

# Food is Care: Northwell's food transformation journey...

**Sven Gierlinger**

*SVP, Chief Experience Officer, Northwell Health*





## ECONOMIC IMPACT



**\$16.5 billion**  
annual operating budget



**\$1.25 billion**  
capital budget

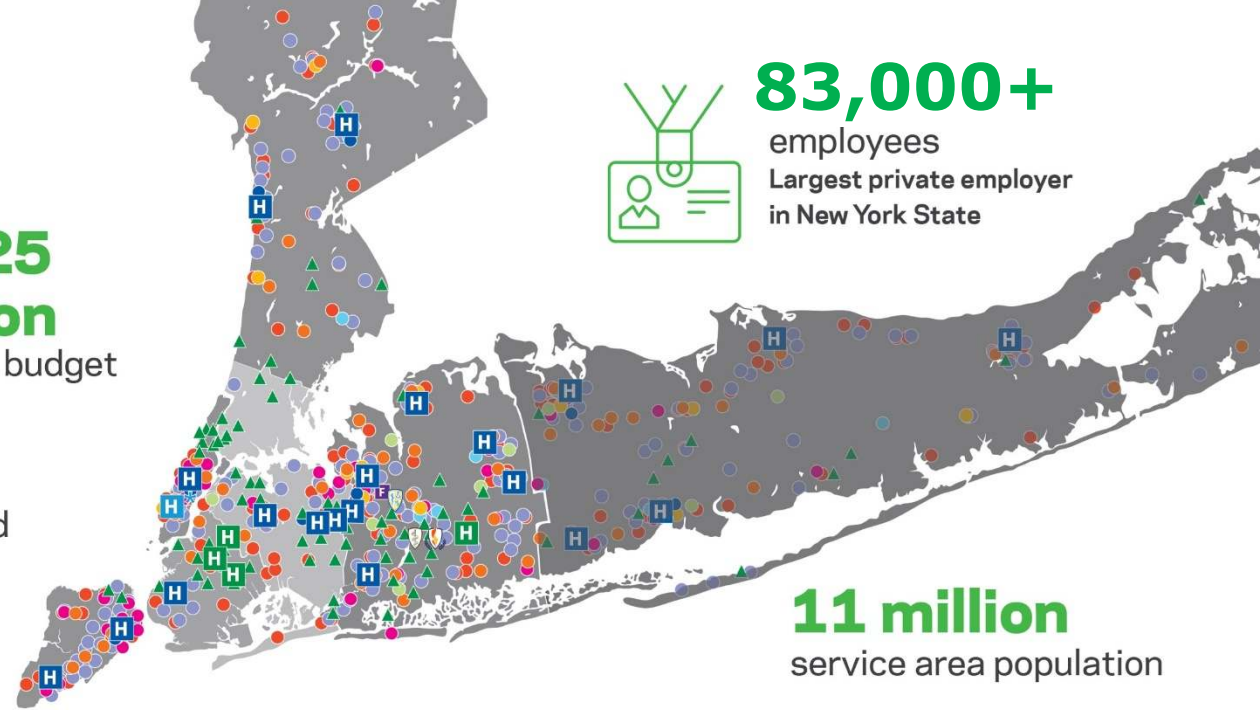


**21** hospitals } **10** magnet-designated

**850+** ambulatory facilities



**83,000+**  
employees  
Largest private employer  
in New York State



**11 million**  
service area population

## CAREGIVERS



**12,000+**  
credentialed  
physicians

**18,000+**  
nurses

**4,900+**  
employed  
physicians

**1,900+**  
residents and fellows  
in 180 programs

**3,500+**  
advanced care  
providers

**5,000**  
volunteers

## OPERATING STATISTICS

**5.5 million**

patient encounters  
- 2 million patients treated annually



**37,000+**  
births

