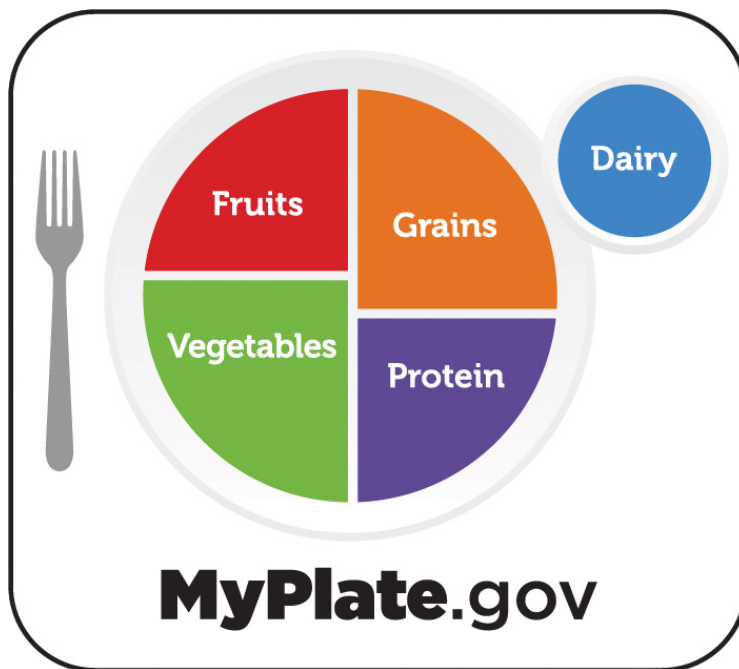


Recommendations for Healthy Dinner Donations

Research indicates that individuals and families experiencing homelessness face multiple barriers to healthy eating. Due to the fact that people experiencing homelessness generally lack access to nutrient-dense (high in vitamins and minerals) foods while having increased access to energy-dense foods (high in calories), many experience malnutrition, obesity, and adverse health issues while simultaneously experiencing hunger. Nutrition and access to healthy foods are important for the health and wellbeing of those experiencing homelessness. Kindly consider the following recommendations when planning a donated prepared meal.

What foods should I include?



- 1. Fruits and Vegetables** Include in each meal as they are high in nutrients. Examples: salad, cucumbers, carrots, peppers, peas, watermelon, oranges, bananas
- 2. Protein** Important for growing children and adults. Choose at least one lean protein. Examples: turkey, chicken, beans, lentils, tofu, canned tuna, eggs, dairy
- 3. Whole Grains** These provide fiber, B vitamins, and minerals. Examples: corn, whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, barley, brown rice, oats
- 4. Beverages** Low-fat milk or water are the best options. 100% fruit juice is also okay but should be limited. Avoid sugar sweetened beverages like soda.

As a general guide, aim for

More



- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Lean proteins

Less



- Sugar sweetened beverages
- Desserts, pastries, chips
- Food high in saturated fat, sodium, or added sugars

What if I want to cater a meal?

If the donated meal is catered from a restaurant or prepared food picked up from the grocery store, here are some tips on what to look for:

- Choose a restaurant that has food in large quantities and offer options with vegetables, whole grains, and a protein. Examples: Cafe Rio (beans, rice, salad), Corner Bakery (sandwiches, salad, fruit), Zao Asian Café (brown rice bowls)
- Look for vegetarian options on the menu at restaurants, usually they are less expensive and contain more fruits and vegetables, a double bonus.
- Choose a grocery store that sells food and prepared meals in bulk like Costco or Sam's Club.
- Bagged salads that come with toppings and dressing are quick and easy to prepare and are available at most grocery stores.
- Rotisserie chickens are a great way to feed a lot of people inexpensively. Chicken is also a great source of lean protein.
- Fruit and vegetable platters are a great way to include vitamins and minerals in the donated meal and pre-cut ingredients can save time and energy.

What if I make the meal myself?

Here are some cost efficient and easy options that can be made at home. Pick one item from each category for a delicious healthy and complete meal.

Main Course

- Chili with beans and vegetables or ground turkey
- Vegetable lasagna
- Whole wheat pasta with tomato sauce and sauteed peppers
- Tuna, egg, or chicken salad on whole wheat rolls
- Baked chicken breast or thigh

Side Dish

- Whole wheat garlic bread
- Potato salad
- Green bean casserole
- Brown rice
- Baked sweet potato
- Whole wheat pasta salad with veggies
- Hummus with crackers or vegetables
- Lentils or quinoa
- Corn on the cob

Fruits and Vegetables

- Fruit salad
- Sliced fruit
- Roasted broccoli or brussels sprouts
- Stuffed mushrooms
- Spinach or romaine salad
- Roasted carrots or butternut squash
- Boiled zucchini
- Cauliflower rice
- Sauteed greens beans

How do I donate a meal while on a budget?

- Meat is typically the most expensive ingredient in a meal, consider choosing a vegetable protein source such as beans, tofu, or lentils for the donated meal.
- If making a meal at home that does require meat, consider slow cooking a less expensive cut of meat like chicken thighs or pork roast to make it tender, or choose canned chicken or tuna.
- Consider using low-sodium canned beans and vegetables, vegetarian chili is a healthy and cost-efficient meal.
- Frozen fruits and vegetables are healthy and typically cost less compared to fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Shop the sales. Check out the coupons before heading to the store and plan a meal around the weekly specials.
- Look for seasonal produce which typically costs less. When in season, strawberries can go for \$1.70 per pound, whereas out of season strawberries can cost up to \$4 per pound.

Thank you to all the gracious donors and partners who work to improve the health of our community.



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