



## Healthy Cuisine for Kids

### HealthierUS School Challenge Cooks Training

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#### Menu Planning to Meet the HUSSC Criteria

Healthier school meals meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Meals should be planned that offer a variety of green and orange vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dry beans and peas, lean meats, and low-fat or fat-free flavored or unflavored milk. Menus, recipes, and preparation techniques should reduce the amount of cholesterol, saturated fat, *trans*-fat, sodium and added sugar. We can achieve the goals of the dietary guidelines by first following basic menu planning principles, incorporating cycle menus as a cost effective, time saving management tool and using the principles of the HealthierUS School Challenge to align menus, purchasing and preparation techniques to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

#### Basic Menu Planning Principles

- ✓ Include a wide variety of foods from day to day.
- ✓ Vary the types of entrees you serve. i.e., sandwiches, casseroles, single main dish items.
- ✓ Try different shapes, colors, temperatures and textures of food and prepare in a variety of ways. Chicken strips (long and thin) and tater tots (short and round) would be a better choice than chicken strips and French-fries.
- ✓ Include raw vegetables and/or try cooking a vegetable with different sauces or seasonings.
- ✓ Include foods that are in season. Serve fresh foods when they are plentiful and at peak quality.
- ✓ Balance higher cost and lower cost foods throughout the week.
- ✓ Introduce new types of foods periodically. Include familiar foods as well as foods that may be new to students.

#### Think About Color

- ✓ Use maximum color presentation. Two colorful foods in each menu create appealing menus. Vegetables and fruits are a natural way to add color.
- ✓ Avoid using too many foods of the same color in the same meal. Use colorful foods in combination with those of little or no color.
- ✓ Use garnishes. Add a slice of radish or cucumber, tomato wedge or fruit.



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Instead of This! (all yellow)	Do This!
CHICKEN NUGGETS	CHICKEN TENDERS
FRENCH FRIES	BAKED SWEET POTATO FRIES
CORN	GARDEN SALAD
PEARS	ASSORTED FRESH FRUIT
MILK	MILK

#### Menu Planning Steps: HUSSC Tips

1. **Ideas to Create Excitement for Building Healthier Menus**
  - ✓ Introduce gardening curriculum as part of nutrition education classes.
  - ✓ When available, purchase local vegetables and fruits.
  - ✓ Encourage students and student groups to suggest new menu ideas.
  - ✓ Introduce new foods or a familiar food prepared in a different way.
  - ✓ Involve children and teens in taste testing new foods and recipes.
  - ✓ Link the cafeteria to the classroom by developing a special menu using foods from a different region or country that students are studying.
  - ✓ Involve students and/or parent organizations in developing promotional campaigns to introduce new foods or menus.
  - ✓ Develop a student, teacher and/or parent advisory group to give input into your school nutrition program.
  
2. **Choose a Variety of Entrees:**
  - ✓ Entrees are chosen first because they are the central focus of the meal. Other foods are chosen to compliment the entrée.
  - ✓ If multiple entrees are offered, offer a variety of meat/meatless options. Try serving one vegetarian entrée along with the regular meat entrée each day.
  - ✓ Vary the types of meats offered through the week.
  - ✓ Balance high-fat menu items with lower-fat ones.
  
3. **Serve More Whole-Grains**
  - ✓ Make sandwiches with whole-grain bagels, tortillas, buns, rolls, or bread.
  - ✓ Include a variety of whole-grain pasta products and brown rice in entrees and/or sides.
  - ✓ Offer whole-wheat crackers or cornbread with soups and chili.



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- ✓ Substitute whole grain flour for all-purpose or enriched flour in recipes.
4. **Vary Your Vegetables: Think COLOR!**
- ✓ Serve a variety of vegetables-fresh or frozen. Offer fresh or frozen vegetables at least 3 times per week.
  - ✓ Offer servings from each of these groups over the week: They are packed full of nutrition!
    - ✓ **Dark green:** broccoli, spinach, romaine lettuce, and other dark leafy greens
    - ✓ **Orange:** Acorn and butternut squash, carrots, sweet potatoes, and pumpkin
    - ✓ **Dry beans and peas:** black beans, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, lentils, navy beans, split peas, pinto beans, and white beans
  - ✓ Serve fresh vegetables to get more fiber such as carrots, broccoli, cauliflower and coleslaw with low-fat dressing.
  - ✓ Serve another vegetable in addition to condiments offered as vegetables. For example, don't just offer lettuce and tomato as the vegetable for the day when offered as part of a sandwich. The serving size of the condiment will most likely *not* count as a full vegetable component that day.
5. **Jazz Up Your Menus with Fruit: Offer a Variety of Fruits!**
- ✓ Offer fresh and canned fruit packed in light syrup or own juice.
  - ✓ Include a variety of color, red, orange, green, dark/blue, purple, white.
  - ✓ Offer whole fruits and cut up fruits to give students a choice.
  - ✓ Offer fresh fruits higher in fiber (in season) such as those with edible skins -- apples, pears, nectarines, peaches -- and those with edible seeds -- berries, bananas.
  - ✓ Serve fruit as a fruit salad or cobbler for a dessert treat!
6. **Use Low-Fat Milk, Cheese, and Yogurt**
- ✓ Serve low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) flavored or unflavored milk.
  - ✓ Use low-fat or skim milk, cheese, and yogurt in recipes.
  - ✓ Serve low-fat yogurt dips with vegetables and/or fruit.
  - ✓ Work with your local dairy to lower the amount of added sugar in flavored milk.