**1 million**

home health visits



**850,000+**

emergency  
visits\*

**250,000+**

ambulatory  
surgeries\*



**1,000+**

active clinical  
research studies

**250+**

principal investigators



## COMMUNITY IMPACT



**\$485 million**

in education &  
research

**\$465 million**

in health improvement  
services & building

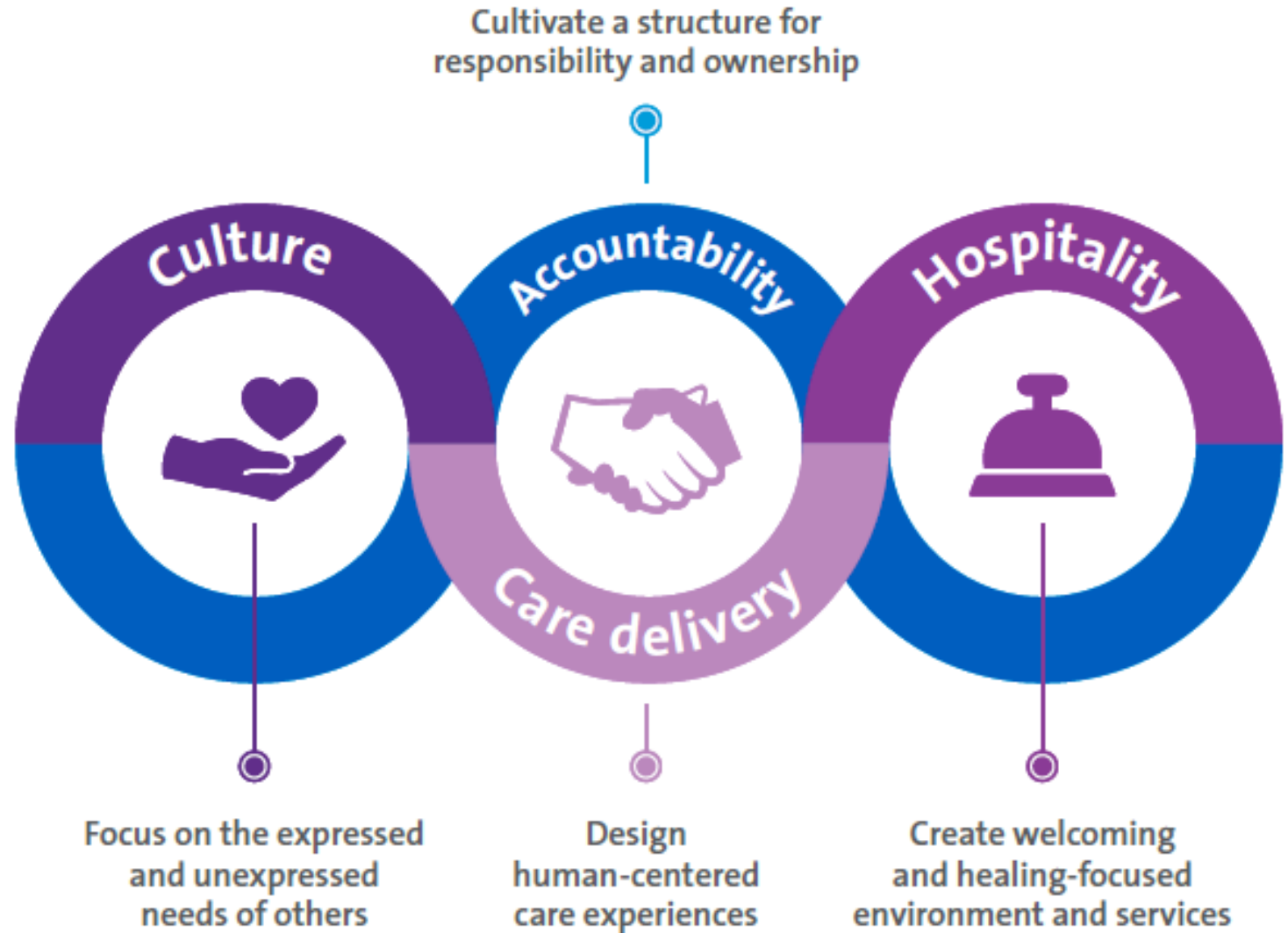
**\$221 million**

in charity care

\*2022 budgeted

# PX Strategy

A comprehensive approach



# What our patients were **really** saying

“The food was inedible most days.”

“Food was atrocious and unpalatable!  
Not fit to feed my dog.”

“Every meal brought to me was unappetizing. **People need good food to get better!**”

“Hire some chefs who know how to cook!”

“Hire a new nutritionist. Food was too heavy on carbs, sauces, water logged frozen vegetables, & sugars.”

Where we started...

