



# WHAT'S FOOD GOT TO DO WITH IT?



How food can positively impact Active Living Communities



# FOOD EVOLUTION



The senior dining experience is evolving to include a whole new genre of culinary delights. Boomers want a variety of choices, venues, and high quality food service options, including grab-n-go, fast casual, and even fine dining. “Destination Dining” can be anything from a rooftop terrace dining venue with a spectacular view of the cityscape, to a chef’s table in the greenhouse. Food trucks are even being used for fun outdoor dining events.

Innovations in food programs that are integrated into the planning, design, and construction of your senior living environment are essential ingredients. The innovations can:

- **Enhance a strong sense of community**
  - **Boost your marketing efforts**
- **Increase the well-being and satisfaction among your residents, their families, and your staff**

We are now seeing reinvented Market Café’s that are quite attractive, and which pay homage to the locations in which they are situated. The Farm-to-Table (or Farm-to-Fork) movement is alive and well and worthy of being available to all senior living communities.





# CASE STUDY

## GARDEN SPOT VILLAGE

For example, Garden Spot Village in Lancaster County, PA serves produce grown on-site in their Aeroponic Greenhouse. The idea started with comments from the residents about the tasteless tomatoes served at the salad bar in the winter. Now, residents can eat bright red tomatoes year-round. At the grill station or the specialty stations in the restaurants on campus, residents and staff can specify exactly what they want to eat, picked that day! Scott Miller, the Chief Marketing Officer at Garden Spot Village, reports that while the average entry age at most Continuing Care Retirement Communities is 82, they are attracting new residents in their '50s and 60's. These Boomers want individualized options.

### GARDEN SPOT VILLAGE

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LANCASTER, PA





GARDEN SPOT VILLAGE

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LANCASTER, PA



## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The return on investment for their Aeroponic Greenhouse was less than 4 years, considering the cost-savings from on-site food production. In addition to these benefits, Linda Dodge, Garden Spot Village's Development Director, said that the investment has paid other dividends:

- The Greenhouse venue has been used to house a variety of events, from stand-up social functions with hors d'oeuvres, to sit-down dinners.
- The produce has been used to create spectacular table-top decorations with eye-popping appeal.
- Volunteers from Garden Spot Village are highly engaged, serving as volunteers to help tend the produce.
- Lighthouse, a local non-profit organization providing vocational services to people with developmental disabilities, has provided staff who help grow the produce. This helps reinforce connections between Garden Spot Village and the larger surrounding community.



The growing system used at Garden Spot Village is a proprietary system developed by Aero Development Corp. Aeroponics™ involves soil-free farming and nutrient-rich growth delivered through an automated root-drench with the plants being grown vertically in columns. Seed propagation is done in large 4' x 8' trays using rock wool. Each tray can hold 1,700 plants; trays can be stacked vertically. Frank Fendler, Aero's Co-founder, said that the firm can provide training either on-site, or at their facilities for your operational staff.



## PARTNERSHIPS

“It’s still farming, and we’re just in the toddler stage with our greenhouse” said Steve Muller, Chief Operating Officer at Garden Spot Village. He went on to explain the continued learning process relative to bugs, fungus, and algae. They use all biologic sprays for pest control. One story Steve told was that when the red clover growing in adjacent fields was harvested, it attracted massive amounts of aphids – a real challenge for the crops inside the greenhouse. Fortunately, Garden Spot Village has cultivated a strong relationship with the Extension Service at Penn State University. That and other partnerships have paid big dividends. For Muller, the combination of technical work in a faith-based, non-profit venue has proven to be very rewarding. “My job is to keep the wheels from falling off, while we all build a culture that delivers a great life and lifestyle for our residents and employees”.



Pods with single and double-cupped columns



Propogation Trays



The beehive next to the Aeroponics greenhouse provides fresh honey



Pod planted with Boston Bibb Lettuce





# HOW TO INTEGRATE FOOD PRODUCTION INTO COMMUNITIES

## 01 START SIMPLE *Potted Plants*



Use a few potted herbs and fruits as accents in the landscape. Alternatively, use some as plant material in the ornamental landscape. In both instances, the kitchen staff can go outside to snip fresh herbs for use in preparing savory dishes. Herbs such as Rosemary, Lemon Grass, Oregano, Sage, and Thyme can be grown either in pots, or in the landscape. Here in Florida, we have used potted Lemon Trees in large terra cotta pots for a Tuscan look and feel in the landscape. Rosemary can grow into a large shrub in warm areas. It has a soothing aroma that one study says can increase memory by 75%.

