

APHA Healthy Meeting Guidelines: Nutrition and Sustainability

The American Public Health Association is one of many organizations that have signed onto the Healthy Meetings Pledge to formalize its commitment to offering healthy options and promoting physical activity and sustainability at our meetings and events. Below are suggestions for you to consider as you're planning for food and beverages at your event(s). For additional guidance on incorporating physical activity into events, see [APHA Healthy Meeting Guidelines: Physical Activity](#)

In general

- Develop menus that meet the needs of attendees, providing healthy options in appropriate portions and accommodating allergies and dietary preferences.
- Evaluate whether food is necessary during the planned meeting. Often, meetings during mid-morning or mid-afternoon do not require food. To keep attendees engaged, offer breaks for physical activity instead.
- If you choose to serve food, use the following guidelines for menu planning:
 - Include fruits or vegetables whenever food is offered.
 - Always provide a vegetarian entree option.
 - Avoid fried foods.
 - Avoid offering red and processed meat, including pork and beef. Many people avoid these foods for health, religious and environmental reasons.
 - Avoid refined grains and offer whole grains instead.
 - Request low-sodium options at meals.
 - Avoid highly processed packaged foods.
- Be proactive about accommodating allergies and dietary restrictions.
 - Ask about dietary restrictions of attendees in advance.
 - Request labels for food items to indicate item, whether it contains any common allergens (wheat, dairy, nuts, soy) or meets certain dietary restrictions (vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, low-sodium).

When placing food and beverage orders

- For served meals, request a menu card(s) on each table.
- For buffet meals and receptions, request a menu card to be provided on the buffet table.
- For boxed lunches, request labels on the box.
- Ask for condiments and dressings to be provided on the side.
- Request whole grains whenever possible.
- Request low-sodium options.

For beverages

- Request water pitchers and glasses instead of plastic water bottles.
- Do not offer sugar-sweetened beverages. If drink options beyond water are necessary, provide sparkling water, 100% juice and/or unsweetened teas.
- Order low-fat or non-fat milk and minimally processed dairy alternative options with coffee and tea service in addition to whole milk or half and half.

For breakfast

- Always serve fruit.
- Consider these healthy breakfast items:
 - Plain yogurt with fresh berries, bananas, or other cut fruit.
 - Hard Boiled or scrambled eggs are a great protein source. Egg dishes also provide a good opportunity to add vegetables (bell peppers, spinach, onions, mushrooms, tomatoes)
 - Almond, peanut or sunflower seed butters are healthy fat options for whole grain bagels and toast.

For lunch, dinner or receptions

- With boxed lunches:
 - Request fruit instead of cookies or other desserts.
 - Request small salads or vegetable sticks/slices instead of chips.
- *For Sandwiches:*
 - Use whole grain bread or whole grain wraps
 - Request lean meats, poultry, seafood, and non-meat proteins: egg, tofu, hummus, or bean spread.
 - Add vegetables: lettuce, raw spinach, tomatoes, bell peppers (fresh or roasted), cucumbers, avocados, artichoke hearts, onions, mushrooms, radish, shredded carrots, or cabbage
- *Always* offer a salad option or vegetable option.
- For salads, choose darker leafy greens (mixed greens/mesclun, spinach, arugula, kale) instead of iceberg or romaine lettuce.
- Order broiled, baked, grilled, poached, sautéed, or roasted lean meats, poultry, seafood, or tofu in appropriate portion size.
- Legume-based entries can be a good vegetarian option.
- Avoid fried foods.
- For special occasions and dinner, cut desserts in half or serve small portions. For lunches, breaks, or regular meetings serve fruit as dessert.

BRAIN FOOD



Provide foods that increase alertness and keep participants focused:

- Oily Fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, tuna, trout)
- Nuts (walnuts, cashews, almonds, etc.)
- Dark chocolate
- Whole grains
- Blueberries
- Oranges
- Leafy green vegetables

Snack Suggestions

- Non-microwave popcorn with light salt
- Fruit trays
- Vegetable trays with salsa, hummus, bean dip or guacamole
- Plain yogurt (low or non-fat and dairy alternative) with option for added fruit and nuts
- Mixed nuts and dried fruit

Here’s a quick reference of healthy alternatives for common menu items

SERVE THIS	NOT THAT
Broiled, baked, grilled, poached, sautéed, or roasted poultry, seafood, tofu, or hearty vegetables (e.g. eggplant, mushrooms)	Red and processed meat, including pork and beef
Fresh fruit, fruit and nut mixes	Candy, cookies or brownies
Minimally processed packaged foods (e.g., packaged foods with few ingredients that consist primarily of whole foods) low in sugar	Highly processed packaged foods (e.g, breakfast bars, muffins, snack mixes, and other packaged foods with many ingredients or additives)
Vegetable tray, whole grain crackers with cheese or hummus	Chips
Whole grain bread and wraps	White or Italian bread
Brown rice	White rice
Water, sparkling water, 100% fruit juice, or naturally sweetened/unsweetened teas	Sugar sweetened beverages (e.g, sodas, punch or teas sweetened with high fructose corn syrup)
Thin, small or “mini” whole grain bagels or whole grain muffins	Regular bagels, muffins, croissants, doughnuts, sweet pastries
Steamed or sautéed vegetables	Vegetables in cream sauce or gravy