

# Promoting and Marketing Antibiotic Stewardship Through Food Services

*A guide for foodservice staff to educate and incentivize around meat and poultry raised without routine antibiotics*



Your facility has made a commitment to antibiotic stewardship and is working towards the goal of reducing antibiotic misuse and overuse through foodservice procurement. As part of food services or administration at your hospital, you're working hard to procure meat and poultry raised without routine antibiotics. You are also looking for ways to educate your patrons about why this issue is important—and on top of it all—sell plenty of delicious, healthy meals made with these ingredients.

By calling attention to these products whenever you can in a myriad of repeated ways, sharing your sourcing story, and connecting it to your facility's mission you can entice patrons to try your meals and provide education at the same time.

*"It's part of our mission in delivering leading edge patient care. We want to participate in antibiotic stewardship and do what we can to prevent antibiotic resistance, and this is the way our department can participate in that." - Patti Oliver, Director of Nutrition for UCLA Health in California*

Both polls and purchasing preference data are showing that more and more consumers are seeking out natural, sustainable, and local foods with clearly defined and responsibly sourced ingredients. Foodservice operators are responding. According to Foodservice Planning Program Operator Survey, "79% of food operators agree that 'no hormones/antibiotics' are sustainability factors that will have a great or moderate influence on purchase decisions in the future."

"Honest sourcing" ranks in the top five noncommercial food and beverage trends in 2016 according to Technomic. They report, "Growing consumer interest in clean and ethical sourcing is impacting noncommercial food service in a big way. Clean eating—the idea of sourcing largely natural and organic products—will find more proponents. As transparency grows across segments, operators will further spotlight humane working conditions, as well as eco-initiatives that center on sustainability and waste management."

## **"GOOD" FOOD POPULARITY BY THE NUMBERS**

- 86% of consumers would like restaurants to be more transparent about what's in their food. (Technomic)
- 72% of consumers are more concerned with additives in food than they were two years ago. *Among these "additives" are meat and poultry raised with routine antibiotics.* (Technomic)
- In a survey of keywords found on menus "antibiotic-free" was in the top three after "natural" and "organic." (National Restaurant Association)
- 70% of consumers are more likely to patronize an eating establishment that offers locally produced food items (National Restaurant Association)
- More than 60% of respondents said they would be willing to pay at least 5¢ per lb. more, while nearly 40% said they would pay \$1 or more per lbs. (Consumers Report)



## The Four Ps & The New Three Cs of Marketing

In order to promote, market, and generate excitement for meals, foodservice operators have commonly followed the four Ps of marketing as described below. In addition, Health Care Without Harm is recommending that foodservice staff take into consideration additional factors, indicated by the three Cs: *Customers*, *Colleagues* and *Community*. Honest and transparent sourcing ranks among the highest consumer trends and will continue to be front and center for the next generation. Any institution serving food will want to extend its efforts beyond cafeteria walls and make connections with the community. The three Cs are a great place to start.

**Product:** The first step is to identify and purchase products that meet verifiable sustainability criteria, such as U.S. Department of Food and Agriculture (USDA) Process Verified for “raised without antibiotics.” Third-party certifications and label claims can help you feel confident when choosing

## CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

**Aim to be as transparent as possible and communicate product attributes clearly.**

Using precise language and details about where and how a meat or poultry product was raised along with relevant third-party certifications and/or USDA-approved label claims allow patrons to be fully aware of all the benefits of choosing that particular product. Reference Health Care Without Harm’s [Understanding Meat and Poultry Labels](#) document for a complete list of vetted criteria and definitions.

The term “antibiotic-free,” for example, can be misleading. The USDA allows this claim to be used on products that *are raised* with antibiotics. So instead use language that clearly references how and if antibiotics are used such as: “raised without routine antibiotics,” “raised without antibiotics,” and “raised without antibiotics important to human medicine.”

***On marketing materials, take time to describe your sustainable meat purchasing. Here is some sample phrasing to draw from:***

- Our commitment to antibiotic stewardship is reflected in our relationship with ranchers and food purveyors. Here are some of the farms and suppliers we are proud to be working with:
- Whenever possible we use products that are locally sourced, organic, and responsibly raised without the use of hormones or antibiotics. Look for eggs carrying the *Certified Humane Raised and Handled* logo or meat and poultry items that are “raised without the routine use of antibiotics” (USDA Processed Verified).
- Our burger patties are made from American Grass Fed Certified beef raised without the use of routine antibiotics.
- We make an extra effort to source ingredients from farmers whose practices support human health and environmental stewardship. Protect medically important antibiotics by choosing chicken menu items with the “Certified Responsible Antibiotic Use” logo.

a product to differentiate among other offerings on your menu or in retail settings. Since most food vendors don't currently communicate these product attributes at the point of purchase, we recommend referencing Health Care Without Harm's [meat and poultry product list](#) as you get started or continue to work with your supply chain.

