

Food Portioning – How & Why??

Lesson Description:

This lesson explains how various foods are portioned for service. The activity is used to determine how some foods are portioned in one or more common portioning units for service. The lesson is designed for managers to teach school nutrition assistants/technicians.

Lesson Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, the participant will be able to:

1. Determine how various foods may be portioned for serving
2. Discuss how foods are portioned

STEP 1 – How foods are are portioned and the common units of measurement.

Counted: Any food that is in uniform pieces that can be weighed or measured to identify the number of pieces that make one serving. The portioning may be done by counting, assuming the size of the pieces are uniform—for example, fish sticks, chicken nuggets, or potato rounds.

Volume Measured: Food items that are volume measured are fruits or vegetables. However, if the items are fairly consistent in size and each contains a consistent number of pieces, the portion may be measured by counting. For example, fruits and vegetables that might be counted are canned fruit halves, fresh cherries, or celery sticks, assuming the size of the pieces are uniform.

Weighted: Meat/meat alternates (M/MA) are portioned by weighing the raw ingredient(s); all grains/breads (G/B) servings are calculated based on portion weight. Some menu items contribute to the meat/meat alternate component of the meal and the contributing ingredient is weighed; however, there are other ingredients in the product that may also be counted as a meal component—for example, meatloaf.

Therefore, rely on the Child Nutrition (CN) label, product analysis, or standardized recipes to determine how much and how to portion the food.

The **CN label** for purchased-prepared food products provides food manufacturers the option to include a standardized food crediting statement on their product label and the common portioning units. Labels must be approved by USDA prior to use and manufacturers must have quality control procedures and inspection oversight that meet the Food Nutrition Service requirements. The products that contribute to the M/MA component of the meal pattern requirements are stated in the label. If purchased-prepared food products are not in the CN label volunteer program, the manufacturer must produce a **product analysis** for M/MA products in the USDA School Meal Program. Portioning information will be stated in the product analysis.

A **standardized recipe** is a recipe that has been tested in the school facility using the same ingredients, equipment, and preparation methods that will provide an established yield (common portioning units) and a consistent quality product.

STEP 2 – How are different food items portioned??

In the column labeled **Food**, there is a list of foods that we serve in our cafeteria. **Counted**, **Volume Measured**, and **Weighed** are all methods used in portioning. As you know, you can also use the portioning information you find on a CN Label, Product Analysis or Standardized Recipe.

Working together, place an “**X**” in the appropriate column(s) to show how each food item should be portioned. Some items may have **two answers**.

Food	Counted	Volume Measured	Weighed	CN Label, Product Analysis, or Standardized Recipe
Meat loaf				
Cooked carrots				
Meat balls				
Whipped potatoes				
Grapes				
Breaded beef sticks				
Spaghetti sauce				
Raw baby carrots				
Raw spinach				
Turkey				
Cooked ham, water added				
Bread sticks				
Milk				
Frozen cooked beef patty				
Spaghetti, plain				
Whole wheat bread slice				
Green beans				
Whole fresh strawberries				
Corn dog				
Sandwich roll				
Banana				
Pancake				
Cornbread				
Beef stew				
Purchased-prepared burrito				
Hotdog				
Tomato soup				
Chicken noodle soup				

DISCUSSION – What is missing from the list above? How would it be measured for portioning?

ANSWERS – How are different food items portioned??

Food	Counted	Volume Measured	Weighted	CN Label, Product Analysis, or Standardized Recipe
Meat loaf*			X	X
Cooked carrots		X		
Meat balls	X			X
Whipped potatoes		X		
Grapes**	X	X		
Breaded beef sticks*	X			X
Spaghetti sauce*		X		X
Raw baby carrots**	X	X		
Raw spinach		X		
Turkey			X	
Cooked ham, water added			X	
Bread sticks			X	
Milk		X		
Frozen cooked beef patty*	X			X
Spaghetti, plain		X		
Whole wheat bread slice			X	
Green beans		X		
Whole fresh strawberries**	X	X		
Corn dog*	X			X
Sandwich roll			X	
Banana**	X	X		
Pancake			X	
Cornbread			X	
Beef stew*		X		X
Purchased-prepared burrito*	X			X
Hot dog			X	
Tomato soup		X		
Chicken noodle soup*		X		X

* These menu items contribute to the meat/meat alternate component of the meal and the contributing ingredient is weighed; however, there are other ingredients in the product. Therefore, rely on the CN label, product analysis or standardized recipe to determine how much and how to portion the food. Depending on the product, it could be portioned by counting, volume measuring, or weighing.

** These menu items contribute to the fruit or vegetable component. Fruit or vegetable menu items are always volume measured. However, if the items are fairly consistent in size, it is possible to measure a serving several times; if each contains a consistent number of pieces, they may be counted to be portioned.