



Manager's Corner

Cycle Menus

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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 – Cycle Menus

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 to empower managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes. This lesson plan contains:

- Learning objective
- Statement explaining the importance of the topic
- List of materials
- Instructions on how to present the information
- Questions to ask staff
- An activity to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the staff

Lesson Overview

Instructions for lesson:

- Review the lesson objective and background information.
- Review why it is important.
- Ask staff the questions.
- Facilitate the activity outlined.
- Provide time for staff to ask questions.

Objective: Identify the benefits of a cycle menu.

Background information: Cycle menus are a set of meal components and food items that are different for each day during a set period of time (cycle) and repeated.

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 available in the school kitchen, food cost, cultural food preferences of student customers, labor costs (amount of time required to prepare menu item as related to payroll per hour of staff), food preparation skill levels, and the availability of USDA Foods.

Seasonal menus allow the opportunity to incorporate in-season options:

WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL
Apples	Asparagus	Blackberries	Beets
Avocados	Bananas	Blueberries	Bell Peppers
Carrots	Broccoli	Cucumbers	Cranberries
Cabbage	Celery	Eggplant	Grapes
Collard Greens	Lettuce	Okra	Mushrooms
Potatoes	Kale	Peaches	Onions
Pumpkins	Kiwifruit	Tomatoes	Pears
Turnips	Spinach	Watermelon	Raspberries
Winter Squash	Strawberries	Zucchini	Sweet Potatoes

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

Why it is important: The use of cycle menus can save time, help avoid repetitive tasks, reduce labor, implement cost-effective inventory management, and may reduce waste. Seasonal menus allow the opportunity to incorporate in-season options.

Questions for 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 available in the school kitchen, food cost, cultural food preferences of student customers, the amount of time it takes staff to make the meal, 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. Responsibilities of the staff who prepare and serve meals include following the menu planner's directions and ensuring students select a reimbursable meal.

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

Answer: It is good practice for districts to use a cycle menu because they can save time, help limit doing the same task over and over, reduce the number of staff to prepare meals, assist in lowering the cost of inventory, and may reduce waste.

Please note: The answers provided are only examples and are not an inclusive list of possible responses.

Activity: Cycle Menus

Activity materials included in this document:

No supplemental materials are included in this document.

Materials provided by the school nutrition operation:

- Copies of the **Grades K-8 Four-Week Cycle Menu**
- Pens/Pencils

Activity Instructions:

- Distribute writing utensils and copies of the **Grades K-8 Four-Week Cycle Menu**.
- Ask staff to review the **Grades K-8 Four-Week Cycle Menu** for a reimbursable school lunch.
- Does the menu include:
 - Variety of items
 - Colors
 - Foods the students will eat
- What seasonal foods could be incorporated into the menu, based on the current season?

The staff does not need to focus on portion sizes, only the menu items.

Please note: The answers provided are only examples and are not an inclusive list of possible responses.

