TOOLKIT

WORKPLACE | COMMUNITY GATHERINGS | YOUTH

Healthy NATIVE FOODS

for American Indian Communities

The HEALTHY NATIVE FOODS TOOLKIT for American Indian communities has been developed to serve as a reference tool to aid in healthy meal planning. The toolkit is designed to provide tips, guidelines and meal planning strategies for staff meetings and community gatherings for both adults and children. A large part of our culture involves the love of gathering with our friends and relatives around a meal. The destruction of once healthy Native food pathways has led the health of our people to many negative health implications such as, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. The toolkit may serve as not only a guide to provide healthier menu options, but also as a way to reintroduce these healthier foods back into the daily diets of our American Indian relatives and friends.

The overall goal in designing this guide is to support cancer prevention within our communities. Our hope is the Healthy Native Foods toolkit for American Indian communities will become a valuable resource for you and your organization in contributing to making community and workplace gatherings more healthful.

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American Indian
Cancer Foundation®

Why is it Important to Focus on a Healthy Plate for Community Gatherings?

When preparing a menu for our community gatherings, we need to focus on who we are serving. Chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease have grown at an astounding rate among our Native communities and are also afflicting our youth earlier in their lives than ever before. Therefore, it is essential when planning the menu for community gatherings we utilize guidelines such as the plate method; designed by the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans .

It is common that community gatherings meals to consist of excessive amounts of carbohydrate foods such as, fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, a white bread roll, corn and large dessert portions. Carbohydrate foods raise blood sugar and include foods from the grain group, starchy vegetables such as corn and potatoes, fruit and sugar sweetened desserts. Therefore, utilizing the Plate method to will help ensure we are providing a well-balanced, healthy meal for our community gatherings.

Why Should We Focus on Healthy Eating at Work?

Healthy eating at work results in:

- Higher productivity
- Less sick days
- Reduced healthcare costs for the organization
- Supportive environment to adopt a healthier lifestyle for staff and their families

Unfortunately, the typical workplace only supplies access to quick, processed, vending machine snacks that have very little, if any nutrition.
Organizations can take steps to achieving a healthier workplace by offering healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks at meetings. This gives opportunity for staff to enjoy healthy food that sustains their energy due to the nutrient composition.
Ideally, organizations providing healthy snacks and meal options at work will endorse a healthy foods policy to help facilitate a healthier work environment.

Creating a Healthy Eating Environment for Children

As caregivers of children, it is vitally important we provide a healthy eating model which can become a part of their lifestyle. One of the major goals in feeding our kids is to provide them with the nutrition their bodies require to grow and maintain a healthy weight. According to a recent journal article in the IHS Primary Care Provider, obesity rates have increased significantly over the past thirty years among American Indian children. The report found that 50% of American Indian children have been classified as overweight. Therefore, we need to all work together and support efforts to help our kids become healthier. By implementing the healthy foods tips provided in this toolkit at your organization, we can facilitate healthy eating patterns for our children and their families.

Healthy Meals Menu Suggestions

The meal options recommended are general guidelines to assist meal planning for catered events, staff meetings, and community social gatherings, including those designed for children's events. Meals provided for youth events do not have to be different than meals provided for adults. We need to communicate to our families that our children need to be given the same healthy foods options as the adults.

Breakfast and Brunch:

- Assorted fresh fruit such as bananas, cantaloupe or mandarins
- Assorted low fat Greek yogurt
- Mini whole wheat bagels, mini low fat assorted muffins/baked goods
- Higher fiber cereal options such as bran flakes or low fat granola
- Oatmeal with assorted berries for toppings
- Egg whites, or egg substitute prepared with little added fat and vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers for omelets
- Egg white sandwiches served on whole wheat thin bagels prepared with vegetables and low fat cheese
- Offer fruit spreads, low fat cream cheese and peanut butter
- Offer lower sodium, low fat meats such as Canadian or turkey bacon, lean ham, soy based sausage or chicken sausage
- Offer baked hash browns instead of fried
- Offer 100% fruit and low sodium vegetable juices in 6 – 8 oz cups
- Offer skim, or 1% milk , lactose free milk, and soy or almond milk for those with lactose intolerance
- Regular and Decaf Coffee and assorted teas

Healthy Tip:

To provide more kid friendly meal options, such as pizza or chicken strips, keep the MyPlate guidelines in mind. For example, offer fresh veggies such as baby carrots and lowfat dip and apple slices along with a slice of pizza. By providing fresh vegetables and fruit with the kid favorites, you are still adhering to the dietary guidelines.

