

# Flexible Menu Planning Tool

Start planning now to be prepared for the fall. Service style may change but your menus and products can stay the same.

By planning a quality, flexible menu now, you will be prepared for any service style.

## Strategies for Flexible Menu Planning

- ☐ Modify existing menu
  - Highlight students' favorites from existing menu
- ☐ Limit entrée choices
  - Offer 1 – 3 choices each day from your highlighted list
  - Provide a cold entrée each day as one of your choices
- ☐ Rethink traditional menu items to transition to grab and go
  - Out of clamshell containers for grab and go pizza, try
    - Pizza Wraps
    - Pizza Panini
    - Hand Calzone
- ☐ Utilize existing containers in storage
  - Disposable cups aren't only for salad shakers, try
    - Pastas
    - Rice Dishes
    - Potato Bowls
    - Vegetables
    - Soups
- ☐ Train staff
  - Demonstrate the proper way to wrap or pack items for efficiency
  - Assign individual kitchen duties to establish assembly lines
- ☐ Monitor local restaurants for menu ideas and marketing strategies



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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Food and Nutrition Division  
National School Lunch Program



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# Example: Flexible Menu

Instructions for using the following  
Example 4-Week Flexible Menu to help  
with menu planning



## Prepare

Prepare a flexible menu for  
multiple types of services



## Innovate

Innovate solutions for  
potential problems



## Relax

Relax when you are fully  
prepared

## Example 4 -Week Flexible Menu

### Instructions:

- ☐ Edit menu items for student preferences & available food items
- ☐ Optimize for student's preferences
  - Customize with local recipes and local farm fresh products
- ☐ Incorporate more recipes as service style evolves
- ☐ Choose a suggested cold entrée daily to offer with daily hot entrée

### Example Menu Edits

- Taco Meat → Beef Burrito Bowls
- Deli Meat Wraps → Turkey Wraps
- Chicken Alfredo Pasta → Rotini Noodles
- Steak Fingers → Chicken Nuggets
- Philly Cheesesteak → Meatball Sub
- Orange Chicken → Beef and Broccoli



## Disclaimer

These menus are not mandatory menus. The CE is responsible for ensuring their menus are compliant with the meal pattern requirements as described in the *Administrator's Review Manual* (ARM) located on [Squaremeals.gov](http://Squaremeals.gov).



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# Example FLEXIBLE MENUS

## WEEK 1\*

| Component              | Monday                               | Tuesday                         | Wednesday                                 | Thursday  | Friday                 |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| Hot Entrée             | Hamburger<br>Cheeseburger            | Pepperoni Pizza<br>Cheese Pizza | Steak Fingers Bowl with<br>Gravy and Roll | Meat Nachos<br>Cheese Nachos                              | Chicken Alfredo Pasta  |
| Grains                 | WG Hamburger Bun                     | WG Pizza Crust                  | WG Roll                                   | Corn Tortilla Chips                                       | WG Noodles             |
| Meat/Meat<br>Alternate | Hamburger Patty<br>Cheese Slice      | Shredded Cheese<br>Pepperoni    | Steak Fingers                             | Taco Meat (Beef,<br>Chicken, Pulled Pork)<br>Nacho Cheese | Chicken                |
| Vegetable              | Tomatoes and Lettuce<br>Baby Carrots | Green Beans                     | Mashed Potatoes<br>Baby Carrots           | Beans<br>Tomatoes and Lettuce                             | Broccoli               |
| Fruit                  | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit               | Fresh Fruit                     | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit                    | Fresh Fruit   | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit |

## WEEK 2\*

| Component              | Monday                 | Tuesday  | Wednesday              | Thursday                          | Friday                      |
|------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hot Entrée             | Chicken and Waffles    | Meat Tacos<br>Black Bean Tacos                 | Beefy Mac              | Philly Cheesesteak                | Teriyaki Chicken Bowl       |
| Grains                 | WG Waffle              | WG Tortilla                                    | WG Macaroni Noodles    | WG Sub Roll                       | WG Rice                     |
| Meat/Meat<br>Alternate | Chicken Tenders        | Taco Meat (Chicken, Beef,<br>Pulled Pork, BBQ) | Beef Spaghetti Sauce   | Philly Meat<br>Cheese             | Chicken with Teriyaki Sauce |
| Vegetable              | Carrots                | Corn   | Beans<br>Carrots       | Bell Peppers<br>Sandwich Toppings | Broccoli                    |
| Fruit                  | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit | Fresh Fruit                                    | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit | Fresh Fruit                       | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit      |

