

Serving Up Local
Case Study 2017



REGION OF DURHAM

Refreshing Food in Long-Term Care

Durham Region, Ontario

Fairview Lodge, Whitby
Hillsdale Estates, Oshawa
Hillsdale Terraces, Oshawa
Lakeview Manor, Beaverton

The Region of Durham’s four Regionally owned and operated long-term care homes are working to change the perceived bias around health care food.

Mealtime is often one of the most anticipated times of the day for residents living in a long-term care (LTC) home. With a Regional approach to providing a positive dining experience for LTC residents, while utilizing state-of-the-art food preparation technology, the Region’s homes are using creative strategies to help enhance resident’s satisfaction with food. The Food Leadership Team and their staff are incorporating Ontario fresh and frozen food alternatives for the combined 847 residents in their care, aiming to increase their local food purchases and raise awareness among residents, families and staff about local food offerings on LTC menus.

“We’re very excited about the lasagna because it is a locally produced meat lasagna, just like Mama used to make!” said Catherine Pazzano, Director of Food Services at Hillsdale Estates.

Two priority needs identified by the Durham team at the beginning of the project were a greater awareness of local food offerings by residents, and incorporating more local foods into seasonal menus by using existing equipment and food service systems. The *Serving Up Local* project partnered with Burlodge Canada to offer a training day focused on opportunities to incorporate more local ingredients into resident menus. Burlodge Canada built a demonstration kitchen at its Brampton facility where a “Refresh” seminar was offered to help clients re-envision food prepared in Burlodge retherm ovens. These ovens are used to heat and or cook foods in resident dining rooms while promoting a home-like dining atmosphere.

The Durham teams tested retherm meals featuring local ingredients that fit the LTC homes’ budgets and comply with their group purchasing (GPO) food contracts—two important considerations when purchasing local food within public sector institutions. On the menu that day: local bread

Finding local, frozen entrées that fulfill the home’s Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) food contracts, satisfy nutritional requirements, stay within budget parameters and are carried by the home’s distributor is no easy task. However, the Region’s LTC teams consulted velocity reports from their distributors, and price comparison reports prepared by the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) as part of the *Serving Up Local* project, to identify products that met all of these specifications. **New Ontario frozen entrée options offered at the homes include Teriyaki Chicken, Turkey Chili and Meat Lasagna.**

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Each home prepares resident meals using both on-site cooking and prepared items with meals served in a home-like dining room environment.

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847 resident beds

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Approximately **2,896** meals served per day in 32 dining rooms & several community programs

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\$ 409,357.86 local food purchases in 2017

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\$ 384,338.33 local food purchases 2016

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6.5% increase in local food sales

pudding, Ontario apple crisp, shepherd's pie with local beef and vegetables, Ontario feta and red pepper frittata, Mediterranean bean salad with Ontario cucumbers and tomatoes, Ontario honey roasted carrots and local pasta fagioli. Catherine Pazzano, Director of Food Services at Hillsdale Estates in Durham Region, attended the "Refresh" seminar and has now successfully increased the local ingredients cooked by retherm. "The Ontario honey roasted carrots are a tasty and easy addition to the menu for us."

Increasing cooking from scratch in the homes allows for greater inclusion of local food through the use of mixed vegetables for soup, chili and stews. **"Some of the new cooking from scratch recipes we are using that incorporate local ingredients include: Spaghetti Bolognese, chicken à la king, vegetarian chili, cottage roll, beef pie and beef chili. They are exciting, as in some cases we do not have an outsourced alternative. In other cases, we can customize the recipes to suit our residents' needs. Our homemade items have been well received by residents,"** said Peter Chrisostomou, Food Service Supervisor at Fairview Lodge.

GHFFA was also able to identify cost neutral options in the categories of frozen vegetables, dairy and fresh proteins that now appear on the menu. **Fresh seasonal produce was increased in the Region of Durham's LTC homes by 134 per cent during the project term with a focus on asparagus, corn on the cob, cucumbers, peaches and strawberries, as well as apples—the**

local food star of the LTC homes' community events in 2017!

Fresh apples were a crowd-pleasing free sample for residents and community members at the Durham long-term care homes' events, including a fall fair and community picnic. **The Region of Durham's LTC homes have increased their purchases of Ontario apples by 470 per cent. Local apples are now featured on the Region's LTC home menus.**

The Region of Durham LTC homes' busy roster of food-related events also included food expos for vendors to display their products to residents, families and staff who are able to sample their goods and engage with those who are producing the food served in LTC. All these events provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the *Serving Up Local* project, and to ask residents and their families how they feel about local food. **Surveying by GHFFA of 65 residents and their family members in Regional long-term care homes shows that 72 per cent felt that being offered local foods made them feel better about the food served.** Common responses from residents are that local food makes them feel "good", they want to support local farmers, and for some they recall happy memories revolving around home-grown or farm-grown food. **For family members, serving local has a positive effect on their perception of the quality of food offered at the homes.**

"The food is fresher and we're supporting local farmers," said one family member of a Fairview Lodge resident.

1 Development of new recipes/processes incorporating local foods while using existing food systems, with some homes expanding their cooking from scratch offerings

2 Fresh seasonal produce purchases increased by 134 % during the project term

3 Plans to explore more local food options in 2018

4 Increase awareness of local foods through identification on the resident menus and use of marketing materials

5 Visit to Ontario farm and Refresh Workshop at Burlodge has increased homes' knowledge of local foods and how to incorporate them into existing food delivery models



Serving Up Local is a partnership between Durham and Halton Regions, the City of Hamilton and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) to increase the amount of local foods offered in their facilities with a special focus on long-term care homes. We use the purchasing power of public institutions to strengthen Ontario's agricultural sector and appeal to our residents seeking local food offerings. This project is made possible with financial support from the Government of Ontario, in partnership with the Greenbelt Fund. For more information: www.foodandfarming.ca



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Possibility grows here.