

Commissioner's Memo
10/28/2019

Salad Bars in the National School Lunch Program

Memo Information

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Memo Type Regulatory

Unit Child Nutrition

Regulatory Authority 7 CFR 210.10; SP41-2019

Response Required NO

Attention Superintendents; Principals; Child Nutrition Directors/Managers

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Memo Text

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance on policy changes and general updates to outdated resources/website links and updated questions and answers related to the use of salad bars in the National school Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) encourages the use of salad bars in school programs to support increasing student access to and consumption of a variety of fruits and vegetables. In addition to the nutritional benefits, salad bars may lower plate waste by allowing students to take only items they will eat. Salad bars, while beneficial, may not be a viable option for all school foodservice operations. In this case, schools are encouraged to explore other creative options to improve fruit and vegetable consumption.

There are many ways that schools can incorporate salad bars into their programs to facilitate service of reimbursable meals. Salad bars can:

- provide options for a reimbursable meal
- provide individual foods or menu items as part of a reimbursable meal
- feature a special fruit and vegetable theme
- provide side salads to their meal service
- can be pre-portioned or pre-packaged to provide service efficiency in high volume situations

Portion Size

Minimum portion sizes must be consistent with the meal pattern for the age/grade group when planning a salad bar. The planned portion size should be an amount that is reasonable for that menu item. One challenge of a salad bar is to ensure that students actually take the minimum required portion size. Minimally, each fruit or vegetable serving must be at least 1/8 cup to count towards the fruit or vegetable component. Pre-portioning food items is one way to help students identify portion sizes. Providing appropriately sized serving utensils will also assist students in taking the correct serving size. For self-service items, schools are encouraged to place signs as visual aids to help students determine the minimum portion.

Point of Sale

To ensure that each student's selection from the salad bar meets the required portion for a reimbursable meal, the point of sale (POS) should be stationed after the salad bar. If a school is not able to position the salad bar in a location prior to the POS, pre-portioned items should be provided; students must be instructed on how to select the appropriate portion(s), and appropriately sized serving utensils provided. Attractive signage also provides a visual reminder to help students determine how to select foods from the salad bar.

Production and Menu Records

School districts are required to use production and menu records for salad bars. These records demonstrate how the meals offered contribute to the required food components and food quantities for each age/grade group every day. They also promote consistent food quality with predictable yields, control food costs and help with inventory control.

To develop a production record for a salad bar, the menu planner would first determine the planned serving size. Second, the number of servings the salad bar will yield must be established. Finally, the menu planner must determine the amount of each food ingredient used in the salad bar by:

- measuring the amount of each ingredient placed on the salad bar
- measuring, or estimating, the amount of each ingredient leftover on the salad bar at the end of the meal service; and
- subtracting the amount leftover from the amount placed on the salad bar for each ingredient.

Food Safety

Schools must follow all State and local food safety rules and regulations to minimize the risk of food-borne illnesses. It is important to control potential food safety hazards and maintain appropriate food temperatures to prevent the growth of pathogenic microorganisms. The Institute of Child Nutrition's Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools fact sheets provide specific food safety recommendations for produce. Consideration of layout, food protection, monitoring and training are factors in the safe incorporation of a salad bar into school meal programs. Teaching students proper salad bar etiquette through signage and monitoring the service area may be beneficial to the control and transmission of pathogens.

For additional information about implementing or improving your salad bar, contact your Area Specialist through email, or, by phone at 501-324-9502.

Attachment:

Salad Bars in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Q & A

Resources:

Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/Food_Safety_Produce_Best_practices.pdf

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*Handling Fresh Produce on Salad Bars**

<https://theicn.org/resources/179/produce-safety/105755/handling-fresh-produce-on-salad-bars-fact-sheet.pdf>

Promoting and Supporting School Salad Bars: An Action Guide for State Health Practitioners.

https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/pdf/Promoting_Supporting_School_SaladBars.pdf.pdf

Attachments

- [Salad_Bar_Q__A_113600.pdf](#)