9th %ile

Nationally in Quality of Food

(1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2016)

# Did you know?

10M+ meals a year

1K+ employees in food & nutrition

\$55M food & nutrition supplies  
purchase

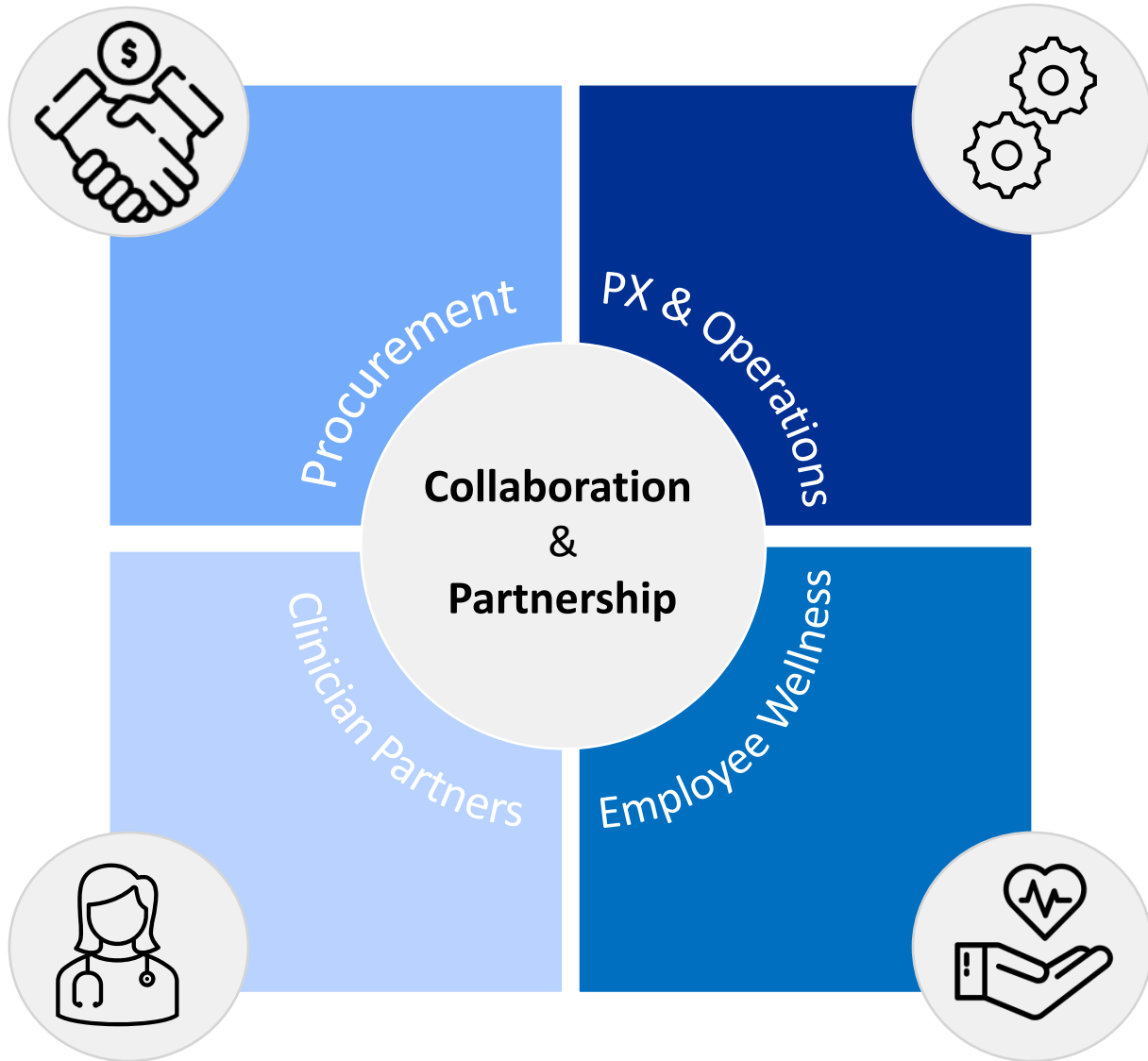
# Disruptive Innovation

Building a foundation of excellence



# Turning hospital food from liability to asset

## A Collaborative Approach





# Our challenge to **make things right**

## Where we were...

Cook-Chill model

Frozen, Canned, & Fried Food

Processed & Preservatives

Unappealing, pre-packaged, pre-cooked food

Use of unhealthy ingredients (high fructose corn syrup, trans fat, etc.)

