

# Foodservice Updates

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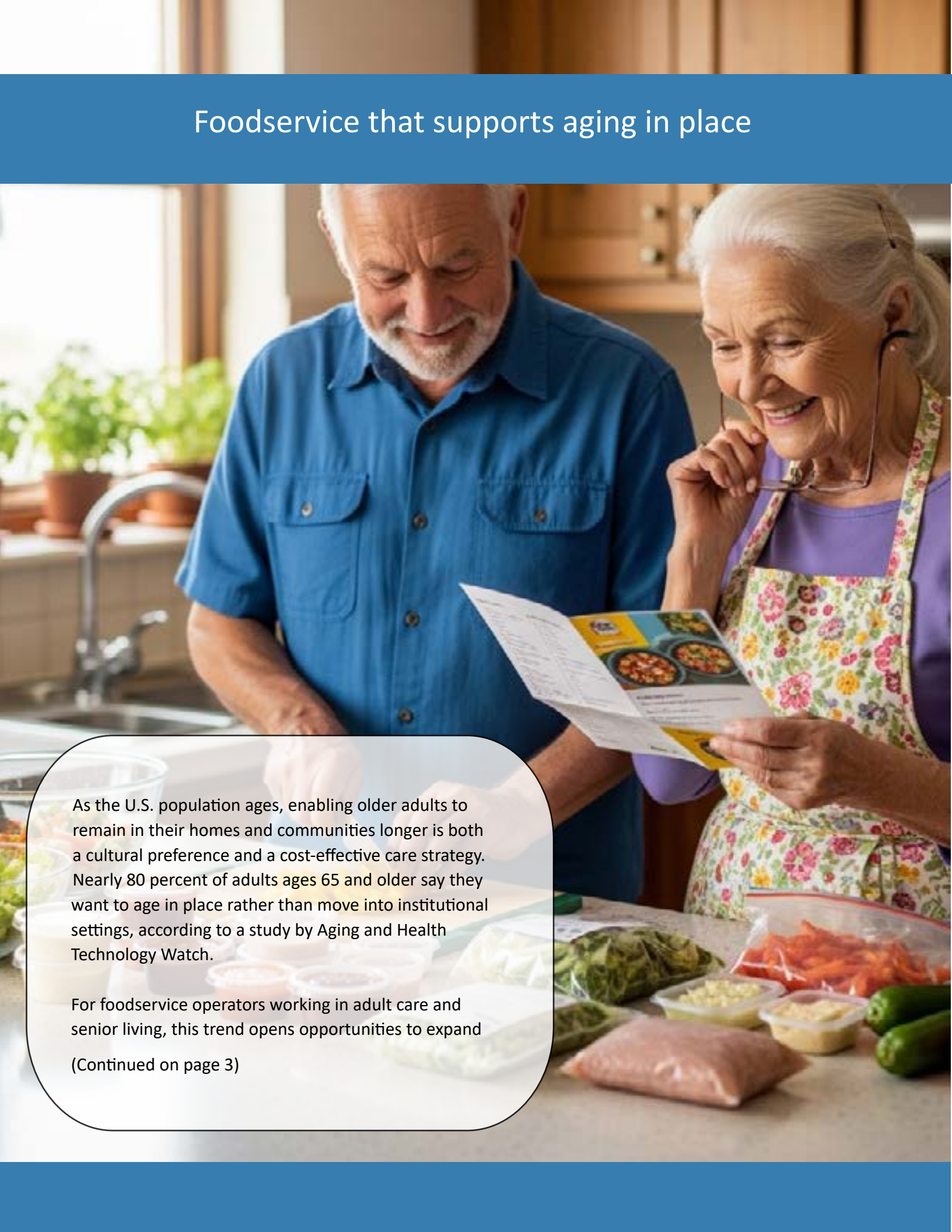
Foodservice that supports aging in place

Mitigate the safety risks of fatigue

Use data dashboards to connect your metrics

When healthcare costs squeeze senior living operators, scenario planning can help senior living

## Foodservice that supports aging in place

An elderly couple is in a kitchen. The man, on the left, has a white beard and is wearing a blue short-sleeved button-down shirt. The woman, on the right, has white hair and is wearing a purple top and a floral apron. They are both smiling and looking at a recipe card held by the woman. The kitchen counter in front of them has various ingredients in containers, including green leafy vegetables, a pinkish-red bag, and some small bowls. In the background, there is a kitchen sink with a faucet and some potted plants on the windowsill.

As the U.S. population ages, enabling older adults to remain in their homes and communities longer is both a cultural preference and a cost-effective care strategy. Nearly 80 percent of adults ages 65 and older say they want to age in place rather than move into institutional settings, according to a study by Aging and Health Technology Watch.

