



## Developing Cycle Menus and Accommodating Students with Special Dietary Needs

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**Say:** Good afternoon, everyone! It's so great to see you today. Welcome back! The last webinar discussed USDA Foods and how to prepare them alongside local foods, keeping cultural inclusiveness in mind. With every webinar, our goal is to help provide you with tools to meet the USDA transitional standards. Today we will discuss cycle menus and accommodating students with special dietary needs.

**Do:** Introduce selves.

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Welcome!

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**Say:** Remember that as we go through today's webinar, the chat box is open for any questions and comments. We can learn a lot from each other during these times together. Please feel free to comment and ask questions in the chat anytime! We will monitor it together throughout this hour and would love some conversations.

## Objectives

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- Explain the benefits of cycle menus.
- Summarize the steps to create cycle menus.
- Develop a recipe data bank to assist in cycle menu development.
- Describe best practices for modifying menus for students with special dietary needs.



**Say:** Let's review today's objectives:

Explain the benefits of cycle menus.

Summarize the steps to create cycle menus.

Develop a recipe data bank to assist in cycle menu development.

Describe best practices for modifying menus for students with special dietary needs.



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## Professional Standards – Learning Codes

- Menu Planning (1100)
- Nutrition Education (1200)

# Cycle Menus

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**Say:** Let's begin!

# Cycle Menus

W1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday		
Hot Entree 1	Cheese (v) or Pepperoni Pizza	Bean Burrito Bowl with Elote (v)	Roasted Chicken	Lasagna	Sloppy Joe		
Hot Entree 2			Veggie Chili (v)	Cheesy Baked Potato (v)	Fish Sticks		
Cold Entree	Hummus Wrap (v)	Chicken Caesar Salad					
Grain (if applicable)		Brown Rice	Corbread	WG Garlic Bread	Macaroni & Cheese		
Vegetable	Lemon Roasted Carrots	Seasoned Black Beans (v)	Roasted Potato Wedges	Roasted Parmesan Broccoli	Baked Beans		
Vegetable	Romaine Salad	Corn Elote	Green Beans	Cherry Tomatoes	Celery & Carrot Sticks		
Vegetable		Lettuce & Pico					
Fruit	Red Apple Wedges	Orange Wedges	Banana	Fresh Pear	Green or Yellow Apples		
Fruit	Canned Pears	Canned Pineapple	Baked Cinnamon Apples	Canned Peaches	Raisins		
Condiments	Ranch Dressing, Vinaigrette	Salsa, Sour Cream, Shredded Cheese	Shredded Cheese	Sour Cream	Ketchup		
Condiments	Parmesan, Red Pepper Flakes	Caesar Salad Dressing		Ranch Dressing	Tartar sauce		
Milk	Variety	Variety	Variety	Variety	Variety		Total
Dark Green	0.5	0.25		0.5			1.25
Red/Orange	0.5	0.25		0.5	0.25		1.5
Starchy		0.25	0.5				0.75
Legume		0.5					1
Other			0.5		0.25		0.75

- A set of menus that repeat
  - Each menu day is different
- The image shows one week of a cycle menu with each day having a different menu

**Ask:** How many of you currently utilize cycle menus? If yes, use the thumbs up reaction to let us know!

**Say:** Fantastic! As many of you know then, cycle menus are a series of menus that are repeated over a specified amount of time, such as 2 or 4 weeks. Usually, the daily menu is different each day during the cycle. Once you reach the end of the cycle, it is repeated.

It is common practice to include seasonality in a cycle menu; this can be done quarterly, so minor changes here and there to reflect the seasons and what is growing locally!

Let us know how long your cycle menus are in the chat, and we can compare! If you have different cycles for different age groups, add that too! For example, a 4 week cycle for K-5, 3 week for 6-8, and 2 week for 9-12.