Lack of leadership commitment & culinary talent



# Our Transformation Journey

## Organizational Commitment

released 2017

*Northwell Health has transformed the way we buy, cook and serve food throughout our organization to support the healing and well-being of our patients, team members and community, elevating the taste and quality of foods we serve.*

### Key Initiatives

- Northwell Healthy Choice
- Chef Excellence
- Education
- Community



## The Northwell Health Food and Nutrition Commitment

Northwell Health has transformed the way we buy, cook and serve food throughout our organization to support the healing and well-being of our patients, team members and community, elevating the taste and quality of foods we serve. Food is our most basic way to maintain good health, prevent sickness and maximize clinical benefit. At Northwell, we see food as health, and as medicine.

As the largest healthcare system in New York State, and as obesity and chronic disease continue to escalate, we have an imperative to provide fresh, healthy, and great tasting food to the millions of lives we touch each year. We know that even small shifts in food choices over time, including environmental reinforcement, can support maintenance of healthy weights and reduce the risk for chronic disease.

Our goal is to change how people think about food.

The transformation of our nutrition environment is strategically focused on sourcing fresh products, reducing the amount of processed and frozen convenience foods served, and incorporating healthy, restaurant-quality cuisine that offers more nutritious and delicious choices that support health and healing for every community we serve.

We're committed to replacing freezers with refrigerators; removing fryers; and replacing sources of added sugar with healthier options. To further advance our goals, we have implemented the following initiatives:

**Northwell Healthy Choice**  
Our nutrition criteria embrace national recommendations with delicious options available daily in our cafeterias, coffee shops, vending machines and catering. It is our pledge to serve food that tastes good, is good for you, and supports the environment.

- Northwell Healthy Choice options provide:
- Better quality calories. Better choices.
  - Whole foods. Minimally processed.
  - Fresh baked. Never fried.
  - More fiber. Less salt, less sugar and less saturated fat.
  - More water, seltzer and unsweetened beverages.

**Chef Excellence**  
We are raising the bar for chef development, recruiting the future generation of chefs, applying hospitality industry practices to our food preparation, and celebrating the flavors of whole, fresh ingredients. Our registered dietitians are an integral part of the team to meet the healing and well-being needs of our patients, visitors and team members.

**Education**  
We understand that healthy habits begin in the home. That's why we provide our communities with opportunities to learn how to prepare foods in healthy ways, taste new dishes, and learn about good nutrition throughout their lifespan. Our teaching kitchens are a popular, accessible tool to expand cooking confidence and learn about nutrition.

**Community**  
We are assisting patients who have food insecurity by providing hospital-based access to emergency food, supporting their nutritional-related conditions, and helping them navigate government and community resources. We further extend our reach to our community through policy and collaborations with local organizations, farmers, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture offerings.

*Michael J. Dowling*  
Michael J. Dowling  
President and CEO



At Northwell Health, we are working to change health care for the better. The implementation of a comprehensive food and nutrition transformation is one of our key strategic commitments to keep our patients, team members and communities safe and well.





# Making National News right from the start



FOX5NY.COM  
5:54 41°  
**GOURMET HOSPITAL FOOD**

## The New York Times

### Hospital Food You Can Get Excited About

Bland, institutional food can be bad for patients in many ways.



## INSIDE edition



### What's cooking at Chez Northwell

A Michelin-star chef is reinventing hospital food at the state's largest health system

Bruno Tison fastened a generous clump of filet mignon with butcher's twine, seasoned it with salt and pepper, and sautéed it in a blazing hot pan with his herb-infused demi glace. After the chef taste-tested the meat with satisfaction, his protégés in the basement kitchen at Lenox Hill Hospital quickly nibbled on the rest.

photo of his latest creation: a towering salad of avocado and fresh tuna tartare with an herb emulsion. Hospital food didn't exactly use to be Northwell's strong suit. Many past patients rated its meals as "not good, or awful," said Sven Giesinger, Northwell's vice president and chief experience officer. Giesinger, himself a trained chef, hired Tison to turn things

## BECKER'S HOSPITAL REVIEW

### Northwell first health system in nation to hire Michelin Star chef

Written by Anuja Vaidya (Twitter | Google+) | December 20, 2017 | Print | Email

[Share](#) New Hyde Park, N.Y.-based Northwell Health named Michelin Star chef Bruno Tison assistant vice president for food services and the corporate executive chef.

Northwell Health hires Michelin-starred chef Bruno Tison for hospital system

12/20/2017 | *Newsday*



Northwell Health's secret to better patient care? A Michelin star chef.

9:30 AM - October 15, 2018

Home > Providers > Hospitals



### Northwell Health's top chef is a real star—Michelin that is

By Modern Healthcare | March 10, 2018

It's not news that hospitals have been working for a while to improve their culinary game. But Northwell Health has kicked things up a notch.