For foodservice operators working in adult care and senior living, this trend opens opportunities to expand

(Continued on page 3)



*The number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to increase from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million by 2050, according to the Population Reference Bureau. This is creating a large, expanding market for services that support older adults at home — including meal delivery, tailored nutrition plans, home-based food preparation programs, community meals, and subscription services targeted to health needs.*

### **aging in place**

*(From page 2)*

offerings beyond their facility's dining rooms. Community-based and at-home services can help support nutrition, independence, and wellbeing — while expanding local partnerships for operators. One foundational strategy is partnering with or replicating local home-delivered meal programs. Foodservice Director reports that The Commons, a senior living community in Oklahoma, partners with a local nonprofit to provide mobile meals for seniors in the region. The hot midday meals were available Monday through Friday for \$67 a month at the time of the report, and companies could sponsor the program to offset the cost of the meals. Nationally, participation in such programs among adults ages 60 and older has roughly doubled since the early 2010s. Up to 4 percent of these consumers report using delivered meals, according to research published in the *Journal of Primary Care & Community Health*.

Operators can further adapt by developing flexible menus tailored to common age-related needs. This could include offering higher-protein, easy-to-prepare, and texture-modified dishes, as well as providing shared meals in community spaces, which research shows may boost dietary intake and social connection. Investing in technology for digital ordering, automated delivery scheduling, and nutrition tracking can also bridge the gap between in-facility and at-home foodservice, supporting older adults wherever they choose to live.



*In your operation, are there unpleasant surprises that crop up — or pockets of data that aren't leading to regular action?*

## Use data dashboards to connect your metrics

Data has become central to how foodservice businesses perform and compete. But at the same time, there are so many sources of data that it can be easy to lose track of how they relate to each other. Increasingly, data dashboards are helping operators connect food quality, labor, and safety metrics into one daily decision-making system. Instead of reviewing reports after the rush, managers can monitor real-time KPIs like ticket times, voids, staffing levels, prep completion, and temperature logs in one view.

Day to day, this changes how foodservice businesses operate. For example, if a dashboard shows lunch sales rising faster than forecast while labor is understaffed, managers can call in support before service suffers. If food quality scores dip while overtime climbs, it may signal rushed execution or insufficient prep. Dashboards can also flag food safety risks — like a walk-in cooler trending above 41°F — triggering corrective action before product loss or inspection issues occur.

The benefits climb with multi-unit brands and institutional operators. They can use dashboards to standardize execution across locations, improving consistency while reducing labor waste and safety blind spots. The result is better control, which enables action before concerns balloon into larger problems.

## When healthcare costs squeeze senior living operators, scenario planning can help



*Rising healthcare and operational costs can lead to higher resident fees, increased staff costs and other quality and access challenges. Planning and budgeting for multiple scenarios can help operators identify options.*

U.S. healthcare costs are projected to climb 9.6 percent this year — creating a ripple effect on senior living communities and the foodservice operations within them. Healthcare wage pressure pulls dollars toward nursing and care roles, leaving fewer resources for culinary staffing, training, and hospitality-focused positions. Reimbursement delays and rate gaps further compound the challenge, often slowing investment decisions and forcing communities to absorb short-term losses.

Operators may be forced to make trade-offs that land on dining budgets. Foodservice leaders are likely to face tighter constraints on food quality, menu innovation, and service enhancements. It calls for creativity and some advance planning.

To manage this volatility, operators can use scenario planning as a practical risk-management tool. Rather than relying on a single annual budget, they can build multiple models that test assumptions around factors like food inflation, wage increases, census shifts, and reimbursement timing. These exercises can help identify trigger points — such as when menu mix changes, labor model adjustments, or vendor renegotiations are required. They can also help operators identify the best time to invest in new technology and tools. By partnering with finance, HR, and clinical leaders, foodservice leaders can ensure dining strategies stay aligned with broader organizational priorities. This can turn uncertainty into informed, proactive decision-making.



*So many workers are tired on the job, but a combination of shift management, training, and tools can help you fatigue-proof your business.*

## Mitigate the safety risks of fatigue

More than 43 percent of U.S. workers are sleep deprived, according to research from the National Safety Council — and the people most at risk work the night shift, long shifts, or irregular shifts. In foodservice, fatigue is a food safety risk with real consequences for operators. Research published in the *Journal of Food Protection* found that burnout and exhaustion can dampen employees' commitment to critical safety behaviors. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of mistakes in handling, prep, and compliance.

In restaurants and institutional kitchens, long hours, non-standard shifts, and limited rest breaks contribute to fatigue that can impair judgment and attention — the same cognitive skills needed to reliably follow food safety procedures. While federal regulators don't yet treat fatigue as a formal safety hazard, workplace studies show that sleep loss and extended work periods negatively affect cognitive performance and decision-making. This elevates the risk of handling errors, cross-contamination, or lapses in sanitation.

Operators can mitigate these risks by structuring shifts to allow for adequate recovery, assigning critical safety tasks to the least fatigued staff, limiting back-to-back extended shifts, using checklists during peak periods (not after), building regular breaks into schedules, and training supervisors to spot signs of exhaustion. There are additional safety nets too, like automated temperature controls, color-coded equipment, and slimmed-down menus during busy shifts. These steps can improve safety outcomes, as well as support retention and morale across teams.