**Do:** Look through chat answers and call out some noticeable trends.

## Why Cycle Menus?


- Meet nutrition standards
- Save time
- Control food and labor costs
- Reduce storage cost
- Reduce food waste
- Build employee confidence

**Say:** There are many reasons to utilize cycle menus.

**Do:** Read the reasons.


**Say:** Let's start with meet nutrition standards.






Meet  
Nutrition  
Standards

SUMMARY OF CHANGES




MILK

Schools and child care providers may offer flavored, low-fat milk (1%) in addition to unflavored, low-fat milk and flavored or unflavored nonfat milk<sup>1</sup>.




SODIUM

The weekly sodium limit for school lunch and breakfast will remain at the current level, known as Target 1, for school year 2022-2023. For school lunch only, the limit will decrease marginally (10%) in school year 2023-2024 to put schools on an achievable path toward long-term sodium reduction, which will be addressed in future rulemaking.



WHOLE GRAINS

At least 80% of the grains served in school lunch and breakfast per week must be whole grain-rich (containing at least 50% whole grains).



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**Say:** Cycle menus are the key to meeting meal patterns for both breakfast and lunch, and to help us meet the transitional nutrition standards. As you know, you must complete weekly meal certification worksheets. With a cycle menu, you can complete the worksheets before school begins, and then simply tweak with any small changes made throughout the year, like if you make any seasonal adjustments.

In addition, creating a cycle menu allows you to know where you stand in meeting the dietary specifications for calories and saturated fat, as well as the transitional standards for sodium and whole grains. You can calculate all of the required nutrients and whole grain percentage at the beginning of the school year. If you need to swap a grain item, you already know where you are at and if it needs to be whole grain or can be refined.

Saves Time

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**Say:** Cycle menus save time in a multitude of ways. From procurement and purchasing to menu planning to forecasting to training staff, you only have one set of menus to work with. It helps to streamline processes and increase efficiency.

# Control Food and Labor Costs

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**Say:** With a constantly repeating menu, you always know which products you need and how much. This makes procurement and purchasing easier and helps your supplier and food manufacturers as well.

And as you know, we must balance food and labor costs, so, with more control over food costs, you can better determine what you have left to spend on labor!

# Reduce Storage Cost

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**Say:** Cycle menus help to minimize products, especially if menus are planned using multipurpose ingredients, like USDA Foods diced chicken, as demonstrated in the last webinar. Cycle menus also help prevent orphan items, items that are just sitting in storage taking up space because they only made it on the menu a few times.

# Reduce Food Waste

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**Say:** With cycle menus, not only do your staff become familiar with the menu, but so do your students. It becomes easier for your managers to forecast how much food to prepare each time.





**Say:** And finally, cycle menus help build employee confidence. When your staff prepare the same meals over and over, they become experts. The process to prepare the menu items becomes quicker each time they prepare the food items.

If you think of any other advantages to using a cycle menu, please add them to the chat!

# Steps to Develop Cycle Menus

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**Say:** Now that we have established that cycle menus are definitely the way to go, let's review the steps to develop a cycle menu. By following these steps, the process should become easier and, in our opinion, more fun!

## Steps to Develop Cycle Menus

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1. Gather necessary information
2. Create new recipes
3. Create a recipe bank
4. Determine cycle length
5. Write menus



**Do:** Review the steps on the slide.

**Say:** Let's elaborate a little more on each of these steps, starting with gathering necessary information.



## Step 1: Gather necessary information

- Meal pattern charts
- Ingredient labels
- Existing recipes

**Amount per serving**  
**Calories 230**

	% Daily Value*
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>17%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	
Sugars 12g	

**825133 - Taco**  
Source: #12 Culinary  
Number of Portions: 40  
Size of Portion: each

**Components:**  
Meat/Alt: 2.5 oz  
Grain: 2.0 oz  
Fruit:  
Vegetable: 0.75 cup  
Milk:

HAACP Process: #2 Same Day Service

Ingredients	Measure	Instructions
820046 Chicken Taco Filling	5 lbs = 13 cts	Prepare Cook
825119R Puffed Beans	1 1/4 gals	Notes: The filling mix portions, Cook Burdick/Good CCP, Heat v CCP, Heat v Prepares or chases v
TOMATOES RED RIPE RAW YEAR RND AVERAGE %a, Low-sodium, Canned	5 lbs = 8 OZS (AP) 1 qt = 1 cup	Notes: Thaw may not C

