Menu Planning

**MENU EVALUATION CHECKLIST**

- All CACFP meal pattern requirements are met.
- All three breakfast components are included.
- Lunches and/or suppers contain the four required meal pattern components with five food items.
- Snacks contain two of the four meal pattern components.
- Serving sizes are sufficient to provide participants the required quantity of all meal pattern components:
  - Meat or Meat Alternate
  - Vegetables and/or Fruits
  - Grains or Breads
  - Milk
- Menus contain a wide variety from each of the food groups.
- Food items high fats, oils, and sweets used only in moderation.
- Whole grains are used frequently.
- Menus include a good variety of:
  - Color - in the foods themselves or in a garnish;
  - Texture - soft, crisp, firm, starchy;
  - Shape - different sized pieces and shapes of food;
  - Flavor - bland and tart or mild and strong flavored foods;
  - Temperature - hot and cold foods; and
  - Form - fresh, canned, raw, and cooked forms of food.
- Menus include a pleasing combination of foods that go well together.
- The participants’ cultural and ethnic food practices have been considered.
- The participants’ favorite foods have been included.
- New foods are introduced regularly.
- Seasonal foods are included.
- Special occasions are planned for.
- Foods are included that can be prepared and served by the participants occasionally.
- Food items are appropriate for the age group(s) of participants served.
- The menus can be prepared in a reasonable amount of time.
- The number and skill of the food service staff has been taken into consideration.
- The availability of recipes and equipment has been taken into consideration.
- Breakfast, lunch, and supper menus complement each other.

Good examples of menus meeting these best practices and other menu planning help can be found in the USDA manual, “Building Blocks for Fun and Healthy Meals” and on the USDA Childcare Nutrition Resource System website: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/buildingblocks.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/buildingblocks.html)