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Mission Meals provide delicious food for veterans

By Terry Dickson · June 20, 2026



Tony Dulaney and Caryn Stinson in the American Legion Post 9 kitchen during the Mission Meals pilot.

Photo: Terry Dickson/The Brunswick News

A few veterans that endured C ration meals of ham and lima beans and eggs and ham are now dining a few times a week on red wine braised beef tips ratatouille over Jasmine rice and other high quality dishes.

The prepared-from-scratch Mission Meals are cooked in the kitchen at American Legion Post 9 off U.S. 17 in a pilot project to serve those who fall through the cracks of other programs, said chef Tony Dulaney, a former Marine who is on the second 90-day leg of the pilot program. He’s a member of the post’s executive board.

Post Commander Wes Carico is enthusiastic about continuing it, including giving Dulaney use of the service-minded post's kitchen.

Dulaney said he believes a good quality home-cooked meal would improve the quality of life of veterans and has provided more than 200 in 15 weeks.

"It's run on donations" with the majority coming so far from the American Legion with the proviso that the program ultimately secure outside funding, Dulaney said.

He has received some in-kind donations of ingredients, including the eggplant in the ratatouille he and girlfriend Caryn Stinson prepared Monday. The eggplant came from the backyard garden of one of the 15 veterans who get three Mission Meals each week.

Dulaney said he prepares menus for the meals based on what he has in the pantry, freezer and refrigerator and shops for the rest. The former Jarhead doesn't shop for jars. If he's cooking Italian there is no Ragu or Classico dumped in a pot to heat over the gas burner. Instead he simmers the sauce from fresh ingredients, herbs and spices. He stirs the pots or turns the sizzling meat while Stinson preps and measures ingredients.

They had three menus to cook and package in turn Monday. Menu 43 was pan-seared tilapia, ratatouille over jasmine rice with balsamic reduction and herb oil. Menu 44 was braised beef tips with red wine brown gravy over buttered egg noodles and honey glazed baby carrots. Menu 45 was to be southwestern style chicken, oven-roasted potatoes, butter sauteed mixed vegetables and rice DeGallo with tangy dipping sauce.

The goal is a protein, a starch and vegetables in each meal.

Once prepared, the Mission Meals are packaged for refrigeration with the ingredients listed and instructions on heating. They're geared toward the noon and dinner hours, but that's up to the veterans.

All but a couple of the veterans pick them up. With Dulaney and Stinson both operating businesses, they don't have time to deliver.

As they prepared the first menu, Dulaney stirred a pot of rice as Stinson carefully measured out chicken stock. Dulaney frequently checked the ratatouille cooking on a baking sheet in the oven.

Although both he and Stinson have "always been into cooking," Dulaney said, neither has worked in a restaurant in years. When he did, he was a chef in fine dining restaurants. The two want to duplicate that as much as possible in the Mission Meals from the moment they shop.

"We try to find things like you'd find in an upper shelf restaurant," he said.

Still, they try to stretch their available dollars. “I’m trying to make the best food with the least amount of money possible,” Dulaney said.

Even on a tight budget, the reviews have been good.

“I’ve had people say they’ve never been able to eat this kind of food. That’s part of the joy and the fulfillment,” he said.

The veterans he and Stinson serve often fall short of qualifying for assistance because their financial situations are in a gap. Although some are aged and sometimes feeble, they don’t meet disability requirements. As a result, they fall through bureaucratic cracks and have to fend for themselves.

Dulaney, Stinson and Carico want to not only keep the program going, but also expand it.

For that they’ll need some community and business commitments to consistently help fund the program along with some donations of food.

“I’d like to get some sponsorship in product,” he said.

There already is some donors, volunteers and other supporters, but more is needed to expand the program.

For information, to donate or assist, contact Dulaney at 912-399-3794 or by email at caferogue1775@gmail.com.