

Crab legs? Check. Pizza? Made to order. Soft-serve ice cream? No problem. Is this a run-down of the food that's available on a seaside boardwalk? No, just some of the fare onboard USS *Providence* (SSN-719).

In 2010, the USS *Providence* (SSN-719) culinary team took home the Capt. Edward F. Ney Award for excellence in food service for the second year in a row. The winners accepted the award at a ceremony in Reno, Nev., on April 17. The ship competed against all other boats in the Submarine Force. USS *Wyoming* (SSBN-742) (Blue) was runner up, and USS *Ohio* (SSGN-726) (Blue) received honorable mention.

UNDERSEA WARFARE Magazine spoke with two members of the award-winning team to find out their ingredients for success. No secret spices here, just hard work (and maybe a little hot sauce thrown in for good measure).

# Peanut Butter Pizza and Five-Star Service

## *The USS Providence Award-Winning Culinary Team*

There is no culinary training specific to submarines. "It's generic," said Petty Officer First Class Devin Morava. The cooks learn the basics of food preparation and line cooking, "but no submarine training." On the other hand, Seaman Jaron Holliday, another member of the team, did go to school for food service prior to joining the Navy.

In the galley, the leading culinary specialist and the supply officer are responsible for food planning. The menu follows a three-week cycle, similar to that of a cafeteria calendar. "All the subs pretty much run off that three-week menu," said Morava. But there is some leeway with what they can prepare. "Certain meals are made on crew preference. Like it will say, 'chicken,' and you can make what you want with chicken on that day."

The menu is protein-based and varies depending on where the sub and her crew are located and where they can obtain food. Shelf life and sustainability are

very important for a vessel that can be out to sea for months at a time. The culinary specialists said perishable items like produce and milk have a maximum shelf life of two weeks. After that, they move on to things like Jell-O and canned goods. As for frozen food, they carry 90-days worth. But you won't find any convenience food onboard. According to Morava, there are "no TV dinners on a sub."

Asked if any particular food is off limits, Morava said not really. "Each region has a different [food] catalog. All the boats have the ability to order the same thing. It is their preference to order what they would like." As for items that will definitely be off the menu, "no squid or lamb," he said.

When it comes to the actual meals, "95 percent are cooked onboard," said Morava. There are some things that are precooked, such as presmoked ribs, but many items are made from scratch, including their own hamburger buns!

The amount of food the culinary team prepares depends greatly on whether the sub is in port or at sea. "One third of the crew stays onboard while in port, so the evening meal will be smaller," explained Holliday. "But out to sea, everyone stays, so everyone eats." Knowing that everyone will be eating tells the cooks exactly how much food to make. "While you are in port, you have the opportunity to go out and get food," added Holliday. Out to sea? They make do with what they have.

And, ship motion can make cooking for about 130 people in a tiny galley pretty tricky, what with cake-spills in the oven, eggs running across a slanting grill, oil on the floor that should be in the fryer and other messes. "We have a pretty good crew," said Morava, "They understand... most of the time."

The culinary team faces quite a few other routine challenges. "There's not a lot of space," said Holliday. Only one cook at a time can be in the galley. "Two is possible," said Morava, "but they start bumping into each other, and it gets crowded."







Holliday mentioned that time is important in meal prep. “You have to have the meal done by a certain amount of time and before that... so the cooks can eat,” he said. The galley serves every six hours when underway—four meals in a 24-hour period. Holliday also mentioned drills and unexpected hiccups, like losing power on one side of the galley, that make preparing food on time difficult.

The logistics of eating on a sub are also a challenge. The meal is served buffet style, but due to the cramped space, not everyone can get up at the same time. It is often “one in, one out” in the mess hall. To cut down on the chaos and minimize the number of people standing in the access, every crew member is assigned days to come help serve the meal.

New crew members in particular do the dirty work, like washing dishes and scrubbing the decks. Morava and Holliday called them the “unsung heroes” of the food service operations. However, new crew members are often assigned to the sub only temporarily, so the “unsung heroes” who assisted in the winning of the Ney award have since moved on and are no longer working in *Providence’s* galley.

The cooks mentioned “Burger Day,” which falls on a Friday, as one of the easiest cooking days. “Quick and easy, the crew loves it, and only a couple ingredients are required,” explained Morava.

“Taco Tuesday” and “Wicked Chicken” are the sub crew’s favorite meal days. On Taco Tuesday, the team prepares some sort of tacos, chimichangas or fajitas. Wicked Chicken is served every Wednesday. It is essentially buffalo chicken, called “wicked” because it is so hot and spicy.

On Sunday, the galley serves prime rib, steak, lobster or crab legs. On Saturdays, pork is served, followed by pizza as the midnight meal. Asked if they make all different kinds of pizza, the culinary specialists mentioned preparing peanut butter and cheese pizza. “If we have it, we’ll make it,” they said. Whatever floats your boat, so to speak.

The culinary team does their best to celebrate special occasions as they would on land. They often make cakes for crewmembers’ birthdays, and they are allotted extra money to serve traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas meals.

In the end, the culinary team will do whatever they can to please the crew. According to Morava, “Food is one of the biggest morale things for a submarine. We get allotted a little [extra] chunk of money that the rest of the Navy does not.” So, UNDERSEA WARFARE asked, would *Providence’s* consistent hard work pay off again in 2011’s competition? The answer: “We’re trying to go for a three-peat!”

*Providence* received honorable mention in the 2011 Ney Award competition’s submarine category. *USS Maryland* (SSBN-738) (GOLD) took first place, with *USS Olympia* (SSN-717) following as runner-up. While not quite the hoped-for “three-peat,” a third straight year of recognition as one of the top three submarine galleys is still a great tribute to the remarkable skill and dedication of the *Providence* culinary team.

Olivia Logan is managing editor of UNDERSEA WARFARE magazine.

(Above, left to right) Fresh fruit is available in the galley. (Good nutrition is important; every meal is required to have a healthy option.) Dessert for a distinguished visitor luncheon: Cereal-Crusted Ice Cream Balls (cookies and cream ice cream combined with Cinnamon Toast Crunch and finished with a chocolate and caramel drizzle). A member of the culinary team prepares the famous Wicked Chicken. (Photos by Olivia Logan)



Photo by Lt. Patrick Evans



Photo by Olivia Logan

(Opposite) Lt. j.g. Allen Hamby, *Providence’s* Supply Officer, sets the ward room table for a luncheon with a distinguished visitor. What was on the menu? Wicked Chicken, of course.

(Right, top) During a visit to Naval Submarine Base New London in April, Adm. John C. Harvey, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, presented the 2010 Ney Award for Food Service Excellence to the culinary specialists of *USS Providence*, represented by Petty Officer 1st Class Devin Morava, center, and Petty Officer 2nd Class José Rosarivas, right.

(Right, bottom) The pantry aboard *USS Providence*.