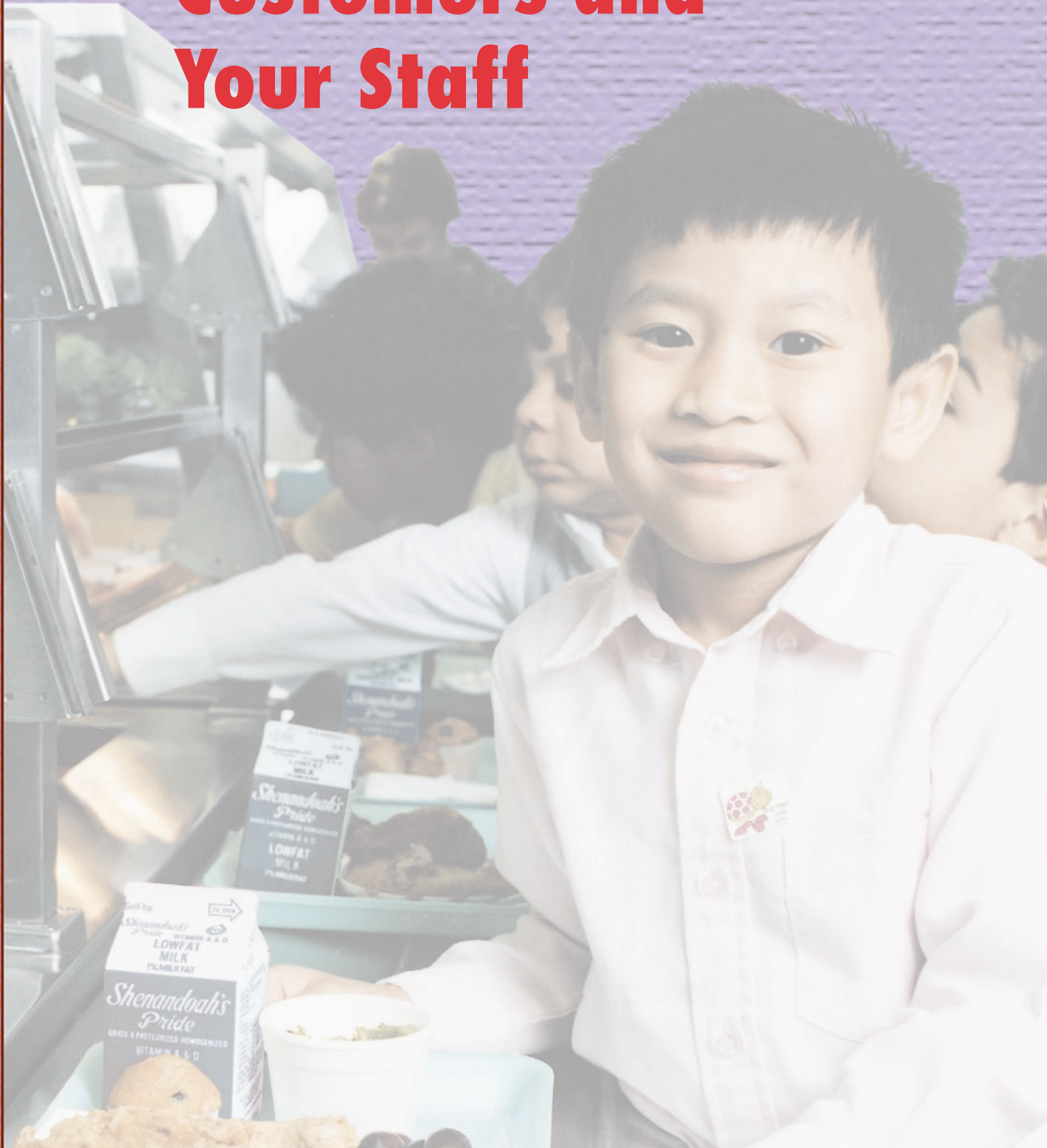


Quality Meals — Good for Your Customers and Your Staff



Chapter 6

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Quality Meals — Good for Your Customers *and* Your Staff

Once you've *planned* a healthy meal, you're off to a good start. But don't relax yet. What you and your staff do next, in the kitchen and on the serving line, is crucial.

That's because the first rule in getting students to accept healthy school meals is to *produce* quality products — breakfasts and lunches that look good, taste good, and are nutritious. This chapter offers some tips on meeting this challenge.

Your ultimate goal, of course, is providing healthy meals to satisfied customers, but chances are you will boost your employees' morale, too. A food service staff that strives for excellence every day can find great satisfaction and pride in serving meals.

Begin by Setting Quality Standards

■ Achieving excellence starts with defining what “excellent” means.

Work with your employees to set standards for quality, and then look for ways to meet these standards every day. Training will be important. Make sure your employees understand the standards and know how to meet them.