Lunch and Dinner:

SALADS AND SIDES:

- Wild Rice Salad or Mixed green salads with low fat dressings and vinaigrette's such as olive oil/canola oil and vinegar, served on the side
- Dinner salads which include protein foods such as beans, shelled edamame, skinless chicken breast and nuts
- Fruit salads made with fresh, cut up fruit
- Three bean salads
- Pasta salads prepared with low fat or vinaigrette dressings with added vegetables
- Greek style salads made with mixed greens, cucumbers, tomatoes, kalamata olives, feta cheese and olive oil vinaigrette

MAIN DISHES:

- Low Sodium soups and Chili made with alternative protein sources such as bison, soy ground crumbles and beans
- Vegetarian Lasagna, prepared with vegetables such as broccoli, spinach and sundried tomatoes and low fat cheeses
- Indian Tacos prepared with ingredients such as bison, beans, chicken, tomatoes, peppers, onion, low fat sour cream, or guacamole
- Casseroles prepared with ingredients such as, vegetables, lean meats, low fat cheeses, and low sodium broth
- Sandwiches prepared with whole wheat bread, pita pockets and assorted vegetables and lean, lower sodium deli meats

DESSERTS:

- Fresh fruit
- Baked Apples and cinnamon
- Apple slices and caramel dipping sauce
- Frozen treats such as low fat ice cream, sorbet and frozen yogurt served in 1/2 cup serving bowls with fruit as a garnish
- Oatmeal cookies with raisins or dark chocolate chips
- Carrot cake prepared with applesauce
- Apple or assorted berry crisp prepared without butter, low fat granola cereal and topped with vanilla Greek yogurt

Heart-healthy Herbs and Spices *Adapted from Heartbeatsback.org

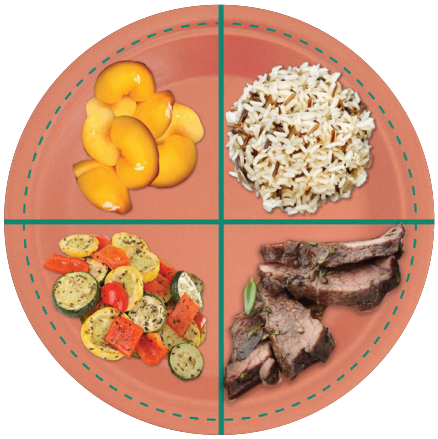
Herbs/Spices	Try with:
Allspice	most foods
Basil	vegetables, fruits, roasts, stews, ground beef and fish
Bay	leaves vegetables, beans, stews, poultry, fish and seafood
Cardamom	fruits and baking
Cayenne pepper	chili, Mexican dishes and fish
Chives	salads, fish, soups and potatoes
Cider vinegar	vegetables and sauces
Cilantro	salsas, vegetables and soups
Cinnamon	fruits, desserts, drinks and poultry
Cloves	fruits, teas, poultry and desserts
Coriander	fruits, meats, fish and seafood
Cream of tartar	stabilizing baked goods
Cumin	rice, meats and poultry
Curry powder	poultry, fish, vegetable and rice
Dill	some vegetables, fish, seafood and soups
Fennel seed	poultry and fruits
Garlic	most foods such as vegetables, soups, sauces, meat, poultry and fish
Ginger	fruits, vegetables, fish, chicken and cookies
Horseradish	meats, vegetables and dips
Lemon juice	meats, fish, vegetables
Mint	meats, fruits, drinks and smoothies
Mustard	seed meats, chicken, sauces and vegetables
Nutmeg	fruits, vegetables, sauce and rice
Onion powder	meats, stews, vegetables and soups
Oregano	pastas, salads, pizza and ground beef
Paprika	potatoes, salads and eggs
Parsley	fish, omelets, soups, ground beef, pasta and sauces
Rosemary	fish, lamb, poultry, pasta, tomato sauce and vegetables
Saffron	rice, fish, soup and seafood
Sage	poultry and soups
Sesame seed	poultry and Eastern foods
Thyme	soups, sauces, poultry and beans
Turmeric	Eastern dishes, fish, lamb and rice
Vanilla	cakes, drinks and dessert