In his former life in the world of fine dining, Bruno Tison earned a coveted Michelin star as executive chef of the Fairmont Sonoma (Calif.) Mission Inn &



## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

### Take Two Aspirin—and a Serving of Kale

# Procuring **healthy choice** ingredients:

From processed, frozen, canned... to fresh, natural, locally sourced, & healthy



Meatless Monday's  
30% of Menus Natural Plant Based



100% "Strauss Pasture Raised" beef – no antibiotics or hormones, grass fed/grass finished American beef



Antibiotic and hormone free (ABF) fresh poultry



Wild or BAP, ASC, and MSC certified fresh seafood



100% "Farm Promise" pork – antibiotic and hormone free, vegetarian fed, and humanly raised



Fresh vegetables instead of frozen, canned



Fresh, artisanal bread program – locally baked



Healthy Choice desserts – provided by local bakeshop



Culturally Diverse Food Offerings



100% elimination of oil fryers from all Food and Nutrition Departments



80% of purchased beverages are reduced sugar or sugar free



# Transforming the Culinary Experience

## A Focus on Chef Talent



### Culinary Careers at Northwell Health

2.2K views · 3 years ago



We're revolutionizing food's role in health care. Are you Made for elevating the culinary experience? Watch how Northwell is ...

### Our Executive Chefs come from places such as...

- The French Laundry
- Four Seasons Hotels
- Fairmont Hotels
- The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company
- The Plaza Hotel
- French Culinary Institute of New York
- *And multiple Michelin Star restaurants across US & Europe... we are the envy of many hotels and restaurant companies*

### Attracting staff from hotels & restaurants

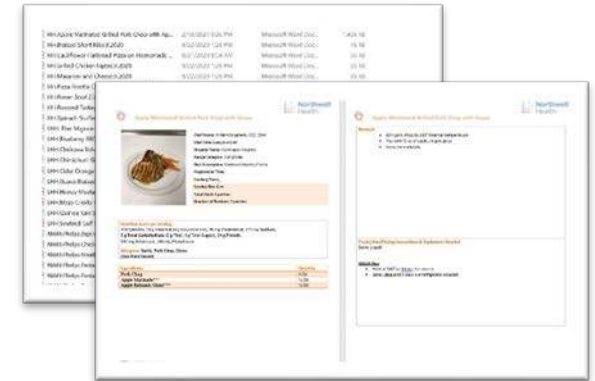
### Tuition Forgiveness Program (*partnership with HR*)

The Why... (*job security, growth, benefits, work life balance, higher purpose*)



# Raising the bar...

- Focus on teaching staff
- Recipe database
- Appearance: Professional uniform standards
- In-room dining vs. cook serve vs. ~~cook chill~~
- Patient rounding
- Menu & concept redesign

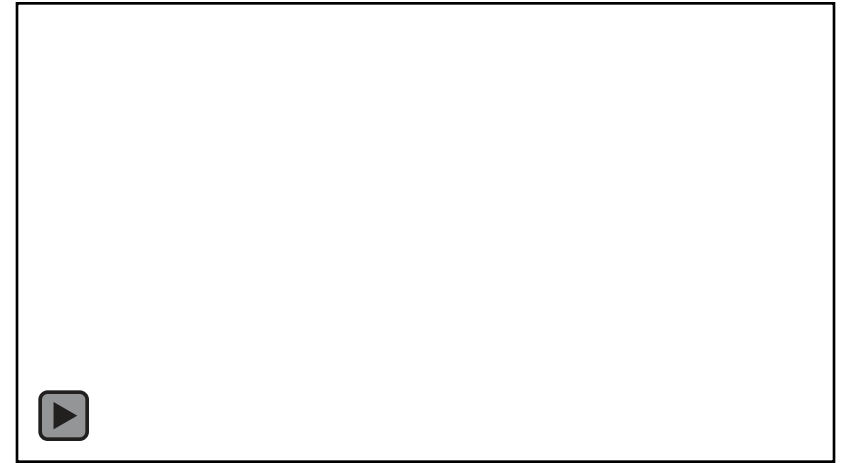


# 2022 Northwell Health Chefs Challenge

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Chefs Challenge

*held at Glen Cove Hospital*

“This event is important because it highlights culinary excellence across Northwell and energizes all of our chefs and food and nutrition teams to bring their best.” – **Sven Gierlinger, SVP, Chief Experience Officer**



