

UNIVERSITY
OF MINNESOTA

**School of
Public Health**

**Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at
Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events**





Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events

The School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota is committed to promoting the health and well-being of populations. Our food choices, lifestyle and environment all affect our health. We know that dietary factors contribute substantially to preventable diseases and premature deaths.

- American diets are low in fruits, vegetables and whole grains and are high in refined carbohydrates, total fat and saturated fat.
- Dietary factors are associated with 4 of the 10 leading causes of death: coronary heart disease, some types of cancer, stroke and type 2 diabetes. Health conditions related to dietary factors cost society an estimated \$200 billion each year in medical expenses and lost productivity.
- There is an epidemic of obesity. Currently, about two-thirds (64%) of adults are overweight or obese and 15% of youth are overweight. Approximately 300,000 deaths a year are currently associated with obesity and being overweight.

Because of the strong relationship between diet and health, the increasing rates of obesity, and our commitment to health, the following guidelines were developed to help facilitate the selection of lower fat and calorie food and beverage options for meetings, seminars, and catered events. It is fitting for a School of Public Health to provide leadership to promote healthful eating at work-site functions. We can model our commitment to good health by creating a healthy work environment. Most importantly, by following these guidelines, you can promote your own health and reduce your risk for chronic diseases.

GUIDELINE 1

Offer healthy food choices* at breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and receptions

There are many healthy options for tasty foods and beverages. When food and beverages are provided for events, offer food choices that are lower in fat and calories. Fruits and vegetables are always a good choice. Portion sizes have increased substantially in the United States and can contribute to added calories. Try to offer smaller portions of foods, such as mini muffins or mini bagels.



** Food recommendations included in this guideline are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans issued in 2000 by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans are science-based recommendations that provide advice for healthy Americans aged 2 years and over about food choices to promote health and prevent disease.*

GUIDELINE 2

Consider not offering food at mid-morning or mid-afternoon meetings, presentations and seminars

In America, we are surrounded by food all day, every day. Many meetings and seminars provide food. With the increasing rates of overweight people and the difficulty of controlling weight in a food-saturated environment, it is important to consider whether it is necessary to provide food at meetings, presentations and seminars, especially mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

We can help create a norm that food does not have to be omnipresent and does not have to be used to try to motivate people to attend these events. While food is often provided at meetings for social reasons, we would like to increase awareness that at mid-morning and mid-afternoon meetings food is not necessary. Consider offering only beverages. If it is decided to provide food, offer only fruits, vegetables and/or other healthy foods.



Some suggestions for foods and beverages include the following:

BEVERAGES

- Ice water
- Bottled spring or sparkling water – regular or flavored with no sugar
- 100% fruit or vegetable juices – avoid large-size bottles
- Skim or 1% milk
- Coffee and flavored coffees – regular and decaffeinated
- Tea – regular and herb teas – hot or cold
- Coffee/tea creamers of skim milk, 1% milk or fat-free half & half

BREAKFAST MEETINGS

- Fresh fruit
- Yogurt – flavored non-fat or fat-free
- Bagels – 3-1/2” diameter or less; serve with low-fat cream cheese, jam or jelly
- Muffins – small or mini (5 g fat or less/muffin)
- Fruit bread (5 g fat or less/1 oz slice) – skip serving with butter or margarine



- Granola bars – low-fat (5 g fat or less/bar)
- Beverages from “Beverages” list

SNACKS

- Fresh fruit – cut up and offered with low-fat yogurt dip
- Raw vegetables – cut up and offered with fat-free or low-fat dressing or salsa dip
- Pretzels – served with sweet mustard dip
- Tortilla chips – baked and offered with salsa dip

- Popcorn – lower fat (5 g fat or less/serving)
- Whole grain crackers – (5 g fat or less/serving)
- Angel food cake with fruit topping
- Beverages from “Beverages” list

CATERED LUNCHES & DINNERS

- Select an entrée with no more than 12 to 15 g fat
- Always offer a vegetarian entrée
- Avoid fried foods or cream sauces
- Include fresh fruit
- Include at least one vegetable – fresh or cooked, with no butter or cream sauces added
- Serve salads with dressing on the side – offer at least one low-fat or fat-free dressing
- Include whole grain breads – skip the butter or margarine
- Choose lower fat/lower calorie desserts: cut up fresh fruit and offer with low-fat fruit yogurt dip, low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt, sherbet or sorbet, angel food cake with fruit topping
- Beverages from “Beverages” list



Box Lunch Sandwich Ideas (always include a vegetarian option):

- Whole grain breads or pita wraps – prepared without butter/margarine, mayonnaise/salad dressing
- Meats, poultry or marinated tofu – low-fat (3 g fat/oz)
- Cheese – 1 oz
- Toppings of lettuce, sprouts, tomatoes, onions, pickles, mustard, catsup, low-fat mayonnaise
- Pretzels or baked chips (7 g fat or less/oz)
- Fresh fruit