## Cold Entrée Suggestions

\*Offer choice of milk

| Cold Entrée            | Nut/Nut Free Butter & Jelly<br>Sandwich + Additional MMA  | Deli Meat & Cheese Wrap or<br>Sandwich | Salad Entrée  | Protein Pack  |
|------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Grains                 | WG Sandwich Bread   | WG Tortilla Wrap OR<br>WG Bread        | WG Crackers<br>WG Roll/Breadstick                     | WG Pretzels OR<br>Crackers                          |
| Meat/Meat<br>Alternate | Nut Butter/Nut Free Butter +<br>Cheese Stick OR<br>Yogurt | Deli Meat<br>Sliced Cheese             | Cheese<br>Hard Boiled Egg<br>Deli Meat<br>Fajita Meat | Hummus<br>Hard Boiled Egg<br>Cheese Sauce<br>Yogurt |



# Example FLEXIBLE MENUS

## WEEK 3\*

| Component           | Monday                                     | Tuesday                         | Wednesday                 | Thursday                                    | Friday                 |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Hot Entrée          | Chicken Sandwich<br>Spicy Chicken Sandwich | Pepperoni Pizza<br>Cheese Pizza | Spaghetti with Meat Sauce | Burrito Bowl                                | Hotdogs                |
| Grains              | WG Hamburger Bun                           | WG Pizza Crust                  | WG Noodles                | Brown Rice                                  | WG Hotdog Bun          |
| Meat/Meat Alternate | Chicken Patty                              | Shredded Cheese<br>Pepperoni    | Beef Spaghetti Sauce      | Seasoned Black Beans<br>Taco Meat<br>Cheese | Hotdog Franks          |
| Vegetable           | Carrots<br>Cold Bean Salad                 | Cucumbers                       | Broccoli                  | Lettuce, Tomatoes<br>Corn                   | Carrots                |
| Fruit               | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit                     | Fresh Fruit                     | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit    | Fresh Fruit                                 | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit |

## WEEK 4\*

| Component           | Monday   | Tuesday                                  | Wednesday   | Thursday                                | Friday                               |
|---------------------|--|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Hot Entrée          | Plain Mac & Cheese<br>Meat Mac & Cheese                          | Buffalo Chicken Wrap<br>BBQ Chicken Wrap | Calzone<br>Meat Calzone                                   | Grilled Cheese<br>Grilled Deli & Cheese | Orange Chicken Bowl                  |
| Grains              | WG Macaroni  | WG Tortilla Wrap                         | WG Calzone Pizza Dough                                    | WG Sandwich Bread                       | Brown Rice                           |
| Meat/Meat Alternate | Cheese<br>Topping (Popcorn Chicken,<br>Popcorn Shrimp, BBQ Beef) | Fajita Chicken Strips<br>Cheese          | Cheese<br>Filling (Pepperoni,<br>Hamburger Beef, Sausage) | Cheese<br>Deli Meat                     | Popcorn Chicken with<br>Orange Sauce |
| Vegetable           | Carrots  | Bean Salad                               | Cucumber Slices<br>Cherry Tomatoes                        | Carrots                                 | Broccoli                             |
| Fruit               | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit   | Fresh Fruit                              | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit                                    | Fresh Fruit                             | Fruit Cup/Canned Fruit               |

## Cold Entrée Suggestions

\*Offer choice of milk

| Cold Entrée         | Nut/Nut Free Butter & Jelly<br>Sandwich + Additional MMA  | Deli Meat & Cheese Wrap or<br>Sandwich | Salad Entrée  | Protein Pack  |
|---------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Grains              | WG Sandwich Bread   | WG Tortilla Wrap OR<br>WG Bread        | WG Crackers<br>WG Roll/Breadstick                     | WG Pretzels OR<br>Crackers                          |
| Meat/Meat Alternate | Nut Butter/Nut Free Butter +<br>Cheese Stick OR<br>Yogurt | Deli Meat<br>Sliced Cheese             | Cheese<br>Hard Boiled Egg<br>Deli Meat<br>Fajita Meat | Hummus<br>Hard Boiled Egg<br>Cheese Sauce<br>Yogurt |