- **Set quality standards for food.** Set standards not only for taste, but also for appearance, texture, and temperature. In doing this, consider your customers' preferences — for example, some people like their pizza crust thicker and chewier than others. Be sure to get feedback from students. Listen to their comments, watch their actions and reactions, and then try to incorporate this feedback as you work to make a more satisfactory product.
- **Use proven, standardized recipes and good quality ingredients.** Before serving a new item, involve staff in planning the procedures for preparing it. Make sure all new food items are tasted before they are served.



- **Keep quality in mind.** Check daily to be sure top quality is maintained. Post your “standards for excellence” and encourage the staff to read them often.

You will not be able to serve quality meals if your suppliers give you inferior products. Prior to sending out bids or getting price quotations, review potential suppliers to ensure they are as concerned about quality as you are.

- **Teach your employees to use good judgment about cooking times and preparation techniques.** They’ll need to know how to test for top quality by smell, sight, taste, and temperature. Photos of correctly prepared food are good teaching tools.
- **Make sure employees understand basic differences between home cooking and institutional cooking.** These include, among other things, differences in quantities, temperatures, equipment, and procedures (such as working with pre-cooked portions, and staggering cooking and holding times).
- **Emphasize the importance of food safety.** Make sure your staff understands that food safety is important at *every* step — from purchasing and receiving, to storing, handling, preparing, cooking, and serving.

As you work to ensure quality and safety, you might find helpful these additional materials developed by USDA for school food service professionals: (1) *Serving It Safe*, a comprehensive multi-media training course on food safety; (2) *Choice Plus*, a reference guide to purchasing foods and ingredients; and *Fruits & Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More*. These are described in more detail in Appendix 3 and are available through the Resource Library on the Team Nutrition Web site at teamnutrition.usda.gov/library.html.

Serve Quality Food

- **Good food is the key ingredient in keeping customers satisfied and coming back for more.**

Throughout this chapter, you will find tips on preparing and serving food in ways that protect and enhance flavor. For starters, here are just a few examples:

- **Carefully select how you will prepare and hold each food.** For example, plan to cook vegetables in batches and avoid holding for more than 15 to 20 minutes before serving. This will help retain flavor, color, and nutrients. Remember, food continues to cook while it’s on the serving line.
- **Don’t overcook.** Accidents and mistakes happen. But if a food burns or falls short in other ways, don’t make the second mistake of serving that food. As we’ll see below, overcooking can also cause food to lose nutritional value.



- **Always taste before serving.** Make sure food has been prepared and seasoned correctly.
- **Serve foods at the proper temperature.** Serve hot foods hot (135°F and above) and cold foods cold (below 41°F). Proper temperatures are important for food safety as well as taste and appearance.
- **Feature freshness!** For example, serve salad greens that are crisp and green.
- **Serve eye-appealing foods.** Like adults, children as well as older students notice and are influenced by how foods look.
- **Think about the big picture.** Offer menu choices that maximize the flavor and appearance of the entire menu.

Choose “Healthy” Preparation Techniques

- **Consider the merits of various cooking techniques and select carefully. Be careful to retain nutrients during preparation and cooking.**



There's no one “right” way to cook a particular food. However, certain techniques can increase your chances of preparing healthy meals — by helping to minimize nutrient loss, for instance, or enhancing flavor without adding a lot of fat.

For example, baking can be used to cook many foods, including meats and fish. When no fat is added, baking is a great low-fat cooking method. Baking on a rack or draining the fat after baking helps make meat, poultry, and fish even lower in fat.

Steam cooking is another no-fat-added method which is versatile and quick. It produces a high quality product without extra fat. It also minimizes nutrient loss. For example, steamed vegetables generally retain more vitamin C than boiled vegetables.



Trim the Fat!

- Learn strategies for limiting fat, such as selecting certain oils for cooking and choosing lower fat ingredients.



Fat is an important nutrient and sometimes an essential ingredient in cooking. But too much fat in the diet may cause serious health problems. This is why, in keeping with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the nutrient standards for healthy school meals include specific levels for fat.

As we've seen in earlier chapters, these nutrient standards set levels for total fat *and* saturated fat. When menus are averaged over a week:

- No more than 30 percent of calories should come from total fat.
- Less than 10 percent of calories should come from saturated fat.



Starting on page 168, we'll explore some strategies for reducing fat in school meals. We'll begin by looking at the different types of fat, such as *saturated*, *trans*, *monounsaturated*, and *polyunsaturated*; and we'll see which of these are the best choices for low-fat cooking.

You will also find a variety of practical tips, many of them as simple as draining meats after cooking. In addition, there are suggestions for new ways to make old favorites, such as a reduced-fat pie crust.



Pictured here from USDA *Recipes for Schools (2006)* are Fish Scandia, Corn and Green Bean Casserole, and a variety of desserts. Beef Stir-Fry is shown on page 164. For more information on the recipes, see Appendix 3.





Showcase What You Are Serving

■ Make sure the foods you are serving look good from start to finish.

You may have heard someone say about a meal: “The food may *taste* good, but it sure doesn’t *look* good.” Let’s face it — we all eat with our eyes as well as our palates. Keep this in mind as you plan menus. Put together complimentary foods, pleasing color combinations, and a variety of shapes, tastes, and textures.

