

Alaska Pioneer Homes Serve Family Recipes



At the Alaska Pioneer Homes, the residents are the heart of the home, and nothing is more important than assuring each elder feels that sense of home. One of the many ways the division and Nana Management Services (NMS) work together to accomplish that is through the kitchen. Few things in life possess the ability to bring forth warm memories and fond feelings quite like food, especially those involving long-standing family recipes.

As the Alaska Pioneer Homes dining services provider, NMS invites residents and their families to drop off their favorite recipes and share their personal stories behind each one. While not all recipes are possible to scale up in size enough to serve at the homes, the recipes that can be are made with loving care by the kitchen staff who strive to recreate them with exact perfection. For the kitchen staff, being able to make a resident's family recipe just as they remember it is a powerful gift they love to provide. As the Fairbanks Pioneer Home's NMS Food Manager, Augustine Ruhri, puts it, "Food isn't just about taste, it is about the smell and the rest of the five senses. It has the ability to bring back feelings of familiarity, security and peace and even transport people back in time to good memories and faraway places." Augustine shares that she has been entrusted with many a residents' original recipe card, full of creases and stains, which tell Augustine just how loved the recipe truly is. Several recipes shared so far have been over 100 years old! The gift of a special meal is one close to Augustine's heart, and is an honor for her to help provide. At the end of the day, the original recipes cards are safely cared for and returned to the residents. Meals that feature resident recipes are included on the menu and publically celebrated.

Across the six Pioneer Homes, a wide variety of resident recipes have been prepared and served, much to the delight of the residents and staff. At the Fairbanks Pioneer Home, the sweet smell of blueberry and orange pancakes have greeted breakfast goers, and lunch and dinner guests have enjoyed a special beef macaroni and tomato casserole and a braised beef stew, just to name a few. At the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home, several recipes, such as "Audra's Famous Chili", have been so popular that they are now part of the regular food rotation. For the Anchorage Pioneer Home, having a former North Slope chef as a resident has proved to be deliciously delightful, as "Harry's Bean Salad" is a much loved hit and "Harry's Warm Potato Salad" was the perfect addition to the home's 2018 Octoberfest themed meal.

Enabling residents to be able to enjoy and share their family recipes is just of the many ways the Pioneer Homes seek to help residents feel at home. Considering the well-known fact that no one's food is ever quite as good as Grandma and Grandpa's, why not tap into the mouthwatering benefits of centuries of combined cooking experience across the Pioneer Homes' masterful residents!