

The Past, Present, and Future of Food Service

Supporting the changing needs of the MAGTF
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Mission Statement: The Marine Corps Field Feeding Program consists of the right mix of personnel, rations, equipment and training in order to support the Marine Air Ground Task Force commanders' expeditionary maneuver warfare and peacetime feeding requirements.

—MCRP 4-11.8A

Marine Corps Field Feeding Program¹

The goal for every food service Marine in our ranks is fairly simplistic: provide safe, timely, adequate, and flavorful meals to servicemembers in every clime and place. Achieving this goal however, is anything but. While we have the equipment necessary to meet the mission, personnel are becoming hard to acquire. With budget constraints as well as civilian counterparts being used as a justification for the downsizing of food service, senior leaders are being forced to become more creative with the employment of their Marines and equipment. Food Service's expeditionary focus in accordance with *Expeditionary Force 21* is to maximize organic capabilities and limit contracting while sustaining the force with Meals Ready-to-Eat and unitized group rations (UGRs).

Current Capabilities

Food Service Company, Headquarters

Regiment, owns a diverse gear set utilized to execute what most would argue is our primary function in the Marine Corps: expeditionary field feeding. Based upon the size of the force that needs support and the type of environment in which we will be operating, Marines of Food Service Company can tailor the capabilities set employed to fit the operational vision of commanders and the needs of their Marines and sailors.

By far, the most readily deployable field feeding piece of equipment is the Tray Ration Heating System (TRHS),

which is a fully mobile system with "heat on the move" capabilities. With all of its SL-3 (stock list) components, the TRHS is capable of providing 250 portions of hot chow utilizing UGR heat-and-serves (H&S) in about 40 minutes and can do so with only three food service Marines. It runs on diesel fuel and has the ability to be powered by a converter box attached to a HMMWV. But these things alone do not make the TRHS our most expeditionary piece of gear. What makes the TRHS highly expeditious is the fact that it provides a "true" mobile feeding capability. Gone are the days of a linear battlespace where Marines could cook chow toward the "rear" of the engagement and push it forward. The Marine Corps' expeditionary mindset and constant offensive approach to engagements require supporting units to move with the ebb and flow of the conflict. With a TRHS strapped in the back of a HMMWV, food service Marines can prepare chow while moving with the supported unit. In a 24-hour period, one TRHS is designed to feed 500 Marines and sailors with enhancements (i.e., fresh fruits and vegetables) while

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Food Service Company, 1st MLG. (Photo by LCpl Lauren A. Falk.)

remaining minimally static and support several units that may not even be in the same battlespace as one another.

two TRHSs, two convection ovens, two tilt braisers, and a three-compartment sink to clean necessary equipment and

the heat source for both the TRHS and the EFK, making both systems work harmoniously and eliminating the need for several different maintenance kits and fuel sources. With the addition of Small or Large Field Refrigeration Systems, Marines and sailors can enjoy a wider variety of meals augmented by fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products. The EFK requires the support of an MEP 803A generator and a generator mechanic to supply power to both the EFK and the refrigeration systems. Additional requirements needed are a potable water source and grey/black water removal system utilizing a Water Six Container Storage Tank Module (SIX-CON) or water bladder. That is not to say that the EFK does not fit the expeditionary nature of the Marine Corps; it only illustrates that each piece of gear in the food service repertoire is best suited to certain types of missions. The TRHS helps Marines secure a foothold in a battlespace, and the EFK promotes the longevity of sustained operations while also having mobile flexibility.

Manpower

In fiscal year 2013, Food Service Company had a table of organization of 197 Marines. During fiscal year 2014, that number dropped to 163 Marines. During fiscal year 2015, the table of organization strength is 135 Marines. With a reduction of over 60 Marines over a three-year period, Marines have continued to maintain equipment field-

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The Enhanced Tray Ration Heating System (E-TRHS) is the mid-level equipment set that can feed 350 Marines and sailors two meals a day. It is a TRHS with a Small Field Refrigeration System which provides cold storage in a static location with continual replenishments and enhancements. Although the refrigeration system is typically static, the TRHS can still be mobile with a HMMWV.

The newest piece of gear that Food Service Company has is the expeditionary field kitchen (EFK). The EFK is an ISO container in an expandable configuration mounted on the MCC-20 trailer pulled by an MTRV 7-ton. With six Marines, an EFK can be operational within 45 minutes to enable cooks the ability to produce 750 meals twice a day. What makes the EFK different from our other field feeding equipment is the array of cooking techniques and menus it can support. Inside the EFK, there are

utensils. While the TRHS is designed to prepare UGR H&Ss, the EFK can boil, bake, steam, braise, simmer, sauté, and fry. The Babington Airtronic Burner is



Food being prepared in the field. (Photo by 1stMARDIV Food Service Office.)



Quantico Mess Hall, 1940. Food service has come a long way from covered and aligned cups and plates. (Photo provided by History Division.)

ed when the table of organization was 197 Marines. Food Service Company Marines support a large majority of field exercise and deployment within 1st MLG and also 1st MARDIV above its organic capability, which often results in a large number of food service personnel either deployed or in a temporary additional duty status supporting local field operations such as Weapons and Tactics Instructors Courses (WTIs), MEF Exercises, command post exercises, and world-wide deployments in support of the MEUs and special purpose MAGTFs, all while maintaining \$8 million worth of field feeding equipment. In addition to expeditionary field feeding requirements and maintenance of equipment, Food Service Company Marines also have a garrison mess hall mission to provide 32 cooks in support of the Regional Garrison Food Service Contract to maintain their core competencies while preparing meals for roughly 1,200 patrons a day, seven days a week. With the table of organization and equipment unbalanced, Food Service Company continues to fulfill the regimental commanding officer's intent for personnel and equipment readiness.

The Way Ahead

Marines do more with less, and we never back down from a challenge.

Food Service Marines are constantly trained and tested, ensuring that the knowledge necessary for continued field feeding success is ingrained in each and every one of them. Senior food service leaders are working each day, briefing commanders on equipment and personnel capabilities in support of the Marine Corps Field Feeding Program. With continual support from all levels throughout the MAGTF, the food service community and commanders can continue to promote mission success no matter the size or shape of the area of operations. The battle for personnel structure is an ongoing one, and food service is working hard to ensure we have a seat at the table when the decisions are made. New equipment is constantly in the works in an attempt to better support the changing needs of the MAGTF and the scope and tempo of its missions. In a world where operations are king, food service will be ready to support wherever and whenever we are called upon.

Note

1. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Marine Corps Reference Publication 4-11.8A (MCRP 4-11.8A), Marine Corps Field Feeding Program*, (Quantico, VA: June 2015).



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