

Chapter 6:

Menu Planning and Sample Menus



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MENU PLANNING AND SAMPLE MENUS

Mealtimes are often the highlight of the day for older and disabled adults. For some participants, the food they eat at the CACFP adult day care program will be the tastiest and healthiest food they will have all day.

With thoughtful and sound meal planning, centers can:

- **Ensure that participants receive the nutrition they need to maintain or improve their current health status**
- **Show respect to participants by considering their cultural and ethnic food preferences and special dietary needs**
- **Ensure that the foods served meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements**

This chapter will review the following:

- Cultural/ethnic and regional food preferences
- Menu planning
- Cycle menu development
- Menu evaluation
- Menus for special diets
- Sample menus

The information provided in this chapter will address the menu-planning needs of centers that produce their meals in-house and those that purchase meals from an outside vendor.

Cultural/Ethnic and Regional Food Preferences

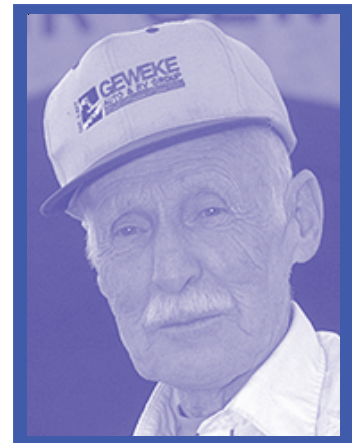
Food preferences are based on:

- Cultural background
- Religious beliefs
- Family traditions

The CACFP adult day care participant brings traditional patterns of eating to the center. Food service employees should understand and respect the diverse eating patterns of all participants.

Food preferences are based on:

- **Cultural background**
- **Religious beliefs**
- **Family traditions**



Each center should strive to offer a menu that meets the nutritional and cultural preferences of the participants being served.

- Survey participants, their families, and their caregivers to learn the types of foods and methods of food preparation they prefer.
- Spend some time talking with participants about their food preferences during the menu planning process.
- Use participant food preference information for planning or revising menus and for special occasion meals.

Menu Planning

Menu planning is an essential part of every successful CACFP adult day care program.

- The nutritional value of the meals and compliance with Federal program requirements depend on careful menu planning.
- The menu determines what foods are purchased, how foods are prepared, staff qualifications for food preparation, and food preparation equipment.

All CACFP adult day care programs are required to have planned menus.

A registered dietitian will need to write menus for participants with special nutrition needs.



The easiest menu format to use is a cycle menu. A cycle menu is one which is planned for a specified period of time and then repeated.

- Special occasions and seasonal foods are added to the menus at the beginning of the cycle.
- The State Agency or other funding source may require a specific number of weeks for the cycle menu.
- The basic cycle menu is designed for participants without special nutrition needs.
- A registered dietitian will need to write menus for participants with special nutrition needs, such as those requiring therapeutic diets, consistency-modified diets, or combination diets.

Cycle Menu Development

Planning menus may sound easy, but it takes a lot of time and effort. The menu served to participants without special nutrition needs is called the “regular diet.” There are seven basic steps to menu planning for the regular diet served to CACFP adult day care participants.

Step 1: Allow a block of time to work on the menu and gather together all the recipes and resources needed.

- Add new food items and new recipes, if possible. However, test all new recipes prior to placing them on the menu.
- Ask key food service employees to suggest new menu items.
- Try to select foods that can be easily modified for special diets.
- Have a complete copy of the minimum meal components available to consult to be sure the menus are in compliance with the CACFP requirements under the Federal regulations and with State requirements.

Step 2: Determine the length of the cycle.

- The length of the cycle may be determined by your State Agency or funding source.
- Keep in mind that adults usually eat a wider variety of foods than children and a longer cycle is preferred by adults.

Step 3: Identify the main dish.

- The main dish is usually the most expensive item and becomes the base for the menu.
- Remember that the required CACFP meal components are different for breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks.
- Be sure that all meal components are listed on the menu in the appropriate portions.

Step 4: Visualize what each meal will look and taste like to the participant.

Color, flavor, and food texture make food appealing, so ask yourself the following about the menu items:

- Are the colors appealing?
- Do the flavors blend?
- Is there a variety of soft and crisp foods?

Step 5: Think about variety from day-to-day and week-to-week.

- Popular menu items can be served more than once during the cycle. However, think of ways to serve favorite foods in different forms, shapes, textures, and temperatures (hot vs. cold).
- Include a variety of different food preparation methods such as baking, broiling, and steaming.

Step 6: Think about the participants’ ethnic and cultural preferences.

Honoring the participants’ ethnic and cultural food preferences is essential for food acceptance.

