



STANDARDS FOR PREPARED FOODS, SNACKS AND BEVERAGES

STANDARDS FOR CAFETERIAS, CAFÉS, AND CONCESSIONS

This document sets standards for all prepared foods, snacks, and beverages offered in the County of Los Angeles. These standards apply to both County departments that operate their own food services and County food service contractors. The food standards seek to increase access to nutritious foods and reduce the prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases for County employees, visitors, and individuals dependent on County-operated services. Recognizing the impact that food production and consumption may have on the environment, these standards also aim to reduce the County's food purchasing carbon footprint.

Section A: Nutrient Requirements for All Purchased and Served Foods

Section B: Food Category Requirements

Section C: Product Placement, Menu Labeling, Signage & Pricing



SECTION A

NUTRIENT REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL PURCHASED AND SERVED FOODS

FOR ALL PURCHASED AND SERVED FOODS

Trans Fat	<p>PURCHASING AND/OR SERVING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Require all items to contain 0 g trans fat.
Sodium	<p>PURCHASING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Require all individual items¹ to contain ≤ 480 mg sodium per serving unless a lower standard is specified (refer to pages 3-7). 2. Recommend purchasing and/or serving "low-sodium"² items, whenever possible. <p>SERVING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Require all meals³ to contain ≤ 800 mg sodium. 2. Require all entrees⁴ to contain ≤ 600 mg sodium. 3. Require all side items⁵ to contain ≤ 230 mg sodium.
Calories	<p>SERVING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Require all entrées to contain ≤ 700 calories. 2. Require 50% of all entrées to contain ≤ 500 calories. 3. Require all side items to contain ≤ 200 calories. 4. Recommend pre-packaged "Grab-n-Go" entrée items⁶ to contain ≤ 500 calories per package.
Fiber	<p>PURCHASING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommend purchasing food items that have at least 2 g of dietary fiber per serving, whenever applicable.⁷ <p>SERVING:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommend each entrée contain at least 6 grams per entrée, 25% of the day's total recommended amount of fiber. <p>(Refer to Section B for fiber requirements for specific food categories).</p>

FOOD CATEGORY REQUIREMENTS

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Beverages



PURCHASING AND/OR SERVING:

1. **Require** access to and promotion of tap water at no cost.⁸
2. **Require** 50% of beverages in cases and 50% of beverage options in fountain drink machines to offer only the following products:
 - Water with no caloric sweeteners
 - Fruit-based and vegetable-based drinks that are 100% juice (without added sweeteners) and no more than 230 mg sodium per serving
 - Milk products, including 1%, nonfat, lactose-free, lactose-reduced, fortified soy beverages
 - Beverages that do not exceed 25 calories per 8 ounces

Snacks



PURCHASING AND/OR SERVING:

1. **Require** 50% of snacks⁹ meet the following standards for each individual food item or package, if a pre-packaged item:
 - ≤ 7 g total fat per serving (excluding legumes, nuts, nut butters, seeds, eggs, non-fried vegetables, and cheese packaged for individual sale)
 - ≤ 2 g saturated fat per serving (excluding eggs and cheese packaged for individual sale)
 - ≤ 5 g “added sugar” and ≤ 10 g total sugar per serving (excluding vegetables, fruit, trail mix, and dried fruit, all which contain no added sugars)
 - ≤ 200 mg sodium per serving
 - ≤ 200 calories per serving
 - At least 2 g of dietary fiber, if the snack item is grain/potato based
2. **Require** at least 3 grain-based products to be 100% whole grain,¹⁰ as labeled, while meeting other nutrient requirements for snacks listed above.

FOOD CATEGORY REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)

Fruit



PURCHASING:

1. **Require** canned fruit to be packaged in unsweetened 100% juice or water, not syrup.
2. **Recommend** dried, frozen, pureed, or whole fruits have no added sugars.

SERVING:

1. **Require** at least 3 fresh fruit options¹¹ per meal service, 2 of which are intact, whole fruit options.
2. **Recommend** seasonal fruit whenever possible.¹²

Vegetables, Beans, Nuts & Seeds



PURCHASING:

1. **Require** canned/frozen vegetables to contain ≤ 290 mg sodium per serving.
2. **Require** canned/frozen beans to contain ≤ 290 mg sodium per serving.
3. **Require** all nuts/seeds to contain ≤ 290 mg sodium per serving.

SERVING:

1. **Require** at least 3 non-starchy vegetables¹³ that are not fried daily.¹⁴
2. **Require** at least one raw, leafy green vegetable and at least one steamed, baked, or grilled vegetable daily.
3. **Recommend** seasonal vegetables whenever possible.¹⁵
4. **Recommend** all nuts/seeds to be unsalted.

