

Dining At Home/Dining Out

Summary

Food patterns used by different individuals whether dining at home or dining out.

Materials

- *What Should I Eat? A Complete Guide to the New Food Pyramid*
, Tershia d'Elgin, 2005.
- *Guide to Good Food*
, Largen and Bence, Goodheart-Willcox Company, 2006.
- *CoEd Magazine*
, March 1982
- "Digital Dining," *NEA Today*
, 2006, pp. 34-35.

Background for Teachers

There are dissimilarities as well as similarities in the food patterns used by different individuals and different families to meet their health needs. Nutritious meals can be prepared at home and/or selected at restaurants.

The family is the basic unit of a society. The family unit transmits an individual's physiological and social heritage. Food choices are grounded in patterns of living and, together with the family environment, food choices have a direct affect on well being and longevity. Various food patterns can contribute to good health. Nutrients essential for health are found in many different foods. Eating a variety of foods is essential for good health.

Although most food likes and dislikes are learned in the family, some food choices are based on personal preferences. One member of a family may enjoy orange juice as a breakfast beverage, and another member may prefer milk; both choices are appropriate. Some individuals eat the same type of food every day for breakfast; other people enjoy many different foods for breakfast.

Other individual food patterns may be influenced by factors such as ethnic heritage, religion, or the region of a country. In the southern region of the United States, many people enjoy biscuits as a breakfast bread. In other regions, bagels or toast are more typical choices. Because biscuits, bagels, and toast contain similar nutrients, the differences in these food patterns do not have nutritional implications.

Within a culture, there are similarities not only in the types of food eaten but also in the meal and snack patterns. Three meals a day is typical of the United States. In addition, many people have a coffee break mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Many school children regularly eat snacks after school. For many people, meal and snack patterns differ on weekends. Brunch, a single meal eaten in late morning, sometimes is substituted for breakfast and lunch. Food patterns are so important that, for example, heart disease may appear to run in families when what really runs in families is a food pattern of eating high cholesterol foods.

Food patterns in the United States also differ in the timing and type of meals. Some people eat light meals for breakfast and lunch and a hearty evening meal. Other people eat large breakfast and noon meals and a light evening meal. Some people meet some of their food energy and nutrient needs with snacks. Other people never snack. The British typically eat a hearty snack, tea time, in late afternoon, and then eat dinner about 8 p.m. In some cultures, people typically eat four meals daily; in other cultures, some eat two meals per day.

Most of the world's people eat a combination of plant and animal foods, although the proportions of each that they eat may vary. In some countries e.g., the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina,

Norway, Denmark, people obtain a substantial portion of their food energy from foods of animal origin. In other countries e.g., China, India, Mexico, people eat a limited amount of foods of animal origin and rely primarily on foods of plant origin for energy and nutrients.

In many subcultural groups in the United States, as well as in various other countries, some people avoid eating foods from animals; these people are called vegetarians. If food choices are well planned, such a diet can meet most health needs. Diets that totally exclude animal products, including milk products and eggs are deficient in vitamin B12. They also have lower levels of iron and quality protein. Some plant foods provide protein, but it is of lower quality than animal product protein and menus have to be carefully planned to consume needed nutrients.

If a single food provides a high percentage of the food energy and is eaten several times a day, it is considered a staple food for that culture. Examples of staple foods include wheat, rice, and corn. Although most cultures have some staple food, the food considered staple is different for different cultures. Even among cultures with the same staple food, different methods of food preservation and preparation may be used. Within any culture, there are individuals who choose to eat differently; their food patterns often reflect similarities as well as differences when compared with other people in their culture.

Similarities and differences in food patterns exist within cultures and among cultures. No single pattern of meals is best; health needs can be met with various patterns.

To assess meal patterns that provide good nutrition, food intake usually is evaluated on a daily basis rather than for a single meal or snack. When selecting food for any meal, an individual needs to consider all the food, including snacks, to be eaten throughout the day. Individuals need to learn to make appropriate choices whether the food is prepared at home or selected from a restaurant menu. MyPyramid was designed to help people make these choices.

