

PLANT-FORWARD HEALTHCARE OPERATIONS TO WATCH

These hospitals and senior-living communities demonstrate a commitment to plant-forward cuisine, local sourcing, sustainability and more, underscoring the idea that a healthy world can begin with what we choose to put on our plates.

BY *FSD STAFF*





PLANTS PROLIFERATE

More than a year after the coronavirus changed life as we know it, eyes remain on the healthcare industry as it works to restore the wellness of communities that have weathered the unprecedented and prepare them to return to some shade of normalcy.

With the COVID-19 crisis casting a spotlight on issues such as food waste, responsible sourcing and access to nutrition, the message of food as medicine may have a more receptive audience than ever before. A top dining director in higher education even noted that he'd seen college students—considered by many to be the holy grail of unhealthy eaters—opting for more fruits and vegetables lately in an effort to shore up their health.

One organization working to promote healthier, planet-friendly menus is The Culinary Institute of America (CIA), whose collaboration with [Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) on the [Menus of Change](#) initiative and its [Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus](#) has helped foster the idea of plant-forward eating and menu strategies as a means to individual and collective wellness. The CIA has further expanded its work in this area with the Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit and its digital media counterpart, the [Plant-Forward Kitchen](#).

It's against this backdrop that *FoodService Director* and the CIA unveil our first list of Plant-Forward Healthcare Operations to Watch, a collection crafted with input from Health Care Without Harm, an organization that strives to promote sustainability within the healthcare segment. (This list will be further explored in an *FSD*-led session during the [CIA's upcoming Menus of Change summit](#), being held virtually from June 22-24, 2021.)

The operations that made the cut demonstrate a commitment to plant-forward cuisine, local sourcing, sustainability and more, underscoring the idea that a healthy world can begin with what we choose to put on our plates.

The CIA defines plant-forward as “a style of cooking and eating that emphasizes and celebrates, but is not limited to, plant-based foods—including fruits and vegetables (produce); whole grains; beans, other legumes (pulses), and soy foods; nuts and seeds; plant oils; and herbs and spices—and that reflects evidence-based principles of health and sustainability.”



BRYAN HEALTH

Lincoln, Neb.

When COVID-19 limited hospital visitors and pared down service at Bryan Health, Executive Chef Nazim Khan seized the opportunity to finalize plans for a new plant-forward station. The concept launched June 1, 2020, and has been growing in scope and sales ever since.

“Nebraska is meat-and-potatoes country, and I thought the new station would contribute about 3% to 5% of revenue, but on some days, the items account for 17% of sales,” Khan says.

Before the launch, plant-based demand from doctors and nurses had been growing steadily. “Every Thursday and Friday, I had been offering salads made with locally sourced produce, topped with a choice of protein,” he says. “Increasingly, customers were asking for vegetarian proteins, such as falafel, instead of chicken and beef.”

Growing up in Bangladesh, Khan was exposed to a broad and flavorful range of vegetarian dishes. Through his years in culinary school and hotel kitchens in the U.S., he educated other chefs on the variety of flavors and ingredients that can make plant-based eating exciting. He borrows dishes from multiple global cuisines, creating plant-forward items that appeal to mainstream tastes. For example, he menus tostadas topped with avocado mousse, black beans, fire-roasted corn salsa, shredded lettuce and queso fresco—a customer favorite—on Taco Tuesdays.

Khan’s Lebanese-style falafel is also a bestseller. He soaks and cooks dried chickpeas, then blends them with cilantro, parsley and chiles. The prep is paired with tzatziki, cucumber-tomato salad, garlic hummus and warm naan.

Once the plant-forward station caught on, Khan saw to upgrading some of his raw materials. For his kofta, he combines unprocessed tofu with three kinds of lentils—beluga, pink and green—and a bit of plant-based meat to hold it together. Customers can opt for the kofta as an add-in for bowls, tostadas, pita sandwiches and salads.

