

Healthy *Eating*



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
FOOD POLICY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



Office of Statewide Health Improvement Initiatives
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii>

**HEALTHY EATING:
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
FOOD POLICY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE**



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INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is committed to promoting the health and well-being of all Minnesotans, including its employees. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle involves more than individual choices. Environmental and social norms are key factors influencing healthy eating habits that are integral to good health and optimal work performance. An environment that always includes healthy foods makes choosing healthy foods easier for all. MDH will ensure that a variety of healthy food choices are available for all agency activities where food is served.

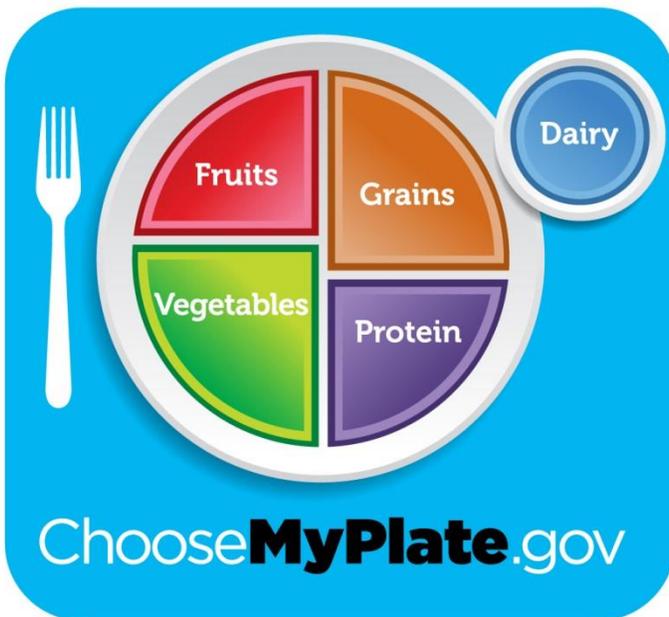
This guide is designed to help those responsible for planning and ordering food for meetings and events. It includes simple, practical information about planning for and ordering healthy foods; whether individuals select food from menus, food is ordered for meetings, or when planning a large catered event. By following these general guidelines, good food and healthy choices will be available at all MDH meetings and events.

A GUIDE TO THE NEW POLICY

MDH considers the USDA My Plate guidelines to be a good standard for planning healthy meals: half the meal consists of fruits and vegetables, one quarter of protein, and one quarter of grains.

- Make sure there are plenty of fruits and vegetables available.
- Offer a lean protein at every meal.
- Offer whole grains and/or products rich in whole grains (breads, crackers, pastas, etc.) instead of white flour products and white rice, when possible.

Examples of meals that follow the My Plate guidelines are provided in later sections of this guide. [See policy number 102.](#)



If you'd like to learn more about My Plate, click on this link: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

THE CATERING POLICY ENCOURAGES:

- Purchasing foods and beverages with reduced or no added sugars.
 - If desserts are offered, serve smaller portions to reduce added sugars.
 - Fruit-based desserts typically have less added sugar. Consider offering fresh fruits for dessert.
 - Limit or eliminate foods/drinks with little nutritional value such as soda pop and candy.
- Purchasing foods and beverages with reduced or no saturated fat.
 - Avoid cream, butter or cheese sauces, and high-fat meats. Choose tomato or broth based sauces instead.
 - Order grilled, baked, broiled or steamed items, rather than fried foods.
- Purchasing foods with reduced or no added sodium.
 - Avoid processed, salty snack foods (chips, pretzels, etc.). Order vegetables with low-fat dips such as yogurt or bean-based dips instead.
 - Request that foods typically high in sodium (such as soups and lunch meats) have reduced sodium content. For more guidance on recommended sodium levels, see resources on page 13.
- Provide substantive vegetarian options and accommodate dietary restrictions (e.g., gluten-free, lactose-free) when feasible.
 - A substantive vegetarian option means including a vegetarian protein, not just omitting the meat from the regular offering.

BEVERAGES

Beverages are frequently served at meetings when food is not. Healthy beverage options include:

- Tap water with or without ice
- When tap water is not practical, bottled spring or sparkling water (plain or flavored with no sugar)
- 100% fruit juices
- 100% vegetable juices (low-sodium)
- Low-fat milk
- Coffee and flavored coffees – regular and decaf
- Tea (regular and herbal, hot or cold)
- Coffee/tea creamers of low-fat milk or half & half



WORKING WITH VENDORS

Selecting a vendor (restaurant, caterer, food-service provider) that offers healthy options is essential. Whether it's a national chain or a local restaurant, vendors generally want to accommodate their customers' needs. A good food-service professional can answer questions about the foods they offer and which ones will meet MDH food policy guidelines.



SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL VENDORS

- "I need to make sure healthy foods are available at any meetings we host. Which menu items are lower in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars?"
- "Can you please put any spreads like mayonnaise and mustard on the side rather than on the sandwiches?"
- "We want to have meals catered for a conference we are hosting. We want healthy, tasty foods and we want the meals to be special. We have a budget of \$....., what can you offer me?"
- "We want to be sure to serve plenty of fruits and vegetables. Can you tell me if any of these items have vegetables or fruits that are not mentioned on the menu?"
- "Can we get this pizza with a whole wheat crust?"
- "Could we get sparkling water and 100% fruit juice instead of soda?"
- "We love your desserts, but could we get them in half size or smaller portions?"
- "Can you make a steady supply of ice water available?"
- "I notice most of your entrees have cream sauces. What entrees do you recommend that would be lower in fat, especially saturated fat?"
- "We'd like to order some boxed lunches. Can we get fruit or a vegetable salad instead of the chips and cookie?"
- "Our guests really like to have something sweet with their lunch. Can you put a small wrapped mint in the box lunches instead of the dessert that usually comes with it?"

ORDERING HEALTHY FOOD

MDH staff often order food in one of three different ways:

- 1) Providing menus for attendees
- 2) Ordering food for meetings
- 3) Hosting large catered events (i.e. conferences)

FOOD FROM MENUS OR RESTAURANT WEBSITES

Look for restaurants that have healthy options.

Ask if they offer or provide:

- Vegetable salads or vegetable side dishes
- Substitutions like fruit to replace chips and cookies
- Low-fat and reduced sodium meat options
- Whole grain options for sandwich breads, pizza crusts, rolls, etc.
- Beverages with reduced or no added sugar
- Substantive vegetarian options and foods to accommodate special diets

If the answer to the above questions is "no," and the vendor cannot provide any options in accordance with the MDH food policy, a new vendor should be selected.

EXAMPLES OF MEALS THAT COULD BE ORDERED FROM CAFES, LOCAL RESTAURANTS, OR NATIONAL CHAINS:

- Sandwich on whole wheat bread with lean meat, cheese, lettuce and tomato; vegetable soup on the side; baked chips or small cookie.
- Pizza with whole grain crust; green salad with a selection of dressings, including low-fat options.

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY BEVERAGE OPTIONS

INCLUDE:

- Tap water with or without ice
- When tap water is not practical, bottled spring or sparkling water (plain or flavored with no sugar)
- 100% fruit juices
- 100% vegetable juices (low-sodium)
- Low-fat milk
- Coffee and flavored coffees – regular and decaf
- Tea (regular and herbal, hot or cold)
- Coffee/tea creamers of low-fat milk or half & half



FOOD FOR MEETINGS

When ordering meals for meetings (boxed lunches, trays, etc.), choose a vendor that can provide healthy options. Ask if the vendor can provide:

- Vegetable salads or vegetable side dishes
- Lettuce and tomato or other vegetables on all sandwiches
- Lean protein entrees, including something substantive for vegetarians
- Foods with little or no saturated fats
- Foods with little or no added sugars
- Fresh fruit and fruit-based items for dessert
- Options for people with dietary restrictions (e.g. gluten-free food)
- Whole grains and their products (breads, crackers, pastas, etc.) instead of white flour products and white rice when possible

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY BOXED LUNCHES:

- Turkey sandwich on whole grain bread; green salad with low-fat salad dressing; whole piece of fruit; small cookie for dessert.
- Low-fat pasta salad with chicken and vegetables; cream of tomato soup made with low-fat milk; whole grain roll; one piece of individually wrapped chocolate.
- Vegetarian: Black bean salad with vegetables and low-fat cheese; baked corn chips, whole piece of fruit; individually wrapped mint for dessert.

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY BREAKFAST OPTIONS FOR BUFFETS:

- Fresh fruit

- Low-fat yogurt
- Low-fat cottage cheese
- Whole-wheat bagels (cut in halves) with fruit spreads, jams, hummus, peanut butter, or low-fat cream cheese
- Low-fat milk, tea, water
- 100% fruit or vegetable juices

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY SNACK OPTIONS:

- Assorted whole fruit
- Cheese cubes
- Vegetables with a low-fat yogurt or bean-based dip
- Popcorn
- Whole-wheat low-sodium pretzels
- Nuts
- Trail mix

Note: Food is often provided at meetings for social reasons or to encourage attendance. MDH would like to encourage a norm where food is not always present and therefore, is not necessary at mid-morning and mid-afternoon meetings. A physical activity break is a healthy replacement for a food break.

