

# The Western White House'

*Since its beginning  
in 1888, San Diego's  
Hotel del Coronado  
has hosted movie stars  
and U.S. Presidents.*

*By Martha O'Connell*

When trying to find the best foodservice provider for *Hotel del Coronado*, Purchasing Director LeAn Smith ran an informal test. She called three vendors and asked whether they could put a freezer in the hotel's lot if the main one broke down. One company never called back, another called back two weeks later and said it could deliver one for \$750, and Alliant Foodservice's Pete Holohan, district sales manager for the Southern California region, called back at 8 a.m. the next morning and asked when she would like it delivered. A vendor partnership was born.

## AMONG THE ELITE

Being able to respond when the hotel is in a pinch typifies the service this prestigious five-star resort demands. Located on Coronado Island along San Diego Bay, the Hotel del Coronado is among the world's elite hotels. Political dignitaries, movie stars, and tourists are among its clientele.

Built in 1888, The Del is considered a National Historic Landmark and has hosted many U.S. Presidents, including every head of state since Lyndon Johnson. Some have dubbed it the "Western White House."

*Lowe Enterprises*, owner of The Del, plans to spend more than \$50 million in the next five years to preserve the spectacular resort situated on 26 acres. Lowe's Denver-based subsidiary, *Destination Hotels & Resorts*, manages the hotel. "We call the hotel the crown jewel in our portfolio," says Kim Schlittenhart, regional sales manager for Alliant. "When talking with other customers, we are proud to share our successful relationship with the Hotel del Coronado."

It's also a tough client that requires constant day-to-day monitoring. Smith and Holohan meet at least once a day to plan foodservice needs and it's this close working relationship that keeps The Del's 10 foodservice outlets running flawlessly.

## ON THE MENU

The Del serves up everything from gourmet shrimp to burgers. It houses nine year-round food outlets, including the *Prince of Wales Grill* that features American cuisine, the grand *Crown Room* for large events, and the casual *Ocean Terrace* that serves award-winning California bistro fare.

The Del also is home to the *Del Deli*, *Palm Court*, and *Beach Burgers* restaurants, *Fire & Ice* for ice cream and coffee, the *Ocean Terrace Lounge*, and room service. And open seasonally, there's the poolside *Splash Bar*. Alliant, with its three conveniently located warehouses in San Diego, City of Industry and Santa Ana, is the primary foodservice distributor for each of these outlets.





**Alliant's Pete Holohan (center) and Kim Schlittenhart (left) meet with The Del's LeAn Smith at least once a day to plan The Del's foodservice needs.**

When Smith began the vendor partnership with Alliant last year, she knew her food costs needed to be reduced. Since partnering with Alliant, they have. "My food costs have been impacted dramatically," Smith says. "But it's important to me to know that as you're negotiating a price, you're not sacrificing the quality. It's very important to me that my chefs are still happy, and they are." Holohan responds: "With the diversity of their foodservice needs, we need to make sure they have the specific line they want."

#### THE MISSING LINK

For a world-class resort where room prices range from \$205 to \$2,300 a night, supplying food products entails more than just dropping them off. To keep deliveries coming in smoothly and to help eliminate mistakes, Smith uses Alliant Link, Alliant's computer ordering system. With the hotel's diverse foodservice needs and seasoned clientele, it is important

that Alliant stay on top of The Del's needs.

Several requirements come into play, including daily deliveries between 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. only, and trucks that pull in quietly so guests aren't disturbed.

Another rule is that if something is missing on that day's order, it must be brought the same day. This rule keeps Holohan running.

Holohan, an NFL player for 12 years before joining Alliant, gets a taste of his former profession on days when The Del needs an unusual item pronto. He has made hurried runs up to Los Angeles to fetch items like colossal gourmet cheesecake, spinach pasta sheets and octagonal takeout containers for a beach party.

#### CRUNCH TIME

On one occasion The Del ran out of hot dog buns during a party. Holohan happened to be in the hotel, so he ran to a local retail grocery store and loaded up his Bronco with buns. The party continued serving the hot dogs on buns without delay.

Alliant's primary mission is superior foodservice, but the company has taken its relationship with The Del a step further. Alliant has helped The Del grow its business by

## At A Glance

### HOTEL DEL CORONADO

**Location:** Coronado Island, San Diego

**Built:** 1888 as a sprawling Victorian-style resort. Southern California's only oceanfront hotel

**Size:** 26 acres

**Foodservice:** 10 outlets

**Number of rooms:** 692

**Room prices:** \$205 - \$2,300 per night

bringing in convention groups from food manufacturers not in the hotel's market. With the increase in business, there was an increase in the amount of products purchased.

The partnership came full circle. "We took the partnership to the next level beyond being just the foodservice distributor in the hotel," says Tom Kertis, president of Alliant-Calif. "The partnership really transcends foodservice distribution."

"We're a customer for vendors and they become a customer for us. Then it's mutually beneficial. It's something we strive for because it makes business sense," says Lauren Ash Donoho, The Del's public relations director. Holohan agrees: "The Del is a tremendous feather in the cap for Alliant Foodservice nationally, as well as regionally. If you were to randomly ask people where they'd like to go to spend a weekend, I'd say chances of The Del coming up would be pretty great. We're really proud of our affiliation with the hotel." Only Alliant was able to meet the demands of the prestigious hotel, as was proven in the past, and will continue to be proven well into the future.

**With 10 foodservice outlets, The Del serves up everything from ice cream to steak.**