Grades K-8 Four-Week Cycle Menu Example

<p>Chicken Alfredo Twist D-54r (2¼ oz eq meat, 1¼ oz eq grains) Whole Grain Garlic Toast (1 oz eq grains) Garden Salad (romaine- ½ cup dark green veg, shredded carrots- 1/8 cup red/orange veg, grape tomatoes- 1/8 cup red/orange veg) Fresh Cubed Melon (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Porcupine Sliders F-10r (2 oz eq meat/meat alternate, 2 oz eq grains) Lettuce (1/8 cup dark green veg) Fresh Sliced Tomatoes (1/8 cup red/orange veg) Potato Wedges (¾ cup starchy veg) Grapes (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Fiesta Mexican Lasagna D-62r (1 oz eq meat alternate, 3/8 cup red/orange veg, 1/8 cup starchy veg, ¼ cup other veg, ¾ oz eq grains) Whole Grain Cheese Stick (1 oz meat/meat alternate, 1 oz eq grains) Lentils of the Southwest I-24r (½ cup legume veg) Banana 1 small (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Chicken Curry Casserole D-55r (1¼ oz eq meat/meat alternate, ¼ cup other veg, ¾ oz eq grains) Whole Grain Breadstick (1 oz eq grains) Spinach Salad (½ cup dark green veg) Cherry Tomatoes (1/8 cup red/orange veg) Fresh Orange Smiles (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Sesame Asian Noodle Chicken Salad D-560 (1½ oz eq meat/meat alternate, 1/8 cup red/orange veg, 1/8 cup other veg, 1 oz eq grains) Roasted Broccoli (½ cup dark green veg) Oatmeal Muffin Squares B-200 (1/8 cup fruit, 1 oz eq grains) Fresh Pineapple (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>
<p>Volcanic Meatloaf D-580 (2½ oz eq meat/meat alternate) Whole Grain Dinner Roll (2 oz eq grains) Mashed Potatoes I-123 (½ cup starchy veg) Sliced Carrots (¼ cup red/orange veg) Banana 1 small (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Hawaiian Ham and Coconut Rice D-540 (2 oz eq meat/meat alternate, ¼ cup fruit, 1¼ oz eq grains) Sweet Potato Sticks (¾ cup red/orange veg) Fruit Cocktail (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Taco Soup H-71 (1 oz eq meat/meat alternate, ¼ cup legume veg, ¼ cup red/orange veg, ¼ cup additional veg) Baked Tortilla Chips (2 oz eq grains) Creamed Spinach I-120 (½ oz eq meat/meat alternate, ½ cup dark green veg) Fruit Salsa (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Roasted Fish Crispy Slaw Wrap F-13r (2¾ oz eq meat, ¼ cup dark green veg, ¼ cup red/orange veg, 7/8 cup other veg, 1½ oz eq grains) Baked Potato (½ cup starchy veg) Fresh Orange Smiles (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Bean Tostada D-120C (1 oz eq meat/meat alternate, 3/8 cup legume veg, 1/8 cup red/orange veg, ¼ cup other veg, 1/8 cup additional veg, 1 oz eq grains) Spanish Rice B-30 (1/8 cup red/orange veg, ¼ cup other veg, 1/8 cup starchy veg, 1 oz eq grains) Sliced Apples (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>
<p>Vegetable Chili Boat D-63r (¾ oz eq meat alternate, ¼ cup red/orange veg, 1/8 cup other veg, ¼ oz eq grains) Whole Grain Cheese Stick (1 oz eq meat alternate, 1 oz eq grains) Corn (½ cup starchy veg) Fruit Salad (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Chick Penne D-53r (1 oz eq meat/meat alternate, 1/8 cup dark green veg, 1¼ oz eq grains) Whole Grain Roll (1 oz eq grains) Spinach Salad (½ cup dark green veg) Cauliflower (¼ cup other veg) Grapes (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Crunchy Hawaiian Chicken Wrap F-12r (2 oz eq meat, ¼ cup dark green veg, 1/8 cup red/orange veg, 1/8 cup other veg, 1¼ oz eq grains) Black Beans (¼ cup legume veg) Vegetable Medley (½ cup other veg) Mandarin Oranges (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Spaghetti and Meat Sauce D-350 (2 oz eq meat/meat alternate, 3/8 cup red/orange veg, 1 oz eq grains) Whole Grain Cheese Stick (1 oz eq meat alternate, 1 oz eq grains) Green Salad (½ cup dark green veg) Fresh Apple 1 small (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Chicken Burrito D-530 (2 oz eq meat/meat alternate, 1/8 cup red/orange veg, 2 oz eq grains) Lentils of the Southwest I-24r (½ cup legume veg) Baby Carrots (¼ cup red/orange veg) Sliced Cucumbers (½ cup other veg) Chilled Peaches (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>
<p>Tuscan Smoked Turkey and Bean Soup H-12r (1½ oz eq meat/meat alternate, 1/8 cup red/orange veg, 1/8 cup other veg) Whole Grain Crackers (2 oz eq grains) Baked Potato (½ cup starchy veg) Green Salad (½ cup dark green veg) Chilled Apricots (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Mexicali Taco Boat D-550 (2½ oz eq meat/meat alternate, ¾ cup red/orange veg) Baked Tortilla Chips (2 oz eq grains) Pico De Gallo G-150 (1/8 cup red/orange veg, 1/8 cup other veg) Banana (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Sweet & Sassy Chicken D-570 (2 oz eq meat/meat alternate) Brown Rice Pilaf B-220 (1/8 cup red/orange veg, 1/8 cup dark green veg, 1/8 cup other veg, 1 oz eq grains) Cauliflower (½ cup other) Melon Medley (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>Turkey Pot Pie D-190 (2 oz eq meat/meat alternate, 1/8 cup starchy veg, 1/8 cup additional veg, 1½ oz eq grains) Green Salad (½ cup dark green) Cinnamon Applesauce (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>	<p>BBQ Chicken D-110 (2 oz eq meat/meat alternate) Whole Grain Dinner Roll (2 oz eq grains) Mashed Sweet Potatoes (¾ cup red/orange veg) Lima Beans (½ cup legume veg) Fresh Orange Smiles (½ cup fruit) Milk (1 cup fat-free or 1% milk)</p>

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