FOOD CATEGORY REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)

Grains, Bread, Baked Goods & Cereal

PURCHASING:

1. **Require** 50% of grains and pasta to meet the following standard:
 - At least 3 g of dietary fiber per serving
2. **Require** 50% of sandwich bread¹⁶ to meet the following standards:
 - ≤ 180 mg sodium per slice
 - At least 2 g of dietary fiber per slice
3. **Require** 50% of baked goods¹⁷ to meet the following standards:
 - ≤ 290 mg sodium per serving
 - ≤ 300 calories per serving
4. **Require** 50% of cereals to meet the following standards:
 - ≤ 5 g “added sugar” and ≤ 10 g total sugar per serving
 - Cereals with dried fruit contain ≤ 17 g total sugar per serving and meet fiber and sodium standards below
 - ≤ 200 mg sodium per serving
 - At least 2 g of dietary fiber per serving

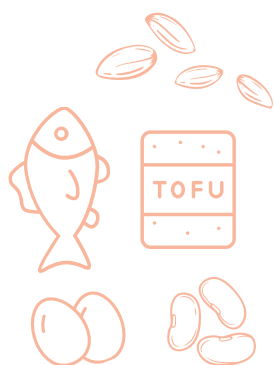
SERVING:

1. **Require** at least three 100% whole grain¹⁸ entrees and/or sides daily.
2. **Recommend** all grains to be 100% whole grains.



FOOD CATEGORY REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)

Protein



PURCHASING:

1. **Require** canned/frozen beef, pork, poultry, and seafood to contain ≤ 290 mg of sodium per serving.
2. **Require** processed meats¹⁹ to contain ≤ 480 mg sodium per serving.
3. **Recommend** purchasing extra lean and/or lean meats.²⁰
4. **Recommend** minimizing the purchase of processed meats.

SERVING:

1. **Require** at least 2 of the proteins offered daily be plant-based proteins (e.g., as protein options served in salad bars and/or incorporated in entrees/sides/snacks).²¹
2. **Require** daily offerings of plant-based entrees.²²
3. **Require** non-fried seafood offered at least twice a week.
4. **Recommend** offering a variety of non-fried protein foods such as seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), unsalted nuts and seeds, and soy products daily.
5. **Recommend** a 2:1 ratio of plant-based entrees to non-plant-based entrees.
6. **Recommend** daily offerings of meat-plant blends.²³

Dairy



PURCHASING:

1. **Require** yogurt, yogurt products, and yogurt alternatives²⁴ to meet the following standards:
 - Labeled as low-fat or non-fat²⁵
 - Labeled as plain or ≤ 30 g of sugar per 8 oz or an equivalent²⁶
2. **Require** cheese and cheese alternatives²⁷ to contain ≤ 350 mg sodium per serving.
3. **Require** offering plant-based dairy alternatives (i.e., almond, soy, oat milk, etc.).
4. **Recommend** defaulting to plant-based dairy alternatives.

FOOD CATEGORY REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)

Sauces, Dressings, Condiments & Dips



PURCHASING:

1. **Require** all sauces, dressings, condiments, and dips to contain ≤ 350 mg sodium per serving (30 g).²⁸
2. **Recommend** purchasing low-sodium sauces, dressings, condiments, and dips whenever possible (e.g., reduced sodium soy sauce).
3. **Recommend** purchasing plant-based condiments, dressings, and sauces.

SERVING:

1. **Require** at least one low-sodium salad dressing daily.
2. **Require** olive oil and vinegar (e.g., balsamic, red wine) to be offered daily.
3. **Recommend** making salad dressings from scratch whenever possible.
4. **Recommend** defaulting to plant-based condiments, dressings, and sauces.

Ready-Prepared Food Items

PURCHASING:

1. **Require** all ready-prepared food items²⁹ to contain ≤ 480 mg sodium per serving.

Desserts



PURCHASING AND/OR SERVING:

1. **Require** 50% of all desserts including freshly made, pre-made, and pre-packaged items meet the following standards:
 - ≤ 7 g total fat per serving
 - ≤ 2 g saturated fat per serving
 - ≤ 5 g "added sugar" and ≤ 10 g total sugar per serving
 - ≤ 480 mg sodium per serving
 - ≤ 200 calories per serving
2. **Require** at least one dessert to contain 100% whole grains daily, if desserts are offered.
3. **Require** at least one dessert be fruit-based³⁰ daily if desserts are offered.
4. **Recommend** incorporating fresh fruit whenever possible.
5. **Recommend** defaulting to plant-based desserts whenever possible.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT, MENU LABELING, SIGNAGE & PRICING

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Product Placement



1. **Require** healthy items³¹ that are offered to be prominently placed and easily accessible for customers by meeting the following standards:
 - Place only healthy snacks (see snack standards above), plant-based items, and water, within 5 feet of all checkout registers
 - Fresh fruit is placed within reach of all checkout registers
 - Healthy beverages are displayed at eye-level³² sections of all beverage cases (see beverage standards above)
2. **Require** healthy snacks/desserts and plant-based items to be displayed at eye level in display areas (see snack and dessert standards above).
3. **Recommend** removal of salt shakers at tables, only offering salt near other condiments.