To improve the quality and taste of seitan, Khan adds chickpea powder, cuts it into cubes and threads it on skewers to cook tandoori-style. It’s become popular to add to salads in place of tandoori chicken, he says.

The success of Bryan Health Center’s veggie-forward station convinced Khan to go entirely plant-based when he took his exam to become a certified master chef. He created three vegan dishes for the American Culinary Federation competition—a first for the judges—and passed.



SHARP CHULA VISTA MEDICAL CENTER

Chula Vista, Calif.

Creating sustainable menus is a focus at every healthcare facility in the Sharp network, an aim that takes into account how food is produced, sourced, prepared and packaged. Plant-forward eating is a driver of this sustainability mission, but Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center takes it up a notch or two.

Foodservice operations at this San Diego-area medical center are managed by Sodexo, and Executive Chef Justin Searle develops many recipes and menus along the guidelines of that company's Nourish program.

Nourish was inspired by the eating habits of people living in Blue Zones, areas of the world known as longevity "hot spots" because they have a higher proportion of inhabitants who live past 100. Their diets are rich in grains, vegetables and fruits, as well as functional foods that provide added health benefits, such as prebiotics, probiotics and anti-inflammatory compounds.

Chef Searle came to Sharp after working at upscale hotels and brings a fine-dining legacy to his position. But he combines that culinary experience with "a pretty holistic approach to health and wellness at home," he says. Searle applies both mindsets to the dishes he creates for cafes, retail outlets and patient menus.

Nuts and seeds are important ingredients in his repertoire, and they recently shined in a popular Broccoli-Pesto Flatbread. "Raw broccoli and walnuts are the base of the pesto, then I combine that with blanched broccoli on the flatbread crust," he says.

Bowls are a big hit, and Searle uses them as a vehicle to combine smaller portions of animal protein with plants. A customer favorite paired sockeye salmon with arugula, kale, radishes, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds, drizzled with an avocado-citrus vinaigrette. He also relies on plant proteins, such as black-eyed peas, lentils and quinoa to ramp up nutritional value, and uses jackfruit in place of meat.

When possible, Sharp Chula Vista sources from local farms and the just-picked produce goes into chef's specials that day. Plus, two units have their own gardens, says Searle, and cooks are able to harvest fresh basil and other herbs, eggplant, bell peppers and more right on the hospital grounds.



KAISER PERMANENTE

Oakland, Calif.

With big goals to source 100% of its food sustainably and locally by 2025, Kaiser Permanente has been making bold moves. Toward this end, it provided a \$2 million loan grant for the construction of the newly opened Union City Culinary Center, a 56,000-square-foot space aiming to produce meals for noncommercial and retail operations in an environmentally friendly, socially responsible manner. As part of its partnership, the center will provide 2.5 million patient meals yearly to be served across the health system's 21 hospitals.

“This center is one truly remarkable example of our shared commitment to making a difference for people. We are tackling food sustainability for our communities and providing an important opportunity to help build health and wealth in the Bay Area.”

— **Carrie Owen Plietz, president of Kaiser Permanente Northern California**



ROGUE VALLEY MANOR

Medford, Ore.

Retirement community Rogue Valley Manor has seen an influx of baby boomers in the last couple of years. These younger residents come with expectations for healthier, more adventurous food that fits their lifestyle, and senior-living chefs are delivering.

“We have staunch groups of vegans and vegetarians, and while they are vocal, they are in the minority,” says Director of Dining Eric Eisenberg. “Overall, there are many more flexitarians who want to see more plant-forward choices.”

Eisenberg and his chefs are increasingly putting plants in the center of the plate and treating meat as an accompaniment on the menu. “We’re also looking toward Asian and African cultures for one-pot meals that focus on vegetables and grains,” he says. East Indian curries and North African tagines are recent additions.

Rogue Valley Manor sources from a midsize farm nearby to purchase vegetables in season, including squash and corn. It’s more challenging to work with smaller local farmers because of the volume of meals the kitchen turns out every day for its 1,000 residents and 600 staff members. But Eisenberg has worked out an arrangement with a small farm that grows only grains and legumes. The farm dries beans and stores rice for year-round availability.