**Meal Pattern Chart:**

Amount of Food <sup>1</sup> per Week	Minimum per day		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Meat/Alt	2 1/2 (1 1/2)	2 1/2 (1 1/2)	2 1/2
Grain	3 1/2 (1 1/2)	3 1/2 (1 1/2)	3 1/2
Vegetable	1/2	1/2	1/2
Fruit	1/2	1/2	1/2
Milk	1/2	1/2	1/2
Water	1	1	1

**Portion Sizes (oz):**

Grade	Meat/Alt	Grain	Vegetable	Fruit	Milk
Grades K-5	2.5	2.0	0.75	0.75	1.0
Grades 6-8	2.5	2.0	0.75	0.75	1.0
Grades 9-12	2.5	2.0	0.75	0.75	1.0

**Portion Sizes (cup):**

Grade	Meat/Alt	Grain	Vegetable	Fruit	Milk
Grades K-5	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2
Grades 6-8	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2
Grades 9-12	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2

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Grades 6-8	2.5	2.0	0.75	0.75	1.0
Grades 9-12	2.5	2.0	0.75	0.75	1.0

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Grades 6-8	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2
Grades 9-12	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2



**Say:** Before you get started, it's helpful to gather the following: meal pattern charts, ingredient labels, and existing recipes. Also, don't forget about the transitional standards. All of these tools are necessary to help develop menus. Even if you basically have the meal pattern chart memorized like we do, it doesn't hurt to keep it handy.

## Step 2: Identify new recipe needs

- Cultural Inclusiveness
- Scratch
- Local foods



**Say:** On to step 2! Identify new recipe needs. While we know some foods will most likely always remain a staple in school meals, like pizza, we do want to stay relevant with the times and be in tune with what today's students are craving! We are now serving Gen Z and Gen Alpha, the two most diverse generations in the history of the United States. They are also the most connected, having grown up in a world constantly connected through the internet. They know about foods from around the world! With that said it's also important to identify what ethnicities and/or religious groups are predominant at your schools and see if you can add menu items that are more familiar to their tastes and/or beliefs. We want to be culturally inclusive when it comes to our menus.

While we understand labor shortages and a lack of skills, the more scratch-made dishes you can add to the menu, the more in control of nutrients and flavor, not to mention taste! Consider what scratch dishes you can add to help control sodium, add freshness, and meet the Transitional Standards. Think about balancing scratch dishes with heat and serve items to help with labor and production.

Another consideration: what local foods can you incorporate? Whether it's fresh produce for sides or a local meat or grain.

## Step 3: Create a recipe bank

Hot Entrees	Cold Entrees	Fresh Vegetable Sides	Cooked Vegetables	Fruit Sides	Grain Sides
Cheese Pizza	Cobb Salad	Baby Carrots*	Black Beans	Canned Pineapple	Spanish Rice
Pepperoni Pizza	Chef Salad	Carrot Sticks*	Pinto Beans	Canned Peach Slices	Brown Rice
Veggie Pizza	Fiesta Chicken Salad	Cucumber Coins*	Refried Beans	Canned Apricots	Macaroni and Cheese
Roasted Chicken	Sunbutter Sandwich/PB&J	Cherry Tomatoes*	Baked Beans	Canned Pears	WG Roll
Crispy Baked Chicken	Cherry Yogurt Parfait	Red Bell Pepper Strips*	Steamed Broccoli	Gala Apples	WG Breadstick
BBQ Chicken	Blueberry Yogurt Parfait	Broccoli*	Roasted Broccoli	Yellow Apples	WG Cornbread
Tacos - Beef, Chicken, Pork, Vegetarian	Peaches and Cream Yogurt Parfait	Celery Sticks*	Corn	Green Apples	Brown Fried Rice
Fish Tacos	Hummus Wrap	Romaine Side Salad	Roasted Potato Wedges	Oranges	Lo Mein Noodles

The image shows a recipe bank that includes a column of hot entrees, cold entrees, fresh vegetable sides, cooked vegetables, fruit sides, and grain sides.