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY BEVERAGE OPTIONS:

- Tap water with or without ice
- When tap water is not practical, bottled spring or sparkling water (plain or flavored with no sugar)
- 100% fruit juices
- 100% vegetable juices (low-sodium)
- Low-fat milk
- Coffee and flavored coffees – regular and decaf
- Tea (regular and herbal, hot or cold)
Coffee/tea creamers of low-fat milk or half & half

FOOD FOR CATERED EVENTS

Choose a caterer that can provide healthy options. If using an RFP or RFB process, include healthy food requirements. Sample Language is on page 11. When deciding on the menu, ask if the vendor can provide:

- Vegetable salads or vegetable side dishes
- A lean protein entree, including something substantive for vegetarians
- Foods with little or no saturated fats
- Foods with little no or added sugars
- Fresh fruit and fruit-based items for dessert
- Options for people with dietary restrictions (e.g. non-dairy, gluten-free food)
- Whole grains and their products (breads, crackers, pastas, etc.) instead of white flour products and white rice when possible

EXAMPLE OF A HEALTHY BREAKFAST BUFFET:

- Fresh fruit salad
- Low-fat yogurt
- Spinach and feta egg bake
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Thinly sliced ham
- Whole-grain toast served with assorted fruit spreads
- Mini blueberry bran muffins

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY LUNCH/DINNER BUFFETS:

- Grilled chicken breast
- Mixed-green salad served with a variety of dressing, including low-fat options
- Whole grain breads and rolls
- Minestrone soup with beans and a vegetarian broth (substantive vegetarian option)

- Steamed broccoli
- Baked potatoes with low-fat or vegetable toppings on the side
- Apple cobbler

OR

- Chef soup selection
- Thinly sliced roast beef and turkey sandwiches presented in halves
- Grilled salmon and asparagus
- Pesto pasta salad with cherry tomatoes and low-fat mozzarella (substantive vegetarian option)
- Green salad with a variety of dressings that include low-fat options
- Fruit plate

Note: The new policy asks vendors to label healthy foods clearly and display them prominently on the buffet. When ordering food, ask the caterer about presentation.

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY BEVERAGE OPTIONS:

- Tap water with or without ice
- When tap water is not practical, bottled spring or sparkling water (plain or flavored with no sugar)
- 100% fruit juices
- 100% vegetable juices (low-sodium)
- Low-fat milk
- Coffee and flavored coffees, regular and decaf
- Tea (regular and herbal, hot or cold)
- Coffee/tea creamers of low-fat milk or half & half

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I know if half the food is fruits and vegetables, one-quarter protein, and one-quarter grains?

Be sure to tell the vendor that is your goal and they can help you determine if the foods they provide meet it.

Do I have to make people in my office/attending the meeting or event choose healthy food?

No, but healthy options need to be available for them to choose.

What if my vendor doesn't offer healthy options?

Ask the vendor if they can change their offerings to accommodate the MDH food policy. If they can't, you'll need to find a different vendor.

Do snacks need to be half fruits and vegetables and include a protein?

No, because they are not considered a "meal." However, including vegetables and/or fruit is always recommended. See above for a list of healthy snack options, or consider not offering snacks.

What if I can't find a place that offers healthy food and vegetarian options?

Almost every vendor has some healthy options. If the vendor has very few, ask them to identify healthy items on their menu, or if they can make foods for your order that meet the MDH healthy foods criteria. You may want to consider seeking another vendor with a larger selection of options that meet with MDH policy guidelines.

Can we still have dessert?

Yes, but it is not necessary. If you decide to order dessert, consider offering it in smaller portions. Reducing portion sizes and/or providing fruit or vegetable based desserts are good ways to reduce added sugars in a meal.

What if people want/specifcally ask for soda or candy?

If/when people feel they must have soda or candy, they can bring or purchase it.

TIP:

Behavioral economics research shows what retailers have known for years: the easier it is to get something, the more likely a person is to select it. Ask vendors to place the healthy items in a more prominent position and the less healthy items in a less prominent location. For instance, place fruits and vegetables at the beginning of a buffet table.



TOOLS

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR VENDORS

The Minnesota Department of Health has a healthy catering policy for all meetings and events. Our new policy asks employees to order healthy food for MDH sponsored events.

MDH considers the USDA My Plate guidelines: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/> to be a good standard. Half of the meal consists of fruits and vegetables, one of quarter protein, and one quarter of grains. Our food policy encourages purchasing meals that follow this guideline.