Medford also has a robust grower’s market, held every Thursday. The chefs shop there for seasonal vegetables, mushrooms and fresh herbs that they turn into toppings and mix-ins for the Thursday night pasta bar. “This changes weekly with the produce that is available and has become very popular with our residents,” Eisenberg says.



ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Memphis

The young patients at St. Jude are fighting life-threatening illnesses, and they need food that will not only nourish, but provide comfort. Chefs Rick Farmer and Michael Vetro cook meals that heal, pairing each patient's nutritional needs with their favorite foods.

The children come from diverse backgrounds and often crave the tastes of home, so the chefs have researched and cooked dishes from Korea, Peru, Croatia, Syria and other countries, sourcing authentic ingredients to get the flavors right. Essential nutrients help the body fight disease, but these dishes provide emotional well-being too.

Plant-forward menus are gaining ground on menus, for both St. Jude patients and the 5,000 staff members the chefs feed daily. Farmer has developed a number of Mediterranean-inspired vegetable-centric items that feature less animal protein. And the dining program works closely with local farmers and sources from the hospital's own garden to get the freshest, most nutritious produce.



UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT MEDICAL CENTER

Burlington, Vt.

The rooftop garden at University of Vermont Medical Center contains blueberry bushes not only for the purpose of providing berries to the hospital's dining program, but to offer a home to local birds and insects. The garden also houses beehives, a plum grove and a dedicated children's area where kids can learn about organic gardening. Food waste from the hospital's eateries is brought to a nearby nonprofit, which in turn provides soil for the garden, creating more of a closed loop system.

The hospital, an early adopter of Health Care Without Harm's Healthy Food in Health Care Pledge, also seeks to be an example—it created the Center for Nutrition and Healthy Food Systems to help other healthcare institutions enact more sustainable practices in their dining programs. In addition, it shines a major spotlight on local sourcing and is a member of the Vermont Fresh Network, a group that seeks to support the state's food system through local purchasing and more.

University of Vermont Medical Center serves no fried food on campus, and many of its recent plant-based offerings boast bold flavors, including a Curried Butternut Squash Bisque and a Maple-Roasted Tofu Wrap with kale slaw featuring carrots, jalapenos and dried cranberries.



OHIO LIVING

Westerville, Ohio-based

More plant-forward options have been hitting plates at Ohio Living, a senior-living community with several locations throughout the Midwestern state. The dining team at Ohio Living Breckenridge Village in Willoughby recently unveiled a new pub and bistro, where healthier items such as quinoa and noodle bowls are appearing alongside standard pub fare like burgers.

Ohio Living has also worked to boost residents' access to fresh produce during the pandemic. At Ohio Living Rockynol in Akron, foodservice staff set up a standalone farmers market as well as a mobile version for residents.

The mobile market travels to residents' rooms and other areas of the building, while the standalone version in the lobby uses scheduled visiting times to maintain social distancing and safety. Residents at both markets can grab produce such as apples, bananas, pears, strawberries, watermelon and blueberries.



CITY OF HOPE

Duarte, Calif.

Nourishing Hope, the foodservice program at cancer center City of Hope, seeks to support patients and guests with an array of fresh, nutritious foods. Its dishes center on such antioxidant-rich ingredients as organic produce, wild-caught salmon and poultry raised without hormones. Several recent offerings featured global flavors, such as poisson yassa, a Gambian fish dish, and xia, Asian-style walnut shrimp, served alongside tofu fried rice and stir-fried snow peas and peppers.

In addition, an onsite garden open to hospital patients, staff and visitors aims to benefit the community and further cement the link between nutrition and wellness.



HACKENSACK MERIDIAN HEALTH

Hackensack, N.J.