## 2023 highlights include:

- Celebrity guest judge, Chef David Burke
- Introduction of a Prize Package
- Senior leadership attendance



## Congratulations to the winning teams!

- **First Place:** Northern Westchester Hospital
- **Second Place:** Huntington Hospital
- **Third Place:** Staten Island University Hospital, Prince's Bay



# Clinical Nutrition: An Evidence-based Approach

Aligned clinical nutritionists/RDs under system leader



## Inpatient Focus

- Standardization
- Quality & Regulatory Compliance
- Top Projects: Malnutrition & Liver Frailty Testing



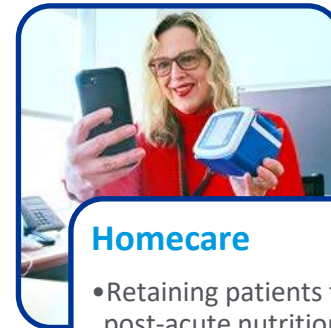
## Outpatient & Ambulatory Care

- Billing and Reimbursement
- Transitions of Care
- Standardization of care in specialty areas



## Community Outreach

- Wellness on Wheels
- Health Screenings
- Healthy Store Initiatives
- Grocery Store Tours



## Homecare

- Retaining patients for post-acute nutrition support
- Focus on Region Care



## Education

- Partnership with Medical Education
- Partnership with Northwell Zucker SOM



# Teaching Kitchens

- 80+ Teaching Kitchens in 2022
- Northwell is active member of Teaching Kitchen Collaborative
- Healthy Choice Recipe Database

Northwell Healthy Choice Teaching Kitchen  
Huntington Hospital  
Chef Michael Milland Registered Dietitian Stephanie Schiff

### Lemon and Mint Cucumber Yogurt Sauce



**Ingredients**

- 16 oz Plain Greek Yogurt
- 1 each, cucumber, peeled, seeded
- 1 each, Lemon, juice and zest
- 2 tbl Fresh mint, chopped fine
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tsp garlic, minced

**Instructions (yield 20 oz)**

1. Grate cucumber on box grater and spread on grate, sprinkle lightly with kosher salt to extract excess water, let sit 15 minutes, squeeze dry
2. Combine with remaining ingredients, adjust seasoning
3. Refrigerate until needed

**Nutrition Facts**  
48 Calories, 1g Total Fat (0g Saturated Fat), 3mg Sodium, 10g Protein, 8g Carbohydrate (0g Fiber, 5g Total Sugar).

**Micro nutrients**  
Greek Yogurt Rich in protein, potassium, and calcium  
Lemon: Manganese, Vitamin B-6, & C  
Cucumber: Good source of fiber, provides potassium & magnesium  
Mint: Excellent source of Vitamin C & antioxidants  
Garlic: High in Vitamin C & Flavonoids

