The Client
Sodexo provides three meals and snacks daily to over 1000 patients at a large urban hospital in the lower mainland in British Columbia.

Sustainability Initiative: Food Waste Prevention
Sodexo has committed to cutting food waste in our business in half as signatories to Champions 12.3 (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal) and Champions 2030 (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, USDA and FDA), which both target a 50% reduction in food loss and waste by 2030. Our commitment surpasses these targets by setting our timeline at 2025.

Background
We collaborate closely with our client and meet quarterly to discuss sustainability projects. Some of these are Sodexo driven and some are client driven but we decide together on the priorities. One of those areas that we knew we wanted to work on was around food composting and waste reduction. We want to make sure that we are bringing in and producing the right amount of food and serving to people what they want.

For our Composting and Recycling Program we sort items into different waste streams when the dirty trays come back; recycling in recycling, refundables with refundables, leftover food in compost bins.

A few years ago we rolled out the Bedside Spoken Menu Program which involves a staff member attending the patient bedside, discussing food options with them, assisting the patient with meal selection in compliance with their dietary requirements, and electronically entering the patient’s meal order into our diet management software right at the patient bedside.

Challenges
It’s always a challenge to balance wanting to work efficiently and as quickly as possible with doing the right thing for the environment. When we first initiated the Bedside Spoken Menu Program the adoption rate was not as high as it should have been for patients that were eligible for the program. We implemented staff training and increased our visitation rate from 44% to 78%.

Megan Lacoste, General Manager
Business Segment: Healthcare

“While composting food waste is better than sending it to the landfill, preventing food from being wasted in the first place is the best solution. By reducing food waste, we can also reduce the amount of resources lost in its production, processing and distribution.”

Sustainability Champion
SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPION

SUCCESSES
We do a Bi-Annual Waste Audit and saw a reduction in solid food waste from 19.93% in March to 14.75% in September. Increasing the rate of the Bedside Spoken Menu is just part of the reason for that reduction but I think it has contributed.

We also changed our practice of giving a plastic straw automatically to providing cardboard straws upon request and we brought our usage from 500 plastic straws per day to 5 cardboard straws per day.

IMPACT
There have been several positive impacts:
• With the use of an iPad and more face-to-face interaction, we no longer have patients selecting their choices through a paper menu
• We are now perceived as a friendlier patient-centred food service
• Patients now have more choice about what they eat based on their preferences but also on how they’re feeling in their recovery. Sometimes our patients don’t have big appetites and other times they do. It can change day-to-day depending on medications and treatment etc.
• Allowing a patient to determine the quantity of food served and the type of food served resulted in less leftovers after meal service as patients can order exactly what they feel up to eating (within their prescribed diet)

RECOMMENDATIONS
While composting food waste is better than sending it to the landfill, preventing food from being wasted in the first place is the best solution. By reducing food waste, we can also reduce the amount of resources lost in its production, processing and distribution.

There are a lot of initiatives out there we can take advantage of as food service managers, I recommend you choose one and stick with it, change is not going to happen immediately. As a region, we’ve been working on our food waste reduction plan since 2014. I wish you the best of luck and remember that any improvement is taking us as a company, population and society in the right direction.