

# A DAY in the LIFE



Cook Christina Castillo is ready to distribute freshly made sandwiches.

“It truly is organized chaos at times, but that’s what makes our team so strong,” said retail supervisor Karie Maneely. “We have so many services happening at once – from patient trays to cafeteria meals and community programs. That teamwork is what allows us to keep everything running smoothly and make sure every meal is accurate, safe and on time.”

### Supporting multiple services each day

On a typical weekday, nutrition services prepares meals for hospital patients, cafeteria guests and local day care children while also packaging food for approximately 65-70 Meals on Wheels participants. The team stocks nursing unit pantries; maintains physician lounge supplies; and prepares food and beverages for meetings, events and special requests.

Cooks begin their shifts by checking equipment, monitoring cooler and food temperatures and reviewing menus and prep lists. As cooks, they oversee hot food production and ensure items are prepared according to standardized recipes and food safety guidelines.

### A day in the life of nutrition services

Each day at Columbus Community Hospital, the nutrition services department begins work early to ensure patients, residents and community members receive safe, nutritious and timely meals. While much of the staff members’ work happens behind the scenes, the department plays a vital role in patient care, staff support and community outreach.

The team manages a wide range of food service operations that reach nearly every area of the hospital. This work requires careful coordination, strong communication and a consistent focus on safety and quality.

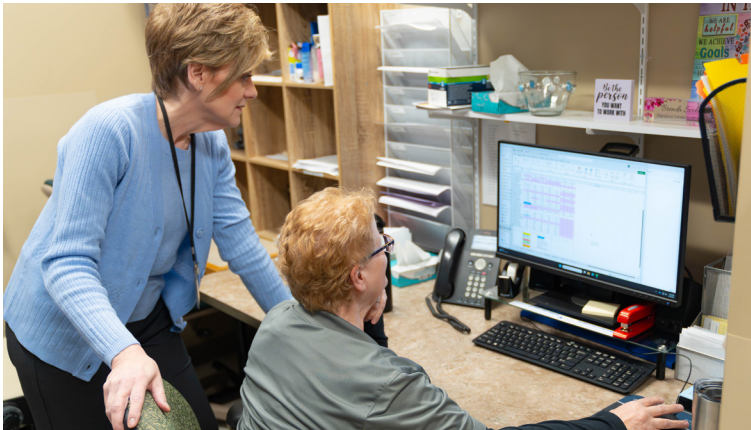
What appears to be just one kitchen serves as the central hub for multiple services, including inpatient meals, cafeteria dining, day care meals, Meals on Wheels, catered meetings and daily beverage services. Each service has its own schedule and requirements, yet all must come together seamlessly throughout the day.



Float service aide Lizania Camps ensures food is at the proper temperature and records it on her device to maintain consistent safety and quality.

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**Brenda Svoboda**  
Nutrition services supervisor at Columbus Community Hospital



Assistant director Trina Benedict and production supervisor Brenda Svoboda assess nutrition service processes and ensure all meals and operations run according to plan.

Breakfast preparation quickly transitions into lunch production, with soups, entrées, sandwiches and sides all coming together on a tight timeline.

Cook and kitchen lead Denise White helps guide daily kitchen operations, supporting workflow, coordinating tasks and assisting team members across stations as needed. Her leadership helps maintain consistency during high-volume service times and ensures the kitchen remains organized and efficient.

Cook's helper Natalie Audiss supports food preparation, tray assembly and kitchen organization, helping ensure ingredients, pans and supplies are ready when needed. Cross-training is a key strength within the department. Team members such as float service aide Lizania Campos are trained in multiple positions and step in where coverage is needed, helping the team maintain uninterrupted service during busy periods or staff absences.

### Accuracy and safety in patient nutrition

In a hospital setting, nutrition services extends well beyond cooking. Each patient tray must align with physician-ordered diets, allergy restrictions, calorie counts and texture modifications. Diet orders can sometimes change multiple times in a day, requiring constant communication with nursing staff and dietitians.

"We double-check orders and work closely with dietitians because accuracy is so important," said nutrition services supervisor Brenda Svoboda.

The department also supports speech therapy, swallow evaluations and dysphagia diets, which require additional precision in food preparation and texture. In addition, nutrition services stocks nursing unit pantries to ensure patients – and especially families with newborns – have access to food items outside of standard kitchen hours.

### Serving the community

Nutrition services' impact extends beyond hospital walls. The Meals on Wheels program operates Monday through Friday, providing dependable, nutritious meals to community members. The department also prepares day care meals, following the same food safety standards and guidelines used for patient care.

In the cafeteria and Java City, barista and cook's helper Constance Albrecht serves staff, visitors and community members while also assisting the kitchen team as needed.

"They come here for health care," she said. "And if the food is good, that makes a difference in their day."

### Teamwork that supports care

Teamwork is the foundation of the department's success. Nutrition services collaborates closely with nurses, dietitians, speech therapists and other providers to meet changing patient needs, while also maintaining service across all areas of the hospital.

From assembling limited-time café specials to preparing meals for meetings

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**Jesse Davis**

Director of nutrition services at  
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and special events, staff members rely on one another to stay on schedule. Clear communication and flexibility allow the team to adjust quickly when menus change, special diets are added or unexpected needs arise.

"If you drop the ball in one area, it can affect everything," Svoboda said. "We stay organized and support each other."

Meals are an important part of the hospital experience, offering comfort, routine and a sense of normalcy during a time that can feel uncertain. The nutrition services team takes pride in contributing to the hospital's mission through dependable service, attention to detail and a commitment to quality.

"A warm meal can really make a difference," noted Jesse Davis, the department's director.

The department ensures that nourishment, safety and service remain a consistent part of care, one meal at a time.



Cook Jaxon Neal carefully cleans the ovens to maintain a sanitary and organized workspace.