Forty-six percent of Americans eat out every day. (*What Should I Eat? A Complete Guide to the New Food Pyramid* , d'Elgin). Because of this, it is important to address how to make healthy food choices away from home. Although many full-service restaurants offer a wide variety of choices from each food group, some restaurants offer more limited menus. The fast-food restaurants usually offer limited menus but speedy service. However, it is possible to select nutritious meals even when menu choices are limited. Foods from MyPyramid's Meat & Beans Group and the Grains Group usually are in plentiful supply on a restaurant menu. Although food choices from MyPyramid's Milk Group as well as the Vegetable and Fruit Groups are more limited, foods from these groups are becoming more available. Many restaurants, including fast-food restaurants, offer salad bars or pre-made salads with an array of foods many of which are vegetables. Watch the fat content in salad dressings! Foods from the vegetable and fruit group also can be selected by choosing lettuce, tomato and/or onion on a hamburger. For example, tacos have tomatoes and lettuce. Pizza has a tomato sauce; vegetables such as mushrooms and green peppers can be added. However, the amounts of these vegetables on a hamburger or on taco are less than a serving (as defined in MyPyramid). Foods from the milk group also are available. Milk is among the beverage choices in most restaurants; milkshakes and malts frequently are available also, but they are high in fat. Hamburgers with cheese are available; in addition, pizza and tacos contain cheese. Even fast food restaurants are offering healthy fare in their children's meals in the form of fruit instead of French fries and milk instead of soda. People who eat meals in fast-food restaurants may need to supplement their consumption of the vegetable and fruit group and milk and cheese group at home by eating such things as carrot sticks, cheese cubes, and milk for snacks. Many restaurant-prepared foods, especially those in fast-food restaurants, are high in salt and in fat. People who frequently eat in restaurants may need to be especially careful of the other foods they select throughout the day. Know that when it comes to the recommendations from MyPyramid, most food choices from fast food restaurants would fit in the tip of each section of the pyramid, meaning they should be consumed sparingly.

Many meals available in restaurants are high in calories. However, if appropriate choices are made

both in the foods selected and the portion sizes, caloric intake need not be excessive. Many restaurants highlight some low-calorie items on their menus or offer half-sizes of sandwiches, salads, etc. Also, a customer can request food to be served without sauces, gravies, butter, or salad dressings. Another alternative is to request that these items be served in separate dishes, which allows the individual to control the amounts used.

Lunches served at school as part of the National School Lunch Program are planned to provide about one-third of an individual's daily nutrient needs. In some schools, students are allowed to select a portion of the lunch rather than the entire lunch. With this option, individuals have more responsibility for making appropriate choices than when the entire meal is served as a unit. In making these selections, individuals need to consider their food intake throughout the day. Some cafeterias have gone high-tech, with parents having the ability to monitor online what food choices their child makes. Some programs allow the parent to prohibit certain foods for their child ("NEA Today," April 2006). Sometimes meals are prepared at home but eaten elsewhere; examples are picnic meals and brown bag lunches eaten at school or work. Lack of refrigeration from the time such meals are prepared to when they are eaten may limit the number of appropriate choices. However, with careful planning, nutritious and safe brown bag or picnic meals can be prepared. Most fresh fruits can be carried easily and do not require refrigeration. Raw vegetables such as carrot and celery sticks, green pepper rings, or cherry tomatoes also are good choices. Milk or soups can be carried in a small thermos. Milk alone can often be purchased at the cafeteria. Peanut butter or cheese sandwiches are appropriate choices for brown bag lunches. When in doubt, insert a small ice pack into the lunch sack. Preparing nutritious meals at home offers some challenges in addition to making appropriate choices. There may be limitations in knowledge, time, money, ingredients, or skills.

Instructional Procedures

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

OPTION #1

As a follow-up to the preassessment activity, [PREDICT YOUR HEALTH FUTURE](#), discuss the implications to health of a sound diet during the teen years. Emphasize connections between choices made now and the quality of life in the later life cycle stages.

Arrange to have the students' blood pressure checked and talk about it in class. The school nurse or a health occupation class is a good resource for this activity. Have the students record their blood pressure in their notebooks for use later.

OPTION #2

While discussing some of the challenges of preparing nutritious meals in the home setting, have the students complete [FOOD PATTERNS DISCUSSION WORKSHEET](#). Use this as a basis to help students make appropriate choices while at the same time realizing their limitations in knowledge, time, money, ingredients, and skills.