Reshape Your Health, a nutrition program launched by Hackensack Meridian Health in 2018 and geared toward patients, is full of healthy eating and shopping tips from the hospital's dietitians, as well as cooking demos with Hackensack's executive chefs. Its patient menus include a variety of plant-forward options, such as spaghetti and vegetarian meatballs made with eggplant; soba noodles with tofu, asparagus and wild mushrooms; and a Waldorf salad in a jar, which includes apples, celery and grapes with lemon mayo served in a mason jar.



GNG Strawberry Salad
\$5.49

Ingredient List: Spinach, Strawberries Fresh, Cheese Feta Crumble Bag Ref (6560577), Almonds Slivered, Onion Red Sliced (2384584)

MU HEALTH CARE

Columbia, Mo.

Although the pandemic disrupted dining operations at the University of Missouri’s hospital complex, the foodservice team seized the opportunity to renovate the facilities and reconceive the program.

“The plan was to seamlessly integrate several aspects of the department, including retail locations, employee cafeterias, doctor’s lounges and grab-and-go that will allow us to really elevate our most important segment—patient dining,” says Rocky Dunnam, executive chef for MU Health Care.

The first order of business? Repurposing the self-serve salad bar into a fully customizable salad station. A culinary associate can now build, toss and dress a salad to a customer’s specs and put it into a compostable container to go. The station also offers several plant-forward specialty salads, with a rotating daily selection.

Expanding the selection of healthy snacks was another priority, and items such as hummus with veggie dippers, salad wraps and strawberry-and-yogurt parfaits are on offer. The area of the salad bar that used to hold utensils and napkins has been transformed into a full-service fresh smoothie concept.

To meet sustainability goals with the increase in to-go options, Dunnam searched for and tested a range of eco-friendly packaging, and recyclable, compostable and biodegradable containers are now in the lineup.

Going forward, “we are actively researching immune-boosting ingredients to weave into our menus. Some of these items are common, like garlic, ginger and citrus,” Dunnam says. “But some others we’re exploring are ancient remedies like turmeric, green tea and sesame seeds.”



GEISINGER HEALTH

Danville, Pa.

With locations in central Pennsylvania, the eight hospitals in the Geisinger Health system draw from a population that grew up on hearty, meat-centered meals. But gradually, executive chef Matthew Cervay has been able to get staff and patients on board with more plant-forward choices.

“I’ve taken steps to decrease meat and increase grains and legumes on the menu,” he says. “I now use about 2½ ounces of meat per serving, more as a flavor to enhance bowls and global dishes. It’s still a challenge to convert all my customers, but more are embracing the move.” As a bonus, plant-forward preps decrease food costs, Cervay says.

Thai flavors are a favorite of the chef’s, and he’s created a Quinoa Thai Bowl that contains 2½ ounces of chicken, sesame oil, quinoa, edamame, cucumbers, scallions and cilantro, with a scoop of red bell pepper, carrot and cabbage slaw. Thai Curry Shrimp with noodles and vegetables is another global prep, as are carnitas that stretch a small portion of pork with brown rice, pinto beans, kale, corn and crumbled queso blanco. The menu always offers a vegetarian version of each dish as well, with the option to substitute tofu or tempeh.

Geisinger’s mission is to support local farmers, and when in season, he swaps in produce from Pennsylvania suppliers for the fruits and vegetables he regularly gets from a broadliner.



COMMONWEALTH SENIOR LIVING

Charlottesville, Va.-based

A farm-to-table program has been in place at Commonwealth Senior Living for over five years, and 85% of the produce served to residents is sourced from Maryland and Virginia, where most of the company's 35 communities are located. But in the last year, vegetables and herbs started growing right in the dining rooms, thanks to microfarms installed by a local hydroponics company.

"Having the [microfarm] allows us to educate our residents right at the table," says Andre Smith, director of dining services at Gloucester House, a community in Gloucester, Va. "That encourages them to make healthier choices that include vegetables they weren't familiar with previously." The staff even gets residents involved in the "harvest," picking vegetables for their plates to provide an interactive experience that spurs trial of new ingredients and enhances seniors' memory.