Northwell Health

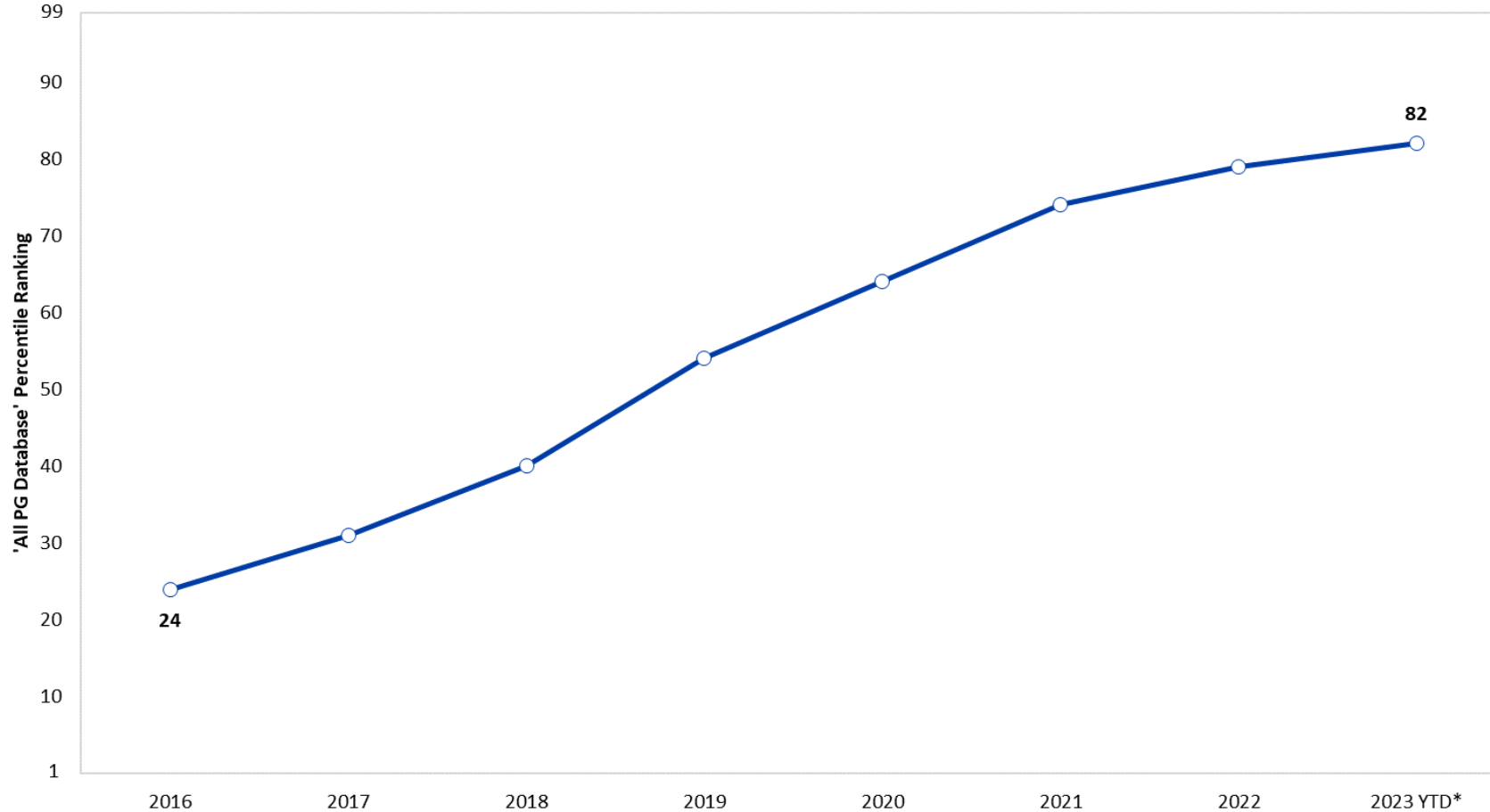


# Focus on Community & Sustainability

- Farming – Supporting Local
- Queens County Farm & Museum Partnership Agreement
  - *QCFM is one of the longest continually farmed sites in New York State. The farm's 47-acre historic site has produced food and fed New Yorkers for over three centuries.*
- The Center for Discovery, Harris NY
- Harlem Grown
- Food & Nutrition Sustainability Committee
- Educational Supermarket Tours & Teaching Kitchen Partnership with Gala Foods



# Outcomes: Northwell Health Inpatient 'Quality of the Food'



\*Surveys received through 5/18/23

73% of Northwell adult hospitals rank in the top quartile

7 Northwell hospitals are achieving the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher

# What Patients are Saying Now...

## The Impact on Healing

I was just so thrilled with everything that *I didn't even remember that I was in pain and not feeling well.*

Each order appears to be individually prepared and served in a fashion more *reminiscent of a fine hotel's room service than a hospital.*

In these difficult times, seeing *the time and care placed in patient food services translates to a patient.* We are stuck here to recover and sustenance plays an important role.

All of the people who prepared and delivered my meals over the last four months created an experience that I looked forward to each day. *It can only be summed up as excellence.*

Being in a hospital is never an enjoyable experience- but your *caring meal preparation was the highlight of my stay.*

You should be proud of the staff and know that *their smiles and compassion contributed to a successful recovery.*

I am so grateful for the *healthy, delicious and well-prepared meals* during my stay. The impeccable service of the staff was first class to say the least.

The food was delicious,  
But still was nutritious.  
The taste would compare  
With fine restaurant fare.

Each meal a delight,  
I savored each bite.  
The meals served each day  
Helped brighten my stay.

All dishes served hot,  
Enjoyed them a lot.  
Your menu was vast,  
Delivery fast.

Each choice whet the taste,  
Eased the hurdles I faced.  
So thank you for dishes  
Surpassing my wishes.





# We value feedback in real time...



North Shore University Hospital  
Northwell Health®

## ENJOYING OUR FOOD?

SCAN THE  
QR CODE TO  
LEAVE A REVIEW



12:09 5G

hxplatform.pressganey.com

North Shore University Hospital  
Northwell Health®

At North Shore University Hospital, we strive to provide whole person healing and that includes our food and in-room dining experience. Please take a few moments to provide feedback on your experience.