Make a note of the healthy practices already in place and consider adopting other ideas. Promote your healthy practices to your school and community using a variety of methods such as posters, bulletins, articles, newsletters, displays, theme menus, special events and presentations.



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#### Cycle Menus

A cycle menu is a carefully planned series of menus that offer different items from day to day for a certain length of time and are repeated on a regular basis. Menus can be planned for four to six weeks and repeated during the school year.

Cycle menus save time; helps to control food costs and provide the ability to offer a variety of food choices. Flexibility is the key in planning cycle menus to allow for adjustments depending on availability of USDA-donated foods, seasonal food and special occasions.

#### Benefits of Cycle Menus

- a.* Saves time on menu planning. After the initial planning, you will only need to revise menus for special occasions, and/or seasonal foods.
- b.* Controls Costs. It's easier to project the correct amount of the product to purchase, and makes it easier to buy regularly used items in bulk.
- c.* Gives cooks a chance to practice and master recipes. When recipes are standardized, staff is more efficient in producing them.
- d.* Save storage space. Keeps inventory at appropriate levels.
- e.* Reduce food waste. Easier to project how much to make.
- f.* Accurate portion size. Repetition of items helps in standardization of preparation and serving procedures.
- g.* Allows flexibility for seasonal changes, commodity food and special events.
- h.* Allows more time for training and marketing.

#### Tips to Make Cycle menus a Success!

1. Make a List! Start your cycle menu by listing 10 entrees. Add sides, fruits, veggies, whole grains and skim or 1% milk.
2. Add Excitement! With more time to market your cafeteria try new promotions, taste tests, chef to school, and/or seasonal décor,
3. Keep Your Cycle Menu FRESH! Renew your cycle menu 1 to 2 times a year. Try new recipes with kids and staff and add popular menu items to the new cycle menu!



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#### Marketing Your Menu

Communicating to parents that you are offering a variety of healthy choices is an important aspect of your foodservice department. Your menu may be the only source of information that parents have about your food service operation. Positioning your food service operation, as a leader in the community, will help shape parent's perception in making decisions about the quality of your program, which may increase participation and ultimately benefit your bottom line.

#### Marketing with descriptive terms

There is a definite difference between a menu with basic food names and a menu that uses descriptive food names. A study by the Cornell Food & Brands Lab showed that of the 140 diners surveyed, people chose the descriptive menu item 27% more than the normally labeled menu choice. In fact, diners who chose the descriptive menu item had better attitudes about the product and restaurant, including the willingness to go back. They even indicated that they would be willing to pay almost 10% more for each descriptive menu item.

#### How do descriptive names trigger our expectations?

Labels can influence our expectations in several ways. Words can create an image or ideology that is associated with the food; words can make us think of the past and fond memories. Describing the taste, smell, and other characteristics of the food can raise our expectations.

#### How do brands help to raise our expectations?

Our taste is influenced very easily, so small cues such as a brand name that you are familiar with help reassure you that the product must taste good. People usually claim to be loyal to a certain brand, but when the labels are taken off, consumers really can't tell the difference between store brands, like Sam's club or Food Club brand, and popular brands, such as Coca Cola and Pepsi.

#### Ask yourself do you market menus served as healthy? Does your published menu look like Menu 1 or Menu 2?

Menu 1	Menu 2
Chicken Nuggets	Whole Grain Chicken Nuggets
Fruit	Fresh Fruit
Green Beans	Lightly Seasoned Fresh Green Beans
Milk	Low-Fat Milk



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#### Menu Writing Examples

**Whole Grains:** For example, rather than saying Hamburger on Bun say Hamburger on Whole Grain Bun. If you don't have room for the word whole grain, then make a note of menu items served as whole grain at the bottom of the menu page and place an asterisk by the menu item. **Example: Chicken Strips\*, Cheese Pizza \***

**Fruits and Vegetables:** Make a statement if you serve a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Make a note on the bottom of the menu that says "**Variety of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Offered Daily**", "**Salad Bar Offered Daily**" etc. This way parents know that a variety of healthy options are available daily.

**Milk:** Remember to make a note that all milk options are "Low-Fat" or "Fat-Free."

#### Helpful facts about Eating Expectations

- Our expectations can make a food taste better or worse.
- Names, labels, and appearances affect whether we think a food tastes good or not.
- Beware of the *HYPE*: popular brands don't always taste better.
- Foods with descriptive names are rated as more appealing and tasty.
- Foods served on a nice plate tend to taste better to the eater.