In addition to leafy greens and fresh herbs, the microfarms now cultivate beets, carrots, tomatoes and more. Smith creates such veggie-forward specialties as a Strawberry Kiwi Microgreen Salad with arugula, spinach, Swiss chard, fresh strawberries, kiwi, baby bibb lettuce and fresh mint, dressed with a housemade strawberry-citrus vinaigrette, as well as a Cream of Mushroom and Arugula Soup. For snacks, residents can request a "Green Juice" Smoothie blended with arugula, watercress, cucumbers, honey, lemon juice, orange-infused water and bananas.

The structure of the self-contained microfarms, coupled with frequent harvesting, significantly cuts down on waste as well.

And Commonwealth doesn't limit its local initiatives to produce—the communities also work with independent fishermen in the region to source seafood from the nearby Chesapeake Bay.



MAINEGENERAL HEALTH

Augusta, Maine

The food and nutrition services team at MaineGeneral Health works across the hospital system and with many community partners to continuously educate patients, staff and the public. Its educational outreach is built on three principles: nutrition and healthy cooking, the benefits of local sourcing and adopting sustainable practices.

To bring education to the greater community, dietitians partner with several nonprofits, including Health Care Without Harm, the Good Shepherd Food Bank and the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative, a network cofounded by the CIA and Harvard's Chan School of Public Health that promotes teaching kitchens as catalysts of personal and public health.

MaineGeneral has forged other partnerships with local producers and farmers, and the meals and to-go items in the cafeteria and retail venues are largely crafted from produce, dairy, meat and fish from Maine suppliers. Items and menus are often labeled with sourcing info to reinforce the importance of buying local. To further support the Maine food system, the hospital is a major sponsor of a couple farmer's markets in the Kennebec Valley.

On the sustainability front, MaineGeneral is a leader in reducing waste. Single-bin recycling has recently been put in place at its Alford Center for Health in Augusta—a program that has kept an estimated 200 pounds per day of recyclable items out of the trash stream. Working with the Agri-Center in Exeter, Maine, the hospital system recycles food waste into electricity.



MORRISON LIVING

Atlanta-based

Adam Grafton, vice president of culinary for Morrison Living, has a strong commitment to sustainability and health, but he also respects traditions. In his position, he oversees dining in 400 senior-living communities across the U.S., and heirloom recipes play a big part in his programs. But Grafton balances these comforting foods with on-trend dishes that put plants in the center of the plate.

Morrison Living is a division of Compass Group, a company that has adopted sustainability and wellness as part of its corporate responsibility, and Grafton encourages his chefs to embrace this mission. They have innovated with plant-forward and vegetarian options as well as sourcing humanely raised animals and sustainable seafood. During the pandemic, a summer promotion focused on a plant-forward seasonal snack program called “A-dip-tive.”

A-dip-tive features several versions of dessert hummus, including a black bean-based chocolate variation and vanilla made with white beans, as well as a chickpea-based ice cream. The recipes change with the seasons, and a pumpkin-vanilla hummus with cinnamon pita chips debuted in the fall.

“The promotion is targeted to all levels of care, from independent living to nursing, so we can engage with residents wherever they are,” Grafton says.

Within the larger Compass Group, there’s a continual push for ingredient transparency and efforts to be more socially and environmentally responsible. Morrison Living is a strong supporter of these goals, which shines through in the menus, teaching kitchens and interactive dining events.



SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Seattle

Each week, members of the culinary team at Seattle Children's Hospital meet to discuss purchasing decisions for the kitchen, reviewing not only the cost of potential ingredients but how they fare on a series of sustainability attributes such as whether they are locally sourced or antibiotic-free.

"We use all of those traits when we're making a decision as to whether or not we're going to essentially move our purchasing dollar elsewhere," says Gina Sadowski, director of nutrition, culinary and retail at the hospital.

Doubling down on local sourcing, Seattle Children's also has access to produce from its in-house organic garden, which was started several years ago and has since expanded from herbs to include more than 30 different types of fruits and vegetables. Produce from the garden is used in the hospital's food pantry as well as in side dishes and entrees served at retail.