Storage and cooking with herbs & spices checklist

- Store dry herbs and spices in tightly covered containers- in a cool, dry dark place. Flavor is destroyed by: heat, bright light and air.
- Date dry herbs and spices when purchased and use within 1 year.
- Check freshness of dry spices and herbs by rubbing between fingers and smelling aroma...if not very aromatic, throw away and purchase new.
- In menu items that require longer cooking times, (soups, stews) add spices toward end of cooking.
- Add spices and herbs a few hours ahead of time to ensure flavors blend to chilled foods such as salads and dips.
- When doubling recipe's it is not necessary to double spices, instead start with 50% more.
- If you need to substitute fresh for dry herbs, figure 1 tablespoon fresh herb = 1 teaspoon of dried.

Reference: 1. Duyff, RL. American Dietetic Association Complete Food & Nutrition Guide. 4th ed. Hoboken, NJ:John Wiley & Sons, inc; 2012: 376-378

My Native Plate Portion Tool



Indian Health Services has developed the My Native Plate, which is based on the USDA's My Plate. The plate illustrates appropriate portions containing the foods from each of the food groups recommended by the Dietary Guidelines. In an effort to help portion control at community gathering's and staff meetings, provide smaller, single serve portions for events that use self service.

Actual size "My Native Plate" PDF is available for download at:
www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Diabetes/HomeDocs/Resources/InstantDownloads/MyNativePlate1_508c.pdf

Quick and Easy Ways to Have a Healthy Native Plate

- Use 9 inch plates, to help avoid oversized portions.
- Half the plate should be colorful with fruits and vegetables, such as broccoli, carrots, bell peppers and tomatoes.
- One quarter of the plate should consist of lean protein sources such as, bison, chicken breast, fish, beans or soy based meat alternatives.
- The last quarter of the plate should be a whole grain option such as wild rice, brown rice, quinoa and whole wheat bread or buns.
- Remember, fruit can be served as a side dish, topping on a salad or as part of dessert.

Healthy Snacks for Children

Providing nutritious snacks for children will help give the nutrients they need, while also avoiding excessive hunger once meal time arrives. Children, like adults can eat more than they need if they become overly hungry, and this can lead to becoming overweight. The majority of children in our country consume one quarter of their calories per day from snacks. Unfortunately, the snacks they are eating are high in sugar, calories and fat, and provide little, if any, nutrition. Therefore, it is essential we provide healthy snacks to help support their growing bodies.

Healthy snack ideas:

- Cut or sliced vegetables served with hummus or low fat dressing
- Fresh fruit such as grapes, mandarins and bananas
- Trail mix served in snack size bag
- Fat free Greek yogurt
- String cheese
- Apple slices and peanut butter
- Celery topped with peanut butter and dried fruit
- Whole grain foods such as popcorn, and whole oat cereals Baked, whole grain tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip
- Mini whole wheat bagels with peanut butter or light cream cheese

Healthy Tip:

Look for the word "whole" before the first ingredient to help identify food products that include the whole grain

Healthier Options: Vending Machine & Workplace

Consider these selections:	Avoid or limit:
• 100% fruit and vegetable juices (adults: 6-8 oz size, kids: 4-6 oz size) • Low fat milk and milk alternatives (almond or soy) • Water or carbonated water • Adults: Coffee and tea (unsweetened, flavored or unflavored)	• Soda pop • Energy Drinks • Sports drinks
• Trail mix, nuts such as peanuts and almonds • Baked potato chips, pretzels and whole wheat crackers	• Chips • Cheese cracker sandwiches
• Dried fruit such as raisins and cranberries • Whole grain fruit bars	• Fruit snacks
• Low fat cookies and granola bars • Bison jerky such as Tanka Bars	• Candy and Candy bars • Cookies • Bakery items (donuts, fruit pies, pastries)

