

Planning Healthy Cafeteria Menus



Include food choices from each of the four food groups from Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide at every meal:

- Vegetables and Fruit: Prepare meals with vegetables and/or fruit covering half of the plate or dish.
- Grain Products: Offer prepackaged products that score as *Sell Most* at lower prices than those that score as *Sell Sometimes*. Replace white flour with whole grain flour in recipes and look for prepackaged food listing 'whole grain' with the first ingredient on a label.
- Milk and Alternatives: Have milk and milk alternatives readily available for sale to students. Offer lower or non-fat milk (skim, 1% or 2%) as beverages and use lower-fat milk products as ingredients when preparing food.
- Meat and Alternatives: Use lean whole cuts of meat more often than processed meats. Try meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu in various types of food such as salads and burgers.

Plan healthy menus:

- Include food from all four food groups in every meal and two food groups at each snack.
- Include vegetables in the main entrée and as a side dish at every meal.
- Include pre-cut fruit in every daily dessert menu.
- Use dark green and orange or yellow vegetables often.
- Use preparation techniques that do not require added fat such as grilling, barbecuing, boiling, baking, poaching or steaming.
- Make water and low-fat milk options available at every meal.
- Offer lentils, beans and tofu often.
- Offer fish (non-battered or non-fried) at least once a week.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Fill menus with healthy food scored as *Sell Most* (prepackaged food) or *Sell* (freshly made) that include ingredients like:

- Whole grains
- Vegetables and fruits
- Legumes
- Fish
- Calcium-rich food such as milk and milk-based products
- Unsaturated fats
- Lean meats and poultry
- Water to quench thirst

Act to support healthy eating:

- Score freshly made food using the [Checklist](#).
- Adapt favorite recipes to make food more nutritious by using resources such as [Bake Better Bites](#) and [Tips and Recipes for Quantity Cooking](#).
- Score prepackaged food using the [Nutrient Criteria](#) or check the [Brand Name Food List](#) for products that have already been scored.
- Consult with students to do taste testing and help select food they enjoy.
- Offer *Sell Most* items at lower prices than *Sell Sometimes* for prepackaged items.
- Use resources such as BC's [School Meal and School Nutrition Program Handbook](#) for tips and menu ideas.

Showcase the great taste of healthier food while reducing sugar, sodium and fat:

- Retain fiber by washing but not peeling thin-skinned fruits and vegetables.
- Use reduced sodium options when choosing products such as canned vegetables, pasta sauces and soups or stocks.
- Choose no sugar added products for jams/jellies and fruits canned in their own juice or water.
- Add milk, buttermilk or yogurt instead of cream, sour cream or butter.
- Use sauces such as soy sauce, fish sauce and hoisin sauce that are labeled as reduced or low in sodium.
- Sweeten smoothies with fresh, canned, or frozen fruit instead of honey or sugar.
- Choose unprocessed meats.
- Offer lower-cost meat alternatives more often such as lentils and beans.
- Plan seasonal menus and serve BC products as often as possible.

Add little or no salt 'A little' added salt is:	
1 serving	10 servings
1/16 tsp 0.25 ml 0.3 g	½ tsp 2.5 ml 3 g
25 servings	50 servings
1 tsp 6 ml 7.5 g	2 tsp 12 ml 15 g

Instead of salt try:

- Being bold with flavourful vegetables like garlic, onions, shallots, ginger and leeks.
- Roasting veggies and meats. Browning adds a pleasant savoury taste to food.
- Adding fresh herbs just before serving (herbs lose flavour when cooked).
- Spicing it up. Experiment with spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, turmeric, cardamom, cumin, paprika and more.
- Being a hot shot. Give your dish some heat with crushed chili pepper.
- Adding tang with flavoured vinegars, orange, lemon or lime juice.
- Concentrating flavours by adding the minimum amount of water required for soups and sauces.
- Using milk, fruit juice, salt-free homemade stocks, low-sodium stocks or low-sodium vegetable juices instead of water.

Where Can We Find Out More?

- HealthLink BC: www.HealthLinkBC.ca
 - Speak to a Dietitian by dialing **8-1-1** or Email a HealthLinkBC Dietitian
- Bake Better Bites: Recipes and Tips for Healthier Baked Goods:
www.healthyschoolsbc.ca/program/resources/80/25666/Bake-Better-Bites.pdf (PDF 2.34 MB)
- Tips and Recipes for Quantity Cooking: Nourishing Minds and Bodies:
www.healthyschoolsbc.ca/program/resources/59/40617/Tips-and-Recipes.pdf (PDF 2.75 MB)
- Brand Name Food List: www.brandnamefoodlist.ca
- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php
- School Meal and School Nutrition Program Handbook:
www.bced.gov.bc.ca/communitylink/pdf/smph.pdf (PDF 10.24 MB)