With a little planning, the culinary team can place specific orders through the garden and incorporate items such as tomatoes and zucchini into the patient menu. "We're actually purchasing from ourselves in a hyperlocal micro-market, if you will," says Sadowski.

The hospital's retail cafe offers plant-forward options such as buddha bowls, and on the patient menu, smoothies made with fresh produce and fresh-pressed juices such as carrot and ginger are favorites.

With so much emphasis on sustainable purchasing, Seattle Children's makes a point to educate guests about the ingredients that end up on the menu. Information about the organic produce and cage-free eggs the hospital uses, for example, is called out on patient menus and on digital screens inside its retail location.

"We think it's important for people to know what it is they're getting," Sadowski says, "and the more exposure to it, the more it may influence their personal choices at home as well."



NEW YORK- PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL

New York City

Through its NYPGreen initiative, New York-Presbyterian has committed to serving healthier, more sustainable menu items. The hospital phased out sugary drinks in 2017, switched away from plastic straws and stirrers, and promotes Meatless Mondays, offering a meatless entree option at each of its retail eateries. Plant-forward dishes recently menued across the New York-Presbyterian system include a citrus salmon salad with oranges, red bell peppers, green beans, pine nuts, spinach and feta; an Italian veggie sandwich with roasted eggplant, broccoli rabe, roasted peppers and mozzarella; and a Moroccan-inspired chickpea tagine.



KARDIA CAFE AT UNC REX HOSPITAL

Raleigh, N.C.

Kardia Cafe opened four years ago with the goal to serve seasonal Mediterranean-influenced dishes in a fast-casual setting.

“[The Mediterranean diet] was a natural fit, being in a heart hospital, to have something that was very healthy and a good role model for what the hospital itself represented,” says Kardia Chef Manager James Castellow.

Kardia’s menu has evolved but has stayed true to its roots. Popular menu items include roasted vegetable salads, including one made with butternut squash, and a grilled salmon plate. The cafe is also known for its in-house beverage program. It doesn’t serve traditional sodas, instead offering such options as lavender honey black tea and rosemary-infused blood orange juice. One of its most popular is the Kardia Kolada, made with pineapple juice and coconut milk.

About two years ago, the Kardia team began developing a grab-and-go initiative due to a renovation of the hospital’s main cafeteria. “We moved all of that cooking over to Kardia,” says Castellow. “So, for about six months, we closed down and became basically a prep space for the hospital.”

The team purchased extra equipment to allow guests to access the cafe’s fare during that time. “We had like three coolers and a cash register, basically, and we were able to serve Kardia-style food in a grab-and-go setting, and that was very successful,” says Castellow.

The temporary setup ended up being great preparation for the impending pandemic. Once COVID-19 hit, the Kardia team was able to quickly transition back to its to-go format. “We were able to instantly overnight, like a flip of a switch, turn back into what we had already developed,” says Castellow. “We didn’t miss a beat. It was like we had already done all the homework for it.”

The grab-and-go menu consists of several wraps, bento boxes made with hummus, crackers, crudites and cheese, and seasonal salads with ingredients such as pecans, apples and dried cranberries. “The salads are huge,” says Castellow. “We sell probably twice as many salads as we sell anything else.”



UCSF HEALTH

San Francisco

Nearly one-third (30%) of consumers say they would be more likely to visit eateries with sustainability efforts, according to data from Technomic, a foodservice researcher and sister company of *FSD*. And at the University of California San Francisco Health, sustainability has been a cornerstone for some time.

Recent plant-based dishes at UCSF Health include Filipino-style Sitaw at Kalabasa featuring green beans, kabocha squash and coconut milk, a Vegetarian Bibimbap Bowl and Cantonese Eggplant Stir Fry. In addition, the hospital's Roots + Shoots station centers around plant-based entrees, with animal-based proteins available as sides.

