

# Food Service Facts

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# 18. Nutrient Standard Menu Planning

Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP), Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning and other Alternate Menu Planning systems are described in this chapter. Each system is designed to meet School Meals Initiative (SMI) nutrition goals.

## Nutrient Standard Menu Planning

NSMP takes a nutrient approach to menu planning. Instead of working with food components in specific amounts, the menu planner works with menu items. Menus are analyzed weekly and are required to meet specific nutrient standards.

NSMP allows flexibility in selecting foods and responding to customer preferences. Vegetarian and ethnic selections may be planned more easily. The NSMP system is designed to give menu planners a wider array of options when making changes in their menus. The goal is to provide students with needed calories and nutrients; and limited amounts of fat, saturated fat, sodium and cholesterol while satisfying their food preferences.

The nutrient analysis is completed by the food service director or manager before the menu is served providing immediate feedback on compliance with the nutrition goals.

## Nutrient Analysis

A computerized nutrient analysis is required for NSMP. The nutrient analysis must be done using software approved by USDA. A current list of USDA-approved software can be obtained by contacting Child Nutrition & Wellness, KSDE.

Menu planners use the software to enter their own ingredients, recipes, portion sizes, nutrient information for local products, menus and production information. The menus' nutrient analysis is averaged over a week and that data is compared to the nutrient requirements for each established age/grade group.

**USDA School Meals Initiative (SMI) Nutrient Standards**

These targets should be met by the lunches served over the course of a school week:

- ◆ No more than 30% of total calories from fat
- ◆ No more than 10% of total calories from saturated fat
- ◆ No less than 100% of age/grade range standards for:
  - Calories
  - Vitamin A
  - Vitamin C
  - Iron
  - Calcium
  - Fiber
  - Protein
- ◆ No more than 100% of age/grade range standard for:
  - Sodium
  - Cholesterol

The sponsor must generate a weekly analysis for lunches and breakfasts for the required age/grade groups and assess whether the nutrient targets are met. If the menus do not meet the targets, the menu planner must take steps to bring about a more desirable nutrient profile. This might be accomplished by using a different recipe, purchasing a different product, adjusting portion sizes, etc.

During the School Meals Initiative (SMI) review, KSDE will review data to ensure that the analysis is completed accurately and the SMI nutrition goals are met.

## NSMP Meal Pattern

NSMP meals are required to have a minimum of three (3) menu items for lunch and for breakfast. A menu item may be any single food or combination of foods.

A lunch planned with NSMP must include at least the following categories of menu items:

- ◆ **Entrée:** An entrée is a combination of foods or a single food item offered as the main course. The entrée is the central focus of the meal and forms the framework around which the rest of the meal is planned.
- ◆ **Fluid Milk:** Fluid milk must be offered as a beverage.
- ◆ **Other Menu Items:** Other menu items can be any other food except a condiment or a “food of minimal nutritional value” (as defined in Chapter 20).

A breakfast planned with Nutrient Standard Menu Planning must include at least the following categories of menu items:

- ◆ **Fluid Milk:** Fluid milk must be offered as a beverage or on cereal or both.
- ◆ **Other Menu Items:** At least two (2) other menu items must be offered. They can be any foods except a condiment or “food of minimal nutritional value” (as defined in Chapter 20).

Detailed information about the requirements for the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning system is provided in the KSDE publication [Planning NuMenus for Healthy School Meals](#). This publication has been distributed to sponsors that have indicated use of the NSMP option on the Site Application of the Program Agreement. If additional copies are needed, contact KSDE.

## Categories of Menu Items

**Entrée:** For lunch, an entrée is a menu item that is served as the main course and is a combination of foods or a single food item, as determined by the menu planner. For breakfast, there are no items designated as entrées.

Since the entrée is generally a major portion of the meal and is the only required item to be served to each student under the “Offer” option, it should provide substantial nutrients toward meeting the required nutritional standards.

**Milk:** Sponsors are required to offer students fluid milk served as a beverage at breakfast and lunch. A variety of milk choices must be offered for lunch. Encouraging students to select the lower fat milk is consistent with the School Meals Initiative (SMI) nutrition goals.