Also give thought to what your customers will see as they move through the serving line. For example, group menu choices so students can make decisions easily. Use neatly printed signs that are simple to read and understand. Make sure students don’t have to wait to pick up several items grouped at one spot. In addition:

- **Display foods neatly and in a manner that showcases their colors, textures, and shapes.** For example, garnish steamtable pans to increase eye-appeal. Put food neatly onto plates or trays.
- **Use pans that fit properly into steamtable wells.** Make sure they are not too big, and not too small.
- **Use pans and utensils that look good on the serving line.** Make sure they are clean and free of unappetizing baked-on foods.
- **Use crushed ice to keep cold foods cold.** It looks nice, too!



The rest of this chapter gives you how-to ideas you can use to cook for quality and good health! Here's a quick guide:



How to Protect the Nutrients in Food

- What Causes Nutrient Loss
And What Can You Do About It? page 165
- When Working With Grains page 166
- When Cooking Fruits and Vegetables page 167

How to Trim the Fat

- A Closer Look at Fat and Cholesterol page 168
- Smart Choices for Low-fat Cooking page 170
- Tips for Low-fat Baking page 172
- How to Use Less Fat
When Sautéing and Stir-Fryingpage 175
- Cut Back on Deep-Fat Cooking
And Use Less Fat page 175
- Some Helpful Examples page 177
- Meeting the Fat Challenge page 180

How to Lower Salt and Sodium

- Tips for Using Moderate Amounts
of Salt and Sodium page 182
- Tips for Seasoning Vegetables..... page 183
- Try These Spicy Blends! page 184

How to Equip Your Kitchen

- Tips on Choosing and Using Equipment
For Healthy School Meals..... page 185



How to Protect the Nutrients in Food

WHAT CAUSES NUTRIENT LOSS AND WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

Water-soluble vitamins such as vitamin C and the B vitamins are easily destroyed by excess water, air, heat, and light. They are also affected by the pH balance of the cooking liquid. Fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K are more stable. No matter how careful you are, food preparation of any kind destroys some nutrients. Excessive losses, however, can be reduced through proper preparation techniques.

To avoid losing nutrients, be careful with...

- ... **Water.** Soaking food in water dissolves water-soluble vitamins and minerals. Avoid it except when absolutely necessary. If foods, such as vegetables, must be soaked or remain in water during cooking, use as small amount of water as possible and use the leftover cooking liquid in soup or in another product.
- ... **Heat.** Heating food causes nutrient loss, especially vitamin C. For example, the vitamin C content of canned peas will differ significantly from that of cooked frozen peas. Frozen peas are higher in vitamin C because heat from the canning process has already destroyed some of the vitamin C in canned peas.
- ... **Light.** Milk is an excellent source of riboflavin; but if it is allowed to stand open or is exposed to light, considerable destruction of riboflavin can occur. A light-obstructing container, such as a cardboard carton, can help prevent this. If you are using another type of container, be sure to store it away from light.
- ... **pH Balance.** Baking soda should not be added to green vegetables to retain color during cooking. It makes the cooking water alkaline, destroying thiamin and vitamin C.
- ... **Air.** Vitamins A, C, E, K, and the B vitamins — thiamin, pyridoxine, biotin, and folate (also called folic acid) — are destroyed by exposure to air. To reduce nutrient loss:
 - 1) Cut and cook vegetables in pieces that are as large as possible.
 - 2) Store foods with proper covers.
 - 3) Cook vegetables as soon after cutting as possible.
 - 4) Cook vegetables until “just tender.”
 - 5) Prepare food as close to serving time as possible.



How to Protect the Nutrients in Food

WHEN WORKING WITH GRAINS

Health experts encourage Americans to choose whole grains and breads as a major component of a nutritious diet. This is why grains and breads form one of the widest bands of MyPyramid. To provide maximum benefit, they must be prepared correctly. Some tips:

To retain the nutrients in grains, be careful with...

- ... **Washing and rinsing.** Never wash rice before cooking. Rice is enriched by spraying with vitamins and minerals. As a result, when you wash rice, the enrichment goes right down the drain. Rinsing cooked grains and pastas also causes considerable loss of nutrients and is not recommended.
- ... **Toasting.** Browning uncooked rice before adding water can destroy a lot of the thiamin content.

To make your meals more nutritious...

- ... **Substitute whole-wheat flour for part of the white flour in recipes.** When introducing whole grains, try starting with 10 percent whole-grain flour or grains and gradually increase the amount over time.

Using part all-purpose flour and part whole-wheat flour is more acceptable in some products than 100-percent whole wheat, although this does not apply to all products. For example, some food service operations have found that children liked a pizza crust made with 1/2 whole-wheat flour and 1/2 white flour, but not a 100-percent whole-wheat crust.

- ... **Make oat flour by grinding oatmeal in a blender or vertical cutter mixer.** You can use oat flour with other flours for breading, baking, and thickening sauces.



