

Section 3

Cultural, Religious and Personal Considerations

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3.1 Introduction

Personal preferences and eating habits can be shaped by many factors, such as cultures, religious beliefs, and food traditions.¹

In many cultures food is intertwined with health and healing.² A resident's culture can influence their food and beverage choices.^{3,4} For residents, part of the enjoyment of eating is choosing foods that reflect their own culture and preferences.

A menu based on nutrient-dense foods, that are appropriate to culture and religion, may be adapted to promote and optimize nutrient intake. Resident preferences and feedback may be incorporated to ensure foods appropriate to cultural and religious practices are included in the menu selection.

Some facilities may have residents from specific cultures or religions with menus adapted that reflects their beliefs and practices. The following are key points for consideration for all facilities:

- The menu must be planned so that residents are provided with appetizing foods and fluids appropriate for their health and personal requirements, cultural and religious needs/practices, and quality of life.⁵
- Residents, family members, other designated parties, and appropriate team members are consulted and involved in the menu planning and approval process to ensure menus reflect current residents' social, ethnic, cultural, and religious practices and needs.⁵ This is an important message throughout this toolkit.
- There is a policy and procedure that addresses menu planning principles and involvement of residents in menu planning.⁵ This may include choice and variety, resident and family input, and cost.⁵
- The dietitian functions as part of the interdisciplinary care team, which includes the resident and/or family, when developing meal plans for end-of-life care. The team must consider the cultural, social, psychological, and religious beliefs and wishes of the resident to provide comfort foods that are enjoyable.⁵
- Residents and their family members may work with operators to provide recipes and/or contacts for sourcing traditional foods.
- When providing foods from specific cultures or religions, some liberalization of healthy eating guidelines may be needed to serve food items appropriate for the culture or religion, for example allowing foods higher in fat or salt.

This toolkit provides general guidelines and suggestions for planning a healthy and enjoyable menu. It is not in the scope of the toolkit to provide specific detailed menus. It is important for each individual site to consider the cultural, religious, and personal preferences of its residents when creating a menu.

3.2 Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Foods

Part of the enjoyment of eating is choosing healthy foods that reflect a residents' cultural, ethnic, and food traditions. Healthy food choices and eating habits vary widely around the world, between cultures and even within the same culture. It is important to discuss options with individual residents to find out their personal preferences.

Foods for Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) are a diverse group, with each having its own history, culture, and traditions.⁶ Culturally appropriate or traditional foods will vary between groups, and also depend on where the resident lived previously.⁶ Traditional food intake is higher for reserve communities living in remote areas compared to those near rural or urban areas.⁶

For Indigenous peoples, foods eaten are usually viewed as healthy, natural, and an important part of the Indigenous culture.⁶ In addition to food being a good source of nutrients, traditional foods also support overall health and quality of life; eating traditional foods may help to maintain cultural identity and connection to the land.⁶

Culturally appropriate food is understood to reestablish and respect the relationships that Indigenous peoples have with the land, with ancestors, with current and future generations, and with local environments.²

These traditional foods are also an important part of Indigenous peoples' celebrations and ceremonies.⁶

It is important to not make assumptions about what traditional foods Indigenous residents would like to eat. Include resident preferences and feedback to ensure culturally appropriate and traditional foods are included in the menu selection.

Some examples of these foods include:

- Wild game¹ or traditional meats such as bison, deer, rabbit, and moose
- Wild birds¹ such as grouse, ducks, and geese
- Fish
- Plants
- Berries
- Prepared foods such as bannock (fried bread)

Residents can be involved in the menu planning so that meals provided can include foods and fluids based on cultural and personal preferences for improved quality of life.⁵

For instance, wild meat may be included as a protein food at some meals, berries and bannock may be served as part of a snack.

For more information about Indigenous peoples including demographic details, Indigenous identities, cultural practices, historical events, wellness approaches, and social determinants of health, see [Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#).

¹ Ensure wild meats and birds are from approved sources and meet the Public Health Act Food Regulation and Meat Inspection Regulations enforced by Alberta Agriculture.