Step 7: Calculate the cost of the menu.

The cost of the menu includes:

- The cost of the food
- The cost of the labor
- The cost of the utilities used to prepare the food

Sample menu writing worksheets are provided in appendix 6.

Menus may include foods made from “scratch” or commercially prepared main or side dishes.

Records must be kept of commercially prepared or processed foods to document the contribution of each menu item to the CACFP meal pattern.

One of the following is required to document the contribution of commercially prepared or processed foods to the CACFP meal pattern:

- Child Nutrition (CN) label
 - The CN label on a food product shows how the product contributes toward food-based meal pattern requirements.
 - See appendix 7 for more information about CN labeling and CN label application procedures.
- A statement from the manufacturer documenting the product, food components, and amounts that are credited to that product
 - Manufacturers must use the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (USDA/FNS, 2001) to determine the yield of food components.
 - Check with your State Agency or funding authority source for specific information that needs to be provided by the manufacturer.

Menus may include foods made from “scratch” or commercially prepared main or side dishes.



Menu Evaluation

It is important to evaluate a menu before it is used.

- Set up a menu committee that will be responsible for evaluating the menu.
- Ask key employees, a registered dietitian, participants, and caregivers to serve on this menu committee.
- Schedule a time for the committee to meet and evaluate the menu.
- Have the committee use the menu evaluation checklist in appendix 8.

The menu committee needs to use the following criteria in evaluating the menu.

1. **Nutritional Adequacy:** Does the menu follow the minimum food components for the CACFP adult meal pattern? Does the menu provide the nutrients older adults need? (Note: Refer to appendix 4 for facts on major nutrients and food sources to help plan nutritious menus. A registered dietitian can complete a nutrient analysis of the menu. To do this, the dietitian will need food labels, recipes, production records, etc.)
2. **Food Preferences:** Do the menu items reflect the participants' ethnic, cultural, and regional food preferences?
3. **Personnel:** Are employee skills adequate to prepare and serve the menu?
4. **Equipment:** Is the food service equipment available to prepare the menu? Is there an overload on any piece of equipment that would interfere with quality preparation and service?
5. **Flavor:** Is there a combination of mild and strong flavored foods?
6. **Consistency:** Is there a combination of soft and crisp food items?
7. **Texture:** Is there a variety of ground and whole cuts of meat? Is there variation in texture?
8. **Color:** Are contrasting color combinations used? Will food look attractive and appetizing when served together? (Note: Color is also related to nutrient content.)
9. **Variety:** Is the same food served more than once during the meal or during the day? Does the same food item appear on the cycle menu from the previous day or the next day? Is the end of the cycle menu different from the beginning of the cycle?

After the menu committee has evaluated the menus, use the new ideas to revise them.

Once the menus are revised, they need to be evaluated for cost.

- Remember that the main dish is usually the most expensive item on the menu.
- Try to include a balance of low-priced and high-priced items to keep food costs in line with the budget.

Menus for Special Diets

Special diets are ordered by a physician or other authorized medical professional, just as prescription medicine is. The diet is part of the medical management of the participant and must be followed as closely as possible.

All special diets need to be written and approved by a registered dietitian.

There are three ways the regular diet menu can be modified to meet special nutrition needs:

- Therapeutic diets (such as low fat, low sodium, or calorie-modified)
- Consistency-modified diets (change in food texture)
- Combination diets
 - More than one therapeutic diet (such as a low fat, low sodium diet)
 - Therapeutic diet with consistency-modified foods (such as a calorie-modified, pureed diet)

Therapeutic diets are ordered by a physician or other authorized medical authority. They are designed to assist in the management of disease or disorders by reducing or increasing specific foods, ingredients, or nutrients (for example, fat or sodium).

The ADA (1998, 2000) recommends a “liberal approach” to writing menus for therapeutic diets for older adults. A “liberal approach” means that only a few foods are restricted on therapeutic diets. With the approval of the physician or registered dietitian, occasional “treats” may be served to improve participant satisfaction.

All therapeutic diets must follow the CACFP meal pattern except for specific medical conditions.

According to CACFP guidelines found in 7 CFR, part 226.20h, “Substitutions because of medical needs shall be made only when supported by a statement from a recognized medical authority which includes recommended alternate foods.” Documentation of the medical need and a list of alternate foods must be kept on file and in the individual plan of care.

Some participants may require a therapeutic diet in which a specific food, ingredient, or nutrient has been reduced or increased.



Consistency-modified diets are those in which the food texture has been changed to make chewing easier or to promote safe swallowing. Changes in consistency can be based on either the regular diet or a therapeutic diet. All diet orders must specify a regular or therapeutic diet when consistency changes are requested.