How to Protect the Nutrients in Food

WHEN COOKING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Advances in food technology make it possible to obtain fruits and vegetables in many forms. You can get them fresh, frozen, or canned; whole or pre-cut; bulk or pre-portioned. In any form, fruits and vegetables need to be handled and stored correctly to retain nutrients and ensure food safety.

You might be surprised to learn that value-added produce (fresh cut ready-to-use fruits and vegetables) can be a vehicle for food-borne illness if improperly stored or handled. To help you evaluate a supplier of value-added produce, see Appendix 10 for tips on sanitation, temperature, and dating.

For best results when cooking fruits and vegetables...

- **When cooking vegetables, prepare small amounts.** Avoid long exposure to heat. Fresh or frozen vegetables can be cooked by several different methods. You can steam, bake, or saute them. Regardless of the cooking method you choose, it's better to prepare small amounts than to cook single large batches. Nutritive value is lost and quality is lowered with long exposure to heat.
- **To retain nutrients and bright colors, cook “just until tender.”** A good way to cook vegetables is using a convection steamer.
- **Use carefully timed “batch cooking” to avoid having vegetables held too long on the serving line.** A good rule of thumb: The quantity you cook should not exceed the amount you can serve in 15 minutes. This applies to both vegetables served alone and to vegetables used in recipes such as beef or chicken stir-fry.



How to Trim the Fat

A CLOSER LOOK AT FAT AND CHOLESTEROL

Medical experts agree that eating too much fat, especially saturated fat and cholesterol, can take its toll on our health. While it's true that we need some cholesterol, the human body can make its own supply. Having a large amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in our diet is linked to increased blood cholesterol levels and a greater risk of heart disease.

It is also important to pay attention to the amount of *trans* fat in food. *Trans* fats are created when oils are “partially hydrogenated” to turn liquid oils into solid margarine or shortening. Foods that are high in *trans* fat include hard or stick margarine, cakes, cookies, pies, and other fatty foods made with partially hydrogenated (partially hardened) oils. *Trans* fat contributes to elevated blood cholesterol levels and can increase heart disease risk.

As you work to reduce fat in school meals, your first strategy should be to decrease the total amount of fat you use. But keep in mind, reducing saturated fat and *trans* fat is also your goal.

To reduce fat, especially saturated and trans fat...

■ **Be aware of the fat and cholesterol content of foods.**

Meat, poultry, fish, milk, cheese, egg yolk, and organ meats are all major sources of cholesterol. Serving less fat from these sources can help lower blood cholesterol as well as reduce total fat and saturated fat intake.

For sure, we *don't* want to stop serving these foods — they contain valuable nutrients. But we can make changes in the *way* we prepare and serve them.

For example, we can use leaner cuts of meat; trim fat and skin from chicken; offer low-fat or fat-free milk; and modify recipes in a variety of ways. You will find suggestions like these in Chapter 4 as well as this chapter.

In addition, in response to a growing interest in leaner diets, lower fat versions of many foods are now available. As you plan your menus, take advantage of opportunities to reduce fat. After all, it's just as easy to make or purchase pizza with low-fat cheese, and it will help you meet nutrition goals for fat!

■ **Be aware of differences in cooking oils. Instead of using a saturated fat — such as butter, solid or “stick” margarine, palm oil, palm kernel oil, or coconut oil — it's better to choose an unsaturated fat, like olive or safflower oil, when possible.**

Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature and are generally of animal origin. However, three vegetable oils — palm, palm kernel, and coconut — also contain a lot of saturated fat.

Unsaturated fats are usually liquid oils at room temperature and are of vegetable origin. Some are what is called “mono-unsaturated” — olive, peanut, and canola oils are examples. Others are “polyunsaturated” — safflower, sunflower, soybean, cottonseed, and corn oils are examples.



- **Check food labels and ingredient lists for overall fat, saturated fat, and *trans* fat. Choose products that are lower in fat and include less saturated fat and *trans* fat.**

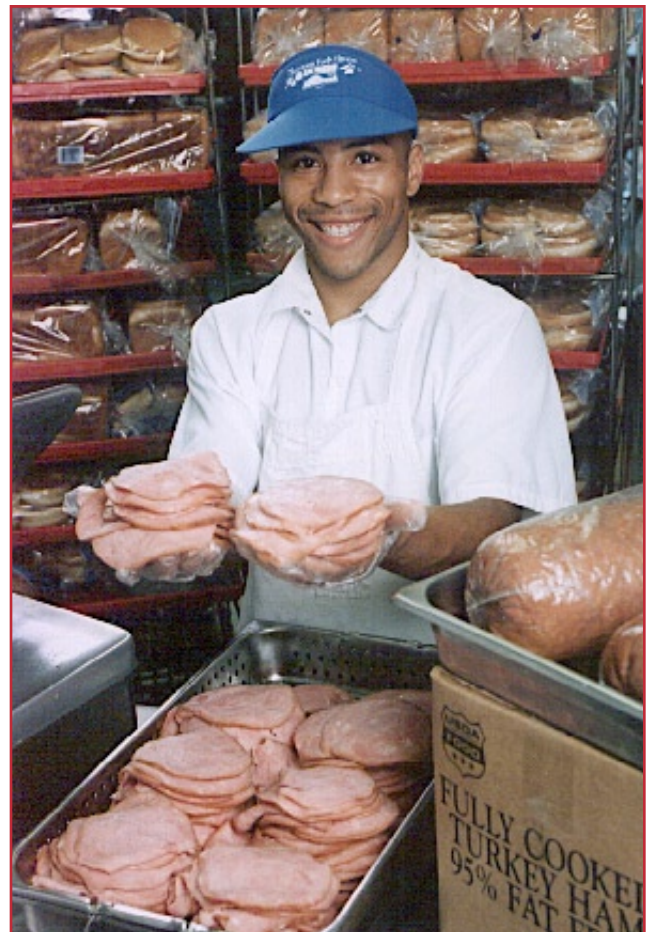
You will want to know what type of fat a product contains. Watch out for ingredients that tell you a product may be high in saturated fat or *trans* fat — for example, check for coconut oil, palm oil, cream, cocoa butter, beef fat, poultry fat, lard, or butter.