**Say:** Step 3: Create what we like to call a recipe bank. This is so helpful when building menus! Basically, you create a list of all the recipes you would like to menu. We have an activity coming up where we will practice this step as a group!

**Do:** Go over the different column headers.

## Step 4: Determine cycle menu length

- Consider
  - Age group
  - Number of daily entrees
  - Any theme lines



**Say:** Step 4: Determine cycle length. For this step, consider the age group, the number of daily entrees you want to offer, and if there are any theme lines. It is common for K-5 menus to have a longer cycle with fewer entrée choices and 6-12 menus to have shorter cycles with more entrée choices. There isn't a right or wrong, but make sure you provide enough variety so students don't get bored.

## Step 5: Write menus

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- Start with entrees
- Add sides
- Other considerations



**Say:** Step 5: Now it's time to write the menus! Reference your recipe bank, and start with the entrees. As you add entrees, be sure to vary the protein, be mindful of available equipment, and also consider nutrition recommendations. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend adding more plant-based proteins, including lean meats, low fat dairy and seafood, and limiting red meat. Be sure to check that each week has the correct balance for the weekly minimums for grains and meat/meat alternates.

Once entrees are added, start adding sides, remembering to ensure you meet the requirements for each of the vegetable subgroups. And also, keep in mind although you are creating a cycle menu, you can still vary fruits and vegetables according to the season and what you can procure locally. Making quarterly changes is common. The last step is to add milk.

While writing the menu, other things to consider include: color variety, different shapes, textures, spiciness levels, and cold vs. hot foods.

Think about balancing familiar foods with new, high cost food items with low cost items, and as discussed earlier, high labor items (scratch) with less labor

items.



**Say:** Alright, now it's time for the activity we alluded to earlier!



## Recipe Bank Activity

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- Add your division's best recipes
- Add menu items



**Say:** We are going to create a recipe bank together! We thought this would be a great opportunity to not only share ideas but also set you up for planning next school year's menus. We have created a Google link that has columns for each food category. We will drop it into the chat in just a minute. As you think of ideas, new or old, add them to the sheet. There will be a lot of us in there at once, so you might have to make sure you aren't typing over someone else's entry.

Also, before this webinar, we asked that you share a favorite recipe and add it to the Google folder we created. Remember, recipes are only standardized once you test them in your kitchen with your equipment and ingredients, so be sure to test them before implementing them in your division. Be sure to add the recipe name to our recipe bank!

Ok, we are adding the link for the recipe bank to the chat now. Let's get started!

**Do:** Add link to chat:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1YLI7qMZZ3a2OVweO2jL4CHifeYTn>

[b1fjNivTXT57Vpg/edit?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1nJWWAXzqQ-G_eBs2vXC1NGZpHzbhA47A?usp=sharing)

**Instructor Note:** The recipe folder can be found at this link:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1nJWWAXzqQ-G\\_eBs2vXC1NGZpHzbhA47A?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1nJWWAXzqQ-G_eBs2vXC1NGZpHzbhA47A?usp=sharing).

**Do:** Review the group's work and discuss recipes.

# Accommodating Special Dietary Needs

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**Say:** Great work everyone! We are going to end this webinar with one last topic – accommodating special dietary needs.

# Requirements

- Must accommodate if disability
- Medical statement



**Say:** As a reminder, we are required by law to accommodate students with disabilities. This includes students with severe food allergies, and those with diabetes, kidney disease, and more.

Students are required to have a medical statement on file signed by a licensed physician. Technically, we do not have to make accommodations for students with minor food allergies, meaning they do not result in anaphylactic shock. It is up to your division if accommodations will be made.

