



Supply Chain



Chef's Academy – a unique innovation from NHS Supply Chain

The Independent review of NHS Hospital Food 2020 highlighted the need for chef training and development, including a national training certificated course for hospital caterers, an NHS catering apprenticeship scheme and the need to celebrate success through a new NHS Chef of the Year award and Chef's Academy.

The establishment of the Chef's Academy in October 2020 by Nick Vadis and Stephen England, on behalf of NHS Supply Chain: Food, has helped develop the skills and culinary knowledge of chefs, offering an opportunity to feel a sense of community and pride within their roles, and acting as a way of attracting and retaining staff through continued professional development.

Nick gave a comprehensive overview of the success of the Academy so far when he spoke at the recent HCA Leadership & Development Forum (see page 35). Small groups of up to 10 NHS chefs are brought together with Nick and Stephen, amongst other leading chefs from the foodservice industry, for training days to learn how to cook new and exciting meals from the Culinary Concepts recipe book, co-created by Nick and Stephen. The Chef's Academy was conceived to provide chefs with a great forum to learn some new nutritionally balanced recipes to deliver to patients, addressing all special dietary requirements and dietetic needs. According to Nick Vadis, Chef Ambassador to NHS Supply Chain, "NHS Chef's

Academy is an amazing opportunity for NHS Chefs to learn new skills and develop their culinary knowledge on insight-driven food. It also provides them with a platform for mixing with their peer group and learning together."

The benefits

As well as the training itself, chefs can network with one another, and share ideas, knowledge and best practice. Along with in-house culinary experts, there is a dietician and nutritionist present at every event who explain the science of designing the meals, the calorie breakdown, and how the meals are nutritionally balanced.

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At the end of the training day, each chef receives a certificate as well as a bank of under 600kcal recipes with full nutritional analysis (fat, salt, sugar and calories) to take home, enabling them to have the skills they need to produce these meals back at their units. Ongoing support is offered to NHS Trusts, with visits to kitchens to see how their individual spaces can be best utilised.

Economies of scale

All the recipes taught are mapped to approved products, each coming with pricing suggestions and an awareness of cost. The recipes also come with a scaling tool so they can be adjusted to the number of people being catered for, with the price of the item adjusted accordingly.

Delivering great results

The academies have been a huge success, with 107 NHS chefs having attended across 14 events so far. Chefs who are part of the NHS Apprenticeship programme can score points for their attendance, which counts towards their qualification.

For more information on the upcoming dates, venues and locations of the Chef's Academy, and to register your interest in attending, please visit www.supplychain.nhs.uk/event/chefs-academy

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Award-winning event programme

The Chef's Academy won the 2022 Public Sector Catering award for training and apprenticeships on 7 April. Sam Lee, NHS Supply Chain: Food, Category Tower Manager said, "Nick and Stephen rose to the challenge in creating a concept that made NHS Supply Chain: Food more than just a procurement body. The academies were born from a request of 'using your industry expertise, what more can you offer NHS caterers?' Having attended one, I can honestly say simplicity delivers. I was able to experience how the chefs engaged with each other and how they learnt new skills. The events enabled them to understand the benefits of why things are done in a certain way. The team are rightfully delighted to have won this award and I cannot wait to see how they take this one step further."

Stephen England, Culinary Specialist, said, "Both Nick and I were extremely honoured to have received the Public Sector Catering Award for the work we have done with the NHS Chefs Academy. The sessions are designed to inspire and educate chefs from the NHS. The training is totally free and after the session is complete the chefs then have access to more than 200 dietetically and nutritionally analysed recipes suitable to use for patients, staff and visitors."

The Chef's academies have also been nominated for the Craft Guild of Chef's Hero award.