Consistency-modified diets may include thickened beverages. The purpose of the changes in the texture of beverages is to promote safe swallowing and prevent food or fluids from getting into the lungs. The changes in food consistency are usually recommended by a swallowing therapist, physician, or registered dietitian. A registered dietitian will need to review the diets ordered and write consistency-modified diets appropriate for the participants.

Some participants will have orders for both therapeutic diets and consistency-modified diets. These are **combination diets**. A registered dietitian can assist centers in planning menus for participants on combination diets.

For participants' good health, centers must be sure to prepare and serve the diets as prescribed by the physician, swallowing therapist, or registered dietitian.

Sample Menus

The following pages contain sample menus that meet the CACFP adult meal pattern requirements.

Sample Menu: Breakfast

Food Components	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Milk (fluid)	1 cup¹ milk	1 cup¹ milk	1 cup¹ milk	1 cup¹ milk	1 cup¹ milk
Vegetables, Fruit, or Juice²	½ cup fruit juice	½ cup pears	½ cup fruit juice	½ cup peaches	½ cup fruit juice
Grains/Breads³	2 oz biscuit	2 slices toast	1½ cups cold cereal	1 cup oatmeal	2 oz English muffin

Sample Menu: Supplemental Food (Snack)

Food Components (Select Two Required Components)	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Milk (fluid)	1 cup¹ milk		1 cup¹ milk		
Vegetables, Fruit, or Juice²		½ cup fruit juice		½ cup fruit juice	½ cup berries
Grains/Breads³	2 oz blueberry muffin	1 oz animal crackers	1 oz cinnamon toast	1 oz graham crackers	
Meat⁴ or Meat Alternate^{5,6}					4 oz yogurt

¹A cup means a standard measuring cup.

²Fruit or vegetable juice must be full strength.

³Breads and grains shall be whole grain or enriched meal or flour; cereal shall be whole grain or enriched or fortified.

⁴This must be the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.

⁵Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch requirement.

⁶Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

Sample Menu: Lunch (Midday)

Food Components	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Milk (fluid)	1 cup ¹ milk	1 cup ¹ milk	1 cup ¹ milk	1 cup ¹ milk	1 cup ¹ milk
Vegetables, Fruit, or Juice ²	½ cup baked potato wedges, ½ cup seedless grapes	½ cup turnip greens, ½ cup mashed potatoes	½ cup cinnamon apples, ½ cup broccoli	½ cup green beans, ½ cup carrots	¾ cup sweet potatoes, ¼ cup kiwi fruit
Grains/Breads ³	2 oz hamburger bun	2.2 oz cornbread	1 oz biscuit, ½ cup Mexican rice	2 oz roll	2 oz whole wheat roll
Meat ⁴ or Meat Alternate ^{5,6}	2 oz lean beef patty	2 oz grilled chicken	2 oz ham	2 oz turkey	2 oz fish filet

¹A cup means a standard measuring cup.

²Fruit or vegetable juice must be full strength.

³Breads and grains shall be whole grain or enriched meal or flour; cereal shall be whole grain or enriched or fortified.

⁴This must be the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.

⁵Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch requirement.

⁶Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

Sample Menu: Supper (Evening Meal)

Food Components	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Vegetables, Fruit, or Juice²	½ cup¹ tossed salad with dressing, ½ cup broccoli	½ cup peaches and blueberries, ½ cup peas with pearl onions	¾ cup baked potato, ¼ cup cole slaw	½ cup zucchini squash, ½ cup fresh strawberries	½ cup sliced tomatoes, ½ cup potato salad
Grains/Breads³	1 oz Italian bread, ½ cup spaghetti	2 slices whole wheat bread	2 oz biscuit	2 oz roll	2 slices whole wheat bread
Meat⁴ or Meat Alternate^{5,6}	2 oz meat balls in tomato sauce	3 oz tuna salad	2 oz BBQ chicken	2 oz stewed beef	3 oz egg salad
Beverage⁷	1 cup¹ milk or juice or water	1 cup¹ milk or juice or water	1 cup¹ milk or juice or water	1 cup¹ milk or juice or water	1 cup¹ milk or juice or water

¹A cup means a standard measuring cup.

²Fruit or vegetable juice must be full strength.

³Breads and grains shall be whole grain or enriched meal or flour; cereal shall be whole grain or enriched or fortified.

⁴This must be the edible portion of cooked lean meat or poultry or fish.

⁵Nuts and seeds may meet only one-half of the total meat/meat alternate serving and must be combined with another meat/meat alternate to fulfill the lunch requirement.

⁶Yogurt may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened.

⁷A beverage of choice may be served at supper.