**Ask:** What are the most common food allergies you are seeing within your divisions? Add it to the chat!

## Best Practices

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1. Mimic regular menu
2. Reference ingredient list
3. Work closely with school nurse



**Say:** When making accommodations, it's best practice to mimic the regular menu as closely as possible so that the student doesn't feel left out or even embarrassed by the different meal. For example, if the menu includes pasta, try substituting a wheat free pasta for a student with a wheat allergy.

Be sure to reference all of the ingredient lists, and buy specialty ingredients if necessary. Those can be pricey, so you have to do the best you can within your budget.

Lastly, work closely with the school nurse as needed to make sure everyone is on the same page, and looking out for the child.

## Example – Student with Wheat Allergy

W1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Hot Entree 1	Cheese (v) or Pepperoni Pizza	Bean Burrito (v)	BBQ Chicken Leg	Spaghetti and Meatsauce	Turkey Burger
Hot Entree 2			Veggie Chili (v)	Cheesy Baked Potato (v)	Fish Sticks
Cold Entree	Fruit and Yogurt Parfait (v)	Chicken Caesar Salad + WG Roll			
Grain (if applicable)		Spanish Brown Rice	WG Roll	WG Garlic Bread	Macaroni & Cheese
Vegetable	Roasted Carrots	Seasoned Black Beans (v)	Roasted Potato Wedges	Roasted Parmesan Broccoli	Cucumber Coins
Vegetable	Romaine Salad	Mexicali Corn	Green Beans	Cherry Tomatoes	Lettuce, Tomato, Pickle
Vegetable		Lettuce & Pico			
Fruit	Red Apple Wedges	Orange Wedges	Banana	Fresh Pear	Green or Yellow Apples
Fruit	Canned Pears	Canned Pineapple	Baked Cinnamon Apples	Canned Peaches	Raisins
Condiments	Ranch Dressing, Vinaigrette	Salsa, Sour Cream, Shredded Cheese	Shredded Cheese	Sour Cream	Ketchup, Mustard
Condiments	Parmesan, Red Pepper Flakes	Caesar Salad Dressing		Ranch Dressing	Tartar Sauce, Ranch Dressing
Milk	Variety	Variety	Variety	Variety	Variety

An image of a menu with the following items highlighted that contain wheat: Cheese or Pepperoni Pizza (Monday), Fruit and Yogurt Parfait (Monday), Bean Burrito (Tuesday), Chicken Caesar Salad with Whole Grain Roll (Tuesday), Whole Grain Roll (Wednesday), Spaghetti and Meat Sauce (Thursday), Whole Grain Garlic Bread (Thursday), Turkey Burger (Friday), Fish Sticks (Friday), and Macaroni and Cheese (Friday).



**Say:** Let's take a look of what this might look like. We are going to continue with the example of a child with a severe wheat allergy. We are going to modify this menu together. We have highlighted the menu items that need to be adjusted.

**Do:** Walk through modifying the menu. Use the chat to generate ideas. Use link below to access:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zdyI4\\_yBqujVVIhcqCeW9Bq9GSVNnjtgh4FwFZMRp6M/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zdyI4_yBqujVVIhcqCeW9Bq9GSVNnjtgh4FwFZMRp6M/edit?usp=sharing)

**Ask:** What are the most common challenges you all have encountered with accommodating students with disabilities? How have you overcome those challenges?



**Say:** Great work today! As we wrap up, remember using cycle menus is a great way to help your divisions meet the transitional standards, as well as add local and culturally inclusive items to your menus. Cycle menus also make accommodating students with special dietary needs easier because you don't constantly have to evaluate new menus.

Once cycle menus are written, your program will run more efficiently, leaving you more time to handle all the other tasks associated with your extremely busy jobs!

# Questions

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**Say:** Thank you so much for being here today and participating in our webinar. We are excited to see and hear your new ideas as we travel through these webinars together!

**Ask:** Does anyone have any questions?