

OPERATION HOSPITAL FOOD

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>> Celebrity chef James Martin has launched a website to help hospitals create nutritious meals on a budget.

The well-known TV presenter is on a mission to improve hospital food – and has the backing of the Hospital Caterers' Association and British Dietetic Association.

In his BBC One series "Operation Hospital Food" James has proved that it's possible to give patients better, more nutritious meals at no extra cost – indeed sometimes for less money – and is now determined to get his ideas and recipes into as many hospitals as possible.

The new website provides hospital caterers with a wide range of healthy recipes fully approved by nutritionists and guaranteed to work within even the smallest hospital budgets. It also includes advice and recipes for the hospitals that no longer have traditional on-site kitchens but use bought-in meals, as well as techniques and ideas for hospitals to maximise the profits from their restaurants (producing more money to be spent on patients), streamline their operation and costs, and navigate through the issues and challenges surrounding procurement.

In addition there are scaled down versions of all the recipes so that anyone can try them at home.

James said: "People deserve decent food in the NHS. It's not a big ask. So we've created an easy-to-use website that's accessible to all. We've put everything out there – so now it's up to the hospitals to take it forward. There's really no downside to this, so I hope every single hospital, every single trust, takes a little bit of this advice away to improve hospital food for the better."

Various governments have spent over £50million trying to improve the quality of hospital food – with, according to patients, little obvious improvement. But rather than try and impose change from the top down, James has achieved success by keeping out of politics and working direct with hospital kitchen teams themselves.

However, it's impossible for James to personally visit every hospital within the UK. So instead, he is confident the website will give each of them the tools they need to bring about change themselves. Plus, it will introduce consistent nutritional standards across the country's hospitals. There are currently no UK-wide nutritional standards for hospitals – although there are for prisons.

James added: "I'm massively passionate about food in hospitals. Change can be achieved, and above all else you can do it on budget, save money, save massive amounts of waste and improve the hospitals and patient's experience."

To find out more visit:
www.bbc.co.uk/operationhospitalfood

Catering for kids in hospital

James worked closely with the catering team at the Royal Oldham Hospital to take on his most daunting task to date: catering for kids in hospital.

After chatting to the young patients about what food they would really like to be served – pizza, chicken nuggets and burgers – James set about creating healthy versions. The biggest challenge was to create a pizza dough which wouldn't dry out in transit to the ward – and James solved the problem by using semolina flour.

"The great thing about semolina flour is that the recipes it's added to bake on the outside but stay slightly moist on the inside," he explained. "That means when the cooked food is loaded into the serving trolleys my semolina dough mix should buy the pizzas a little bit of extra time to stop them from drying out."

His recipes went down a treat with the youngsters, much to James' relief.

He continued: "Now I know it's only burgers, chicken nuggets and pizzas but it really is so important to put a smile on their young faces. They're going through so much at a young age being in hospital and to see them eat something they really enjoy makes this job really worthwhile. Out of all the stuff I've done for the last four to five years in the NHS that was probably the hardest criticism that I was going to get, from the kids. They're honest and that's what you want. Above all else you've got to give them what they want – burgers, pizzas, chicken nuggets – but when you've made it yourself you know exactly what's in it. The nutritionists say that's ok, that's what they want and let's face it – give the kids something to eat. Far better having that than having nothing."