CATERED RECEPTIONS

- Fresh fruit – cut up and offered with low-fat yogurt dip
- Raw vegetables – cut up and offered with fat-free or low-fat dressing, salsa or tofu dip
- Raw vegetable salads marinated in fat-free or low-fat Italian dressing
- Pasta, tofu, and vegetable salads with fat-free or low-fat dressing
- Vegetable spring rolls – fresh, not fried
- Vegetable sushi rolls
- Cheese – cut into 3/4” squares or smaller
- Whole grain crackers – 5 g fat or less/serving
- Salmon (poached or steamed, no breading)
- Lean beef or turkey – 1 oz slices
- Cake – cut into small 2” squares
- Angel food cake slices with fruit topping
- Beverages from “Beverages” list

TIPS FOR SELECTING FOODS LOWER IN FAT & CALORIES

- Ask caterer to use lower fat or fat-free preparation methods, to serve added fats like dressings or condiments on the side and to provide the number of calories and fat grams in entrées if available
- Select lower fat entrées – approximately 12 to 15 g fat or less
- Select items that are broiled, baked, grilled or steamed rather than fried or sautéed
- Choose entrées in tomato-based sauces rather than cream, butter or cheese sauces
- Include fresh fruit
- Include at least one vegetable – fresh or cooked, with no butter or cream sauces added
- Include whole grain breads – skip the butter or margarine
- Choose lower fat and calorie desserts: cut up fresh fruit and offer with low-fat fruit yogurt dip, low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt, sherbet or sorbet, angel food cake with fruit topping



COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS

CHOOSE . . .

For Beverages

bottled water- (plain spring water or flavored carbonated with no sugar), coffees or tea, 100% fruit or vegetable juices

low-fat or skim milk

For Breakfasts

fresh fruits, dried fruits, unsweetened juices

low-fat yogurt

small bagels – 3-1/2" or smaller

small or mini muffins – 2-1/2" or smaller

small bagels or muffins, low-fat granola bars

toppings of light margarine, low-fat cream cheese, jam or jelly

unsweetened cereals

whole grain waffles and French toast

lean ham or Canadian bacon, vegetarian sausage or bacon substitutes

INSTEAD OF . . .

soda pop or fruit flavored drinks

whole or 2% milk

sweetened canned fruits and juices

regular yogurt

regular bagels

regular or large muffins

regular or large bagels or muffins, croissants, doughnuts, sweet rolls, pastries

regular butter, cream cheese, peanut butter

sweetened cereals

waffles or French toast made from white bread

bacon or sausage

COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS

CHOOSE . . .

For Lunches or Dinners

salads with dressings on the side

low-fat or fat-free salad dressings

soups made with vegetable puree or skim milk

pasta salads with low-fat dressing

sandwiches on whole grain breads

lean meats, poultry, fish, tofu (3 g fat/oz)

baked potatoes with low-fat or vegetable toppings

steamed vegetables

whole grain bread or rolls

margarine without trans-fatty acids

lower fat and calories desserts: fresh fruit, low-fat ice cream, low-fat frozen yogurt, sherbet, sorbet, angel food cake with fruit topping

INSTEAD OF . . .

salads with added dressing

regular salad dressings

soups made with cream or half and half

pasta salads made with mayonnaise or cream dressing

sandwiches on croissants or white bread

high-fat and fried meats, bacon, poultry with skin, cold cuts, oil-packed fish

baked potatoes with butter, sour cream, and bacon bits

cooked vegetables in cream sauce or butter

croissants or white rolls

butter

higher fat and calories desserts: ice cream, cheese cake, pies, cream puffs, large slices of cake

COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS

CHOOSE . . .

For Receptions

fresh vegetables, cut up and served with low-fat dressing, salsa or tofu dip

cut up fresh fruits

grilled or broiled chicken brochettes without skin

miniature meatballs made with lean meat

broiled or poached seafood: shrimp, salmon, scallops, oysters, clams

mushroom caps with low-fat cheese stuffing

miniature pizzas made with English muffins, tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, and mushrooms

vegetable spring rolls – fresh, not fried

small cubes of cheese (3/4" squares or smaller)

whole grain crackers (5 g fat or less/serving)

low-fat, "lite" popcorn (5 g fat or less/serving)

INSTEAD OF . . .

tempura or deep fat fried vegetables

fruit tarts, pie, cobbler

fried chicken, chicken with skin

large meatballs made of high-fat meat, meatballs served in gravy or high-fat sauces

deep fat fried seafood, seafood in high-fat sauces

mushrooms with high-fat cheese stuffing or mushrooms marinated in oil

pizza with pepperoni, Italian sausage or other high-fat meats

egg rolls

slices of cheese

regular crackers

regular popcorn

COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS

CHOOSE . . .