**Promotion:** After procuring sustainably-raised meat and poultry, it's time to make sure your patrons know that these products are unique and to celebrate the environmental or social values that went into producing them by labeling and calling attention to them.

Use repetitive exposure at different points in the transaction. Place a sign next to the product, an icon on the menu, and/or a table tent on the table. Hang signs in places where the food is served and other prominent locations. Highlight certifications and label claims and use language that both informs and entices.

Consider incorporating items into culinary concepts and appealing displays such as serving them in special stations like "build-your-own" panini or stir fry stations, or feature them in the meal of the day, week, etc. Many hospitals are also using internal newsletters, staff trainings or lunch-and-learns to connect sustainable food offerings to health and wellness initiatives or programs. Food service can also take advantage of social media and other online outlets to promote sustainable meal offerings.

Consider asking your producer or vendor to help you promote the items by offering free samples, recipes and details about where customers can find the product outside of the hospital, expanding both the healthy-eating impact and buzz around the products.

## CASE STUDY

### Procuring and Promoting Go Hand-in-Hand: UCLA Health, CA

When UCLA Health announced it was going to prioritize purchasing meat and poultry raised without antibiotics it did a number of things to promote both their mission of antibiotic stewardship and the new products they purchased.

The health system held grand rounds, sent out a press release and published an article in their newsletter. Soon several newspapers and magazines had published articles about their commitment including the LA Times, the Santa Monica Daily Press and Today's Dietitian.

Three years later nearly all of UCLA's meat and poultry products are raised without antibiotics and they are still promoting them through signage, posters and menu icons— both on paper menus and the hospital's new digital menu board. UCLA does its best to inform and educate its patrons.

**Price:** Pricing strategies give your customers an incentive to buy sustainably-produced products. There are many ways to do this without breaking your budget:

- Offer a time-limited discount.
- Feature an entrée or meal of the day.
- Price switch between two burger selections: making the grass-fed burger cheaper than the conventionally-raised option.
- Substitute turkey raised without antibiotics for beef in meatloaf.
- Offering a “blended burger,” reducing the amount of meat and replacing it with mushrooms or other plant-based fillers.

Some hospitals have even put their old burger station out to pasture. By overhauling their burger menu and introducing fresh options operators can offer diners an exciting new experience and update prices to support the introduction of sustainable meats. Consider offering custom made sauces, specialty burgers featuring local flavors, or creative and global tastes like kimchi, a fried egg and sriracha.

**Placement:** Find ways to make it easy and convenient for patrons to choose meat and poultry items raised without routine antibiotics. Be sure to offer grab-and-go or take-out options for busy employees and visitors waiting for loved ones. Many companies are developing appropriate products such as pre-made sandwiches and vending machine products like grass-fed beef jerky.

Another good place to start is by featuring these products through catering where you may have additional flexibility with pricing and the ability to feature the benefits of a sustainably-raised option.

## CASE STUDY

### Grill It and They Will Come: Huggins Hospital, NH

Kurt Roessler, Director of Food and Nutrition at Huggins Hospital has had great success with his burgers that are locally produced, grass-fed and raised without antibiotics. He invites local farmers to come to his cafe, grill some burgers, and to educate patrons. Customers receive free samples, while both Roessler and the farmers are there to answer questions about how the meat was raised and why the hospital chose to cook and serve sustainable ingredients. The event and the burger proved to be so popular that a new type of customer started to frequent the Huggins café.

“We actually do quite a bit of what I call “off-the street” business in our café, where it’s not necessarily people who have hospital business coming in, but just people coming in for lunch. People are coming for our burger because they know it is local and antibiotic-free.”

Huggins has hosted similar successful events on more than four occasions and plans to continue to do so in the future.

“I think it’s a great way to educate employees and people in the community about [antibiotic stewardship and local and sustainable foods]. Because when you give something for free, people tend to listen,” Roessler says

## THE NEW THREE C'S

**Customers:** Healthcare customer satisfaction scores are influenced by food offerings and interactions with food and nutrition staff.

