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Cohort 5

Product Evaluation

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**Table of Contents**

Introduction.....3

Methods.....5

Results.....6

Discussion and Conclusion .....8

References.....9

### **Introduction**

When somebody goes out to eat, there is a level of expectation for what his or her food should look like. For instance a plate that is filled with moldy or inedible product would be considered unacceptable as a meal. Consumers expect that food is edible and fresh. Therefore, when a foodservice operation is purchasing inventory for their facility, it is vital that they create standards for the items that they purchase. These standards are referred to as product standards and are defined as the expectation of a product (Gregorie, 2016), in this case, food.

Product standards are closely related to the quality of food, such as the flavor, texture, appearance, or safety (Gregorie, 2016). These factors are important to consider, because not only will they lend to a more favorable product, but it will also influence people's views.

A study published in 2018 reviewed the ground beef preference. Untrained subjects were asked to evaluate three different preparations of finely textured beef. Finely textured beef is the meat that is located closer to the bone of the cattle. Previously this meat was used for lower value products, such as pet food. With advancements in technology, this meat more popularly known by its moniker, pink slime, and is now available to purchase for human consumption. While controversial to the public, this study aimed to see if there was a higher favorability of meat that contained finely textured beef. The researchers concluded that beef containing 15% of finely textured beef (by weight) added favorable tenderness and juiciness over 0% when consumed as plain. Contrarily, consumers did not prefer it in its overall satisfaction rating. This study serves as an example of product evaluation. Studies such as this allow researchers to explore the

acceptability of products, which can help businesses make choices about what products they will, and will not bring into their facility (Depue et al., 2018).

Another study published in 2015 focused on enhancing food quality versus décor and service. What was concluded from this study was that people were more accepting of food-induced price increases, than price increases associated with décor and service improvement. It is evident that product standards related to food are particularly important to individuals when visiting a foodservice operation (Gergaud & Verardi, 2015).

At Florida Hospital, product evaluation is key to ensure the satisfaction of patients, employees, and visitors. For nutrition services, one method is through product evaluation. This is the process of assessing the quality of food that is brought into the operation and served (Gregorie, 2016). Through the process of product evaluation the decisions for which items to bring into the hospital are made to fit customer demand, nutritional guidelines, and satisfaction.

This research was guided by the importance of product evaluation in a foodservice operation and the need for a replacement of a vegetarian meet crumble product in Florida Hospital's nutrition services department.

An interview was conducted with Florida Hospital's nutrition services purchasing services system administrator and compliance manager, Kristine Eckhardt. A dietetic intern interviewed Kristine about the process of product selection in regards to replacement of an analog meat product that was discontinued and was to be replaced in the food production center and other retail locations within the Florida Hospital system.

### Methods

The product evaluation process at Florida Hospital is a multiple step process. Florida Hospital's nutrition services purchasing services system administrator and compliance manager, Kristine Eckhardt explained that the first step is having a need. In this case, the analog meat crumbles that were being used from *Sunbelt* were discontinued and needed a replacement. *Sunbelt* is a small vendor that supplies the hospital with many of their analog meat products.

Initially, Kristine reached out to *Sunbelt* and inquired if they had any other products that would suffice as a replacement for the discontinued product. Unfortunately, all they were able to provide were canned meat products that were unacceptable for nutritional reasons, as well as the increase in labor required to open cans, compared to bags.

The next step Kristine took was reaching out to *US Foods*, the prime vendor of Florida Hospital, to see what comparable products were available. Of the potential replacement products *US Foods* carried, the price difference was reviewed in order to eliminate outliers that may not fit into the budget. The reason for this is that there is a monthly budget, and if the item is too far out of line with the previous product, there may not be room for its replacement. Additionally, areas such as patient services have a budget for tray cost. This cost includes items such as silver wear and napkins as well as food. After products that exceed the acceptable price threshold are removed, samples can be requested from the supplier. *US foods* incurs the cost of these samples through a budget line that they provide to clients.

For the meat crumbles three products met the price requirement. The original analog burger crumbles cost \$37.13 for 10 pounds, or \$3.71 per pound. The potential analog replacements were as followed. Gardein beef substitute: \$35.16 for 10 pounds, or \$3.52 per pound. Morning star farms beef substitute: \$16.99 per 72 ounces (4.5 pounds), or \$3.78 per pound. Molly’s kitchen beef substitute: \$40.24 for 10 pounds, or \$4.02 per pound (Figure 1.1).