Menu Labeling



1. **Require** calorie information to be posted in a prominent place for items that do not include a Nutrition Facts label.
2. **Require** nutrition information for standard menu items to be on-hand if requested, in accordance with the Food and Drug Administration's Menu Labeling Final Rule.³³
3. **Require** plant-based items to be denoted using a symbol, rather than in the name of the dish (i.e., "Black Bean Enchiladas (v)" rather than "Vegan Enchiladas").
4. **Recommend** sodium information to be posted in a prominent place for items that do not include a Nutrition Facts label.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT, MENU LABELING, SIGNAGE & PRICING

PRODUCT PLACEMENT, MENU LABELING, SIGNAGE & PRICING (CONTINUED)

Signage



1. **Require** clear indication of available free water at fountain drink machine or hydration station (e.g., signage, menu labeling, etc.).
2. **Require** plant-based menu items to be listed at the top of the menu.
3. **Recommend** the identification of healthy menu items (meals, entrées, and side items) that meet nutrition standards listed above.
4. **Recommend** the labeling of menu items that use seasonal produce.

Pricing



1. **Require** bottled water to be available as a beverage option and the price per ounce cannot be higher than any other beverage option.
2. **Recommend** pricing for healthy entrées, side items, snacks/desserts, and beverages to be competitive with comparable options.
3. **Recommend** pricing for plant-based entrees, side items, snacks/desserts, and beverages to be competitive with comparable options.
4. **Recommend** pricing for fresh and pre-packaged salads to be competitive with other entrée options.

Definitions

1. An individual item is defined as a single purchased food product that may be used as an ingredient or as a ready-prepared food.
2. Low Sodium is defined as having less than or equal to 140 mg sodium per serving size of 30 g. [a]
3. According to the Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities, a meal is defined as “an entrée and two side items”. [b]
4. According to the Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR 210.11), an entrée is defined as “an item that is intended as the main dish and is either: (i) A combination food of meat or meat alternate and whole grain rich food; or (ii) A combination food of vegetable or fruit and meat or meat alternate; or (iii) A meat or meat alternate alone with the exception of yogurt, low-fat or reduced fat cheese, nuts, seeds and nut or seed butters, and meat snacks (such as dried beef jerky); or (iv) A grain only, whole grain-rich entree that is served as the main dish”. [c]
5. According to the Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities, a side item is defined as “a single serving of a food or beverage that may accompany a meal or entrée or eaten on its own”. [b]
6. "Grab-n-Go" entrée items are pre-packaged, ready-to-eat food items that are often sold at refrigerated self-service stations. Examples include pre-packaged salads, wraps, sandwiches, or snack cups.
7. The recommended amount of fiber per day is 25-30 grams, depending on age and sex. Fiber can come from various foods, including grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds.
8. Examples include setting up hydration stations that prominently display free water and/or allowing patrons to access free water from fountain drink machines.
9. Snacks are food items that are consumed in between meals that are often packaged or served/sold as separate portioned food items. Examples may include a la carte products sold in snack bars, vending machines, and cafeterias. [d]
10. 100% whole grain products are items that have a "100% Whole Grain" stamp provided by the Whole Grains Council, a designation which is given to food products only if “all its grain ingredients are whole grain” and have “a minimum requirement of 16 g (16 grams) – a full serving- of whole grain per labeled serving”. [e]
11. Fresh fruit options are unprocessed and have no added sugars. They are not canned or previously frozen, and they can be served as cut-up pieces or as an intact, whole fruit.
12. For a list of seasonal fruits, please refer to <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide>.
13. Vegetables that are not starchy. Starchy vegetables include white potatoes, corn, green peas, and lima beans (excluding sweet potatoes and yams).
14. Fried foods are food items that have been cooked by submerging it in hot fat, most commonly oil, until reaching browning reactions (Caramelization or Maillard Reaction).
15. For a list of seasonal vegetables, please refer to <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide>.
16. Sandwich bread is defined as individually wrapped slices of bread or fresh or frozen sliced loaves. [f]
17. Baked goods are items made from dough or batter and then baked, including but are not limited to bagels, breadsticks, croissants, english muffins, muffins, pitas, scones, tortillas, and wraps.
18. 100% whole grain is defined as the first ingredient on the ingredient list, determined by weight, is a whole grain based on qualifying criteria from the FDA whole grain health claim, and the item is free of refined grains. [g]
19. Processed meats are defined as meats that undergo smoking, curing, salting, and/or the addition of chemical substances such as nitrate and nitrite to preserve the meat and enhance its flavor. Examples include bacon, hot dogs, ham, sausages, and deli, luncheon meats.
20. Lean meat is defined as each 3 ½ oz of product must contain “less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams or less of saturated fat”. Extra lean meat contains “less than 5 grams of fat, less than 2 grams of saturated fat” for each 3 ½ oz product. [h]

