

Guidelines for Healthy Church Meals & Potlucks

Healthy eating means choosing the right foods. Build a base by selecting nutrient-packed foods such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, with smaller amounts of protein-rich foods, plus small amounts of fats, oils and sweets. Purchase fruits and vegetables in season. When fresh isn't available, frozen and/or canned are also good, to increase vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Read food labels, to choose better sources of nutrients and to help limit fat, cholesterol, sugar and sodium. Cook using vegetable oils (olive, canola or peanut) instead of lard and butter.

While not every item you serve needs to be "healthy," try to provide healthy choices as often as possible. Provide more nutrient-dense foods (foods with more nutrition and vitamins) and fewer "empty" calories foods (those high in calories and fat but low in nutrients and vitamins). Variety is the spice of life!

SOME HELPFUL HINTS

Fruits and vegetables: Make sure to include as many fruits and vegetables as possible. Remember ALL fruits and veggies count, including fresh, frozen, canned and dried. Try including fruits and vegetables in baked goods and casseroles. You can also offer plates of raw or lightly steamed veggies, and bowls of unsweetened or fruit-juice-only-sweetened canned fruits.

Grains, Breads, baked goods: Try to offer whole grains instead of highly processed white flour in your meals. Brown rice, whole wheat pasta or other grains such as quinoa or barley are good choices. Grocery store muffins, quick breads and sweet rolls are usually very high in fats and sugars. Whole grain breads and crackers and homemade muffins are generally better. You can substitute whole wheat pasta or brown rice in many recipes calling for white pasta or rice and make it healthier.

Healthy protein: Use lean meats, fish, beans, low-fat dairy products or soy protein. Trim visible fat from meats, including the skin. Grill, bake, boil, or broil foods instead of frying. Use low-fat cheeses or less of a cheese with more flavor (sharp cheddar instead of mild cheddar) to create the same taste.

Beverages: Try to provide water, low fat milk and juice as often as possible instead of sugary drinks. Some ideas to try: water with lemon and/or orange slices in a pitcher, hot or iced herbal teas such as hibiscus, mint or berry, plain or sweetened with a little honey.

Desserts: Make fruit a prominent part of dessert or use low-fat or reduced sugar items. Include low-fat dairy or whole grains when possible.

Healthy Meal & Potluck Choices

Food Groups	Less Healthy Options	Healthier Options & Ideas
<i>Grains (breads, baked goods, cereals)</i>	White rice White flour White pasta White Flour tortillas	Brown/wild rice dishes Whole wheat pasta Whole wheat bread or tortillas Corn tortillas Quinoa
<i>Fruits</i>	Almost all forms of fruit are healthy! <i>(Try to avoid "fruit-flavored" items that contain little or no fruit, but lots of sugar or fat.)</i>	Sliced fresh fruit Fruit salad Frozen berries made into smoothies Fruit kebabs Dried fruit (if it is low in sugar and fat)
<i>Vegetables</i>	Almost all forms of veggies are healthy! <i>(Try to avoid lard, butter, and a lot of salt.)</i>	Lightly steamed veggies (green beans, broccoli, cauliflower) Soups or salads Baked or roasted potatoes Casseroles/quiches with low-fat crust
<i>Proteins (meat, eggs, beans, nuts)</i>	Fried Chicken Beans made with lard Bacon Sausage Eggs made with lots of butter, mayonnaise or cheese	Broiled/baked turkey, chicken, fish Peanut/almond butter Tofu (baked or scrambled) Egg casserole/quiche with low-fat crust Baked beans/lentils/pinto or black beans Stews/soups with beef or chicken
<i>Dairy</i>	Whole milk Whipped cream Butter	Low fat yogurt & cheese dishes Reduced fat cream cheese Puddings/tapioca made w. low fat milk
<i>Fats</i>	Coconut/palm oils Fat in meats Butter Cream cheese	Canola/olive/peanut oils Soft tub margarine Peanut/almond butter dishes Tahini (sesame paste)
<i>Desserts</i>	Bakery muffins/cookies Cakes/pies/sweet rolls Ice cream	Baked goods using whole grains Desserts based around fresh fruit Gelatin with fruit Frozen yogurt
<i>Beverages</i>	Fruit punch (or other drinks w. little or no actual fruit juice) Soda Energy drinks	Water Low-fat milk Unsweetened hot or iced tea 100% juice

*This document contains some ideas. Your personal creations and recipes are welcome and appreciated. Thank you for your time and efforts to support the well-being of our congregation!