Better choices for reducing saturated fat and *trans* fat would be products that include unsaturated oils: safflower, corn, soybean, cottonseed, sesame, canola, and olive.

- **Think about reducing fat at every step!**



Using leaner cuts of meat (such as the 95% fat-free turkey ham from USDA pictured at right) is a good way to reduce fat. See pages 170 to 181 for more suggestions.



How to Trim the Fat

Smart Choices for **LOW-FAT** *Cooking*

There are lots of ways to be creative when you're cutting back on fat. You've probably already discovered many! Add these ideas to your list if they are not already on it.

- When adding fats to recipes, select unsaturated fats such as liquid oils or soft margarine.
- Make marinades without oil.
- Cook rice, grains, and beans in defatted broth and add herbs, garlic, or onions for more taste.
- Make a low-fat “cream” topping using cottage cheese, yogurt, lemon juice, and fat-free milk. (See recipe next page.)
- Make a “tomato-cream” sauce with low-fat milk or fat-free evaporated milk flavored with a few tablespoons of tomato sauce. (See recipe next page).
- When possible, skin chicken before cooking.
- Drain all meats after cooking.
- De-fat whenever possible. If your school has the ability to quickly chill and reheat foods in a safe manner, allow time to let your stews, soups, and braised dishes cool so that the fats will rise to the top, congeal, and be easy to spoon off.





Low-fat “Cream” Topping

Low-fat Version A	Low-fat Version B	Low-fat Version C
<i>Stir until blended:</i>	<i>Blend well:</i>	<i>Stir until blended:</i>
1 cup low-fat cottage cheese	1 cup plain low-fat yogurt	1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
1 Tbsp. fat-free milk	1 Tbsp. low-fat mayonnaise	1 cup fat-free plain yogurt
2 Tbsp. lemon juice		



Low-fat “Tomato-Cream” Sauce

Mix together:

1 cup low-fat milk or fat-free evaporated milk

1 Tbsp. cornstarch

3 to 4 Tbsp. tomato sauce

An excellent source of low-fat recipes and ideas is *USDA Recipes for Schools (2006)*. See Appendix 3 for more information.



How to Trim the Fat

Tips for LOW-FAT Baking



Did you know...

- ... you can generally cut the fat in your recipes by 1/4 to 1/3 *without* losing the great taste in baked items?
- ... that chilled, undiluted evaporated fat-free milk can be a great substitute for cream?
- ... that some yeast breads such as French bread and English muffins can be made successfully without fat?

You may also be interested to find out that...

- ... decreasing the fat too much in *rolled* cookies can make a dough that is difficult to roll out. Switching to *soft drop* cookies allows you to cut fat with better results.
- ... you can use fruit purees, such as prune puree or applesauce, in place of up to half the fat in some baked goods.



For best results in reducing total fat and/or saturated fat...

Replace butter and lard with soft margarine or vegetable oil.

Use a non-stick cooking spray on baking pans.

Check ingredient labels and recipes for high-fat foods. When possible, choose similar products without high-fat ingredients.

Just how little fat can you use and still have great taste?

The examples on the next page will give you a clue.

Simple substitutions can make a big difference.

For example, using low-fat yogurt instead of sour cream reduces the amount of fat by 18 grams per 1/2 cup. See below for this and other examples.

**How Little Fat Can You Use...
And Still Have Great Taste?**

<i>For these baked items:</i>	<i>Minimum fat needed is:</i>
Muffins, Biscuits, Quick Breads.....	2 Tbsp. per 1 cup flour
Cakes, Soft Drop Cookies	2 Tbsp. per 1 cup flour
Pie Crust	4 Tbsp. per 1 cup flour





Substitutions Can Make A Big Difference

When you replace this...	With this...	You will lower fat grams by:	You will lower calories by:
Whole milk	Fat-free milk	8	64 per cup
Whole egg, 1	Egg whites, 2	6	47
Cream cheese	Fat-free cream	10	90 per 2 Tbsp.
Ricotta cheese	1% cottage cheese	14	52 per 1/2 cup
Cheddar cheese	Mozzarella, skim	4	42 per oz.
Heavy cream	Half and half	32	15 per Tbsp.
Sour cream	Low-fat yogurt	18	172 per 1/2 cup
Mayonnaise	Reduced-fat mayonnaise	6	60 per Tbsp.
Baking chocolate (1 oz.)	Cocoa (3 Tbsp.)	7	63 per Tbsp.
Evaporated milk	Evaporated fat-free milk	2.5	40 per 2 Tbsp.