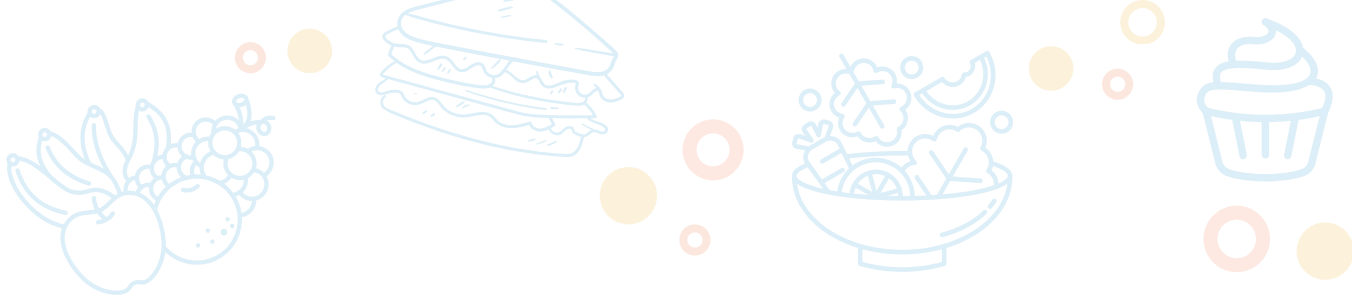
Definitions (continued)

21. According to Melina et al., plant-based proteins are “proteins from a variety of plant foods, eaten during the course of a day, supplies enough of all indispensable (essential) amino acids when caloric requirements are met”. [i] According to Ostfeld, plant-based “excludes all animal products, including red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products”. [j]
22. According to the Plant Based Foods Association, plant-based entrées are main dishes that include ingredients from fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains, legumes, fungi or algae or a combination of these, while containing no more than 10%, by weight, ingredients that are not of animal or plant origin (excluding water, salt, and processing aids). [k]
23. A meat-plant blend, also known as a “protein flip,” is a plant-forward protein item with at least 1/4 part plant protein and 3/4 part animal protein. [l]
24. Yogurt alternatives or substitutes include kefir and non-dairy yogurts, using fortified soy milk, coconut milk, almond milk, etc.
25. Low-fat yogurt should have ≤ 3 g of total fat. Non-fat yogurt should consist of ≤ 0.5 g of total fat. [m]
26. An equivalent is ≤ 15 g sugar per 4 oz and ≤ 23 g sugar per 6 oz. [n]
27. Cheese alternatives or analogs include processed cheeses and vegan-cheese options that are fermented and plant-based.
28. Sauces, dressings, condiments, and dips include but are not limited to barbecue sauce, ketchup, glazes, guacamole, hot sauce, hummus, marinades, salad dressings, steak sauces, peanut butter, salsa, and tomato sauce.
29. According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Good Choice program criteria, ready-prepared food items are “cooked, marinated or prepared meats and vegetables, frozen entrees and sides, breadcrumbs, frozen waffles, instant foods, pizza, potato salad, ravioli, soups”. Other names include tertiary processed foods and convenience items. [f]
30. Fruit-based desserts are defined as having the first ingredient on the ingredient list, determined by raw weight, be a fruit.
31. Healthy items are food and beverage options that meet all relevant nutrition standards set forth in this document.
32. Eye-level is defined as being positioned approximately at the same height as your eyes. This may differ depending upon the populations served by the food venue.
33. Standard menu items include self-serve items and food on-display that are part of a fixed menu. To view the Menu Labeling Final Rule: Food Labeling; Nutrition Labeling of Standard Menu Items in Restaurants and Similar Retail Food Establishments, please visit: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-01/pdf/2014-27833.pdf>

References

These standards were developed by the Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention within the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Select standards were adapted from existing local, state, and federal nutrition standards programs including the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. General Services Administration's Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities. The enumerated definitions come from a variety of organizations including government agencies, associations, public health partnerships, and other professional organizations specialized in nutrition, culinary practices, and public health.

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