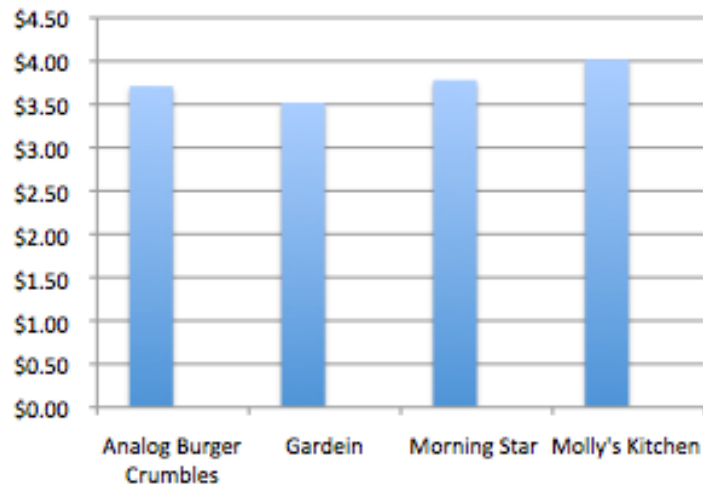
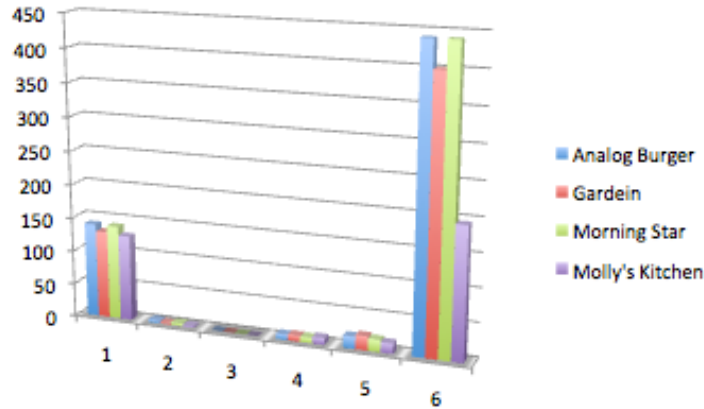


Figure 1.1

After the price is analyzed, the products undergo a nutrient analysis (Figure 1.2, Figure 1.3). In the figures below an analysis of analog burger, gardein, morning star, and molly’s kitchen products reveals that the only significant difference in nutritional value is the sodium level in Molly’s Kitchen’s analog meat product. It is significantly lower. What is important to note is that the products do not greatly exceed the nutritional value of the original analog meat. Therefore, none of the substitutes were removed due to nutritional.



1: Total Calories, 2: Fat (g), 3: Saturated fat (g), 4: Carbs (g), 5: Protein (g), 6: Sodium (mg)

Figure 1.2

Analog Burger	140	4	0	8	18	440
Gardein	130	2	0	9	21	400
Morning Star	140	4	0	8	18	440
Molly's Kitchen	127	2	0	10	15	195
	Total Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat	Carbs (g)	Protein (g)	Na (mg)

Figure 1.3

These products requested as a sample were delivered to Karen Payton. Karen will say “yes” or “no” to products that come into the food production center. Depending on where the product is going, the decision will be made by the Chef manager of that location. The chef manager will also verify that a product can be stored. For instance, if a new product’s packaging is larger, there must be a space that can accommodate the new item.

Finally, after a product is selected, it is communicated to the old vendor and the new vendor of the switch. Ideally Kristine prefers to give both vendors a fair time line, that allows for adjustments on all ends. The new product is then placed into CBORD and the items are exchanged for one another on the previously determined day of the change.

### Results

The process for product evaluation usually takes place in two weeks or less. For the meat analog replacement product evaluation, the process took closer to one month. The morning star beef substitute was not acceptable due to the fact that the crumbles were too big, as well as the packaging was too small. This would have required more man-hours for labor, which made this product unusable. The Molly's kitchen beef substitute was also too big for the purposes of foodservices. Therefore, these items were eliminated. The Gardien beef substitute was the final choice made by nutritional services to take the place of the original analog meat crumble product. The new product is \$0.19 cheaper than the original, and had the closest comparison in size and acceptability.

The product has already been selected and the vendors have been notified, but on September 27, 2018 this product will make an appearance at the Chef's committee, along with other items to be evaluated. The chef's will test the analog meat, but there will be no vote due to the fact that the decision has already been made for the purchasing of this product.

When the Gardien beef is introduced to hospital foodservice operations, it will be in CBORD and updated in all recipes. Comprehensive training on cooking of the meat will not be given to staff, but instructions will be placed in recipes that can be found on CBORD. CBORD will provide information on what the item is, how to order it, and what vendor it is from.

This item is scheduled to be introduced to the hospital when the last of the original meat is gone, and will be purchased and distributed to campuses thereafter.



### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The product selection and evaluation process is extremely important in a foodservice operation. Patients, staff, and visitors are what keep the hospital up and running, therefore it is paramount that they are satisfied with their meal choices. Product selection allows for the hospital to be able to locate products that . Product evaluation ensures that the items being brought in are acceptable and desirable to serve to consumers.

Without product standards, selection, and evaluation a foodservice operation would fall apart. These pillars are the foundation of a successful business, and as stated earlier, satisfaction scores are more likely to increase from the enhancement of food, rather than service and aesthetics.

This product has not been officially introduced in to the service line, therefore it is inconclusive if this product was agreeable by consumers. Further investigation is recommended in order to determine if this product evaluation was successful.

### References

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