



OSCAR Hospitality Food Safety Auditor, Geoff Ramsden

“Hello all, my name is Geoff Ramsden, Food Safety Auditor, and I have been invited to share with you my many and varied experiences in the catering and food service industry. From my early days in various managing positions, to a chef, here and overseas, I am keen to reflect on changes in the Aged Care sector over the last 30 years. I am keen to stir the pot on issues still existing in our Food Catering and Care sector, with a few old chestnuts to throw in the fire. I hope you enjoy this article I wrote.”



The Dining Experience

Where and how we eat is just as much part of the meal as what we eat. A friendly, inviting and comfortable dining setting, free from distracting, irritating, stressful disruptions makes for natural enjoyment of the meal.



As people age, the desire to be “at home” becomes even stronger. This “at home” feeling is a reinforcement of being in a place that is both familiar and secure, a place where we feel at ease and enjoy the company. A place where dignity and spontaneous social interaction is preserved. Such an environment promotes a healthy appetite for food and has a direct influence on resident’s nutritional status.





All meals are a composite experience – most residents have been used to a rather formal and family meal type setting – much preparation, presentation (Dad carving etc.) and a lot of hearty eating and conversation.



This of course, dramatically disappears upon residence in a Hostel or nursing Home. They are often eating with complete strangers; conversation is limited or non-existent for many reasons, such as socio-economic backgrounds and table manners, being contributing factors to this experience.



It matters little how nutritious or balanced the meal is, this is all severely compromised if it is associated with frustration, anxiety or a lack of dignity. So, the food itself is only a part of an important equation – a significantly important part of the overall dining experience is the environment we create in the manner in which we serve and give attention – no different to a restaurant! The social ambience is equal to the food and nutritional aspect.

