

Healthy Food Choices for Top Performance

Lt. Col. Richard D. Kohler, USMC, Director Marine Corps Food Service and Subsistence Program

Government Food Service: *In October, you began your second year as director of the Marine Corps Food Service and Subsistence Program. Tell us about the first year, the challenges and the achievements.*

Lt. Col. Kohler: The Marine Corps is very fortunate to have a professional and dedicated staff supporting the Marine Corps Food Service and Subsistence Program. The foodservice staff has been extremely busy over the past year. Our efforts have included: The Food Service Program Management Office and HQMC Contracts Branch managing the Regional Garrison Food Service Contract II to support all garrison mess halls in the continental United States (CONUS); and foodservice staff participating in implementing the Expeditionary Field Kitchen. The staff also continues participation in the Joint Integrated Field Feeding working group; Combat Feeding Research and Engineering Board; Joint Subsistence Policy Board; and Research and Development Associates Conference.



Kohler

Government Food Service: *One goal you set was to improve education. You mentioned working with the Marine Corps Institute to develop distance-learning courses. Foodservice Marines could improve their knowledge without having to attend the service school at Fort Lee, Va. Has the first course been published?*

Kohler: Education continues to be on my priority list. We are collaborating with Marine Corps Institute to develop distant education courses to improve the knowledge of foodservice Marines.

Government Food Service: *Another part of the plan was to update publications. Discuss progress with the update and changes that were identified to be made.*

Kohler: Updating publications and orders is an ongoing process. We were successful in updating our Marine Corps Reference Publication, MCRP 4-11.8A Marine Corps Field Feeding Program, which provides guidance for commanders, staffs, logisticians, foodservice officers, supply officers, food technicians, mess chiefs and foodservice Marines. It describes the Marine Corps' foodservices support operations in an expeditionary environment to provide comprehensive informative coverage of foodservices operations in the Marine Corps.

Government Food Service: *One success appears to be the Expeditionary Field Kitchen (EFK). How has the EFK performed in the past year and has anything been learned about its use.*

Kohler: The Expeditionary Field Kitchen (EFK), a self-contained mobile feeding platform, is performing as designed. We are still distributing the EFK to designated units around the globe; however, all indications from owning units and user evaluations deem the EFK as a huge success. It will contribute significantly to provide safe, sanitary and nutritious meals in an expeditionary environment. We look forward to after-action data collections since, as all EFKs will be delivered, employed and deployed in support of worldwide operations.



Lance Cpl. Mark L. Edwards, USMC, inspects food crates before bringing them inside an expeditionary field kitchen to prepare a meal. Edwards is a food service specialist with Marine Wing Support Squadron 171, Marine Aircraft Group 12, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, III Marine Expeditionary Force.

(PHOTO COURTESY: CPL. J. GAGE KARWICK, USMC)

Government Food Service: *The "Fueled to Fight" program educates Marines to make healthy choices in the mess hall and to understand that physical training is as important to combat readiness as food choices. How is it progressing?*

Kohler: In fiscal 2013, the Marine Corps implemented its new "Fueled to Fight" nutrition program, which included an upgrade to the Marine Corps Food Management Information System. This program is a comprehensive nutrition education/awareness program to provide Marines with the necessary tools



A food service specialist with Food Service Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 27, 2nd Marine Logistics Group prepares cookies. (PHOTO COURTESY: UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS)

to make healthy food choices for top physical and mental performance. To this end, new menus have been developed and the eating environment tailored to fit warrior-athlete lifestyles. The first phase of this nutrition education occurred in fiscal 2012, as mess halls implemented the stoplight color-coding system (green, yellow and red) making nutrient-dense food selections identifiable. The Marine Corps Installations Command G-4, formerly Facilities and Services Division (LFS-4), Food Services Section, in conjunction with Training and Education Command, developed a nutrition-education program being provided at key Marine Corps training courses, which began with recruit training in fiscal 2012. Another change is the extended hours of operation offered at select mess halls, providing patrons flexibility beyond traditional meal hours. These initiatives are designed to provide the very best service possible, and are in keeping with questions and ideas that have surfaced from myriad customer surveys ensuring that the individual Marine remains the focus of attention.

Government Food Service: *As long as we're updating nutrition programs, how is the Marine Corps' Go for Green nutrition education program going? Are any adjustments being made to it or to menus? Is there any evidence that eating choices are changing?*

Kohler: The nutrition education programs have been fully implemented. There is evidence to suggest education programs have been well received and the demand for healthier options has increased.

