

# HOSPITALITY & DINING

ENHANCING THE SENIOR LIVING EXPERIENCE

**1** INNOVATIVE DINING IDEAS

**2** BEST PRACTICES WHEN PILOTING ROBOTS

**3** WELCOMING IMMIGRANTS, SOLVING A STAFFING CRISIS, ENGAGING RESIDENTS

ISSUE #2 | SUMMER 2023





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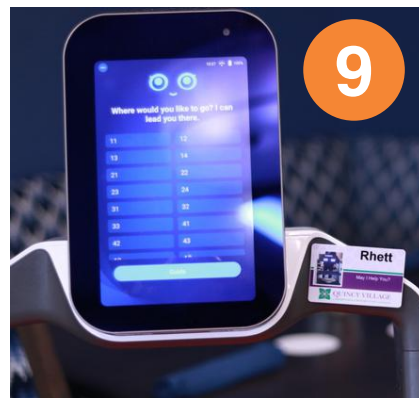
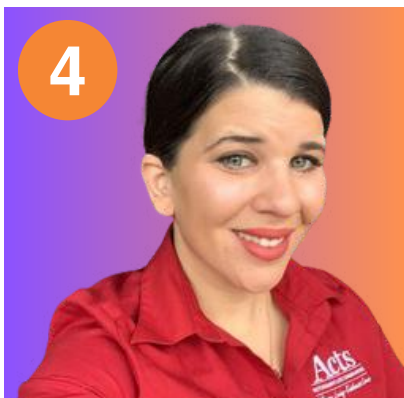
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SENIOR  
**DINING**  
ASSOCIATION

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**HOSPITALITY & DINING, Enhancing the Senior Living Experience** is published two times a year by the Senior Dining Association, 1234 Mann Dr., Suite 200, Matthews, NC 28105.  
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**POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to Senior Dining Association, 1234 Mann Dr., Suite 200, Matthews, NC 28105

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SDA

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# Founder's Note



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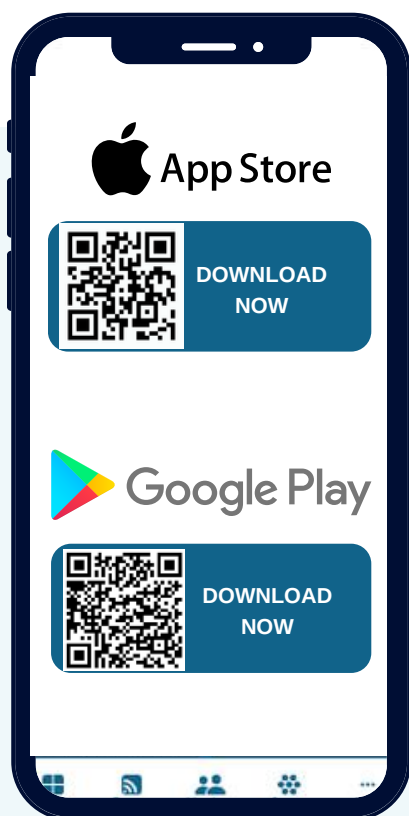
Companies are recognizing the importance of **creating memorable experiences for their staff** to foster loyalty, engagement, and ultimately, long-term retention.

In today's competitive business landscape, employee retention has become a crucial factor in sustaining organizational success. Retaining talented and dedicated staff is essential for maintaining continuity, fostering a positive work environment, and driving innovation.

By prioritizing employee satisfaction and crafting unique experiences, businesses can build strong bonds, boost morale, and create a workplace that employees never want to leave.

Chefs spend their careers creating experiences for their residents and guests. But anyone who creates experiences for others needs to have experiences themselves. **No one can think outside the box if they never get outside the box themselves.**

**Harris Ader**  
Founder, SDA



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# SDA MEMBER FEATURE

## Sabine El Fadel Dessau



Sabine El Fadel Dessau, Culinary and Nutritional Services Director at St. Andrews Estates South of Acts Retirement-Life Communities

Many call **Sabine El Fadel Dessau**, CDM, CFPP, the “Queen of Experiences.” As Culinary and Nutritional Services Director at St. Andrews Estates South of Acts Retirement-Life Communities, she has routinely gone above and beyond in creating special events, decorations, and memorable experiences for residents and staff—and most often very cost-effectively.

