Menus: Planning and prepping for Child Care

Gather inspiration from sample menus! Plan meals ahead of time—it’s a great way to ensure children get a wide variety of food throughout the month, and helps with budgeting. Check out the links below!

Association for Child Development’s Menu Planning Guide – Includes 4-week cycle menus for Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter and loads of resources to help child care centers and homes plan and serve healthy meals. Check out this resource for menu planning tips and best practices. Bonus: All menus meet the Child and Adult Care Food Program meal patterns (CACFP)! <http://acdkids.org/mealpatterns.asp#.W3wF0Um0XIU>

Twist & Sprout® Menus – Check out these 4-week cycle menus that correspond with the four seasons! Each day has breakfast, lunch, and snack with crediting for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (also known as CACFP, Child Food Program, or Food Program). <http://www.providerschoice.com/twistandsprout/>

Tip Sheets and Menus from the Texas Department of Agriculture – 4-week cycle menus you can use as examples or that can be modified to meet your program’s needs. Be sure to review the Tip Sheet when planning, preparing, and serving your menus. Menus indicate recipes that are Whole Grain-Rich, Multicultural Standardized Recipes, and USDA Standardized Recipes. <http://www.squaremeals.org/FandNResources/MENUModule.aspx>

Idaho Menu Planning Toolkit – This menu toolkit includes best practices, tips and strategies for successful meal planning, 3-week menu cycles, resources, and more than 60 recipes to choose from. <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/cnp/shared/Idaho-CACFP-Menu-Toolkit-Final.pdf>

Institute for Child Nutrition – Tips that suggest ways to save time and effort. For more grab-and-go lessons to help your food program, visit the Institute for Child Nutrition website.

Time Saving Tips – Tips that help you organize and cut down on food preparation time. <https://theicn.org/>

Using Standardized Recipes in Child Care – Take the guesswork out of preparing meals for children in your care. A standardized recipe identifies the exact amount of ingredients, preparation methods, and the required equipment to prepare the recipe. In addition, standardized recipes are prepared the same way each time, aiding in food and labor cost control. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-standardized-recipe>

Free online classes on menus and food preparation <https://theicn.docebosaas.com/learn>