Are you a patient a visitor?

Patient

Please rate these aspects of your in-room dining experience at this hospital, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good.

Ease of the ordering process.

Very Poor				Very Good
1	2	3	4	5

Meal options to meet my preferences and dietary needs.

1	2	3	4	5
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The quality and freshness of the food.

1	2	3	4	5
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# Making National News today

The Washington Post  
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Subscribe

## Hospital food is a punchline. These chefs are redefining it.

By Tim Carman

February 27, 2023 at 10:16 a.m. EST



People

Magazine Newsletter Sweepstakes

### MEET THE CHEF MAKING HOSPITAL FOOD GOURMET!

HE WAS THE EXECUTIVE CHEF AT NEW YORK CITY'S LEGENDARY PLAZA HOTEL FOR 13 YEARS. NOW CHEF BRUNO TISON IS SERVING PATIENTS HEALTHY MEALS WORTHY OF A FIVE-STAR RATING.

By YANESSA ETIENNE / Photographs by MELANIE DUNEA

**MEET THE CHEF MAKING HOSPITAL FOOD GOURMET!**

His journey from celebrity chef to hospital trailblazer began when Northwell's SVP and chief experience officer, Sven Gerlinger, was tasked with hiring a chef who could redefine the company's approach to food. At the time, Northwell's food ratings for quality and taste were at an all-time low of 9 percent—with survey comments from staff and patients ranging from "inedible" to "tastes like plastic." "We needed an expert chef who cares," says Gerlinger, 51, "and who could help bridge healing through healthy food and ingredients." For Tison, who'd been looking for a new challenge, it was the chance to make a difference: "I thought, 'If I want to impact the world, changing food in health care would be fantastic!'"

He started by recruiting top chefs from around the world who had never worked in a hospital kitchen—and knew how to use fresh ingredients to create healthy, made-to-order dishes. By upgrading the kitchen and partnering with the hospital's dietitians, Tison's new staff began producing a range of culturally diverse meals—from Asian to Latin American to kosher—with all the nutritional requirements for patients and their various treatment plans. "It's about creating a new culture around food and nutrition in health care," Tison says.

His plan also provided patients with a more fulfilling experience overall, with newly designed menus and seasonal specialties tied to local farm and produce resources—such as Vietnamese lettuce wraps and Mediterranean quinoa bowls. This is an opportunity to personalize care and provide a moment of enjoyment," says Tison.

These days Northwell's food ratings have skyrocketed, with many of their hospitals averaging more than 90 percent. As a result, Tison has started advising other health care companies around the country on how to create similar programs of their own. "It's almost turned into a responsibility for us," says Gerlinger, "because patients deserve better food in hospitals wherever they are. It's been neglected for so long." Adds Tison: "We want to transport patients into the world of food—where maybe, for just 15 minutes when they're reading their menus, they can forget about their illness. And I think it's really working."

**A WORLD OF HEALTHY FOOD**

"Food is the most basic way to maintain good health," says Tison, whose menus include an ever-changing selection of healthy specialty dishes geared to the culturally diverse staff and patients across Northwell Health's 21 hospitals. Whether it's a breakfast of Eggs Shakshuka (left) or a Buddha Bowl Chicken Pilaf (below), we've consistently refined our menus on a daily basis and changing them seasonally," says Tison. "We're in areas where 750 languages are spoken."

**Don Appétit!**

"Great food starts with great chefs," says Tison (right) in the kitchen at the Northwell Hospital in Nashua, N.H., and left, with a patient.

**Celebrity Chef**

"I've cooked for Presidents, queens and celebrities," says Tison (with comedian Joan Rivers in 1994 during his days as executive chef at the Plaza Hotel in N.Y.C.).



# What's next...

- Getting to the 90<sup>th</sup> %ile System-wide
- Continue to elevate and foster Chef Talent & Nutrition Services
- Building State of the Art Teaching Kitchen and Rooftop Produce Farm  
(Chefs, Employees & Communities)
- Food as Health – addressing food insecurities, Community & Population Health Collaboration
- Sustainability, waste reduction & cost control
- “Eating Well Made Easy” Cooking Series on *The Well* & The Northwell Cookbook
- Culinary Medicine Certification for Food & Nutrition Staff
- Promoting our new brand, standard and commitment to F&N excellence...





**Thank you...**  
**Questions?**