## 02 POT YOUR PLANTS *Herbs as decorations*



**Raised Gardens in Resident Park,  
Cypress Cove at HealthPark, Florida  
By Brad Smith Associates, Inc.**

- Provide a wide sitting edge at a comfortable height for gardeners to use while tending plants.
- Build narrower beds accessible from every side.
- Ensure structural stability to prevent bowing.
- Use a high-quality prepared planting soil mixture.
- Provide hose reels at short intervals.
- Space the raised beds to allow for pedestrian (and garden cart) access.
- Design beds or potting stations for wheelchair access, with ample leg room beneath.
- Provide storage areas (protected from the weather) for supplies and equipment.

## 03 SAVE SPACE *Hydro/aeroponics*



To start with, these can be used seasonally, and placed on a patio or terrace. It would be nice to locate them close to the kitchen, so that the chef can have ready access.

In dense urban areas, developing a greenhouse as a rooftop garden feature may be an option.

### CASE STUDY *URBAN SMART FARMS*

A very simple, easy-to-use system is provided by Urban Smart Farms, an innovative firm dedicated to “hacking” the farming industry, using technology to grow faster, maximize yields and responsibly manage water while producing high-quality food. They have found that ½ acre of vertical farming is the equivalent of approximately 5 acres of land production. Their Tower Garden® production system utilizes up to 95% less water than traditional soil-based agriculture. Urban Smart Farms operates a demonstration Tower Garden in the Westwood Lobby of the Orange County Convention Center which provides edibles grown in an all-natural, chemical-free environment.

These are served on site by Centerplate, a hospitality solutions provider. Centerplate’s culinary team uses the herbs, artisan lettuces, and hearty greens in its Center-to-Table work as the food and beverage provider at the Orange County Convention Center.





# HOW TO INTEGRATE FOOD PRODUCTION INTO COMMUNITIES

## 04 GROW YEAR ROUND *Build a Greenhouse*



Operational considerations include:

- Drainage in the floor (sloped floors).
- LED lighting, with high-performance heat sinking capacity
- Climate control (HVAC system, fans)
- Proximity to the kitchen
- Potential to develop views and relationships to interior spaces such as a dining room (your architect, landscape architect, and interior designer can collaborate to develop some very interesting opportunities).

## 06 SAVE TIME *Partner with Local Growers*



These can even include a local horticultural program at a community college or university. It could involve a master gardener team, or a grower that provides produce for several local restaurants. It could be a Co-op. At the LeadingAge Conference in Indianapolis this year, I came across a local Co-Op garden, run by students, that grew produce for local restaurants and for individuals alike. It was on a Greenway that had previously been a vehicular roadway.

## 05 PLEASE THE CHEF *Outdoor Chef's Garden*



This will differ from the Raised Beds for Residents described above. Typically, this will consist of larger raised bed plots (at a lower level). An automatic irrigation system should be included. This garden will be tended and harvested either by your food service staff, your grounds maintenance team, or by an outside vendor.

## 07 BE A DESTINATION *Attract the Community*



*Have such great food and service that the outside community is willing to come to your campus for a meal. Turn it into a profit center.*





# HOW TO INTEGRATE FOOD PRODUCTION INTO COMMUNITIES

## 08 GET OUTSIDE *Outdoor Dining Venues*

Al fresco dining is enjoyable during nice weather.



## 09 BRING THE FOOD TO YOU *Hire Some Food Trucks*

These can be multi-purpose spaces that can host a variety of fun events.



## 12 BE A FOOD FACTORY *Use a Modular Container*

Yes, they do make these! It comes as a turnkey package, complete with a smartphone app that controls the growing environment. The image below comes from FREIGHT FARMS, a company that works with schools, companies, and communities to grow hyperlocal food 365 days a year.



## 10 MAKE TREES WORK *Fruit Trees in the Landscape*

Citrus species; date palms; pecan, almond, or apple trees . . . Check with your local County Extension Agent, horticultural professional, or master gardeners group.



## 11 KITCHENS GO OUTSIDE *Build a Summer Kitchen*

Outdoor cooking takes an indoor activity and moves it into the realm of fresh air. Plus, you can reach over and grab fresh herbs and veggies from the plants around.



### \* **BONUS: ROOF TOP GARDEN OVERHAUL**

Develop a Green Roof – but grow herbs & vegetables on it! [Click here](#) to learn of the Loews Minneapolis Chef's Rooftop Garden – delivering food from the roof to your plate.



Don't take our word for it! Findings from a University of Mississippi Study show that in general, plants grown in the aeroponic system had a higher yield and comparable phenolics, flavonoids, and antioxidant properties as compared to those grown in the soil.



## A Note from the Authors

How can we help you maximize your potential in the marketplace? We'd like to learn more about how we can help you achieve great things – whether that involves planning new construction, making repairs or renovations, or completely repositioning your product offering.

[CLICK HERE](#) to start the conversation.

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[bsaplacecreation.com](http://bsaplacecreation.com)    [info@bsaplacecreation.com](mailto:info@bsaplacecreation.com)

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