



School Cook Training

Participant Manual

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Intended Use and Purpose

This participant manual serves as a comprehensive guide designed to assist individuals in acquiring new skills and knowledge in a structured and accessible manner. Its purpose is to provide clear and step-by-step instructions, ensuring that learners can easily understand and apply the information. Through organized content and practical examples, this manual aims to empower school cooks by offering a resource that supports their learning journey, helping them gain proficiency and confidence in their everyday work.

Feel free to write in and use your manual as much as possible. Your responses will not be evaluated and are for you to take back to work with you to use as necessary.

Written by Jordan Sokmenoglu, January 2024

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Menu Planning: Part 1

Factors to consider when menu planning include:

- Equipment
- Cost
- Personnel Available
- Palatability and Esthetics
- Variety
- Nutrition

In schools, planning the menu involves considering different things to make sure students get good and tasty meals. First, the tools in the kitchen, like stoves and fridges, decide what kinds of food can be made. Money matters too, because schools have a budget, so planners need to find affordable and healthy ingredients. The people who work in the kitchen, like cooks and helpers, affect how many types of meals can be prepared. Making the food look good and taste good is also important because students are more likely to enjoy it. Having many different food options is good too, so students can enjoy a variety of foods. Lastly, making sure the meals are nutritionally balanced is crucial, as students learn better when fueled with healthy food. All these things together help plan menus that are both good for students and practical for the school.

Reflect:

1. Which factors do you consider when planning menus?

2. Which of the factors mentioned in this session do you need to incorporate in your future menus?

3. Finally, are there any areas discussed in this session that you are not sure about or need more information on?

WEEK ONE	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast					
Morning Snack					
Lunch					
Afternoon Snack					

1. List the equipment needed for your menu:

2. Recipe sources:

WEEK TWO	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast					
Morning Snack					
Lunch					
Afternoon Snack					

1. List the equipment needed for your menu:

2. Recipe sources:

Nutrition and Healthy Planning

School food is essential for childhood nutrition because it plays a big role in making sure kids get the right nutrients they need to grow, learn, and stay healthy. The meals provided at school are designed to include a mix of foods that give students energy, help their brains work well, and support their overall health. For many kids, school meals might be a significant part of their daily nutrition, so it's important that these meals offer a good balance of proteins, carbohydrates, fruits, and vegetables. School food also helps ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have access to healthy and nutritious meals, promoting equal opportunities for growth and well-being.

Provide three examples for each category of food:

Food	Serve most often	Serve sometimes	Serve rarely
Fruits and Vegetables			
Grains			
Protein			
Protein with Calcium			
Drinks			

Food Portions and Serving Sizes

As food providers for children, we should encourage them to determine how much they want to eat. We should never force them to finish their plate- children should be encouraged to eat until they are full. That said, there are some general guidelines to consider when building a child's meal:

- ✓ *Provide plenty of vegetables and fruits,*
- ✓ *Offer whole grain foods and protein foods.*
- ✓ *Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.*
- ✓ *Make water the beverage of choice*
- ✓ *Choose foods with healthy fats instead of saturated fat.*

Reading and Understanding Food Labels

The % Daily Value

- Helps compare and evaluate nutrient content of foods
- Based on recommendations for a healthy diet
- 5% or less is a little
- 15% or more is a lot

You can use the label and ingredient list to identify whether a food is suitable for your menu. Watch out for deceptive food marketing on packaged goods!

Reflect:

1. What surprised you in this session?

2. What is one change you can make in your menu, given what you learned today?

WEEK ONE	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast					
Morning Snack					
Lunch					
Afternoon Snack					

Notes:

WEEK TWO	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast					
Morning Snack					
Lunch					
Afternoon Snack					

Notes:

Planning for Substitutions

Planning for substitutions on school food menus is beneficial because it helps make sure that all students, no matter their dietary needs or preferences, can have tasty and nutritious meals. This includes students with allergies, specific cultural or religious dietary requirements, or those who follow health guidelines. Substitutions also reduce food waste by using up available ingredients smartly. When schools plan for alternatives, they can comply with regulations, promote a positive food culture, and enhance overall student satisfaction. It's a way to be flexible, make meals more enjoyable, and educate students about making healthy food choices.

