

Catering Guidelines

Providing healthy foods and beverages at events allows families the opportunity to make a smart choice. Every food and beverage does not need to be healthy, but you can promote healthy items while limiting other choices.

- 1. ASK FOR HEALTHY OPTIONS.** Let the restaurant know you are looking for healthy choices. They may be able to make suggestions or modify their standard catering order to fit your needs.
- 2. BUILD A BALANCED MEAL.** A balanced plate means making half your plate veggies and fruits, and the other half whole grains and protein. Examples of balanced catered meals could include:
 - Spaghetti with meatballs, a side salad, mixed vegetables and fruit.
 - BBQ pork, bread, greens, corn and peaches.
 - Chicken or steak tacos, black beans, salad and fruit.
 - Baked chicken, brown rice, green beans, carrots and fruit salad.
 - Deli meat sandwiches on whole grain bread, salad and an apple.
 - Grilled chicken salad, whole grain bread and fruit.
- 3. CHOOSE MORE VEGETABLES, FRUITS AND WHOLE GRAINS.** For example, if you are ordering boxed lunches and they give you a choice between an apple or chips, choose the apple. Pick whole wheat pasta, brown rice, or whole wheat bread when given the option.
- 4. LIMIT FRIED FOODS TO ONE ITEM.** For example, if ordering fried chicken, do not choose French fries or other fried items as a side dish. Offer an alternative to the fried dish, like baked chicken.
- 5. INCLUDE PROTEIN AT BREAKFAST.** Protein foods include eggs; low-fat milk, yogurt or cottage cheese; low-fat granola; peanut butter (for waffles or toast); and turkey sausage or bacon.
- 6. SAVE DESSERTS FOR HOLIDAYS AND VERY SPECIAL EVENTS.** Limit each guest to one serving, and provide low-fat (1%) milk and water. Examples of balanced holiday meals include:
 - Turkey with dressing, baked sweet potatoes, steamed green beans, and 1 slice of pumpkin pie with low-fat (1%) milk.
 - Pot roast, mashed potatoes, carrots, whole wheat roll and one cookie with low-fat milk.
- 7. PROVIDE WATER, AND LIMIT SUGARY DRINKS.** Ensure water is available at all events. If catering is just for kids, provide only water or plain, low-fat (1%) milk. If ordering sugary drinks, including soda, fruit drinks, sports drinks, and 100% juice, order the smallest size available (for example, a can instead of a 20 oz bottle). If sweet tea is offered, make unsweetened tea available as well.
- 8. PROMOTE HEALTHY CHOICES.** Use the Strong4Life Smart Serving Strategies to promote healthy choices at your events:

- **Sell**—Use suggestive selling techniques to nudge guests to make a smart choice, for example:
 - Provide a visible copy of the menu at the front of the buffet line, or where guests enter the dining space.
 - Identify smart choices with special menus or signage
- **Taste**—When food looks good, we expect it to taste good. Present healthy foods in an appealing way, for example:
 - Serve a variety of colorful veggies and fruits
 - Give smart choices fun and descriptive names, like “dynamite deli sandwich” or “fresh Georgia peach.”
- **Visibility**—Placement of foods in a buffet line or on a snack table makes a difference. Make healthy foods the most visible, for example:
 - Place healthy foods first in the buffet line—start with vegetables, like a fresh salad.
 - Position the dessert table farther away from the seating area.
- **Convenience**—Make the healthy choice quick and easy to reach. For example:
 - Place healthy foods near the front of the appetizer or snack table so they are easier to reach.
 - Make water more convenient by placing it in front of sugary drinks. Offer drinking water in multiple locations throughout the dining space.
- **Price**—If guests are paying for their meal, give the healthy items the advantage by making them more affordable than less healthy items.