

Welcome to the first edition of Safe Food for the Hungry Newsletter - Summer 1999

A newsletter for you, the staff and volunteers of emergency feeding programs. The aim with this Newsletter is to give you information which will help you provide your clients with the safest, most nutritious food possible. This Newsletter is created by the Cooperative Extension Service staff in the Department of Foods and Nutrition at Purdue University, with funding from a Community Foods and Nutrition Block Grant administered by the Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family and Children, Housing and Community Services Section.

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Eating Right

The Importance Of Food Choice

We all like to have a choice, whether it's deciding what to wear, where to go, or what to eat. Choice is good and we appreciate it when we can make decisions for ourselves. Food choice is highly personal. Each of us selects food based on our own unique background, likes, dislikes, health concerns, and other considerations.

Food choice is important for pantry clients too, yet many pantries find it easier to pre-bag food or feel their limited selection of items precludes individual choice. Frequently, clients discard items in standardized food bags when it's something the family does not eat. Allowing clients to select their own food decreases food waste and provides them with a feeling of control and dignity. You may think client choice is impossible at your organization, but, with some reorganization of shelves or re-training of staff and volunteers, it may be easier to accomplish than you think. Here are two ways client choice may be included in your pantry.

1. Shelve your food alphabetically according to the groups in the Food Guide Pyramid (Bread, Cereal, Rice and Pasta Group, Vegetable Group, Fruit Group, Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group, Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts Group, Fats, Oils, and Sweets).

That way, volunteers can quickly find requested food. Then prepare an inventory listing all available products. Allow clients to "shop" from the inventory list based on the criteria you set (i.e. choose 3 vegetables, 1 meat, 2 fruit, etc.) .

2. If you have the space, allow clients to select their own food from the shelves. Client choice pantries report less waste and better utilization of "odd" foods.

Think about it. Could YOU incorporate choice into your pantry?

Pyramid Power

Did you realize that over 25 million Americans rely on food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and other emergency feeding programs? That's one in every ten people in the country - but don't think of that number, picture instead the individual people you help! Everyone would agree that hungry people need food, but filling stomachs is not enough, the food must also be nutritious. Proper nutrition means getting both enough calories and the right combination of nutrients.

Many people in this country eat more calories than they need. But it's important to realize that, although an overweight person may look well fed, they may be filling up on calorie-dense food and not getting all of the nutrients their body needs. Foods high in fat, oils, and



sugar (those at the top of the pyramid) provide calories, but few nutrients. Use the Food Guide Pyramid as a guide to providing food choices for your clients, and, when possible, offer more choices from the bottom of the pyramid and fewer from the top. In your emergency feeding organization, remember that no one food provides all the nutrients necessary to stay healthy so it's important to provide a variety of different foods for your clients.

In the Kitchen

It's In The Bag

One of the Government Commodity Foods that may be available in Food Banks this quarter is Vacuum Packed Lamb in 5lb packages. For organizations providing meals on-site this meat can quickly be turned into an appetizing meal by adapting any of your casserole or stew recipes or, for a change, try one of the following recipes.

QUICK GYRO SANDWICH (serves 25)

Ingredients

- 25 Pita bread rounds, cut in half
- 2 onions, sliced
- 4 tomatoes, cut in wedges

Yogurt Sauce

- 2 cups plain yogurt
- 1 cup finely chopped cucumber
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 Tbl olive oil
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Gyro Mixture

- 5 lb commodity lamb
- 4 TBL oil
- 3 TBL Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1/4 tsp salt

Directions

1. Turn the oven on to "warm" (low). Cut each pita bread in half, put on a baking sheet and warm them in the oven while you are preparing the filling.
2. In a bowl, combine the sauce ingredients and add salt and pepper to taste.

3. Cut the lamb chunks into thin slices or chop into small pieces.
4. Heat the oil in a large skillet, add the lamb and spices and stir until the lamb is thoroughly cooked and hot.
5. Stuff each half of warm pita bread with hot lamb, top with yogurt sauce, onion slices and tomato wedgies.

IRISH STEW (serves 25)

Ingredients

- 5 lb commodity lamb
- 3 cup beef broth
- 4 cans potatoes, drained or 3 lb fresh
- 3 cans sliced carrots, or 2 lbs fresh potatoes, peeled and cubed carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1TBL salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1 TBL Italian seasoning
- 3 cans peas, drained
- 3 TBL cornstarch
- 1 cup water

Directions

1. Open and drain the cans of potatoes and carrots or peel and chop fresh.
2. In a large pot over medium heat, combine the lamb chunks, beef broth, potatoes, carrots, onions, salt, pepper and Italian seasoning.
3. Heat stew to boiling, cover and simmer for 30 minutes.
4. In a bowl mix cornstarch and water to a paste, then add to the stew, stirring constantly.
5. Add the drained peas and simmer for ten minutes more.

What's Happening

Pantry Trucks Take to the Road in Western Michigan

What does an old soft drink delivery truck have in common with a food pantry? Lots, if you live in Western Michigan. John Arnold, the director of the Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of Western Michigan, is using two donated soft drink delivery trucks as "parking lot food pantries". Individual agencies in the area request the truck on a specific day at a specific location - their agency parking lot or a shopping mall parking lot, for example. The agency advertises the pantry truck's location, date and time to its clients and provides the staff to supervise the distribution - usually for about 2 hours. When the truck arrives at the designated place, it is filled with supplemental food from the food bank. Arnold expects the truck will carry approximately 5000 lbs of fresh produce, beverages, frozen baked goods etc., in fact anything the Food Bank has in excess in the warehouse. At the end of the day, the Food Bank picks up the truck, removes scrap, debris and left-overs and charges the agency \$100 for the service. Arnold is excited by the possibility of reaching people in need wherever they are. He sees the trucks being taken to senior centers, migrant worker camps or neighborhood apartment complexes - wherever people in need are located. The trucks won't take the place of the regular pantries - but they will provide agency clients with supplemental foods and ensure that no food is wasted through sitting at the Food Bank warehouse.