How to Trim the Fat

HOW TO USE LESS FAT WHEN SAUTÉING AND STIR-FRYING

Brush the pan with oil just to coat it or use a nonstick spray made from vegetable oil. Typically, using a vegetable oil spray will add less than 10 fat calories to a pan of sautéed vegetables. In contrast, 2 tablespoons of oil add an extra 240 fat calories.

When stir-frying, keep the oil in your kettle very hot. Vegetables soak up cold oil more quickly than hot oil.

Cut back on buttering vegetables by using one part margarine and one part lemon juice.

Experiment with ways to add flavor and moisture without adding fat. Marinades are a good way to do this. Also try using chicken or meat broth, concentrated fruit juice, or perhaps fresh fruit or vegetable juice.



CUT BACK ON DEEP-FAT COOKING ...AND USE LESS FAT

Use deep-fat frying infrequently since it increases the fat content of food. But when you do deep fry, it's best to use unsaturated vegetable fat. Because this type of fat has a higher smoke point, it can be used at a higher temperature, resulting in less fat absorption. Canola oil, for example, works well for deep-fat cooking.

Here are some additional tips to reduce fat absorption:

- 1. Use a deep pot or fryer and make sure it is only half full of oil.** Fat expands when heated and frequently boils up or foams when foods are added.
- 2. Heat the oil to the highest recommended temperature for the food being fried.** This is important because when food is added, it cools down the oil, and more fat is absorbed. See page 176 for recommended temperatures for some common foods.
- 3. Do not overload.** Overloading a fryer may also drop the temperature and result in excessive grease absorption. Follow product directions for the quantity to fry in a batch.



4. **Allow the oil to reheat between batches.** In addition, be sure your automatic thermostats are working correctly.
5. **Add dry foods to the fryer.** This will help prevent spatter and foam.
6. **Gently shake the basket before taking it out of the fryer.** This will help remove excess fat.
7. **Drain food on absorbent paper over racks.** Change the paper frequently because fat-soaked paper will not continue to absorb excess fat.
8. **Strain the fat to remove foreign materials.** Foreign materials can lower its smoke point.

**To Minimize Fat Absorption When Deep-Fat Frying,
Make Sure the Temperature is High Enough**

FOR EXAMPLE:

<i>For these foods...</i>	<i>The recommended temperature range (F) is:</i>
Uncooked chicken, fish, pre-cooked breaded chicken	350° to 360°
Precooked shrimp, croquettes, tempura, fritters	375° to 385°
French-fried potatoes, onion rings	385° to 395°
Potato and tortilla chips	395° to 400°

How to Trim the Fat

Some Helpful
EXAMPLES

It's smart to cut back on fat. But exactly how can you do this? The examples below illustrate some successful ways. On the left you will find the name of a common food. Thirteen are listed alphabetically, from buttered bread to sour cream. On the right are smart choices you might make when preparing or serving that particular food.

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS FOOD?

SOME SMART CHOICES FOR REDUCING FAT INCLUDE...

Buttered Bread

- Butter bread lightly with *whipped* butter.
(If you are using USDA commodity butter, allow the butter to soften at room temperature. Use a wire whip or paddle on mixer to whip until about double in size.)
- Replace butter with jam or jelly.

Buttered Vegetables

- Steam vegetables using no butter.
- Use half the amount of butter.
- Use crumb or herb topping (start by combining 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, 4 teaspoons finely grated lemon rind, and 1 clove of peeled, minced garlic).

Cake Mixes

- Substitute low-fat yogurt, applesauce, or prune/plum puree for some of the oil.
- Use two egg whites in place of each whole egg.

Cheese

- Purchase lower fat brand.
- Serve cheese less often.
- Mix part-skim mozzarella with regular cheese.



EXAMPLES *continued*

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS FOOD?

SOME SMART CHOICES FOR REDUCING FAT INCLUDE...

Chicken Nuggets

- Purchase lower fat brand.
- Bake instead of fry, or drain after frying and pat with paper towels.
- Serve less often.

Chicken Patties

- Purchase lower fat brand.
- Purchase non-breaded chicken cutlets.
- Bake instead of fry, or drain after frying and pat with paper towels.

Fish

- Bake instead of fry.
- Offer catsup or salsa as a condiment in place of tartar sauce.
- Mix tartar sauce with plain low-fat yogurt.
- Use individual condiments in a small quantity as an optional item.

French Fries

- Bake instead of fry.
- Select brands prepared in vegetable shortening or oil.
- Make your own cut-up potatoes and bake with little or no oil. Season with garlic powder, onion powder, and a small amount of salt and pepper.
- Look for opportunities to offer lower fat alternatives, such as baked potatoes.

