

Special Events Healthy Food Considerations

Food is everywhere you go. Show your community that you care about their health by providing nutritious foods and beverages whenever and wherever they are offered.

Special events and occasions often focus on eating. This is why it's important to make healthy food choices at your special event. Healthy food choices are those that are lower in sodium, fat and sugar, and higher in fibre.

Even movie nights, fun days, sporting events and holiday celebrations can be opportunities to learn how great healthy food can taste.

Entrees

- Meatless dishes such as pasta with tomato sauce, vegetarian lasagna, stir-fried vegetables over brown rice, rice and lentil casserole
- Pizza with vegetable or fruit toppings and lower-fat meat toppings such as chicken or ham
- Meat, fish or poultry dishes (3-4 oz servings or less that are broiled, baked, roasted, grilled or steamed)
- Broth based soups

Beverages

- Water
- 100% vegetable or fruit juice
- 2%, 1%, skim milk (white or chocolate), or fortified soy beverages
- Yogurt beverages

Breakfast

- Whole grain breads/toast, pitas, bagels (3½" diameter or less)
- Hot or cold whole grain cereal
- Whole grain crackers with lower-fat cheese (20% M.F. or less)
- Lower-fat yogurt (2% M.F. or less)
- Poached or boiled eggs, lean ham or baked beans

If jams, jellies, syrups, honey samples are offered...serve on whole grain crackers or bread.

Fruit, Vegetables and Salads (Ontario grown if possible)

- Fresh vegetables or fruit (whole or sliced)
- Fruit salad or kebabs
- Dark green salads, such as mixed greens, romaine lettuce or spinach
- Vegetable salads, such as tomato & cucumber or green bean salad
- Whole wheat pasta or couscous, brown rice, bean or lentil salad in non-creamy dressings
- Fruit or vegetable tray
- Lower-fat salad dressings served on the side
- Lower-fat dips offered on the side (e.g. hummus, plain yogurt, bean dip or light sour cream)
- Baked potatoes with low fat vegetable toppings

Sandwiches

- Whole grain breads, bagels, pita, tortillas, rolls or roti
- Lean meats such as roasted beef, turkey, chicken, ham as well as salmon or tuna
- Vegetarian fillings such as tofu, falafel, hummus, peanut or other nut butters, eggs, grilled or roasted vegetables
- Lower fat cheese (20% MF or less)
- Lots of vegetable toppings including shredded lettuce, mixed greens, chopped tomatoes, onions, peppers, cucumbers, grilled or roasted veggies, chopped apple or pear

✓ One spread per bread!
Choose only one spread or dip...light cream cheese, peanut butter, hummus, roasted vegetable dip OR non-hydrogenated margarine.

Grilled Items

- Non-breaded poultry burgers (e.g. grilled chicken breast)
- Vegetarian burgers
- Lean or extra lean beef burgers
- Kebabs – vegetables, lean meats or poultry
- Grilled vegetables (e.g. corn on the cob, eggplant, peppers)
- Grilled fruit (e.g. pineapple, peaches)
- Whole grain buns
- Lots of vegetable toppings including shredded lettuce, mixed greens, chopped tomatoes, onions, peppers, cucumbers, grilled or roasted veggies
- Lower-fat and sodium condiments such as mayonnaise, salsa, ketchup, gravy, etc.

✓ A meal should include at least 3 of the 4 food groups from Canada's Food Guide. A snack should include at least 2 food groups.

Desserts

- Fresh fruit, fruit salads or kebabs with lower fat yogurt dip
- Lower-fat yogurt (2% M.F. or less) or yogurt parfait (with low-fat yogurt, whole grain cereal and berries)
- Trans-fat free whole grain granola bars, oatmeal cookies, etc.

Event Planning

Encourage a variety of vendors including those that offer healthier meals and snacks

- Allow fewer vendors that offer ONLY unhealthy food choices i.e. mini donuts, funnel cakes, cotton candy, etc.
- Ensure vendors offer small portion sizes for unhealthy foods such as French fries, slushie drinks and cotton candy, etc.
- Ensure vendors that use oil for their products use only trans-fat free vegetable oil.
- Consider creating guidelines for healthy food sponsors and donations for your events – be specific about what foods and beverages you would like your sponsors to donate.