

Chinook Regional Hospital Cafeteria – Down with the Deep Fryer Success Story

By Sherri Gallant

When the deep fryer at Chinook Regional Hospital (CRH) choked to death this winter, it was one for the history books. It was the last fryer of its kind still in use at a South Zone AHS facility.

As the door closed on an era of crispy chicken fingers and French fries (the most-ordered item on site for many years), a window of opportunity opened for positive change.

“Oh, a lot of people were pretty upset,” says Michelle Hart, Manager Patient & Retail Food Services, CRH. “I was secretly delighted that the thing broke down as we knew the end of the deep fryer would be a fresh start for us to focus on bringing in more healthy choices for staff and visitors.”



Hart and Robert Kolb, Supervisor Retail Food Services, set to work to fill the opening left by the deep-fryer's greasy exit with fresh new options for diners. In early March, the cafeteria's entire grill area closed for two weeks of renovations, and re-opened with a new roster of menu items including a Panini station, fresh salad bar, fresh pasta and stir-fry stations.



The cafeteria (called Reegies) started offering baked chicken fingers and fries and, while deep-fry die-hards balked at first; they soon accepted the healthier alternative. This once weekly baked offering quickly sells out.

“I don't hear complaints anymore,” Kolb says. “And actually some people have said they like the baked versions better now.” Reegies has also incorporated gluten-free, vegetarian and other selections that cater to people with sensitivities and allergies.

For more information, [resources and tools](#) about the [Healthy Eating Environment](#) in AHS initiative, visit the AHS website at: www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page5234.aspx.