Government Food Service: *Improving utilization of dining facilities is a goal throughout the military. Are any plans in place or in the works for Marine Corps mess halls?*

Kohler: Mess hall utilization is very important, as the Marine Corps standard is a 70 percent utilization rate. Mess halls showing less than 50 percent utilization rate will be considered for consolidation, but only if service to the customer is not reduced. Installation commanders complete and submit an annual consolidation review after determining the mess hall utilization rate.

Government Food Service: *How are the Regional Garrison Food Service contracts progressing? Are any changes on the horizon for mess halls or menus?*

Kohler: The Regional Garrison Contracts provide high-quality services to our Marines and sailors, while meeting the terms and conditions of the contract. The Marine Corps continues to modernize its mess halls, in partnership with Sodexo, providing an array of unique branded homeroom concepts.

Government Food Service: *Please discuss any new initiatives or concepts for Marine Corps Food Service operations for 2014 and beyond. One area mentioned last year was the Marine Corps working with other services to update the Armed Forces Recipe Service (recipe cards), as well as support from Natick on the initiative. How is this progressing?*

Kohler: The Marine Corps is working with our sister services and Natick, to continuously update the Armed Forces Recipe Service (recipe cards). The process is slow and arduous when considering the time and effort required to review, validate and implement over 500 recipes annually.

Government Food Service: *How are plans progressing to implement an automated meal card process and eliminate the older DD Form 714 process in mess halls?*

Kohler: Plans to implement the automated meal card process are going well. I am happy to report that the software has been delivered and rollout will commence when the impending software release authority is granted.

Government Food Service: *The Navy's Enabler system determines eligibility for a ration-in-kind (RIK) meal by automatically scanning information stored on the Common Access Card of any service member. Is the Marine Corps evaluating this system?*

Kohler: The Marine Corps is instead using the Marine Corps Food Management Information System (MCFMIS). This meal card automation program not only determines eligibility, but handles point of sale (POS), will process headcounts, records branch of service and rations entitlement of mess hall customers, accounts for the cost of food eaten and conveys this data to appropriate accounting systems and levels of command.

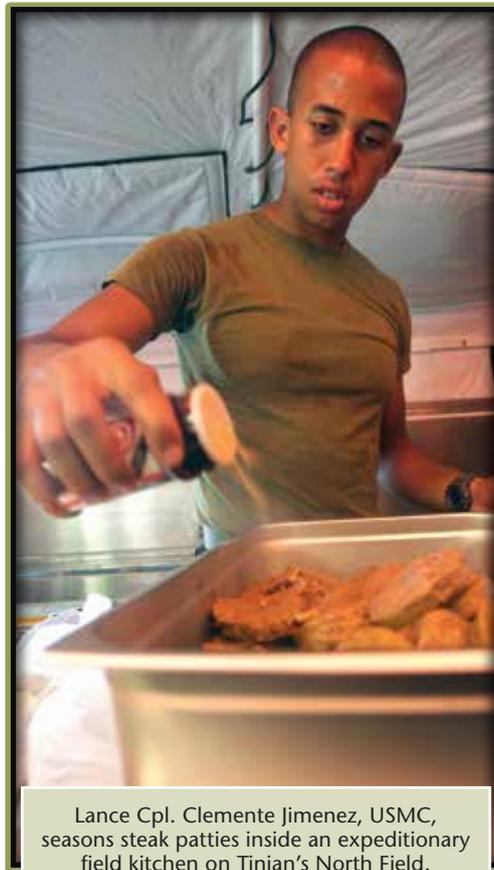
Government Food Service:

What are plans for the Marine Corps W.P.T. Hill awards in 2014? Evaluations were done and winners selected in 2013, but the awards presentation at NRA in Chicago was modified to an evening reception instead of the breakfast held in past years. Are evaluations underway? When will they be announced and what are plans for the awards presentation?

Kohler: We are planning to conduct the evaluations for the W.P.T. Hill awards in February/March. We have submitted a request for travel and are waiting for approval. If approved, we will conduct the evaluations and present the awards in Chicago in May. We are working with the National Restaurant Association on the format of the awards program. We should be able to finalize the format in the coming weeks and the National Restaurant Association will announce how the awards ceremony will be conducted.