My Plate-friendly meals include:

- Ample fruits and vegetables
- Lean meats and substantive vegetarian options
- Whole grains/whole grain products instead of white rice and white flour products when possible

Our food policy also recommends foods and beverages with:

- Little or no added sugars
- Little or no saturated fats
- Lower sodium

If your restaurant or catering business offers selections that follow these guidelines, please let our employees know when they place orders. Our hope is that your establishment will make healthy food available whenever we order from you and that your business will expand its healthy menu options for MDH events in the future.

CATERING CONTRACTS

All catered events should follow the MDH catering policy. Below is sample language to describe meals and foods that will be served as part of an event. These are examples and can be edited to meet the needs of your event. Please work with finance to be sure the final language complies with MDH policies.

SAMPLE RFB/RFP LANGUAGE

MEALS

Please note that the MDH catering policy requires that all meals include ample vegetables and/or fruits, lean meats and/or other proteins that may include plant-based protein options, and whole grain options. (Foods should contain reduced or no added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium). For further guidance refer to the resources on page 13. All meals must also include low-fat foods and a substantial vegetarian option. Reasonable special food requests (e.g. dairy-free, gluten-free, diabetic foods) shall be submitted to the Contract Vendor no later than one week prior to the conference.

BREAKS

The Contract Vendor shall provide regular and decaffeinated coffee and hot water with assorted teas from 7:00 a.m. and refreshed throughout the day as needed. Ice water must be available in all meeting rooms from 7:00 a.m. and refreshed throughout the day. Refreshment breaks will be served in close proximity or in the same room as the vendor displays.

BREAKFAST:

Breakfast should include fruits and/or vegetables; protein sources such as eggs, low-fat yogurt, lean sausage, and cereal or bread products that include whole grain options. All breakfast foods to be agreed upon by the State.

An example of an acceptable breakfast menu is:

- Hard boiled eggs
- Hot oatmeal served with raisins, nuts, brown sugar and low fat milk
- Granola with low-fat yogurt
- Small size or halves of whole grain bagels with cream cheese, nut butter and fruit spread
- Fruit tray
- Orange juice
- Coffee, hot water with assorted teas
- Water

MORNING BREAK

Morning break shall consist of foods such as fruit selections, low-fat yogurt and a selection of whole grain snack bars.

AFTERNOON BREAK

Afternoon break shall consist of a low-fat snack item, such as pretzels or baked chips, including whole grain options, vegetable and/or fruit tray, and roasted nuts.

Examples of acceptable snacks are:

- Assorted whole fruit
- Vegetables with low-fat or bean-based dips
- Nuts
- Trail mix
- Whole grain crackers with cheese slices

LUNCH

Example 1: Buffet style to include: tossed salad or coleslaw, choice of two lean meats (e.g., beef, turkey, pork, chicken, fish, plant-based protein, etc.), choice of potatoes and whole grains (such as brown rice), two vegetables, rolls and butter, small dessert portions, if any (such as carrot cake, cheesecake, or apple pie, etc.) and beverage.

Example 2: Entrée of southwestern green salad with grilled chicken or black beans and dressing on the side, assorted breads that include whole grain options, small dessert portions, if any (such as carrot cake, cheesecake, apple pie, etc.) and beverage.

These are examples of lunches that can be provided by the Contract Vendor as agreed upon by the State and shall be better defined once the Contract is awarded.

Sample menu:

- Grilled chicken breast
- Blackened cod with fruit salsa
- Mixed green salad with a variety of dressings on the side
- Whole grain breads or rolls
- Minestrone soup (vegetarian)
- Steamed broccoli
- Roasted root vegetables
- Brown rice
- Apple crisp

DINNER

Meals shall consist of a mixture of hot and/or cold food items. Buffet style to include tossed salad or coleslaw, choice of two meats, (e.g., beef, turkey, pork, chicken, fish, plant-based protein, etc.), choice of potatoes or whole grains (such as brown rice), two vegetables, assorted rolls that include whole grain options and butter, small dessert portions, if any, (such as carrot cake, cheesecake, apple pie, etc.) and beverage.

Sample menu:

- Lasagna with ground beef and red sauce
- Chicken with lemon caper sauce
- Mixed green salads with a variety of dressings on the side
- Whole grain breads or rolls
- Minestrone soup (vegetarian)
- Steamed greened beans
- Sautéed carrots
- Baked potatoes
- Fresh fruit tart

This is an example of a dinner that can be provided by the Contract Vendor as agreed upon by the State and shall be better defined once the Contract is awarded.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Caterers and MDH employees can use these additional resources for healthy meal and snack guidelines:

- U of M Healthy Catering Guidelines: <http://www.mmshealthycommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/Healthy-Meeting-Guide.pdf>
- Federal Healthy Foods Guidelines: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2010/DietaryGuidelines2010.pdf>

***HAPPY,
HEALTHY
CATERING TO YOU!***



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