["Patients are becoming much more educated about food,"](#) Ryan Conklin, executive chef at Raleigh, N.C.-based UNC REX Healthcare says, "They're sitting in their beds watching cooking shows...The expectations are so much higher now. You're seeing a lot more of a chef presence coming into the healthcare scene, and it's only going to get stronger"

Technology has brought greater consumer awareness of food venue rankings both formal and informal. Word-of-mouth recommendations have a great influence on where people choose to eat.

Healthcare cafeterias are increasingly being seen as destination food venues as they invest in professional chefs and trained culinary staff.

Providing sourcing information that tells the story of the food and why it's important shows your facility's dedication to customers and their expectations.

**Colleagues:** For chefs, foodservice directors, and other culinary professionals, learning from and seeking recognition from peer and professional networks can be another route for added exposure and marketing. Consider ways for your chef or foodservice staff to receive recognition among culinary or sustainable business networks or through awards programs.

**Community:** By modeling sustainable product selection and procurement, hospitals are not only leading by example and educating community members, but their purchases can foster new or expanded production or other community infrastructure needs.

## CASE STUDY

### Convening a Network of Health Foodservice Professionals: University of Vermont Medical Center, VT

Diane Imprie, Director of Nutrition Services at University of Vermont Medical Center was awarded the 2016 International Foodservice Manufacturers Association (IFMA) Silver Plate award, Health Care Category for her leadership in connecting food, health and community.

Her largest impact, according to the the IFMA may be the development of the Vermont Work Group that brings together directors, dietitians and chefs from healthcare organizations from across the state. She is also the founder of the Center for Nutrition and Healthy Food Systems, a center designed to educate other healthcare institutions about building a sustainable food service.

The center's goal is to be a national role model for healthy and sustainable food systems. Among the activities, Diane serves on the New England Leadership team for healthy food systems, which includes healthcare food service professionals who are working to improve the health of the regional food systems while also hosting an onsite leadership workshop for nutrition and other medical professionals from across the country. The mission of the workshop was to inspire others to adopt model sustainable food practices in their organizations, and provided a tool kit for them to do it.

Due to their significant purchasing power and trusted role as authorities on health and wellness, hospitals have an important opportunity to not only increase access to healthier, more sustainably produced food for patients, staff and the community, but to transform the food system toward greater health and sustainability through local sourcing of goods and services and strategic investments.

*“This is an opportunity to go beyond addressing acute food insecurity to building processing and distribution infrastructure, increasing sustainable food production in the region, and funding initiatives to modify land use and preserve agricultural land, all of which are critical steps in our approach to mitigate climate change as well.”*

-Lucia Sayre, the Western Region Director for Health Care Without Harm’s Healthy Food in Health Care program.

To increase their impact and deepen connections with their constituents, healthcare facilities are finding ways to participate in the larger community conversation about the food system. Consider sponsoring community events or joining events hosted by other organizations where you are represented among regional food system leadership.

## CASE STUDY

### The Impact of Local Eggs: Bronson Health Center, MI

Bronson Health System in Michigan has a mission to improve the health of their local community and spending hospital food dollars on locally sourced products is a key strategy.

“We have two farmers that we source our local eggs from that are organic and cage-free eggs.” says Brendan Molony, Bronson’s Sustainability Coordinator, “One of the guys is young and this allowed him to raise his family and live a sustainable lifestyle because he can sell all of his eggs to our organization on a consistent basis. There are all these really great stories of being that community health catalyst. We can help local farmers or if someone wants to start a [food] business we can help them.”

# How to talk about antibiotic resistance, its connection to food and your facility's mission...

"What does my food have to do with antibiotics?" is a question every conscientious foodservice director has encountered. Perhaps in the hospital cafeteria, a customer will look quizzically at the poster reading "poultry was raised without routine antibiotics," mumbling something under their breath about rising food costs and residue on the meat. The truth is that misinformation about antibiotics is nearly as pernicious as antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Experts from Health Care Without Harm's Healthy Food in Health Care Program, clinicians, and foodservice directors [debunked four of the toughest myths regularly encountered in hospital food service](#). These busted myths can serve as catalysts, arming food service directors and staff with responses and clarification to help them act as champions for antibiotic stewardship through sustainable food purchasing in their facilities.

