

***We pay a visit to chief catering officer Alis Erikstrup at Sct. Hans Hospital near Roskilde***



## **“Of course you can provide good food even when you’re catering for 350 people every day.**

Many of our patients live in Sct. Hans Hospital as their home,” says Alis Erikstrup with conviction. Over the last four years as chief catering officer, she has been responsible for the central kitchen at the large psychiatric hospital near Roskilde. Here, they not only provide all meals throughout the day for the 350 patients, they also take care of food preparation for the two staff canteens where many of the 1,300 hospital employees eat every day, as well as providing food for delegates at the many conference and course events held at the hospital throughout the year.



*A spring day at Sct. with fruit trees in blossom*

The St Hans Hospital is Denmark’s oldest psychiatric hospital. The hospital acquired its name sometime in the 17th century when the farm buildings of Copenhagen Castle were fitted out as a hospital for what was then termed “the insane, those suffering from the plague and other infectious diseases”. After many years located in dank and substandard buildings dotted around Copenhagen, the hospital was moved to Bistrup Hovedgård outside Roskilde, with the original buildings from 1816 and various houses large and small that have been added since are now spread over a large scenic spot along Roskilde Fjord.

The field of psychiatry has undergone incredible development within just the last few generations. Going back just to the period right after WWII, there were 1,100 patients crowded into Sct. Hans. Today, the aim is to provide private rooms for everyone,



*The hospital is in an incredibly beautiful setting with view of Roskilde Fjord. Here, the S/S Sagafjord is returning from a Sunday excursion*

and thanks to modern treatment methods and medicines, the number of patients has been reduced to 350, many of whom come under the heading of forensic psychiatry – often with a double diagnosis in connection with abuse.

### **Patients must be comfortable**

However, no matter how long patients are to stay at Sct. Hans hospital, the whole hospital emphasises the importance of keeping patients comfortable. As far as a



*Busy hands at work in the cold-food kitchen*

lot of the patients are concerned, the hospital is their long-term home, after all – maybe for the rest of their lives. Keeping

them comfortable has particular significance in terms of food preparation.

“Quite simply, they must have good food,” as Alis Erikstrup puts it. “There must be a good variety and it should taste decent. This takes not only work but lots of enthusiasm from all of us



*Good food to put you in a good mood who are involved in preparing food.”*

It is plain to see just by looking at the menu plan for a single week that they do manage to offer plenty of variety. For example, taking the Tuesday of our visit as an example, patients can choose from fish casserole with herbs and potatoes or chicken with Spanish rice for dinner, while the vegetarians can

also have Spanish rice – but with carrot steak. Several times each week, there is



*Delicious carrot steaks in the pan* wide selection of toppings that vary from day to day.

As well as the two main meals of the day, the central kitchen also serves breakfast with fresh rolls and accompaniments, plus a variety of little snacks that help to promote healthy living. For example, there may be light sandwiches with liver pâté and cucumber, slices of three-grain bread with pastrami and tomato or a slice of rye bread with soft cheese and pineapple. Each day there is also an inspiration menu for patients who for whatever reason have lost their appetite and who therefore need to be tempted to eat light dishes such as asparagus soup with wholemeal bread, toast and marmalade or A-38 low-fat milk with preserved peaches.



*The hospital buildings are spread over a large area*

They certainly do live well at Sct. Hans hospital, and just as vegetarian patients are given special consideration every day, consideration is also given to patients of a different ethnic background. For their benefit, all menu

also a starter, such as buttermilk soup with raisins or a dessert such as strawberry mousse or pancakes with ice cream.

Each evening, there are hot side dishes to choose from as well as a



*Here, thermal boxes are being packed for the individual wards.*

plans are clearly marked to show whether the dish or topping contains pork.

### **Wards are spread out**

Sustaining such a comprehensive, varied range of fare places huge demands on logistics and planning – especially considering that the many hospital wards are scattered over a very wide area in a myriad of buildings.



The patients should of course end up

*Large portions are required* with the exact meals and toppings they ordered – and hot food should be served hot, while everything else should be fresh and inviting. This is dealt with here at Sct. Hans by having each ward collect the patients' preferences the day before and submit the order directly to the central kitchen's computer, which then ensures that the production plans are ready when the kitchen staff arrive at work at 6.30 a.m., as well as printing out packing lists and

labels for the thermal boxes and iceboxes that need to be transported to the individual wards during the day.

It's all hands on deck from early morning in the well-equipped central kitchen, which has all the most modern



*The big Ergo Bear 100 is ready for action*

aids required to enable a staff of 35 to cope with such large-scale production within the relatively short time available.

This is particularly the case in the hot-food kitchen, where the large, gleaming pans are lined up waiting to receive the tasks of the day. Along one wall, the tall electric ovens are already pre-heated and in one corner of the room the big Ergo Bear 100 is being prepared to stir a huge portion of forcemeat for one of today's dinner options.

"We got our big Ergo Bear 100 about eighteen months ago and we're all absolutely delighted with it," Alis Erikstrup comments. "It handles all

sorts of mixing jobs without any problems and it can do everything in the way of stirring and whisking."

### **Problems with excess weight**

One particular problem for catering in a psychiatric hospital is that patients are often heavily medicated, so they gain excess weight. This is why, a couple of years ago, Sct. Hans Hospital appointed a working party headed by Alis.

As a result of the group's efforts, since the New Year, the central kitchen has switched production to low-fat fare. Initial reactions from patients have been very positive and the initiative is "bearing fruit". However, Alis adds:

"As I said before, this is home to many of the patients, so we do slip in the occasional treat, and at Christmas, Easter and Whitsun we forget all about the maximum 30% fat content!"



*An aerial view of St Hans Hospital, with Roskilde Fjord to the right. The East Hospital is in the foreground, while the West Hospital, where the central kitchen is located, is just visible at the end of the long avenue.*