Outside of the menu, UCSF Health has been using compostable servingware, such as plates covered with a compostable film that allows customers to see what's inside, Director of Food and Nutrition Services Dan Henroid told *FSD* late last year. In addition, it's transitioned to beverages such as kombucha and cold-brew coffee in cans and glass vessels. Water now comes in reusable metal bottles instead of plastic ones, and the team has taken steps to ensure these waters remain cost competitive with less eco-friendly versions.



PENNSWOOD VILLAGE

Newtown, Pa.

At Pennswood Village, senior-living residents have been asking for a greater variety of sustainable and plant-forward options for the past few years, and the culinary team has certainly delivered.

Produce-centric, made-from-scratch fare such as date quinoa salads, red lentil Bolognese and stuffed peppers is a fixture on the menu, as is a Julia Child-inspired take on beef bourguignon that has crossover popularity, made with carrots, rutabaga, parsnips and a mushroom medley. “It appeals to everyone, not just people who are looking for plant-forward or vegetarian items,” Back of the House Dining Services Manager Jim Thoma says. “Everybody enjoys this because it is the classic recipe.”

Pennswood Village has also added more ethnic cuisine, such as Hungarian potato soup and a Middle Eastern lentil salad. “We literally have 12 to 13 different countries and continents on our menu,” Executive Chef Steve Plescha says.

For dishes that do use animal proteins, Plescha is sourcing higher-quality products such as chicken high in omega-3 fatty acids from a nearby farm as well as local, sustainable seafood.

“My [seafood] purveyors are really on top of it,” he says, noting that almost a third of the fish Pennswood Village serves comes from sustainable fisheries.

As plant-forward interest continues to grow, Plescha also hopes to incorporate CBD-infused entrees or sides. “That’s something I’m really interested in, and I’m going to do my homework before I bring it out,” he says. “Whether it’s for inflammation or, you know, just all-around wellness.”



JOHNS HOPKINS HEALTH SYSTEM

Baltimore

When COVID-19 shut down the salad bar at Johns Hopkins, the team retrofitted part of the cafeteria into a concept called The Greens Project so that guests could retain some element of customization. Customers can choose from around 60 different toppings at the concept, including salmon and artichoke hearts. After customers select their toppings, a salad is prepared in front of them by a staff member.

The dining team at Johns Hopkins Bayview serves close to 1,500 meals a day, according to a video created by the health system last year, with an emphasis on freshness, offering a variety of made-to-order options such as sushi, stir-fry and pizza.



BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER

Boston

Hyperlocal sourcing is routine at Boston Medical Center, where about two dozen fruit and vegetable crops grow on the hospital's rooftop farm. The harvested produce goes into patient meals, cafeteria menus and an onsite farmer's market. It is also forms the foundation of the hospital's teaching kitchen, where chefs and dietitians demo healthy recipes for patients, visitors and the community.

During the pandemic, the demos transitioned to Zoom, but the focus remained on nutritious, sustainable yet attainable dishes. Beans and legumes play a major role in recipes such as BBQ Black Bean Burgers with Yuca Fries, Curried Red Lentils with Cilantro Barley and Beet Hummus. And vegetables from the rooftop farm go into African Groundnut Stew with Lemony Greens and Arugula Salad with Roasted Butternut Squash, among other salads, soups, sides and snacks.

Boston Medical Center also offers a Preventative Food Pantry that provides free groceries and nutrition guidelines to low-income patients and families struggling with food insecurity.



MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING CANCER CENTER

New York City

Memorial Sloan Kettering has shifted toward serving more plant-based options in recent years while seeking to educate patients about the benefit of a healthy diet. The hospital offers several events centered around healthy eating, including farmers market pop-ups and cooking demonstrations led by the hospital's dietitians and chefs. Its website is also home to a recipe database filled with plant-forward recipes, such as Edamame Hummus and Spaghetti Squash Casserole with Broccoli and Chicken, geared toward those undergoing cancer treatment or following medically recommended diets such as low-sodium.