Sources for information on substitutions:

- Your local dietician
- Tips on cooking and substitutions for allergies: <https://foodallergycanada.ca/>
- Recipes, substitution ideas: <https://healthyschoolrecipes.com/>
- Resources on allergies: <https://www.foodallergy.org/resources>

Tips for making menu substitutions

- Safety. Regardless of your reason for substituting a recipe or item, you must ensure that the item is safe (i.e. does not contain hidden allergens)
- Nutrition. What you substitute should have a comparable (or better) nutritional value than the food you are swapping it for. For example, you want to substitute beef in a menu item because of price increases. Whatever you choose to replace it with should be a protein item.
- Feasibility. Just like in regular menu planning, you need to consider if the item is reasonable to serve in your facility. Will kids like it? Can you prepare the quantity needed? Do you have the equipment available? Etc.
- Palatability and Aesthetics. Of course, your item should look and taste good! More importantly though, if you are making a dish for someone with an allergy, it should be similar in look and flavour profile so they do not feel isolated.
- Any others?

Activity

Identify Dietary Restrictions:

Menu items:

Make the substitution:

Dietary restriction	Problem ingredient(s)	Old Item	New Item

Notes:

Planning for Production

Planning how to make the food on the menu is crucial to the success of your kitchen for several reasons:

1. **Saving Resources:** When we plan, we can use our ingredients better. That means less waste and spending money wisely.
2. **Keeping Food Quality:** When we plan, we can follow the same recipe and way of cooking each time. This makes sure the food always tastes good and students like it.
3. **Saving Time:** Planning makes things move faster in the kitchen. Everyone knows what to do, so we can serve food quickly.
4. **Thinking about Special Diets:** Planning helps us consider if someone can't eat certain things. We can make sure to have options for our students with special diets, ex. Lactose intolerance, or halal diet.
5. **Keeping Children Nourished:** When the food is good and kids like it, they're happy and full. Nourished children perform better in school.

So, planning menus helps use resources wisely, save money, keep food quality high, work efficiently, please different tastes, think about special diets, and helps us produce food that keeps our children nourished and ready to learn.

Activity (following page)

Menu Item	Ingredients	Tasks	Time needed	Equipment needed

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Notes:

Schedule production:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning					
Afternoon					
Pulls					

* Don't forget equipment availability! *

Cook's Café

Use the space below to write down thoughts as they come up during discussion. You may want to include answers from your own discussion question, as well as those from your colleagues.

1. What are the biggest challenges you face in your day-to day work supporting the school food program?

2. Why is it important for your school to provide food to students?

3. What does your school food program do very well, or what makes your program unique? (ie-certain recipes, types of foods, types of meals/snacks offered, how food is prepared, staff, etc.)

4. What improvements does your school plan to make to the school food program in the next few years? Or What could be done?

5. Does your school incorporate local or land-based food into the school menu? Comment about why your school decided to do this or what could be done.

6. What type of learning needs do school cooks have? Do gatherings like this one help meet these needs?

Managing Time and Budget

It's important to save time and money in a school kitchen. When the kitchen team manages their time well, they can serve meals quickly, giving students enough time to enjoy their food during breaks. This helps students stay focused and feel good throughout the day. Saving money is also a big deal because it allows the school to spend on other important things like classroom supplies and fun activities. Plus, when the kitchen is efficient with its budget, it can keep providing tasty and healthy meals without stressing about costs. So, saving time and budget in the school kitchen is not just about cooking – it's about making sure students get good meals and the school can spend money wisely.

Menu planning on a budget

The following ideas are worth considering if you are tight on time or finances in your kitchen. You are encouraged to take notes in this section as you move through discussions and the activities

- Use cycle menus

- Plan for leftovers

- Go meatless

- Scratch or convenience?

- Be prepared and organized