The Life Plan Community in Boca Raton, FL, is home to 200 residents living independently, in assisted living suites, or in skilled nursing.



HOSPITALITY & DINING reached out to see what she may be planning for summer experiences. **Sabine** shared some ideas she hasn’t implemented yet but are on her bucket list.

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Last year as part of the community’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative with a DEI Team composed of both residents and employees, a DEI Wall was established to celebrate observances such as Black History Month and Women’s History Month.

Some observances such as Jamaican Independence Day incorporated a traditional foods buffet—in that case including a Curry Goat dish that was so wildly popular with residents they wanted to keep it on the menu. Sabine is looking this year to expand opportunities to engage residents with food and education. It’s not so much food holidays but the **purpose behind it**.

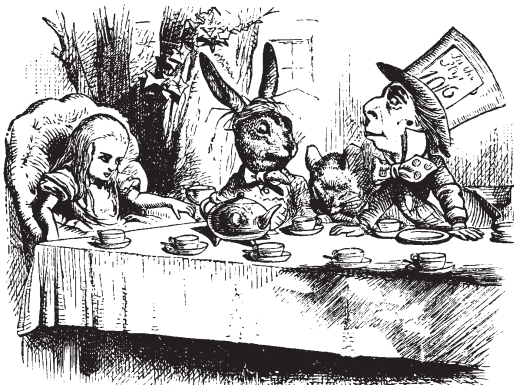


## Introducing new foods

As they introduce new foods, the dining team has found buffets are the way to get more people engaged and interested. Residents can try a little bit of everything. If it was done as a regular waited service, the Curry Goat Dish probably would not have been such a hit. They also ran the Goat for lunch through the bistro for residents and staff, which was met with a line out the door.

## Chef competitions with residents

“I want to get away from chef demos to something more interactive. This is definitely a bucket list item because it takes a lot of planning, but we’ve done chef competitions in the past, and I’d like to do cooking competitions with residents like Iron Chef, mystery baskets, cooking competitions that would engage the residents. Our independent residents cook some of the meals and on Sundays they get together and have parties. So I thought about having a competition outside on grills. It’s limited, and of course we’d have an audience.”



## Interactive dining experiences

“There are two things I’ve wanted to do. One, sensory dining, like blindfolded dining. And a virtual reality dining experience. That’s why I constantly try to look **outside the box**. It’s creating different experiences within our blueprint. I love the idea of interactive dining, maybe an Alice in Wonderland Book or murder mystery theme.”

## Presentation key

“I think it’s just looking for new things but not having to reinvent the wheel with food but focusing on the presentation. How can we make what we do every single day feel different, and it might just be as simple as changing the linens, changing the napkins. I know some of these things are outlandish cost-wise. That’s why I like to see what else we can do, like present our menu to make it look different.





# 2023 AWARD WINNERS

We all thrive on the appreciation of our exceptional ideas and dedication. Empower your team to showcase their brilliance by participating in the SDA awards, which will not only bring them well-deserved recognition but also catapult your organization to national acclaim.



Katherine Brower with Amanda Emerson, Area Manager, Opening and Field Training Manager



Andrew Applegate, President & CEO, Arbor Acres Retirement Community, left, with Erin Perkins, Director of Dining Arts, and Harris Ader, SDA Founder



Susan LoPresti with Jennifer Soss, Corporate Director of Program Development and Training

## Director of Dining Services of the Year Award

**Katherine Brower**, Culinary Services Group Food Service Director at Lafayette Manor Nursing Home in Uniontown, PA, was instrumental in the development of the new corporate menu and Fresh and Focused initiative.

## Director of Dining Services of the Year Award

**Erin Perkins**, Director of Dining Arts at Arbor Acres Retirement Community, headed a green initiative to replace disposable containers used for take-out meals, eliminating 6,500 pounds of disposable waste in the first six months and will save the community \$50,000 in its first year of recyclables.

## Excellence in Hospitality Innovation Award

**Brandywine Living** was honored for its Blue Goblet Signature Hospitality Program. A Blue Goblet substituted for a standard water glass at mealtimes the first week cues both staff and residents to welcome the new resident.



