



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Understanding the Meat Alternate Component

P.02



Fruit of the Month **P.03**

Nutrition Tip **P.03**

Nutrition Fact **P.03**

References **P.04**



Understanding the Meat Alternate Component

Child Care Programs participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are required to have a meat or meat alternate component as a part of a meal in order to be considered a reimbursable meal. To qualify as a reimbursable meal, a meat or meat alternate must be served in the main dish or as the main dish to make sure children get adequate protein to help them grow. Meat and meat alternates are an important aspect of any meal served because they provide essential nutrients. This food

component typically provides appropriate amounts of protein, iron, and B vitamins including niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, and other important nutrients. These nutrients are important for energy, growth, and the formation of body tissues. When meat is not used as the source of these nutrients, it is important to serve the appropriate meat alternates.



Some meat alternates include:

- eggs,
- cheese,
- low-fat yogurt,
- beans and peas, and
- nuts or nut butters.

Understanding the Meat Alternate Component continued on page 2

Understanding the Meat Alternate Component

For additional meat alternates, check out the USDA's Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/crediting-handbook-child-and-adult-care-food-program>.

When incorporating meat alternates into the menu, it is important to make sure it is a complete protein source because they are necessary for the body to function properly. So, what does it mean to be a complete protein source? It means that the menu item or the meal is made up of all the essential amino acids, which are the smallest forms of a protein. Animal sources of protein naturally contain complete amino acids with a few exceptions including many meat alternates. Cheese is an example of a meat alternate that provides complete protein. Other examples of complete proteins include eggs, low-fat milk, and other dairy products.



The meat portion can be the most expensive part of the meal cost. Using meat alternates can be a cost effective and healthy solution. Dry beans, for example, are high in protein and are inexpensive which make them a good option. Using meat alternates throughout a menu cycle can benefit food cost, while providing optimal nutrition for the meals served.



If a meat alternate is not a complete source of amino acids, it can be combined with another food to become a complete source. This combination is often referred to as a complementary protein. Some examples include pairing grains with legumes or grains with dairy. For instance, when beans and corn are incorporated into a menu item, it is a complete source of protein.





Fruit of the Month: Sapotes

The unique fruit, sapote (sa•po•te) is sweet with a juicy and custard-like, creamy flesh. The flavor is mild and is similar to coconut, lemon, and vanilla. It is often used as an ingredient in ice cream because of its unique flavor and smooth texture. However, if picked or purchased overripe, the flavor can be bitter and unpleasant. It is a circular fruit that can range from green to yellow based on maturity. Sapotes are very nutritious being an excellent source of fiber, vitamins A, B₃, C, copper, and magnesium. They are also a good source of vitamin B₆, folate, pantothenic acid, iron, and potassium. Sapotes should be selected with no bruises or blemishes and stored at room temperature. They are grown mostly in California. Although, it is not a common fruit, it can be purchased in markets throughout the United States.

Nutrition Tip

Sugar consumption is one of the largest contributors to childhood obesity. Many food products on the market have added sugar that may not be recognizable. It is important to read food labels and ingredient lists to guarantee excess sugar is not being consumed by children.

Sugar consumption is one of the largest contributors to childhood obesity. Many food products on the market have added sugar that may not be recognizable. It is important to read food labels and ingredient lists to guarantee excess sugar is not being consumed by children.

Nutrition Fact

Did you know ice is considered a food? According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), packaged ice is classified and regulated as a food. Ice manufacturers are required to apply the same measures of sanitation as other food manufactures when producing, holding, and transporting ice. The FDA requires all packaged ice have labels that list the manufacturer's name and place of business, the packer, or the distributor of the ice. Ice manufacturers are also required to list the exact source of water, such as artesian well water or spring water. The FDA does not inspect food service establishments or retail stores who package and sell ice for direct use; however, they are still required to follow their state and local authority's regulations regarding ice.

As a child care provider, you may find it necessary to purchase packaged ice for nutrition activities, cooling warm beverages, or keeping foods cool until served. Remember to keep safety in mind when using ice. Always use a NSF approved ice scoop for handling ice to ensure you have the safest and most durable utensil for handling ice. Never use your bare hands or glassware to scoop ice, by doing this it may contaminate the ice with germs, or the glass may break and chip into the ice. For more information on packaged ice, check out *FDA Regulates the Safety of Packaged Ice* at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm197586.htm>

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). *Protein*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/basics/protein.html>

Fruits & Veggies More Matters. (2014). *Sapotes*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/sapote-nutrition-selection-storage>

United States Department of Agriculture. (2014). *What are added sugars*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.choosemy-plate.gov/weight-management-calories/calories/added-sugars.html>

United States Department of Agriculture. (2008). *Food buying guide for child nutrition programs*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/foodbuying-guide-child-nutrition-programs>

United States Department of Agriculture. (2014). *Child and adult care food program*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2014). *FDA regulates the safety of packaged ice*. Retrieved from
<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm197586.htm>

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with the National Food Service Management Institute at The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights; Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

© 2014, National Food Service Management Institute, The University of Mississippi

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by The University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The University cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images.