Catering Considerations

- Offer lean protein sources such as bison, skinless chicken breast, beans and fish
- Always include a vegetarian option
- Serve meals in healthier portions. Refer to the portion plate included in this toolkit
- Foods should be prepared by grilling, baking or roasting
- Make certain you are aware of any dietary restrictions such as food allergies staff members or guests may have
- Sauces, condiments or dressings should be offered on the side
- Provide foods that are low in saturated fat, do not include trans fat and are low in sodium

Healthy Tip:

Offer a fresh fruit and/or veggie tray with low fat dip or hummus on a table in front of the vending machine!

Healthy Tip:

Keep in mind you can work with your caterer on making adjustments to help make menu items healthier. Ask your caterer how they prepare food. Is there a low sodium option? Can they prepare soup and other food items using herbs and seasonings rather than salt?

How to make your food budget stretch, while getting good nutrition

Many families struggle with making their food dollars stretch each week. One of the biggest hurdles can be finding healthy foods while staying within a limited food budget. Here are a few tips to help get you started on maximizing your food dollars:

Make a Plan Before Shopping.

- Create a food budget
- Write a grocery list
- Review recipes for ingredients needed and make a list.
- Keeping a running list in your kitchen of items needed.
- Doubling recipes to save time later and using leftovers for busy nights and lunches

Practicing portion sizing.

- Using smaller plates, bowls and glasses will help keep portion sizes down. By using the plate method and watching portion sizes, food costs will decrease and calories will become more balanced.

Shop Smart.

- Shop for fruits and vegetables that are in season and buy in small amounts to avoid spoilage
- During winter months, purchase frozen fruits and vegetables. If canned, choose fruit canned in 100% fruit juice and vegetables labeled “low sodium” or “no salt added”
- Utilizing recipes that contain less expensive foods such as: beans, peas, lentils, potatoes, eggs, peanut butter, tuna, oats, brown rice along with canned or frozen fruits and vegetables
- Purchase foods such as grains, dried fruits and nuts from bulk bins

Be a Saver.

- Check grocery store specials and plan weekly menu around those foods
- Compare and purchase store brand or generic brands over private label brands
- Make every effort to shop once or twice per week to help save fuel cost and time
- Do not forget to clip coupons!

Make Snacking Easy and Cheap.

- Making homemade snacks such as purchasing large tubs of yogurt instead of individual sizes and making your own trail mix with nuts and dried fruit
- Rinse off fresh fruit such as grapes and place in refrigerator for quick, easy snack grabbing

5 Practical Ways to Start Making Changes

1. When catering events, ask the caterer to enhance their foods with herbs and spices rather than adding salt to help ensure lower sodium meal options.
2. Provide condiments and other canned or processed foods such as pickles, ketchup and salad dressings that are labeled, “low sodium,” “reduced sodium,” or “no salt added.”
3. Offer more fresh fruit, vegetables, meats and fish options at each meal or snack.
4. Offer processed and ready to eat foods such as luncheon meats, pizza and canned soups less often or in smaller amounts.
5. Replace fried, high fat bakery items such as donuts and pastries with baked goods such as whole wheat bagels, mini muffins and oatmeal cookies.

Please remember change takes time. The recommendations set forth in this toolkit are not to be provided as an all or nothing effort. The healthy food options your organization is planning to implement will need to be integrated slowly. By adding some of the healthy food tips in this toolkit to your events and meetings, your organization can positively alter the lifestyles of those you serve.

Healthy Tip:

The underlying message that should be taken from this toolkit is simply, food should make us feel good.
The meal or snacks consumed should not make us feel tired and lethargic, but rather energized and alert.

Resources

Here is a list of reputable resources that may be useful in your organizations:

Dream of Wild Health: www.dreamofwildhealth.org
5 Food Groups: www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/
Dietary Guidelines: www.cnpp.usda.gov/DietaryGuidelines.htm
Kids Eat Right: www.eatright.org/kids/
I.H.S. Journal Article on AI/AN Overweight Crisis: www.ihs.gov/provider/documents/2010_2019/PROV0610.pdf
Heart Health: www.heartsbeatback.org