Personal Glimpses

Food Choice - A Personal Experience

Every year, the church I attend participates in a community-wide program that helps low-income parents provide Christmas for their families. In addition to selecting toys for their children, each family receives a gift certificate from a local grocery store, a ham and a bag of groceries. For the last several years, I have been the "food committee," bearing the responsibility for obtaining and parceling out the food for the food bags given to the 40 families served by my church. Every year, I struggle trying to decide whether I should get tuna or peanut butter, whether our guests would prefer rice or potatoes, canned green beans or corn, Rice Krispies or Cocoa Puffs. I lie awake at night debating the relative merits of kidney beans and baked beans. When I visit the food bank, I

obsess about finding 40 identical items in each food category so that I can pack 40 identical bags. I work hard to include food from all the food groups to insure that our families have a healthy diet.

Now, I've known about the client choice concept in food pantries for some time. I've attended workshops, I've read journal articles on the subject, and, I understand the psychology of choice, the need for control, the desire of every human being to choose what he or she will eat. I've listened to pantry clients describe their feelings of depression and desperation when this basic need is denied them. I've heard pantry workers talk about cans and bags of food that are abandoned in neighborhood dumpsters or alleys because it was not something the recipient could use or would eat. Yet, year after year I packed standardized food bags for our 40 guest families. This is how it's always been done. Anyway, I reasoned, this is a once-a-year program. We don't have the facilities to allow people to have a choice. It will be too complicated, it will take too much organization. It won't really make a difference.

I was wrong. This year, when I visited the Food Bank, I selected a variety of foods from each part of the Food Guide Pyramid. Instead of desperately trying to find 40 cans of tuna, I casually picked up an assortment of protein sources, including tuna, salmon, canned chicken, peanut butter, stews and beans. Likewise, I had fun selecting various boxes and bags of noodles, pasta, potatoes and rice. Volunteers sorted food by type (soups, cereals, proteins, fruits, vegetables, etc.) and everything was arranged attractively on tables. Signs told guests how many items from each category they could select. Guests, armed with empty bags, moved among the tables and chose the food they wanted.

The difference was amazing! Instead of passively receiving a bag of food that their family may or may not like, the guests were actively involved in choosing their own food. Everyone was excited and animated. I overheard guests exchanging recipes with each other and with their hosts as they "shopped" for their food. Since our guests were responsible for choosing their food, I didn't wake up in the wee hours of the night worrying about whether to provide canned pears or peaches. I didn't spend hours packing food into 40 identical bags. I didn't have to worry about what to do with the donated cans of green chili peppers - I just put everything out and let the guests decide what they wanted.

Far from being more complicated, more time consuming, and more difficult, this method of providing food was much easier. I wonder why it took me so long to give it a try?

The "Perfect" Food

"Eating is one of life's pleasures" - no one would argue with that statement. In the 1960's NASA nutritionists developed a special liquid full of all the nutrients needed to nourish an astronaut for weeks. Can you guess the reaction of the astronauts who tested this "perfect" food? They turned it down flat. They wanted variety in their food with texture and flavor not the same chemical cocktail for every meal. Variety is indeed the spice of life and all of us, whether we buy our food in a grocery store or rely on emergency feeding programs, want variety in our daily eating.

Solve the Food Safety Puzzle

Food Safety Word Find

Find this food safety message, hidden in the jumble. "REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN." (look for the words either horizontally, vertically or diagonally and the solution is at the end of the Newsletter)

Q	C	H	U	R	X	K	R
T	W	A	S	H	J	E	Z
U	R	N	Z	R	B	H	N
Q	H	D	T	M	K	E	K
E	O	S	E	R	T	Y	Y
L	F	M	Z	F	S	X	O
C	E	X	O	A	C	Q	U
R	M	U	X	T	O	V	R

Tips and References

Print out the food safety reminder cards below and post them in a prominent place in your kitchen.

Cooking kills harmful bacteria. Be sure to cook foods to a safe temperature!	
Raw Food	Internal Temperature

Chicken, turkey, duck	180°F
Ground chicken, turkey	165°F
Ground beef, veal, lamb, pork	160°F
Pork sausage, ham	160°F
Dishes containing eggs	160°F
Seafood	145°F
Leftovers	165°F

How Long Can I Keep It?		
Raw Food	In Refrigerator (40°F)	In Freezer (0°F)
Meats(Fresh) Roasts, Steaks, Chops Ground Meat	3-5 days 1-2 days	6-12 months 3-4 months
Meats(Cooked, Leftover) Meat Dishes Gravy and Meat Broth	3-4 days 1-2 days	2-3 months 2-3 months
Poultry(Fresh) Chicken	1-2 days	9-12 months
Poultry(Cooked, Leftover) Poultry Dishes or Pieces Poultry Gravy	3-4 days 1-2 days	4-6 months 6 months
Hot Dogs, Lunch Meats	2 weeks	In freezer wrap 1-2 months
Soups and Stew Vegetable or Meat added	3-4 days	2-3 months
Eggs Fresh	3 weeks	Do Not Freeze

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