SDA Founder Harris Ader with John Tullbane

## Industry Partner of the Year Award

**John Tullbane**, Senior National Account Executive with General Mills, co-chairs the SDA's Industry Partner Action Council, a collective of professionals across various businesses that support the SDA. He was honored for his contributions, collaboration, and support over the past year.





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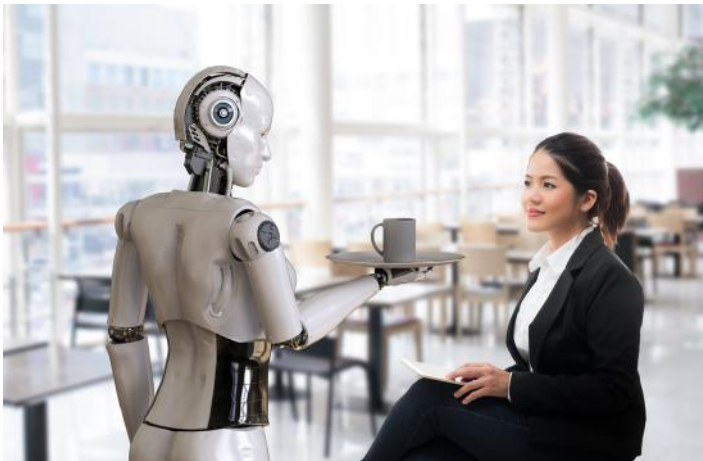


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# BEST PRACTICES WHEN PILOTING ROBOTS



3D Rendering of restaurant robot concept

While there have been mixed opinions about the use of robots, two SDA member organizations have found the integration of robots in their dining departments to be very successful.

Presbyterian Senior Living started a pilot in February 2022 at one of its Life Plan Communities, initially leasing a robot for a one-month trial. Quickly realizing the benefits, the organization purchased the robot at the end of the trial and is now purchasing three more robots for three of its other Life Plan Communities.

**“The robot has been extremely helpful,”**

said Bruce Groft, Regional Dining Services Support Manager at Presbyterian Senior Living.

“If you have an expeditor in the kitchen to load the soups, salads, beverages, and entrées, the server is able to stay in the dining room giving better service to our guests. It is important for the expeditor to anticipate the condiment needs for each meal so that the servers do not have to go behind the wall. Any foodservice person will tell you that when an employee goes behind the kitchen wall, they easily become distracted and that takes away from great customer service.”



Server Ryan with robot Jeeves at Mather Splendido

Following the December 2022 purchase of one robot after three successive 30-day trials starting last May with three different manufacturers, Thad Parton, Director of Restaurant Operations at Mather, said the integration of the robot has been very helpful to their culinary services team. **“We see the robot as being a tool for our team members and not a replacement.** It allows them more time in the restaurants with residents. With reduced trips to the kitchen, it has allowed us to increase section size and accommodates more residents throughout the meal service.”

While Mather sees an opportunity to leverage the robot for running dirty dishes back to the kitchen, Thad said they haven’t integrated that yet. However, for their signature Sunday brunch they believe it can be used to **help replenish the buffet** by running pans out to the buffet attendant and returning empty vessels back to the kitchen.

Besides Mather’s independent living community in Wilmette, IL; two Life Plan Communities in Evanston, IL, and Tucson, AZ, and a third opening in Tysons, VA, in 2024, its Mather Institute shares innovations and next practices with the goal of improving aging services. By regularly collaborating with universities around the country, the Institute serves as an innovation incubator, transforming the senior living industry by bringing leading-edge research to real life.

Mather’s interest in robots initially was two-fold—to try to fill gaps in front of house staffing and also be an innovative lead in implementing the technology. With one robot embedded, **Mather plans to add a second** at Splendido in Tucson as restaurant volume increases this year. Its other communities are very eager to add a robot or two of their own based on the positive results of the testing.