OPTION #3

Following a discussion on cholesterol have the students explore the ingredients found in recipes that produce high and low saturated fat/cholesterol foods. Pass out [RECIPE SORT FOR HIGH/LOW FAT CHOLESTEROL](#) and have the students sort them into two piles - HIGH CHOLESTEROL and LOW CHOLESTEROL. Discuss what makes the difference.

Have the students choose one low cholesterol recipe to prepare in lab.

OPTION #4

Have the students keep records of their own and other family members' food intake for a day using [FAMILY FOOD PATTERNS](#). Have them note where each meal or snack was prepared and where it was eaten e.g., home, school cafeteria, fast-food restaurant, or full-service restaurant.

Have the students keep records of their own eating habits using [PERSONAL FOOD PATTERN](#) and answer questions at the bottom of the chart. Discuss in class.

If possible, have the students analyze these records on the food tracker at www.mypyramid.gov.

OPTION #5

Have the students keep a record of the all the food that they eat for one week using [DIET DIARY](#).

Answer the questions listed on [DIET DIARY QUESTIONS](#). Discuss in class.

OPTION #6

Have students visit websites from different restaurants and look for nutritional information on some of their favorite menu items. Have students report on a favorite menu item, including the main nutrients it provides, fat content, and if there is a more healthy choice they could make next time they visit that restaurant. For example, if their favorite is Wendy's Jr. Cheeseburger Deluxe, one could select a salad instead or select the burger without mayonnaise and/or cheese. Discuss various modifications.

OPTION #7

After a discussion of the differences in family food habits, have the students plan a simple meal for their individual families. Use [FAMILY DIFFERENCES ASSIGNMENT](#) worksheet. Analyze the menu on the [MYPYRAMID ANALYSIS](#) worksheet.

As a homework assignment have each student prepare their meal for their family.

OPTION #8

Have the students plan a day's meals with some or all of the food purchases at a fast-food restaurant. Evaluate the food intake for nutritional adequacy using MyPyramid guidelines and nutritional information found on restaurant's website.

Have the students change some fast-food menus to make them a more balanced meal. Use [ATTENTION: FAST-FOOD FANATICS CAN BE FIT](#).

Have the students take the [FAST-FOOD FANATICS quiz](#).

OPTION #9

Obtain a variety of restaurant menus. Have the students categorize foods served at the restaurants according to MyPyramid. Evaluate by asking the students if a person would have to supplement his/her diet, if many meals were eaten at the restaurants. If so, in what way?

Suppose a person had a health problem related to food and nutrition e.g., diabetes, obesity, hypertension. What foods could he/she select when eating at the restaurants?

Using the restaurant menus as a model, have the students work in groups to plan a menu appropriate for a restaurant of their choice. Evaluate the menu to see if foods available to customers are from each of the groups on MyPyramid.

OPTION #10

Have a contest to plan the most interesting and nutritious brown bag lunch for a situation where refrigeration is not available.

As a group plan, prepare, display, and eat the lunches. Comply with the following rules:

- Prepare the lunch for one person.

- Prepare the lunch in 10 minutes or less.

- Make the lunch nutritious, following the food pyramid and guidelines therein. Make sure the lunch contains only 1/3 of the calories allowed for a teen, which is about 800 calories.

- Make the lunch interesting.

- Each group will display and explain their lunches.

OPTION #11

Obtain menus for a week from the school cafeteria. Have the students analyze selections they could make. Have them determine what other foods they would need to eat at home or in restaurants to provide a balanced diet for the entire day according to MyPyramid 2,000 calorie/day guidelines.

OPTION #12

Invite the school food service manager, a dietitian, public health nutritionist, or airline food service representative to talk about how meals are planned for groups of individuals with mixed dietary practices. Have the students discuss how the various diets meet health needs.

OPTION #13

Using [FOOD PATTERN INTERVIEW SHEET](#) have the students interview grandparents or others of that age or older, to see how food patterns have changed over the years. Ask students question such as: How have the patterns remained the same? How are they different? What accounts for the differences? How and why have the food patterns met peoples' health needs?

Then, as a class, summarize. Divide the students into groups to compile three individual reports (chart and code) into group categories. As each group completes their summaries have them report to the class. Compile the group categories into a large report and post on bulletin board, chalk board, or wall chart to show changing family food patterns of the class.

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