Hot Dog

- Consider a chicken or turkey hot dog.
- Check the fat grams on the label.
- Consider a part-soy product.
- Serve less often.



EXAMPLES *continued*

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS FOOD?

SOME SMART CHOICES FOR REDUCING FAT INCLUDE...

Milk

- Replace whole milk or reduced-fat (2%) milk in puddings, soups, and baked products with fat-free milk, low-fat (1%) milk, or reconstituted fat-free dry milk.

Pizza

- Select pizza made with part-skim mozzarella cheese.
- Select pizza made with reduced-fat cheddar cheese or with a blend of reduced-fat cheddar cheese mixed with part-skim mozzarella.
- Select vegetable-topped pizza.
- Select turkey-topped pizza.

Salad Dressing

Keep in mind that most ladles on salad bars hold at least 2 tablespoons of dressing. One tablespoon of regular salad dressing typically contains 5 to 11 grams of fat or 45 to 99 calories. Since you can't control the amount of dressing a student puts on a salad, it is important to offer a reduced-fat salad dressing. To do this you might...

- Use less oil than recipe suggests.
- Use ranch-style dressing with low-fat yogurt substituted for half the mayonnaise.
- Use reduced-calorie (light) mayonnaise-type dressing.
- Purchase acceptable-tasting fat-free dressings.
- Substitute plain low-fat yogurt for part or all of the mayonnaise in creamy salad dressings.

Sour Cream

- Replace with low-fat or fat-free sour cream, plain low-fat or fat-free yogurt, blender-whipped low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese, or 1% buttermilk.



How to Trim the Fat

Meeting the **FAT** Challenge

You are reading through a new recipe and you come upon an ingredient that might contribute more fat calories than you want. Your challenge is to use that ingredient in a different way, make adjustments, or perhaps find a substitute.

YOUR CHALLENGE IS...

SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS ARE...

Ground beef or pork is in the recipe.

- Drain meat well after browning.
- Replace half of the meat with lean ground turkey, drained after browning.
- Replace 1/4 of the meat with mashed beans. For example, canned USDA Great Northern, pinto, or red beans are great in tacos. Use 1/4 cup of beans as equivalent to 1 ounce of meat if using Traditional or Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning. (The 1-ounce equivalent does not apply to NSMP and Assisted NSMP.)
- If possible, buy leaner ground meat.
- If using Traditional or Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning, use only as much Meat/Meat Alternate as needed to meet the meal pattern requirement. (This requirement does not apply to NSMP and Assisted NSMP.)

Fat is in the recipe.

- Reduce the amount of oil, butter, or shortening used.
 - Eliminate butter, oil, or shortening completely when possible. Replace with fruit purees, when appropriate.
 - For overall health, be sure the type of oil used is unsaturated.
-



YOUR CHALLENGE IS...	SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS ARE...
Mayonnaise is in the recipe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use 1/2 to 2/3 of the amount of mayonnaise specified. ■ Replace 1/2 of the mayonnaise with plain low-fat or fat-free yogurt. ■ Use reduced-fat mayonnaise.
Cheddar cheese is in the recipe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use only as much cheese as needed to meet the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement for Traditional or Enhanced Food-Based Menu Planning. (This requirement does not apply to NSMP and Assisted NSMP.) ■ Instead of all cheddar, use 1/2 or less cheddar and more part-skim mozzarella. ■ Use lower fat cheese.
American cheese is in the recipe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use only as much cheese as needed to meet the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement. (This requirement applies only to Food-Based Menu Planning, not to NSMP and Assisted NSMP.) ■ Use lower fat cheese.
Recipe calls for roux (flour and fat thickener).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Replace part or all of the roux with cornstarch slurry (cornstarch and water) or flour and water, using an amount of cornstarch equal to 1/2 of flour called for, and enough cold water to dissolve cornstarch.
Recipe calls for frying food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bake food.



How to Lower Salt and Sodium

TIPS FOR USING MODERATE AMOUNTS OF SALT AND SODIUM

- 1. Select foods and recipes carefully.** Identify and choose low-sodium foods, especially when purchasing processed products. Look for recipes that contain only a small amount of high-sodium ingredients.
- 2. Add salt only if necessary.** If some of the ingredients in a recipe already contain salt — canned soup, canned vegetables, or cheese, for example — you may not need to add salt at all.
- 3. Gradually reduce the amount of salt in recipes.** For example, instead of eliminating salt completely, try decreasing it by 1/4 at first, then gradually by 1/2. This will probably be more satisfactory to customers.
- 4. Add less salt to water when cooking pasta, rice, and hot cereal.** Use 1 tablespoon salt per gallon of water. This provides flavor but is still low in sodium.
- 5. Try using salt-free or lower salt seasoning mixes.** You can make these yourself or purchase them. Put the mix in marked shakers and use on the serving line for self-serve.
- 6. Use fresh or fresh-frozen meats in recipes instead of canned meats whenever possible.**
- 7. Enhance flavor with spices and herbs.** When you are reducing fat or salt, you may need to adjust other seasonings. See pages 183 and 184 for some spice blend recipes and other suggestions.



