

Board & Care Quality

F O R U M

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Healthy, Cost-Effective Food Purchasing and Preparation

Michael Calabria has been in the restaurant business since he was a teenager, working at pizza shops and then at an Italian restaurant from age 16 through his college years. When his family purchased Calabria's Restaurant in Castle Shannon, Pennsylvania in 1992, Michael spent years working with and learning from his grandfather, who was one of the first certified executive chefs in the country. Michael now heads the operation of the restaurant.

In this interview, Michael shares his knowledge and expertise as a chef about how board and care home operators can get the highest quality food items while also getting the most for their money. In addition, he offers practical ideas for food preparation that is budget friendly and health conscious. To enhance the readability of this interview, headings are used to highlight Michael's comments, rather than the traditional listing of questions and then answers.

GENERAL FOOD PURCHASING

Achieving the lowest overall cost when purchas-

ing food in quantity is a fine line. Purchasing produce in bulk will give people the best price, but if they are not going to use it all and part of it is going to be thrown away, then it is a loss, and they will not save anything at all. If it is all going to be used, purchasing full cases of foods like produce will offer homes the lowest pricing.

We use Gordon Food Service® [whose territory includes parts of Canada and 15 states] for our produce. Companies like this may be more expensive than farm markets and similar places, but quality-wise, we have found that the inspection of the food is better. I am sure that people can get some really great produce at smaller places, but it really scares me to not know the specifics about the safety of that produce. I know that these bigger companies "have my back"; they do not want anyone to get sick from their product, and they will have more inspectors than will small warehouses.

I was buying from a small local business, and I stopped by one day to pick something up. They had boxes of tomatoes dumped out all over the floor of their garage, where they park their trucks, in the oil stains on the floor.

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