# Packaging Options

## Incorporate The Same Entrée Using Various Packaging Options

Be creative with the packaging you have on hand to serve meals for any service style. Listed below are examples of different packaging options and their usage. Whenever possible, consider using packaging that can be utilized for multiple meal types and service styles-

### Cups

- Combo Entrées
- Pastas
- Soups
- Fruit
- Vegetables

### Foil Wrap

- Hot Sandwiches
- Hot Wraps
- Burgers
- Tacos
- Hot dogs

### Paper Wrap

- Cold Sandwiches
- Cold Wraps
- Use designed paper for promotional days



### Clamshells

- Cold Items
- Salads
- Wraps
- Sandwiches
- Protein Packs

### Plastic Wrap

- Containers without lids
- Trays of food
- Use colored wrap for promotional days





# Service Styles

## Incorporate The Same Entrée Using Various Serving Styles

Be creative with the packaging you have on hand in order to serve meals for any service style.

| Menu item   | Traditional Cafeteria Service   | Mobile Cafeteria/Grab and Go/ Kiosk  | Meals in the Classroom   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Hamburger</b><br><b>Chicken Sandwich</b><br><b>Hotdog</b><br><b>Philly Cheesesteak</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display in 2-inch hotel pan</li> <li>• Uniformly lined up, separated by type</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap in foil, label</li> <li>• Uniformly lined up, separate by type</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap in foil, label</li> <li>• Separate in container by type</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Deli Sandwich</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut diagonally</li> <li>• Display both triangles in 2-inch hotel pan</li> <li>• Uniformly lined up by sandwich type</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut diagonally</li> <li>• Wrap in cling wrap, label</li> <li>• Uniformly lined up by sandwich type</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut diagonally</li> <li>• Wrap in cling wrap, label</li> <li>• Separate in container by type</li> </ul>                     |
| <b>Pizza</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve by slice on pizza pan</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place in cardboard or plastic container</li> <li>• Separate by type</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place in cardboard or plastic container</li> <li>• Separate by type</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Deli Wrap</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut in half</li> <li>• Wrap with clingwrap to show ingredients</li> <li>• Display wrap in 2-inch hotel pan</li> <li>• Uniformly lined up by wrap type</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut in half</li> <li>• Wrap with clingwrap to show ingredients, label</li> <li>• Uniformly lined up by wrap type</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut in half</li> <li>• Wrap with clingwrap to show ingredients, label</li> <li>• Separate in container by type</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Nachos</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weigh individual servings of chips in pre-portioned boats</li> <li>• Cheese and taco meat in sperate half pans</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weigh individual servings of chips in pre-portioned boats</li> <li>• Place cheese and taco into to-go containers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weigh individual servings of chips in pre-portioned boats</li> <li>• Place cheese and taco into to-go containers</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pasta (Spaghetti, Macaroni)</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve in 2-inch or 4-inch hotel pan</li> <li>• Separate by noodles, sauce, and meat</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place single serving in container: clamshell, cup, label</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place single serving in container: clamshell, cup, label</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Steak Fingers, Chicken Nuggets, Fish Sticks</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve in 2-inch or 4-inch hotel pan</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place single serving in container: clamshell, cup, label</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place single serving in container: clamshell, cup, label</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Fresh Vegetables</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve in 2-inch or 4-inch hotel pan</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place in offer-vs-serve cups</li> <li>• Place cuts in a hotel pan for service</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place in single serve bags</li> </ul>   |



# Service Styles

Use the blank chart below to begin planning how you can serve your menu items for different service styles.

| Menu item | Traditional Cafeteria Service | Mobile Cafeteria/Grab and Go/ Kiosk | Meals in the Classroom |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
|           |                               |                                     |                        |
|           |                               |                                     |                        |
|           |                               |                                     |                        |
|           |                               |                                     |                        |
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