

Manager's Corner

Cycle Menus

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PURPOSE

Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

VISION

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

MISSION

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

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Professional Standards

Menu Planning – 1100

Employee will be able to effectively and efficiently plan and prepare standardized recipes, cycle menus, and meals, including the use of USDA foods, to meet all Federal school nutrition program requirements, including the proper meal components.

1120 – Plan cycle menus that meet all rules. Consider cost, equipment, foods available, storage, staffing, student tastes, and promotional events.

Introduction

Manager's Corner: Cycle Menus is designed for managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes. *Manager's Corner: Cycle* provides a method for empowering managers to train their staff. This lesson plan contains the following:

- learning objective,
- statement explaining the importance of the topic,
- list of materials,
- instructions on how to present the information,
- questions to ask staff, and
- an activity to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the manager.

Lesson Overview—Questions

Objective: Identify the benefits of a cycle menu.

Why it is important: It is good practice for districts to use a cycle menu for a designated period of time. Seasonal menus allow the opportunity to incorporate in-season options. Planning menus in advance saves time, helps avoid repetitive tasks, reduces labor, implements cost-effective inventory management, and may reduce waste.

Materials included in this document:

- **Food Bar Choices Activity**

Instruction:

Ask the staff to answer the questions included in this training. Facilitate the activity.

Questions for the staff:

- **What does a well-planned menu include?**

Answer: The menu must meet all Federal guidelines and be appealing to the customer. A well-planned menu includes whole grain-rich foods; fruits and vegetables; a variety of shapes, textures, colors, and temperatures; and a blend of flavors. Some other factors to consider in menu planning include equipment, food cost, cultural food preferences, labor costs, skill levels, environmental friendliness, and the availability of USDA Foods.

Remember, it is the role of the menu planner to plan reimbursable meals and communicate clear messages to the school nutrition staff. It is the role of staff who prepare and serve meals to follow the menu planner's directions to ensure students select a reimbursable meal.

- **What are the benefits of cycle menus?**

Answer: Seasonal menus allow the opportunity to incorporate in-season options. Planning menus in advance saves time, helps avoid repetitive tasks, reduces labor, and implements cost-effective inventory management and may reduce waste.

Cycle Menu Activity

Activity instructions:

- Assign the staff one of the following seasons:
 - Fall
 - Winter
 - Spring
 - Summer

- Allow staff 5-7 minutes to determine four menu items that will complement the season they were assigned. Encourage the staff to consider locally grown items that are in season as they determine their menu items. At the conclusion ask the staff to share their responses. Other food items may be included in their choices.
 - Example
 - fall: twice baked sweet potato, baked cinnamon apples, cider baked chicken, autumn harvest red potatoes
 - winter: vegetarian chili, chicken and dumplings, red beans and rice, hot turkey sandwich
 - spring: garden spinach salad, chef's salad, vegetable stir fry, penne with spring vegetables
 - summer: roasted zucchini, fruit and yogurt, chipotle chicken, shredded cabbage salad

References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2018). *School nutrition S.T.A.R. meal preparation and service instructor's manual*. University, MS: Author.

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