How to Lower Salt and Sodium



TIPS FOR SEASONING VEGETABLES

Seasoning vegetables with herbs and spices reduces the need for added salt. Try the suggestions below to enhance the natural flavors of vegetables.

USE....	TO SEASON....
Allspice	Winter squash, sweet potatoes
Basil	Cabbage, carrots, green peas, spinach, tomatoes
Caraway	Beets, cabbage, cauliflower, green beans, wax beans, zucchini
Cardamom	Winter squash, sweet potatoes
Celery seed	Cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, sauerkraut, tomatoes
Chili powder	Corn, tomatoes
Cinnamon	Beets, carrots, sweet potatoes, onions, tomatoes
Curry	Cabbage, celery, lima beans
Dill seed	Beets, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, green beans, green peas, wax beans
Garlic powder	Green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower
Lemon juice	Green leafy vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower
Mace	Cauliflower
Marjoram	Broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, green peas, spinach, zucchini
Mint	Carrots, green peas, spinach
Mustard seed	Cabbage
Nutmeg	Celery, spinach, winter squash



USE....	TO SEASON....
Onion powder	Cabbage, green beans
Oregano	Green peas, tomatoes, zucchini
Parsley	Tomatoes, corn
Rosemary	Cauliflower, spinach, turnips
Sage	Green beans, onions, tomatoes, wax beans
Tarragon	Cauliflower
Thyme	Carrots, celery



How to Lower Salt and Sodium

TRY THESE SPICY BLENDS!

Instead of offering salt on your cafeteria tables, try different spice blends. You can put them in shakers, just as you would salt. Many salt-free seasonings are available commercially, but you can also make your own. A few spice blend combinations are listed below.

The directions are the same for each: Combine all ingredients in amounts listed and blend thoroughly. If the ingredients stick together when you put the blend in salt shakers, add a few grains of uncooked rice.

Spicy Flavor Blend

2 Tbsp. savory, crushed
 1 Tbsp. powdered mustard
 2-1/2 tsp. onion powder
 1-1/2 tsp. curry powder
 1-1/4 tsp. ground cumin
 1/2 tsp. garlic powder

Herbed Seasoning Blend

2 Tbsp. dillweed or basil leaves, crushed
 2 Tbsp. onion powder
 1 tsp. oregano leaves, crushed
 1 tsp. celery seed
 1/4 tsp. grated lemon peel (dried)
 Dash black pepper

All-Purpose Spice Blend

5 tsp. onion powder
 2-1/2 tsp. garlic powder
 2-1/2 tsp. paprika
 2-1/2 tsp. powdered mustard
 1-1/4 tsp. thyme leaves, crushed
 1/2 tsp. white pepper
 1/4 tsp. celery seed

All Seasons Seasoning Blend

1 tsp. basil
 1 tsp. marjoram
 1 tsp. thyme leaves, crushed
 1 tsp. oregano leaves, crushed



How to Equip Your Kitchen

TIPS ON CHOOSING AND USING EQUIPMENT FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS

As you work to plan and prepare healthy meals, you will want to select equipment carefully. For example, instead of using a deep-fat fryer to make French fries, use the oven. Oven-baked French fries are much lower in fat.

Your current equipment is probably versatile enough to support the kinds of changes you will be making as you modify recipes to meet the nutrition goals. Especially helpful will be equipment, like steamers, that allow you to cook foods with little or no fat.

Here's a list of some of the equipment that can help you prepare healthy meals. You may have found other equipment to be helpful as well.

- **Tilting skillets:** These are convenient and fast for braising, pan-frying, sautéing, steaming, boiling, and pot-roasting.
- **Steam-jacketed kettles:** Faster and simpler to control than range-top cookers, these are good for soups, stocks, sauces, stews, vegetables, and more. When steam-jacketed kettles are used properly, fewer nutrients are lost due to heat and time.
- **Pressure steamers or pressureless convection steamers:** Steamers provide the best vitamin retention because they cook more quickly. They are great for batch-cooking in high-volume school food service. Rice, pastas, and vegetables can be cooked in steamers.
- **Convection or conventional ovens:** You can use these for baking, roasting, and broiling, all of which are low-fat cooking techniques. When fats in meat are heated at high temperatures, this changes the physical properties of fat from a solid to a liquid, so the fat drains away.
- **Combi ovens:** These will reheat prepared food without drying it out. They will also roast meats with little shrinkage. They can heat by steam, dry heat, or steam/dry heat.
- **Microwave ovens:** When foods are prepared in a microwave oven, they retain more nutrients than foods that are boiled, baked, or even steamed. This is especially helpful in batch-cooking vegetables. (Microwave ovens are becoming more popular and affordable in school food service.)
- **Cook/holding cabinet:** No food should be held in a warming unit longer than 30 minutes if you want to serve a quality product and retain nutrients. You will have two problems — unhappy customers and fewer nutrients!



