the air and are thus repulsed. The man sweeping the floor today, is often the man with little to no training preparing the [usually] over or under cooked clump of pasta served tomorrow. Norfolk [currently] has the "lowest high-pay" rate in the D.O.C., and no real incentives to encourage keeping a kitchen position. In addition these men are employed and tasked with doing all the "grunt" work, while a number of select elite volunteers proffered very special privileges are used to make "staff trays" and are treated with favor over regular kitchen workers. This creates or contributes to ongoing climate issues, classism, and low moral in the kitchen. Certain volunteers are given free reign, given immunity (contributing to an unhealthy illicit degree of familiarity) and pretty much run the kitchen while staff spends a large amount of their day sitting in an office; an office which their air-conditioner vents hot air into areas where the grunts work under questionable conditions. This poses a lost opportunity to train regular workers in areas other than mopping floors which could help them not to recidivate upon release.

As staff, or as a visitor to MCI-Norfolk, if nothing on the menu strikes your fancy, what is recommended would be to order the "staff tray." But this must be requested with a wink and a nod, and ordered as an "over-time-tray." These staff-trays are made by the elite volunteers, illegitimately using foods ordered from the Inmate Food Account. Though 103 DOC 214, STAFF MEALS, allows an overtime meal to be provided under codified criterias, these trays are given free, without charge, using food purchased for the incarcerated population. There is a provision in 103 DOC 214 where staff can purchase - emphasis on purchase - a meal from the main-line or food prepared for the population, a practice that dates back to a time when the food was actually palatable, and staff did dare to eat from the main-line. However, kitchen staff without conscience about using funds from the Inmate Food Account to purchase for themselves items such as gourmet coffee, ice cream parties, pizza parties, real ground beef, just to mention a few. If the correct foods were ordered, including real

ground beef, etc., the food would improve overnight, and staff would most likely purchase these meals which policy specifies at \$1.35 plus meals tax.

Penny Wise Pound Foolish. According to the minutes of the monthly meetings of the Institutional Food Service Directors, Food Services boasts that they have been able to "shave \$1,000,000 per year, for the past 3 years from the Inmate Food Budget" mostly by utilizing Opportunity Purchases, purchases responsible for high sodium products such as the turkey, beef, premade processed egg products, soy products, products from Mexico (rife with misspellings on the Nutritional Labels . . . ) Food Services are being allowed to ignore dietitian approved products to the detriment of the health of the incarcerated population. While \$18,591,977 was spent on food (FY24), more than \$212,000,000.00 was spent on incarcerated health care.

In addition to the bland, ill prepared food being deposited directly into Unit "slop-buckets" men are forced to make unhealthy choices from a limited commissary as there is no other alternative, relying on prepackaged food stuff simply to exist. Nation wide, an average of 95% of the incarcerated will eventually be released (in Massachusetts the percentage is closer to 83%). These people are leaving prison with a number of chronic diet related ailments, such as hypertension, obesity, type 1, type 2, and pre diabetes, and heart disease to name just a few.

On a closing note, this is not the first instance where Food Services have been indicted for misuse of inmate funds, and not reporting and paying state meals tax(13). And, as well remember, if sampling a soy laden dish (which actually calls for "ground beef") to order a couple of side dishes of antacid, or smarter, you can order a staff tray (\*wink\* Overtime Tray) which contains real ground beef and other gourmet foods ordered from the Inmate Food Account. It is a feloniously egregious violation and conflict that Food Services are being allowed to order staff food from the Inmate Food Account.

#### Endnotes

1. 103 DOC 483.10(2)(a): By statute (M.G.L.c. 127, §36), no person except the Governor, a Member of the Governor's Council, a Member of the General Court, a Justice of the Supreme Judicial, Superior or District Court, the Attorney General, a District Attorney, the Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner of Correction, a Member of the Parole Board, or a Parole or Probation Officer may visit a state correctional institution without permission of the Superintendent or Commissioner.
2. Public Records Request: Fall/Winter or Spring/Summer 3 week cycle menu for the General Population, and CCHH diets.
3. Public Records Request: Spreadsheets/Worksheets for General Population diet. The CCHH somewhat follows nutritional information indicated on

Spreadsheets/Worksheets for General Population as both are supposed to be Heart Healthy Diets, per policy.

4. Public Records Request: Recipes for General Population, and CCHH Diet, most all are the same.
5. 103 DOC 760, FOOD SERVICE POLICY, see 760.04(2), INSTITUTIONAL FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES
6. Opportunity Purchases are products ordered/purchased in bulk procured by the Office of the State Food Service Director.
7. Public Records Request(s): "Fully Cooked Seasoned Beef 'Steak' Fajitas"  
NEF(New England Food # 130046  
"Oscar Mayer, Lean White Turkey, Oven Roasted
8. The D.O.C. diet is "Heart Healthy" low in sodium. Is supposed to satisfy the needs of pre-diabetics, and those with hypertension
9. 103 DOC 760.04(2)
10. Recipes revised in February and March of 2024, made a number of recipes items such as cinnamon, and Pizza Sauce" optional. Pizza sauce can be, and is replaced with tomatoe paste(Opportunity Purchase) and once provided Italian seasoning to sauces and meals. Other recipes were revised to replace white meat turkey with "turkey ends" and Beef with "beef ends" these adjustments to the recipes do not always coincide with the approved spreadsheets
11. See generally, Norfolk 'constitution' gives inmates say, By Feeney, Paul Boston Globe(1960-); Jul 20, 1973; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe pg. A1
12. Public Records Request: Monthly amount(s) of swill/food waste removed from MCI-Norfolk including number of barrels; weight and money paid to: David Cassidy(42 Ellis Street, Medway, MA 02053) for removal.
13. 103aDOC-214 mandates that sales tax be collected when staff purchases any portion of an inmate meal. Pursuant to Public Records Requests this tax has not been collected since 2008, records before this date are unclear. See PrisonLegalNews.com, for cases of Food Service litigation of misappropriation of food services funding, misusing Inmate Funds to feed staff, using Inmate Food Accounts as own personal "slush fund" and negligence to report and pay policy mandated tax.