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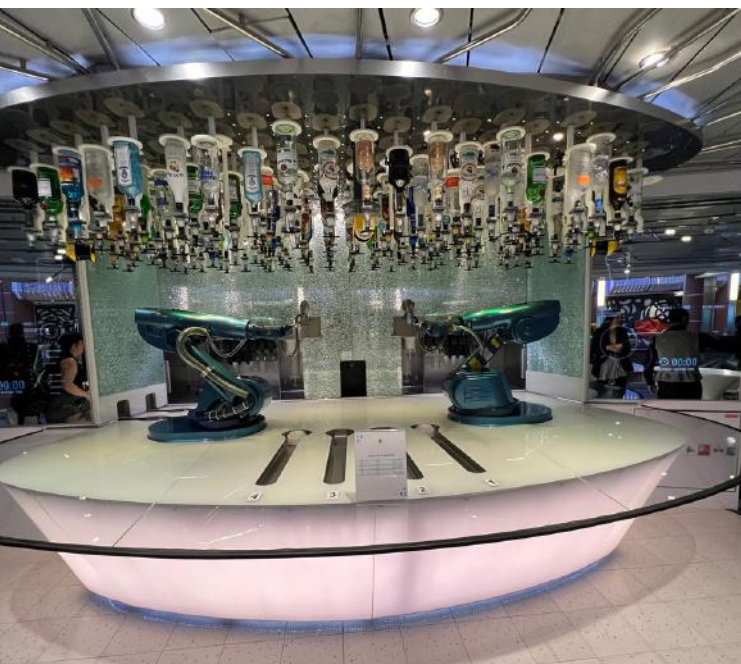


Robot Rhett at Presbyterian Senior Living

## What surprised them

When asked what surprised them the most at Presbyterian Senior Living, Bruce said, “There literally isn’t anything you have to do to maintain it. Since we received the robot, we had to do two updates with the robot company. Other than that, we plug it in to charge it, and wipe it down after meal service.”

Mather was surprised at how quickly their robot could be mapped between a restaurant and the kitchen spaces. “It takes about four hours to do this, some simple station settings, speed and music adjustments, and then it’s ready for service,” Thad explained. “Install and go live happened in the same day. I was surprised by the many residents that thanked us for providing a useful and important tool to better support our service team members. It was no secret that with a smaller than usual staff, the team was working much harder than they ever had. Residents were genuinely appreciative of our efforts.”



Bionic bar with robot servers on Royal Caribbean Cruise Ship

## What disappointed them

When asked about disappointments, Bruce said, “For me and my staff there is nothing disappointing about the robot. But as the technology grows, I’m sure the newer robots will have many new features and then we might say, ‘Wow, I wish our robot did that.’”

Thad said with the robot they ended up purchasing, there has not been a disappointment at all. “It is critical though, when evaluating success, that expectations be realistic. These robots are very good at going from point A to point B to point C and then back to point A. Their capacity is what it is. Expecting anything more than this very narrow job function is just setting yourself up for disappointment. If you understand its abilities and limitations and how that affects your operation, it can be a great addition to your existing team.”



Robot Jeeves at Mather Splendido

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## Positive reactions from all involved

“From the very beginning, when I was approached by my Regional Support, there was nothing at Presbyterian Senior Living but excitement about the whole venture,” Bruce said. “I was positive about it, my staff was positive about it, and when we presented this to our residents they were excited about the project. We had posted pictures and videos of what the robot could do. We had a naming contest that the residents were involved with. We picked the name ‘**Rhett Butler**’ from all the suggestions. Rhett even has his own name tag.

“Guests and family members are completely fascinated with the robot,” Bruce added. “As you can imagine, the kids are left speechless. **The robot sings Happy Birthday**, and that has now become a staple for anyone approaching their birthday; they want Rhett to sing to them. We recently added a 48-unit apartment building to an existing building and in that building is a very large common area. The walk is almost as long as a football field.

Once a month on a Friday evening, the staff place a birthday cake on the robot and send it to the common area singing Happy Birthday the whole way down and the whole way back. When it arrives in the common area, the residents remove the cake and touch the screen to send the robot back to the kitchen.”

Thad admitted Mather team members were skeptical, and it took some time for the robot to gain their trust. “The more they saw it perform well, the more they liked it. When the pilot period ended, the team gave the robot its best possible compliment—they asked when it would be back.

**“THE ROBOT IS A BENEFIT, IT SAVES THOUSANDS OF STEPS A DAY.”**

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# WELCOMING IMMIGRANTS, SOLVING A STAFFING CRISIS, ENGAGING RESIDENTS

As recruitment and retention of staff remain a nationwide challenge, especially in senior living and healthcare, one organization has found a unique way to attract and keep employees.

