

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

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 contribute added calories. 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 2005 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.*

Important: Whenever possible, try to serve locally produced foods. Local foods are tastier and fresher, support farmers and the local economy, and help protect the environment.

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, there is a need 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.

*Adapted from: University of Minnesota School of Public Health

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

- Breakfast – aim for 600 calories or less
- Fresh fruit
- Yogurt – flavored non-fat/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
- Pretzels – served with sweet mus-tard 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)

CATERED LUNCHESES & DINNERS

- Aim for a lunch or dinner of 600 total calories or less
- Select an entrée with no more than 12 to 15 g fat and 450 calories or less
- 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, toma-toes, onions, pickles, mustard, cat-sup, low-fat mayonnaise
- Pretzels or baked chips (5 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 AND 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 and calorie entrées – approximately 12 to 15 g fat or less and 450 calories 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 des-serts: 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 . . .

Instead of. . .

For Beverages

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

soda pop or fruit flavored drinks

low-fat or skim milk

whole or 2% milk

For Breakfasts

fresh fruits, dried fruits, unsweetened juices

sweetened canned fruits and juices

low-fat yogurt

regular yogurt

small bagels – 3-1/2” or smaller

regular bagels

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

regular or large muffins

small bagels or muffins, low-fat granola bars

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

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

regular butter, cream cheese, peanut butter

unsweetened whole grain cereals

sweetened cereals

whole grain waffles and French toast

waffles or French toast made from white bread

lean ham or Canadian bacon, vegetarian sausage or bacon substitutes

bacon or sausage

COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS

CHOOSE . . .

Instead of. . .

For Lunches or Dinners

salads with dressings on the side

salads with added dressing

low-fat or fat-free salad dressings

regular salad dressings

soups made with vegetable puree or skim milk

soups made with cream or half and half

pasta salads with low-fat dressing

pasta salads made with mayonnaise or cream dressing

sandwiches on whole grain breads

sandwiches on croissants or white bread

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

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

baked potatoes with low-fat or vegetable toppings

baked potatoes with butter, sour cream, and bacon bits

steamed vegetables

cooked vegetables in cream sauce or butter

whole grain bread or rolls

croissants or white rolls

margarine without trans-fats

butter

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

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

For Snacks

cut up fresh fruits and/or vegetables

chips or cookies

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

regular crackers

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

regular popcorn or buttered popcorn

baked or low-fat chips, pretzels

regular chips

Small slices of cake (2" square)

large slices of cake

COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS

CHOOSE . . .

Instead of. . .

For Receptions

fresh vegetables, cut up and served with low-fat dressing, salsa or tofu dip	tempura or deep fat fried vegetables
cut up fresh fruits	fruit tarts, pie, cobbler
grilled or broiled chicken brochettes without skin	fried chicken, chicken with skin
miniature meatballs made with lean meat	large meatballs made of high-fat meat, meatballs served in gravy or high-fat sauces
broiled or poached seafood: shrimp, salmon, scallops, oysters, clams	deep fat fried seafood, seafood in high-fat sauces
mushroom caps with low-fat cheese stuffing	mushrooms with high-fat cheese stuffing or mushrooms marinated in oil
miniature pizzas made with English muffins, tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, and mushrooms	pizza with pepperoni, Italian sausage or other high-fat meats
vegetable spring rolls – fresh, not fried	egg rolls
small cubes of cheese (3/4” squares or smaller)	slices of cheese
whole grain crackers (5 g fat or less/serving)	regular crackers
low-fat, “lite” popcorn (5 g fat or less/serving)	regular popcorn
baked or low-fat chips, pretzels	regular chips
dips made of salsa, low-fat cottage cheese, hummus or low-fat salad dressings	dips made from regular mayonnaise, sour cream, cream cheese or cheese sauce
small slices of cake (2” square)	large slices of cake