

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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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, saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium.
- 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, two-thirds of U.S. adults and one-third of youth are either obese or overweight. Obesity increases the risk for many serious illnesses including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and certain types of cancer.

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 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.



*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 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 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, tomatoes, onions, pickles, mustard, catsup, 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 & 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 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**

<b>CHOOSE . . .</b> <b>For Beverages</b>	<b>INSTEAD OF . . .</b>
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
<b>For Breakfasts</b> 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**

<b>CHOOSE . . .</b> <b>For Lunches or Dinners</b>	<b>INSTEAD OF . . .</b>
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

**COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS**

<b>CHOOSE . . .</b> <b>For Receptions</b>	<b>INSTEAD OF . . .</b>
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

**COMPARISONS OF FOOD & BEVERAGE OPTIONS**

<b>CHOOSE . . .</b> <b>For Receptions (continued)</b>	<b>INSTEAD OF . . .</b>
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
<b>For Snacks</b> 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



## CALORIES & FAT OF POPULAR FOOD & BEVERAGE ITEMS

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

Beverages	Calories	Grams of Fat
<b>Coffee Creamer</b> (1 tablespoon)	6 20	0 1.7
<b>Milk</b> (8 oz carton)	fat-free-skim milk low-fat-1% milk reduced fat-2% milk whole milk	86 102 121 150
		trace 2.5 5 8
<b>Regular Soda Pop</b>	12 oz can 20 oz bottle	42 g sugar 70 g sugar*

\*This is more than 17 tsp sugar!

## Breakfasts

Total recommended calories for breakfast = 600 calories (based on 2000 calories/day)

<b>Bagels</b>	3-1/2" 4-1/2"	180 330*	1 3
			*This is the equivalent of 4 slices of bread!
<b>Cream Cheese</b> (2 tablespoons)	low-fat regular	60 100	2.5 10
<b>Blueberry Muffins</b>	small: 2-1/2" large: 3-1/2"	160 250	4 9
<b>Croissant</b>	regular size	230	12
<b>Apple Danish</b>	regular size	260	13
<b>Glazed Doughnut</b>	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
<b>Chips</b> (1 oz, about 12 chips)	baked or low-fat potato regular potato baked or low-fat tortilla regular tortilla	130 150 125 140
<b>Pretzels</b> (1 oz, about 2 pretzels)	regular size	110 1
<b>Cookies</b> (chocolate chip)	small: 2-1/2" large: 4"	50 280
<b>Cake</b> (3" x 2-1/4" piece)	angel white chocolate carrot	130 190 200 240
		trace 5 8 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 calories; 25 g fat or less  
 Total recommended calories for dinner = 600 calories; 25g fat or less  
 This is based on 2000 calories/day (600 calories each for breakfast, lunch and dinner,  
 and 200 calories for snacks)

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

## CALORIES & FAT OF POPULAR FOOD & BEVERAGE ITEMS

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

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



**Message from Mary Story, PhD, RD  
Professor, University of Minnesota School of Public Health**

*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 in the midst of an 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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2008**

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