With a growing family of more than 1,100 team members who come from more than 60 countries, Goodwin Living offers a program to provide team members and their family members with grants to cover the U.S. citizenship application fee.

Goodwin Living is a senior living and health care services organization that supports more than 2,300 older adults across the National Capital Region. It has **published A Guide to Establishing a U.S. Citizenship Program for Employees** to help other organizations who may be interested in being a workplace of welcome for immigrant workers seeking U.S. citizenship.

Immigrants occupy almost 70 percent of Goodwin Living jobs, and nearly 27% of its team members do not have U.S. citizenship.

Since 2018, 142 Goodwin Living team members and their family members have earned or begun their journey to U.S. citizenship through the Goodwin Living Citizenship Program.

**Maribel Carranceja** is one of them, now serving as Front of the House Dining Services Supervisor at Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads, in Falls Church, VA, one of three Goodwin Living Life Plan Communities.

Originally from Manilla, capital of the Philippines, she spent a number of years in Geneva, Switzerland, as "a nanny, cook, butler, everything, you name it" in her words, before coming to the U.S. in 1997.

Through a fortunate stroke of serendipity, an airport employee told Maribel about a friend working at Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads. She applied for and landed a part-time job as a dining server. In less than two months, she was offered the dining supervisor role she still holds seven years later.



## Road to citizenship

Maribel learned about the citizenship program from a coworker, who told her to speak to Valerie Burke, Chief Philanthropy Officer at the Goodwin Living Foundation. Valerie could help Maribel through a program that would pay the \$725 citizenship application fee and provide support to guide her through the citizenship process.

She remembers Valerie asking why she wanted to become a citizen and shared the story of having been separated from her young daughter on a return trip to the U.S. from the Philippines. Born in the U.S., her daughter held a U.S. passport. Maribel's was foreign from her native country, the Philippines.

"I was so nervous, and it broke my heart," she said. "She was only nine years old, holding her passport and a little bag, crying and not understanding why the immigration officer was making her go to a different window by herself."

Granted into the Goodwin Living Citizenship Program, Maribel was overjoyed with the prospect of achieving her dream of citizenship. She studied for a year, watching YouTube videos to learn the 100 questions and answers she'd be expected to know, listening in her car, and being quizzed by her husband, daughter, colleagues, and even her bosses. Residents heard she was studying and asked if she needed help.

She filed her application for Naturalization in October 2019 and got a March 2020 citizenship interview appointment. Devastated with its cancelation due to the pandemic, she showed off her personality and perseverance during the rescheduled September meeting. When the immigration officer asked if she was ready, she replied, "I was born ready, Sir."

“

**I was just so happy, and I'm forever grateful to Goodwin Living for doing this for so many of us.**

**They've been supporting all of us financially and emotionally. They've just been tremendous helping each and every one of us.**”



From separate rooms after answering the first six questions consecutively of what was to be 10, she was told, "You pass. Welcome to the United States. You can go ahead and tell your friends that you're a citizen." Jumping for joy, she went straight to the Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads chapel where she asked someone to take her picture with the American flag. Photos were not allowed at the immigration office.

# An idea takes flight

In 2018, a Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads resident Rita Siebenaler, recognized the \$725 cost of citizenship applications fees was beyond reach for many team members. Granddaughter of four immigrants and a former social worker, she was well aware of the sacrifices immigrants made and wanted to do something about it.

She visited the Goodwin Living Foundation and HR department, asking if residents raised the money could the Foundation support the team members who were immigrants and pay their citizenship application fees.

A true grassroots effort, team members were seeing others get their citizenship and team members started helping each other study for the naturalization test, which is difficult—especially with the second or third language they're trying to learn. Residents stepped in to help, researching books that would be helpful, then organizing a tutoring program. Even through the pandemic, over Zoom and Teams, meetings in their apartments or around the community, residents made themselves available.



“One in four working in senior living are foreign born, and many do not have their citizenship. So, there’s a real opportunity out there to support them,” Valerie said. “I think from the standpoint of Goodwin Living, our mission really drives us—to support, honor and uplift the lives of older adults and those who care for them. They are the people who really live out our mission on a daily basis, and we really want to support them along the way.”

