



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

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Servings versus Portions

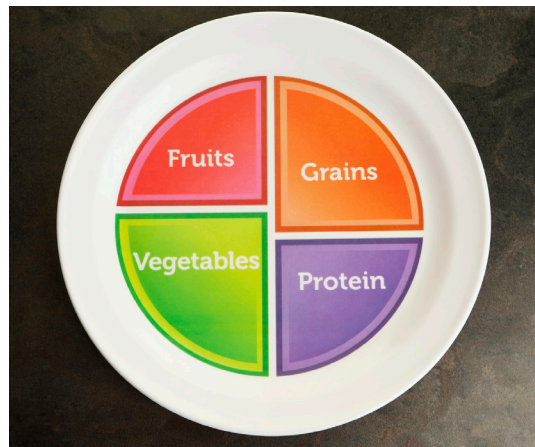
Do you know the difference between a serving and a portion of food? The two terms may sound similar, but they have different meanings. Knowing the difference between these terms can help you plan and serve meals that meet the nutritional needs of young children, as well as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) requirements.

According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, a “serving” is the amount of food suggested in an education tool such as *MyPlate* or on a food label. A food label’s Nutrition Facts reflect the serving amount listed on the package. In most cases, the food label serving size is different

from the CACFP serving size for young children. The serving sizes of the CACFP meal pattern increase by age group to meet nutritional needs of growing children. However, food labels use a standard serving size for the general public.

On the other hand, a “portion” is the amount of food that you choose to eat at any one time. For example, a box of ready-to-eat cereal may list 1 cup as the serving size.

However, you may pour a 1 1/2 cup portion for your breakfast. A child in your care may self-serve a 1/4 cup serving of broccoli during family-style meal service, and take a second portion of broccoli when the bowl is passed again later.



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Servings versus Portions

Your planned serving size may be 1/4 cup of broccoli, but the portion is the total amount the children eat.

A recipe yield typically lists a specific amount per serving and the total servings per recipe. It is important to pay attention to the serving size listed on recipes; this amount will help you to determine how the ingredients contribute to the CACFP food pattern. For example, a quick bread recipe yields 12 servings. The recipe may state that each piece provides one bread/grain serving. However, a smaller portion may not provide enough grains to meet the program serving requirement.

In summary, a serving size is an amount listed in an education tool, food label, or meal pattern. A portion is the amount of food selected at an eating occasion. When planning menus to meet meal pattern requirements, be sure to use the age group specific CACFP serving sizes. Food label serving sizes differ from the serving sizes of the meal pattern. Be sure to know how serving sizes of a food or recipe compare to the CACFP requirements. If you have questions, talk to your sponsoring organization or state agency.



Vegetable of the Month: Lentils



Lentils are vegetables rich in protein, fiber, B vitamins, and the trace minerals: iron, copper, and zinc. Similar to dry beans, lentils are in the legume vegetable subgroup of *MyPlate*. Lentils can count as a vegetable or meat alternate but not both components in the same meal.

Lentils are available in several varieties: French green, Beluga (black), Pardina, Red Chief, and U.S. Regular. One cup of dry lentils yields 2 1/2 cups cooked. Most lentil varieties cook in less than 30 minutes. Unlike dry beans, lentils do not require pre-soaking. Lentils with the outer skin removed (look for the word decorticated on the label) cook in as little as 12 minutes. One cup dry decorticated lentils yields 2 cups cooked.

Cooking lentils can be made easy; add 2 1/2 cups of water to 1 cup dry lentils in a medium saucepan. Bring to boil, partially cover, and lower heat to simmer. Slowly cook until tender, similar to al dente pasta. Note that lentils will boil over when the lid is tight. Keep the lid about 1/2 inch away from the edge to prevent boiling over.



Recipe of the Month Lentil Chili

In this recipe from Montana State University Extension Service, lentils, tomatoes, and ground beef combine for a great taste. This combination of foods also creates better iron absorption from the lentils.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound ground beef (15% fat)
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 cups cooked, drained lentils
- 1 can tomatoes, diced or crushed (29 ounce) or 2 cans (14 1/2 ounce)
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin, ground (optional)

Directions:

1. In a large saucepan, brown beef over medium-high heat, breaking it into bite sized pieces. Drain fat.
2. Add onion and garlic and cook until softened.
3. Add lentils, tomatoes, chili powder, and cumin. Cook for about 1 hour until flavors are blended.
4. Serve hot, topped with your favorite chili toppings.

Yield: 12, 1/2 cup servings (or 6, 1-cup servings)

Nutrient of the Month: Iron

Iron is an essential mineral for good health. It is a “trace mineral” because the body needs it in small amounts. Iron is a major player in most body functions from movement to learning because it helps red blood cells carry oxygen to body tissues. In addition, iron helps promote normal growth and development in addition to body functions.

Iron is found in two main forms heme and nonheme. Heme iron is well-absorbed and is only found in animal foods such as lean beef, dark poultry meat, and seafood. These foods also contain nonheme iron, which is the only type of iron found in plant-based foods, such as vegetables including dry beans, peas and lentils, and grains. Pairing foods rich in vitamin C and including meat, poultry, or seafood with nonheme iron foods help improve absorption.



References

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