For Receptions (continued)

baked or low-fat chips, pretzels

dips made of salsa, low-fat cottage cheese, hummus or low-fat salad dressings

small slices of cake (2" square)

For Snacks

cut up fresh fruits and/or vegetables

whole grain crackers (5 g fat or less/serving)

low-fat, "lite" popcorn (5 g fat or less/serving)

baked or low-fat chips, pretzels

small slices of cake (2" square)

INSTEAD OF . . .

regular chips

dips made from regular mayonnaise, sour cream, cream cheese or cheese sauce

large slices of cake

chips or cookies

regular crackers

regular popcorn or buttered popcorn

regular chips

large slices of cake



CALORIES & FAT OF POPULAR FOOD & BEVERAGE ITEMS

(Note: all amounts given for calories and grams of fat are approximate)

Beverages		Calories	Grams of Fat
Coffee Creamer (1 tablespoon)	fat-free–skim milk	6	0
	half & half	20	1.7
Milk (8 oz carton)	fat-free–skim milk	86	trace
	low-fat–1% milk	102	2.5
	reduced fat–2% milk	121	5
	whole milk	150	8
Regular Soda Pop	12 oz can	150	42 g sugar
	20 oz bottle	250	70 g sugar*
			*This is more than 17 tsp sugar!

Breakfasts

Total recommended calories for breakfast = 300–400 calories (based on 2000 calories/day)

Bagels	3-1/2"	180	1
	4-1/2"	330*	3
			*This is the equivalent of 4 slices of bread!
Cream Cheese (2 tablespoons)	low-fat	60	2.5
	regular	100	10
Blueberry Muffins	small: 2-1/2"	160	4
	large: 3-1/2"	250	9
Croissant	regular size	230	12
Apple Danish	regular size	260	13
Glazed Doughnut	regular size	240	14

CALORIES & FAT OF POPULAR FOOD & BEVERAGE ITEMS

(Note: all amounts given for calories and grams of fat are approximate)

Snacks		Calories	Grams of Fat
Chips (1 oz, about 12 chips)	baked or low-fat potato	130	5
	regular potato	150	10
	baked or low-fat tortilla	125	4
	regular tortilla	140	7
	Pretzels (1 oz, about 2 pretzels)	regular size	110
Cookies (chocolate chip)	small: 2-1/2"	50	2
	large: 4"	280	14
Cake (3" x 2-1/4" piece)	angel	130	trace
	white	190	5
	chocolate	200	8
	carrot	240	11



CALORIES & FAT OF POPULAR FOOD & BEVERAGE ITEMS

(Note: all amounts given for calories and grams of fat are approximate)

Lunches & Dinners

Total recommended calories for lunch = 600–700 calories; 25 g fat or less (based on 2000 calories/day)

Total recommended calories for dinner = 700–800 calories; 30 g fat or less (based on 2000 calories/day)

		Calories	Grams of Fat
Sauces (1/2 cup)	marinara (tomato-based)	50	2
	alfredo (cream-based)	200	15
Salad Dressings (2 tablespoons)	fat-free	50	0
	regular	150	16
Chips (1 oz, about 12 chips)	baked or low-fat regular	130	5
	baked or low-fat tortilla	150	10
	regular tortilla	125	5
	regular tortilla	140	7
Pretzels (1 oz, about 12 pretzels)	regular size	110	1
Cheesecake (2" wedge)	bakery style	460	30*
			*This is more than 7 tsp of fat!
Ice Cream (1/2 cup)	regular vanilla	140	7

CALORIES & FAT OF POPULAR FOOD & BEVERAGE ITEMS

(Note: all amounts given for calories and grams of fat are approximate)

		Calories	Grams of Fat
Receptions Salad Dressings (2 tablespoons)	fat-free	50	0
	regular	150	16
Pasta Salads (2 tablespoons)	low-fat Italian dressing	190	2
	regular creamy dressing	350	22
Egg Rolls (1 3-1/2 oz)	chicken	215	10
Spring Rolls (1 3-1/2 oz)	vegetable, fresh—not fried	80	3
Buffalo Wings (1 mini chicken wing)	barbequed	85	6
Chicken Drumsticks (1 mini drumstick)	barbequed	85	6
Snack Crackers (approx 8 crackers)	reduced fat whole grain	120	3
	regular butter- flavored	130	7
Cake (3" x 2-1/4" piece)	angel	130	trace
	white	190	5
	chocolate	200	8
	carrot	240	11



Message from Mary Story, PhD, RD
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Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events was developed by Public Health Nutrition faculty, staff and students in the School of Public Health. As one of the top public health schools in the country, we believe it is our responsibility to take the lead in educating the public about healthy behaviors. Dietary choices are among the fundamental components of healthy living.

We offer these guidelines to any organization interested in promoting a healthy work environment. The guidelines come at a time when the nation is beginning to realize the impact of the obesity epidemic. Through the choices we make, we can all play a role in putting an end to the epidemic and thereby live longer, healthier lives.

Mary Story

Developed by

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