**“Our residents and team members have very close relationships, and in only two weeks residents raised \$40,000,” said Valerie Burke. “There was real excitement about the program, and probably the only challenge we had in the beginning was helping team members believe it’s really true, that we’ll pay for it, and they don’t have to pay it back.”**

From Valerie’s analysis, team members who’ve participated in the program stay at least a year over the average tenure of six years.

**More than 21% of the team members have served at Goodwin Living for more than 10 years.**



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# INNOVATIVE DINING PROGRAMS

## Ideas from SYNERGY 2023

Collaboration and innovation were in overdrive at the SDA's 2023 SYNERGY Senior Dining & Hospitality Conference in Houston as attendees from across the U.S. and Canada discussed common issues and heard new solutions.

There was a free flow of ideas born through multiple collaborative sessions including roundtable discussions led by moderators about specific topics and SDA Peer Group discussions designed to get people talking and sharing.

In a collaborative general session led by SDA Founder Harris Ader, *The Future of Dining: An exploration of current and future senior living dining experience trends*, attendees grouped by table and away from their own coworkers were asked specific discussion questions against a running time clock. Top thoughts were recorded and many then shared with the wider audience.

1

Tastings around activities, such as oyster tasting with a master class in shucking, learning how oysters are grown, a look into the science and sustainability of an oyster's life cycle, etc.

2

Guest chefs coming in from the general community to prepare menu items from their restaurants; guest chefs also providing tasting menus

**3** Show plates and photos of menu items on TVs, kiosks, electronic menu boards, and presentation table in front of dining room.

**4** Local food sourcing and on-site farmers markets featuring local farmers who are providers to keep residents connected to the greater community; residents love eating local!



**5** Superfoods Chef's Table once a month featuring different superfoods such as April's Kale, May's Nuts & Seeds, and June's Berries.



**6** Diversity & Inclusion Committee composed of residents and team members providing input into diversity in meal selections; family recipes from kitchen team members who came to the U.S. from other countries being featured, increasing the bond between chefs and residents

**7** Sous vide cooking preserves the natural flavors, textures, and nutrients of the food, delivering consistently delicious and perfectly cooked results with less waste.



**8** When getting ready to change new menu items, have a multi-course pairing dinner with wine or beer to try new menu items with the residents.



# EXPLORING GUT HEALTH

Maintaining good gut health is crucial for seniors as it plays a vital role in their overall well-being. As individuals age, the digestive system becomes more sensitive and less efficient, leading to a higher risk of digestive disorders. A healthy gut promotes optimal nutrient absorption, which is essential for seniors to obtain necessary vitamins, minerals, and energy for daily activities. Therefore, prioritizing gut health through proper nutrition and pre/probiotic-rich foods is essential for seniors to maintain vitality and enjoy a healthier, more active lifestyle.

## Why it's important to your residents and how you can help?

### Why is gut health important?

The gut is responsible for many essential functions in the body, including digestion, absorption of nutrients, and elimination of waste. The gut also plays a crucial role in the immune system, and the microbiome or the community of microorganisms that live in our gut play a crucial role in maintaining our health. It helps to regulate the immune system, and it can also help to protect us from harmful pathogens.

There is also growing evidence that our gut health is closely linked to our brain health. The gut and the brain are connected by a complex network of nerves, hormones, and neurotransmitters. This is often referred to as the gut-brain axis. Studies have shown that changes in the gut microbiome can affect brain function, mood, and behavior. This is why it is often said that our gut is our second brain.



### Probiotic Foods

- Yogurt & Kefir
- Sauerkraut
- Kimchi & Miso
- Sourdough
- Pickled Veggies
- Tempeh
- Fermented cheeses
- Apple Cider Vinegar
- Pickles & Olives
- Green Peas

### Prebiotic Foods

- Garlic
- Onions
- Leeks
- Asparagus
- Artichokes
- Bananas
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- Oats
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Daniel Spicer  
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## What to Expect

- ✓ Topic Collaboration
- ✓ Sharing Best Practices
- ✓ One-on-One Meetings
- ✓ Optional Dining Tour of Las Vegas