

# Manager's Corner

## Batch Cooking

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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

### FOOD PRODUCTION – 2100

**Employee will be able to effectively utilize all food preparation principles, production records, kitchen equipment, and food crediting to prepare foods from standardized recipes, including those for special diets.**

2110 – Standardized Recipes

Understand and effectively prepare food using a standardized recipe.

## Introduction

*Manager's Corner: Batch Cooking* 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 batch cooking.

**Background information:** Batch cooking is the term used for cooking foods in small batches (number of servings) as needed throughout the serving periods. By food items cooking as needed rather than all at once, batch cooking can help protect food quality and reduce waste.

**Why it is important:** Batch cooking or cooking to the line minimizes the unnecessary loss of flavor, texture, color, and nutritive value. Batch cooking also helps control costs by reducing waste and helps to maintain the quality of the product.

## Questions for Staff

- **What is batch cooking?**

**Answer:** Batch cooking means cooking small amounts at a time – just enough for a single serving period.

- **What are the benefits of batch cooking?**

**Answer:** Batch cooking can help us protect food quality and reduce waste. For example, if a food item is not as popular as other menu items, batch cooking empowers the staff to scale back the amount that was originally planned. On the other hand, if a food item is selected by customers more than planned, staff can prepare additional batches to meet demand. Although it takes a little more effort to batch cook, it is easy to develop and execute a production plan. The end result is well worth the time – higher quality food for the students with a reduction in waste.

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

## Activity: Batch Cooking

### Activity materials included in this document:

- **Quality Score Card for Cooked Vegetables**

### Materials provided by the school nutrition operation:

- 2 small serving pans
- 4 pounds of broccoli
- 2 (½-cup) spoodles or dishers
- 10 small bowls
- Potholders
- Steamer or other means to cook broccoli

### Activity Instructions:

***Instructor's Note: To minimize the preparation of this activity, try conducting this activity on days that broccoli is being served on the menu.***

- Before the training:
  - Gather the materials needed to complete the activity.
  - Prepare the broccoli for cooking based on your site's standardized recipe.
    - For sites without a standardized recipe, you can find one at <https://mrs.mdek12.org/recipe/steamed-broccoli-spears/>
  - Steam two small pans of broccoli. Each pan will have approximately two pounds of broccoli before it is cooked.
  - Prepare one pan approximately 90 minutes before the training and place it in a food warmer (warming cabinet) until the training begins. This pan will represent the food item not being batch cooked.
  - Prepare the second pan approximately 10 minutes before the training begins. This pan will represent a food item being batch cooked.
- Show the two pans of broccoli to the staff to compare and contrast the differences in quality and appeal.
  - Remember to use pot holders when transferring hot pans from the food warmer or steamer.
- Ask the staff:
  - Which of the two pans of broccoli looks more appealing?
  - Which of the two pans of broccoli has a better texture?
  - Which of the two pans of broccoli would you like to taste?
  - Which of the two pans of broccoli is acceptable to serve?
- Have the staff assess the quality of the two pans using the **Quality Score Card for Cooked Vegetables**.

## Quality Score Card for Cooked Vegetables

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Menu Item: \_\_\_\_\_

Proudly Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_

Quality Scored by \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** When the food is ready to serve, use this Quality Score Card to evaluate the quality. Mark **YES** when the food meets the standard and **NO** when it does not. Mark **NA** (Not Applicable) when a specific quality standard does not apply to the food being evaluated. Use the **COMMENTS** section to explain why a food does not meet a standard.

Remember, if a food does not meet the quality standards, it should not be placed on the serving line.

QUALITY STANDARD	YES	NO	NA	COMMENTS
<b>APPEARANCE</b>				
Bright color typical of the vegetable.	▪	▪	▪	
Vegetable pieces are similar in size.	▪	▪	▪	
Vegetable pieces are intact (pieces are not overcooked with a mushy appearance).	▪	▪	▪	
Garnish is edible and appropriate for the dish.	▪	▪	▪	
<b>TEXTURE OR CONSISTENCY</b>				
Vegetable is fork-tender (slightly crisp and not overcooked).	▪	▪	▪	
All pieces of the vegetable have the same texture.	▪	▪	▪	
Vegetables in casserole-type recipes are well blended, tender, and identifiable.	▪	▪	▪	
<b>FLAVOR AND SEASONING</b>				
Vegetable has a definite, good flavor.	▪	▪	▪	
Seasonings are detectable but not overpowering.	▪	▪	▪	
Seasonings enhance the vegetable flavor.	▪	▪	▪	
A minimal amount of salt has been added (according to recipe if applicable).	▪	▪	▪	
If a sauce is used, it complements the vegetable (mild, not overpowering).	▪	▪	▪	
<b>SERVICE TEMPERATURE</b>				
Hot – 135 °F or above	▪	▪	▪	



## References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2019). *School nutrition STAR: Procurement and inventory management instructor's manual*. University, MS: Author.

United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Professional standards for school nutrition professionals*. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/professional-standards>



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