Karin George: This past year, the focus of food service has been on the customer. Most Navy bases have multiple food service options both on and off base. The primary mission of the ashore galley is to provide meals to sailors who do not receive a meal allowance, but instead have a Ration-in-Kind (RIK) provided meal. Our challenge is to provide nutritional meals that meet the customers’ expectations. Our goal is to be the No. 1 choice for the RIK sailor so that they are not paying for meals out of pocket.

Collecting customer comments and holding routine menu review boards have been the primary information sources for finding out what the sailors want in the galleys. Initial comments show that customers desire a variety of food options, with expanded meal hours. Implementing these suggestions can be challenging in a budget-constrained environment.

In the year ahead, we plan to continue exploring not only our customer desires, but also the training needs of our Navy culinary specialists (CSs). While ashore, we aim to provide training opportunities for the cooks to ensure they maintain culinary skills for when they return to sea, or for transition to the civilian workforce after their service obligation.

George: The challenge for galleys to sustain quality service with limited funding seems to be a repetitive issue. As a Quality-of-Life program, the ashore galleys compete for Operations and Maintenance, Navy funding against all operational costs at the shore installations. Funding for galleys has been sufficient to sustain existing operations; however, new initiatives and recommended improvements are difficult to implement due to the lack of available dollars.

This year one of the major impacts to our budget was the increase in labor costs for our food service workers. While we do have CSs in many of our galleys to perform the preparation/cooking of the meals, all of our sites have food service contracts in place for required sanitation efforts. As a general policy, we decided five years ago that we would not assume risk for service, safety or sanitation due to a shortfall of funds. For this reason we were forced to close operations in past years and restrict patronage. This year we are once again facing unplanned shortfalls in our funding and have obligated funds toward maintaining existing operations rather than investing in new initiatives.

Government Food Service: Tell us a little about how the last year has unfolded. Discuss some accomplishments, any unfinished business and any challenges that lie ahead.

Karin George: Last year, you talked about hurdles resulting from the tight federal budget and keeping operational costs low. Is Navy Food Service Ashore beginning to turn the corner?

George: The partnership between NAVSUP and CNIC continues to be strong. This past year NAVSUP hosted a Food Service Round Table discussion bringing together leadership from all entities that have a role in Navy food service operations. The discussions from this event provided valuable insight for the future of food service. Collectively we recognize
that our customers are looking for more healthy options, greater variety, better quality products, and comfortable and inviting dining areas. The discussions also revealed that the CS community is looking for professional development that can be applied to commercial operations once they choose to leave or retire from service. (See related story, page 28.)

We are working together to standardize equipment and menu items to facilitate the transition from sea to shore duty, as well as capitalize on cost savings by purchasing the same type of equipment. Due to the size of each dining facility and the specific requirements for shipboard equipment, the items selected are not exactly the same, but will be very similar. (See related story, page 32.)

Professional development and training opportunities for the CS members will be a primary focus for this year. We are currently conducting focus group site visits meeting with CSs of all paygrades to hear from the source what the sailors expect from their Navy training.

Training and travel dollars are always at risk for budget cuts. What we’ve already realized is that we can save travel dollars related to training by having mobile training teams. This past year, SUBASE New London hosted the Center for Support Services mobile training team and was able to deliver the Advanced Culinary Specialist Watch Caption “C” School to CSs from both ashore and afloat activities in the local area. The success of this class has promoted additional cooperation between the food service communities to begin looking for new options for training delivery.

**Government Food Service:** Food service is being revised throughout the military. How is the hybrid dining operation, or RIK feeder, progressing? How many does CNIC operate? NAS Fallon, Nev., became the sixth and most recent location last April. Explain how it works, the benefits and advantages, such as nutrition and training for culinary specialists.

**George:** In 2003, CNIC opened the first hybrid food operation combining the MWR club and galley functions into one site. Since that time, CNIC has established other locations with this same type of operation, which we now call an MWR/RIK operation. The concept is to combine the dining operations when there is not sufficient patronage to successfully sustain two or more food service outlets. In many cases, the galley operations were at risk of closing because there just weren’t enough sailors, but those that were there needed a place to eat. To maintain cost effectiveness, we found that it made good business sense to allow the sailors to claim their meal credit at the MWR operation vice providing Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS).

This model works well in areas where there is a strong MWR food and beverage operation in existence and where there is a need to provide essential messing. This model is not intended for every location, and in most cases, maintaining the traditional galley operation continues to be the most cost-effective.

At NAS Fallon, the original MWR/RIK operation was expanded to allow the service member to claim their meal ration at all of the MWR food and beverage operations on the base. This provided the flexibility for the customer by having a food outlet open from early in the morning until late in the evening.

The latest operation to open was at NB Kitsap-Bremerton, Wash. At this location, we had a galley that was used only for surge when a carrier was in port. Often, the crew did not utilize the galley, so we were paying for an operation with low patronage. A business case analysis determined that combining the MWR food service operation from the Sam Adams pub with the space available in the galley would increase patronage and allow sailors to have a place to eat other than the ship.

Because MWR is providing meals to the sailors with reimbursement, they are required to provide nutritional, healthy choice options. Similar to when a sailor visits a galley, they have a choice of food options. The same is true at the MWR operations; sailors have the option for the healthy choice entrée, but they also have a choice for a speed-line or fast-food type item.
As of today, CNIC has MWR/RIK operations at seven installations. Of these, only two have CSs employed. The other locations have NAF employees that provide the meal services. Where the CSs are assigned, they are incorporated into the work schedule to work alongside their NAF counterparts. The benefit here is that they are able to maintain their culinary skills while ashore, as well as learn more of the restaurant management skills that would be experienced outside of traditional Navy food service. At this time, there is no current plan to open operations in any other.

**Government Food Service:** How is credit card use in galleys progressing? In 2015, nearly all CONUS galleys had it, but some were opting out to limit credit risk; and there were concerns OCONUS about securing personal information.

**George:** In 2015, all of our existing credit card machines were required to be replaced with the new chip-and-PIN technology providing added security for the users. In CONUS, all sites were converted and continue to have the capability to accept both credit and debit cards. OCONUS has just started the implementation of credit cards with the first two at Deveselu, Romania, and Sigonella, Sicily. Similar to the security transmission concerns of E-Track, some of the galleys do not have a separate secure phone or cable line for transmission of PII and therefore are not capable at this time to accept credit transactions.

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**Government Food Service:** How is progress going with the Food Service E-Track, a new version of the Navy’s Enabler system, to determine eligibility for a ration-in-kind (RIK) meal by automatically scanning information stored on the Common Access Card of any service member.

**George:** The E-Track system has been implemented in all CONUS operations. The system is working very well and has eliminated the requirement for issuance of meal cards and multiple sign-in sheets at the cashier station. This latest version of the E-Track reads the member’s CAC and validates eligibility for an RIK meal pulling data directly from DFAS. Because of the PII [Personally Identifiable Information] involved, the system and the server must pass Information Assurance requirements. OCONUS, most of our computer systems are not hosted on the Navy and Marine Corps Internet, but rather on One-Net. CNIC is working with SPAWAR [Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command] to certify the security of One-Net [OCONUS Navy Enterprise Network] for transmitting PII over the E-track readers.