

# Food for thought

Dietician dishes out wealth of pertinent nutritional expertise at Veterans Administration Medical Center

## Stephanie Moya

**Position:** Chief of Hospitality and Food Service, Carl T. Hayden Veterans Administration Medical Center, Phoenix.

**Job description:** Responsible for the planning, developing, organizing, staffing, implementing of a high-quality food production and food service program for the veteran population served at the VA Medical Center.

**Time on the job:** With the VA system for 3½ years; 11 months in current role.

**Education:** BS in 2002 and MS in 2004 in Human Nutrition from Arizona State University

**Résumé highlights:** Leadership Development Institute Graduate; Past board member of the Central District of the Arizona Dietetic Association; Taught classes at ASU, Grand Canyon University and Scottsdale Culinary Institute.

**Life lessons learned on the job:** “You get what you put in. If I am not giving my best effort each day then how am I to expect my staff to do the same? I wake up each day and attempt to find the strength, patience, and dedication to lead by example. Some days I succeed in this and some days I do not.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “My first dietetic intern. I began my VA career as an intern, so when I was able to work my way up the career ladder to a position where I was able to offer an intern an opportunity to train in our facility it felt great to give back to the profession. I made it tough on my first intern, but I know she appreciated the journey and how much she really learned in a matter of a few short months.”

### Best career advice you have received:

“Perception is reality. Human behavior can be tricky at times. I have a large staff with diverse professional and educational backgrounds. How they perceive their work environment and how their work environment really is does not always match. However, their actions and responses to their work environment will always reflect their unique perception. If I do not take the time to put myself in their shoes and discover the world from their viewpoint, then it is difficult for me to accommodate or support their wants and needs.”

### Most important concept you learned in school as it pertains to your career:

“The difference between a good source of a nutrient and a common source of a nutrient. For example, liver is an excellent source of Vitamin A, but not a very common source. A common source of Vitamin A is fortified milk. Food recommendations or food menus should be based on both those concepts to increase the nutritional profile, but also to increase compliance.”

### Most challenging aspect of your profession:

“Others often think dietitians are supposed to always eat perfectly



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healthy all the time. Guess what? We eat chocolate cake sometimes, too. It is about moderation and making healthy choices throughout the day, not about always restricting yourself from some of those fantastic culinary treats.”

**If you had to recareer:** “I would attend culinary school and utilize my nutrition and food service background to open a small restaurant that would specialize in great tasting, healthy cuisine. Growing up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has also given me a taste for spicy food so I would include some red chile and green chile recipes on the menu.”

**Closing quote:** “A nickel will get you on the subway, but garlic will get you a seat.”  
– old New York proverb

## Gourmet meals from your kitchen at home:

“I have been attempting to perfect my crab cake recipe for months, but am also proud of my ability to make homemade sushi.”