**Other Menu Items:** If a menu item is not an entrée or milk, it is considered an “other menu item” unless it is a condiment. Other menu items provide nutrients and calories needed to assure the menu meets the dietary goals. “Foods of minimal nutritional value” (as defined in Chapter 20) may NOT be served as part of a reimbursable meal.

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**Condiments:** A condiment is a food served to enhance a menu item. Condiments include items such as relishes, catsup, mustard, jelly, chopped tomatoes, gravies, table spreads, etc. Condiments must be taken into consideration when planning and analyzing a meal; but they are not counted as menu items toward meeting the minimum required menu items for lunch and breakfast.

The NSMP lunch menu below shows each menu item and its related menu category. The menu contains an entrée, milk and three other items for a total of five (5) items.

### Sample Lunch Menu

<b>Menu Item</b>	<b>Menu Item Category</b>
Tacos containing meat, cheese and taco shell	Entrée
Lettuce, Tomato, Salsa	Condiment
Corn	Other Menu Item
Apple half	Other Menu Item
Cinnamon Roll	Other Menu Item
Fluid Milk	Fluid Milk

The NSMP breakfast menu below shows each menu item and its related menu category. The menu contains milk and three other items for a total of four (4) items.

### Sample Breakfast Menu

<b>Menu Item</b>	<b>Menu Category</b>
Pancake	Other Menu Item
Syrup	Condiment
Sausage	Other Menu Item
Juice	Other Menu Item
Milk	Fluid Milk

## **“Offer or Serve”**

The goals of the “Offer or Serve” provision are to minimize food waste and encourage sponsors to offer more food choices. Food service managers report that students like having choices and are more likely to eat food items they choose themselves. The following guidelines should be considered when implementing “Offer or Serve”:

Sponsors that select the “Offer” option must offer all of the menu items to all students. The students choose the foods that they intend to eat. When the “Serve” option is used, students are served the full portion of all menu items. In other words, students are not given the option to take less than a complete reimbursable meal.

- ◆ Senior high schools participating in the National School Lunch Program are required to implement the “Offer” option for lunch.
- ◆ Sponsors may implement “Offer” in their breakfast programs, but are not required to do so.
- ◆ Using “Offer” is a local option in elementary and junior high/middle schools.

The sponsor completes a “Site Application” for each food service site as part of the annual Program Agreement renewal process. On the “Site Application” the sponsor indicates how the site is implementing “Offer” and/or “Serve”. A site could use “Serve” for breakfast and “Offer” for lunch, or vice versa. At an elementary site, some grades may use “Serve” and others may use “Offer”. The After School Care Snack Program must always use the “Serve” option.

Reimbursable meals must always be priced as a unit. With the “Offer” option, the meal charge remains the same whether the student takes the minimum number of food items or the maximum number offered.

### **Key Points of “Offer” for Lunch with NSMP or Assisted NSMP**

- ◆ A minimum of three (3) menu items must be offered, one of which is an entrée and one of which is fluid milk.
- ◆ Students must select at least two (2) menu items, one of which is the complete entrée.
- ◆ When three (3) menu items are offered, students may decline no more than one (1) item.
- ◆ When four (4) or more menu items are offered, students may decline a maximum of two (2) menu items.
- ◆ Double portions of the same menu item cannot be counted as two (2) of the required items.
- ◆ When a student takes the maximum number of menu items offered, one (1) of the items selected must be milk.

## Key Points of “Offer” for Breakfast with NSMP or Assisted NSMP

- ◆ Sponsors may, but are not required, to implement “Offer” in their breakfast programs.
- ◆ A minimum of three (3) menu items must be offered, one (1) of which is fluid milk.
- ◆ Students may decline a maximum of one (1) menu item.
- ◆ There is no requirement for an entrée for breakfast.
- ◆ Double portions of the same menu item cannot be counted as two (2) menu items.

## Inform Students and Parents about “Offer” and/or “Serve”

Students and their parents should be informed about “Offer” and/or “Serve” annually. Posting of menu requirements in the food service area helps students understand which items must be taken for a reimbursable meal. The Sample Letter to Explain “Offer” for Breakfast and Sample Letter to Explain “Offer” for Lunch (Forms 18-A and 18-B) may be sent to students and their parents. The letters may need to be revised to match the number of menu items typically offered in the meal.