- **When asked whether antibiotic resistance is a problem, you can say:**

More than [20,000 people are dying each year in the United States due to antibiotic-resistant infections](#) and these numbers are expected to rise.<sup>1</sup> Sickness and death can be [prevented by using less antibiotics overall](#).<sup>2</sup> As a food service director, this means purchasing and serving meat raised without routine antibiotics.

- **When asked about the link between food choices and antibiotic resistance, you can say:**

[Routine, non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in animal agriculture is breeding antibiotic-resistant pathogens](#)<sup>3</sup> which make tens of thousands of people sick each year and may result in [more deaths than cancer](#) if left unchecked.<sup>4</sup> We are doing our part by serving meat and poultry raised without routine antibiotics.

- **When asked whether meat raised without antibiotics is costing the hospital more money, you can say:**

Food service directors are creative. We find ways to work within our budgets, such as keeping a close eye on portions, reducing processed foods, and watching for sales. In addition [many hospitals and other large institutions are banding together to combine our demand for these products](#)<sup>5</sup> and the price is dropping as availability increases. However the cost savings associated with reducing antibiotic resistant infections far outweighs the investment in meat produced without routine antibiotics. [Even a minimal reduction in antibiotic resistant infections could save health care billions of dollars](#) each year.<sup>6</sup>

- **When asked if food safety regulations protect us, you can say:**

Outbreaks of [foodborne illness and antibiotic resistant infections are a major global concern](#)<sup>7</sup> which means current laws and regulations [do not go far enough](#)<sup>8</sup> in protecting consumers. Antibiotic stewardship is part of [your facility's name]'s mission. We are advocating for better laws and regulations and doing what we can to prevent antibiotic resistance.

1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States, 2013. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/threat-report-2013/>

2) <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/antibiotic-resistance/en/>

3) Laura Rogers. (2010). Avoiding Antibiotic Resistance: Denmark's Ban on Growth Promoting Antibiotics in Food Animals. The Pew Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from [http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/phg/content\\_level\\_pages/issue\\_briefs/denmarkexperiencepdf.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/phg/content_level_pages/issue_briefs/denmarkexperiencepdf.pdf)

4) <http://www.ewg.org/agmag/2016/09/antibiotic-resistance-could-kill-more-people-cancer>

5) <https://noharm-uscanada.org/articles/press-release/us-canada/health-care-sector-demands-sustainable-meat-and-poultry>

6) [https://www.idsociety.org/Topic\\_Antimicrobial\\_Resistance/](https://www.idsociety.org/Topic_Antimicrobial_Resistance/)

7) Matt Mulkey. (2016). Emerging Pathogens in Meat and Poultry - U.S. must step up efforts to rapidly detect and control new foodborne hazards. The Pew Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from <http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/09/emergingpathogensinmeatandpoultry.pdf>

8) Food and Drug Administration. (2015). Antimicrobials Sold or Distributed for Use in Food-Producing Animals (2014 Summary Report). Food and Drug Administration. Retrieved from <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForIndustry/UserFees/AnimalDrugUserFeeActADUFA/UCM476258.pdf>

## Additional Resources

The following resources offer additional guidance and support.

### HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM RESOURCES

- [Health Care Procurement Guide: Sustainably-raised Meat and Poultry](#)
- [Understanding Meat and Poultry Certifications and Label Claims](#)
- [Meat and Poultry Product List](#)
- [Develop an antibiotic purchasing policy or resolution for your facility](#)
- [Get Smart About Antibiotics Week Posters](#)
- [Get Smart Week Buttons](#)

### FOR PRACTICE GREENHEALTH MEMBERS ONLY

- [Poster Less Meat, Better Meat Poster \(PDF and customizable template\)](#)
- [Meat & Poultry Social Media Suggestions](#)

### OTHER RESOURCES:

- [Menus of Change recipe database](#)
- [Ecology Center recorded webinar “Make Healthy Food the Easy Choice”](#)

For more resources, toolkits, guides, and information about transitioning hospital purchasing to protect antibiotics visit

[www.noharm.org/purchasing](http://www.noharm.org/purchasing)



Health Care Without Harm seeks to transform the health sector worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it becomes ecologically sustainable and a leading advocate for environmental health and justice.

Health Care Without Harm’s national Healthy Food in Health Care program harnesses the purchasing power and expertise of the health care sector to advance the development of a sustainable food system.

Visit [www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org](http://www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org) for more information.