Government Food Service: *Marine Corps Food Service is committed to sharpening skills and occupational specialty. When is training planned for 2014?*

Kohler: The Marine Corps has considerable training and updating to the curriculum planned for fiscal 2014. Since our last Food Service Training and Readiness (T&R) Manual Review, we have updated the required training for the Marine Corps Food Service Specialists. For the Basic Course, we have 38 classes scheduled; non-commissioned officer and staff non-commissioned officer courses have two classes per year, and the senior course and reserve course are conducted once per year. The Marine Corps has two Course Content Review Boards scheduled for fiscal 2014. The Marine Corps developed scenario-based training modules that focus on trends that are happening on the ground in Afghanistan. The trends were situations that were suggested from redeploying units coming back from Afghanistan. The Marine Corps goal at the Food Service School is to train Marines



Lance Cpl. Clemente Jimenez, USMC, seasons steak patties inside an expeditionary field kitchen on Tinian's North Field.
(PHOTO COURTESY: CPL. J. GAGE KARWICK, USMC)

to be prepared for what they will face on the ever-changing battlefield. We are scheduled to conduct another training review during fiscal 2014 to continue to refine our programs and ensure we are providing commanders with Marines that are capable of supporting their missions.

Government Food Service:

Culinary training is consolidated into the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence. How is this training evolving given the opportunity for the service members to work together?

Kohler: The Marine Corps is satisfied with our current training at Fort Lee, Va. Observing the Army, Navy and Air Force food-service programs has enhanced our perspective and familiarity with those programs. The Marine Corps' goal at the Food Service School continues to be to train Marines so that they are prepared for anything they may face on the ever-changing battlefield.

Government Food Service: *The Marine Corps is environmentally conscious. What steps have been taken and what lies ahead for 2014?*

Kohler: Continued efforts have been implemented at installations with the procurement of additional compost machines that reduce the weight and volume of food scraps generated by the mess halls. The contract for a total oil management system aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., is ongoing, and additional actions are being taken to prepare other facilities to support this type of closed-loop system. Through our contracting partners, our CONUS mess halls have been employing innovative best practices for sustainability that include recycling of cardboard, plastic bottles, metal cans, and paper. All mess halls are eliminating the use of Styrofoam. The MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., mess hall is undergoing a major renovation/repair project beginning in 2012 that will include the use of solar technology. In addition, the RGFSC II requires Sodexo to provide a Green Procurement strategy plan.

Government Food Service: *Field feeding is undergoing a transition. Give us an update on the latest equipment in use and being rolled out.*

Kohler: On par with actions taken to support garrison mess hall operations, field feeding has taken on the challenge to support the needs of Marine warfighters by investing in new technologies and

equipment capable of preparing the highest-quality meals in the most austere environments. One way to achieve this is the Enhanced Tray Ration Heating System (ETRHS), which will increase a unit's capability to prepare a wider variety of rations and provide the means to serve up to a company-sized unit (twice daily) in forward remote areas. This capability is packed, stored and transported in a Small Field Refrigeration System, allowing the unit to double as a field refrigerator and the system's embarkation container. The Marine Corps approved acquisition objective of 76 ETRHS and has purchased 76. It fielded 54 ETRHS in fiscal 2011 and fielded 22 ETRHS in fiscal 2012.

Another field feeding system that is currently being fielded is the Expeditionary Field Kitchen (EFK). The trailer-mounted EFK is intended to support the entire family of combat rations on a highly mobile and expeditionary equipment platform. When fielded, the EFK can support up to 500 personnel with two hot meals per day. The system allows foodservice personnel the ability to rapidly set up or tear down the kitchen in support of high-tempo operations and promises to be the forward-feeding solution of the future. The Marine Corps has an approved acquisition objective of 112 EFKs. Currently, the Marine Corps has purchased 81 EFKs, which were fielded in the fiscal 2012-2013 timeframe.

Government Food Service: *The Joint Interservice Field Feeding (JIFF) working group brings the services together toward a common ground-based system. Does this group continue to meet and how is it progressing?*

Kohler: The Marine Corps has participated in several working group meetings with representatives from the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Systems Command to discuss areas of potential commonality for field-feeding equipment and systems. The overall purpose is to bring the four services that use ground-based field-feeding systems together in a structured manner to work toward designing and engineering common systems that each service can use in their respective operational situations. The group is specifically looking at developing standard interfaces, appliance configurations, design constraints, definitions of commerciality and common maintenance standards and concepts. This Joint Integrated Field Feeding working group has been hosted by representatives from the Office of the Director, Food Systems Equipment Team, and Systems Equipment & Engineering Team and Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center.

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