Meals served to students that do not contain the minimum number of food items may not be claimed for reimbursement. Menu planners need to make certain cashiers, tray monitors and students can identify at the “point-of-service” which combinations of menu items qualify as a reimbursable meal. If a student takes less than the required number of items or required amounts of those items, the student must either return to the serving area to obtain the required items or the meal may not be claimed for reimbursement.

## Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning

When an outside consultant performs all of the functions of the menu planning and nutrient analysis under NSMP, the system is called Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning. All requirements are the same for both NSMP and Assisted NSMP.

For Assisted NSMP to be implemented effectively, the outside consultant must have access to the sponsor's food production records, products purchased, recipes used and information about student preferences. There must be documented communication between the production kitchen and the outside consultant to assure that the foods and the amounts of those foods included in the nutrient analysis are the foods actually prepared and served.

For more information about Assisted NSMP, contact the KSDE office or your area child nutrition consultant.

## Alternate Menu Planning Approach

The Alternate Menu Planning Approach, also known as "Any Reasonable Approach" allows sponsors to develop their own innovative approaches to menu planning, subject to the guidelines established in the USDA regulations and KSDE approval. All of the SMI nutrition goals must be met when implementing innovative menu planning approaches.

It is the sponsor's responsibility to develop and provide proof that the alternate system meets the nutrition goals that protect the nutritional and fiscal integrity of the program. For more information about these Alternate Menu Planning Approaches, contact the KSDE office or your area child nutrition consultant.

### Changing to Nutrient Standard Menu Planning

**Q** *If a sponsor is currently using Food Based Menus, what is required to change to Nutrient Standard Menu Planning?*

**A** Prior to implementing NSMP, the sponsor must:

- Purchase USDA approved software that contains the most recent version of the USDA Child Nutrition database
- Attend KSDE's NSMP training
- Plan and submit one month's menus analyzed with USDA approved software to KSDE for approval

It is recommended that the menu planner receive training from the software vendor.



### "Offer or Serve"

**Q-1** *When the "Offer" option is implemented and the student turns down more than one (1) menu item at breakfast or more than two (2) items at lunch, what should the tray monitor do?*

**A** The meal is reimbursable only if it contains the minimum requirements. The menu planner establishes the number of items offered to the student and the student may refuse only one (1) menu item at breakfast and up to two (2) items at lunch. If the student takes less than the required number of items at either meal, the student must be asked to take the additional items to meet the meal requirements or the tray monitor must ensure that the meal is not claimed for reimbursement.



**Q-2** *What are the requirements for a “Serve” program?*

**A** Sponsors indicate on the Site Application if the site is using the “Serve” option for breakfast and lunch. “Serve” schools must serve to all students full portions of all menu items needed to meet meal pattern requirements. That is, students must accept full portions of the entrée, milk and other menu items. Students may decline condiments. A student’s tray must include all menu items, even if the student dislikes a menu item and does not intend to eat it. Under “Serve” all food items must be served to all students, unless a current form from a medical authority is on file identifying foods that are to be omitted from the student’s diet.



**Q-3** *Our elementary school does not permit students to decline food items, but not all students eat everything on their tray. Should cafeteria monitors make students eat specific items?*

**A** Some sponsors prefer to require students to take all menu items. This helps expose students to new foods and new ways of preparing foods. School personnel in “Serve” programs control which foods are on the menu and ensure that all menu items are served in full portions. Personnel should encourage students to “try a taste” of the menu items offered, but should not force children to eat specific foods or force children to eat certain foods before others.



### **Sack Lunches**

**Q** *May food service prepare a reimbursable sack lunch for students to take on field trips?*

**A** Yes. Sack lunches prepared by food service may be reimbursable if all requirements are met. The sack lunch must meet the NSMP menu item requirements and contain an entrée, milk and at least one other menu item. Additional requirements concerning meal accountability, foods of minimal nutritional value, record keeping, sanitation and serving times are addressed in Chapter 4.