3.3 Foods from Various Cultures⁷

It is important for each individual site to consider the cultural, religious, and personal preferences of its residents when creating a menu.

The tables below provide some general information on various regions and common foods eaten. Residents and their families may share more information including recipes and examples of how these foods are prepared and served.

Asian: Each Asian region has its own cooking styles and flavors but share some common foods. Rice is a staple for most Asian diets as are other grain foods such as noodles, millet, and corn. These grains, along with fruits, vegetables, protein foods, and vegetable oils are included in most meals and snacks.

Food Groupings	Common foods
Protein Foods	Pork, beef, poultry (chicken, duck) organ meat, eggs Fish (tuna, sea bass, dried fish) and seafood (clams, mussels, crab, shrimp) Milk, yogurt (curd, chaas, lassi), kefir, buttermilk, cheeses (paneer) Legumes (beans, lentils, split peas), nuts and seeds, soy products (tofu, edamame)
Grain Foods	Barley, breads (dumplings, mantou, naan, roti), buckwheat, rice (basmati rice, sticky rice, congee), millet, noodles (soba, ramen, rice, udon)
Vegetables and Fruits	Bean sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, daikon, eggplant, leafy greens (bok choy, spinach, kale, mustard greens), leeks, mushrooms, okra, peppers, potatoes (sweet potatoes, yams), pumpkin, scallions, seaweed, snow peas, taro root, turnips, water chestnuts Apricots, bananas, cherries, coconut, dates, guava, jack fruit, kumquats, lemons, lychee, mandarins, mangoes, melon, oranges, pears, pineapple, tangerines
Other	Butter (ghee), miso Basil, cardamom, chiles, cloves, coriander, cumin, curry leaves, garam masala, garlic, ginger, ginseng, lemongrass, mint, parsley, pepper, star anise, tamarind, turmeric, wasabi

Latino (Central and South America): Each region has its own cooking styles and flavours but share some common foods. Plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grain corn, rice, beans, and nuts make up the main staple of meals eaten.

Food Groupings	Common foods
Protein Foods	Beef, goat, lamb, pork, poultry (chicken, turkey, duck, geese), eggs (chicken, quail, duck) Fish (cod, sea bass) and seafood (clams, mussels, crab, shrimp) Milk, yogurt, cheeses (asadero, cojita, minas, reggianito) Legumes (beans, lentils, split peas), nuts, and seeds
Grain Foods	Arepas, amaranth, breads, maize/corn, pasta, quinoa, rice, tortillas
Vegetables and Fruits	Cabbage, carrots, chiles, eggplant, jicama, leafy greens (chard, kale, lettuce, spinach), maize/corn, peppers, potatoes, pumpkin, onion, okra, yams, yucca, zucchini Avocados, bananas, breadfruit, coconut, guava, lemons, limes, mangoes, melons, oranges, papayas, passion fruit, pineapple, plantains, pomegranate, prickly pear, pumpkin, tangerine, tomatoes, tomatillos
Other	Acai, agave, cacao, chilis, cilantro, cinnamon, garlic, oregano, parsley, tamarind

Mediterranean and Middle Eastern: Each region has its own cooking styles and flavors but share some common foods. A variety of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and protein foods make up the main staple of meals eaten. Olive oil replaces other fats and oils as the most common fat source.

Food Groupings	Common foods
Protein Foods	Beef, goat, lamb, pork, poultry (chicken, turkey, duck), eggs Fish (mackerel, sea bass, salmon, tuna, tilapia) and seafood (clams, mussels, crab, shrimp) Milk, yogurt (including Greek yogurt), cheeses (feta, haloumi, brie, parmesan, ricotta) Legumes (beans, lentils, split peas), nuts, and seeds
Grain Foods	Barley, buckwheat, bulgur, farro, millet, oats, polenta, rice, wheatberries, breads (pita), couscous, pastas
Vegetables and Fruits	Artichokes, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, celeriac, chicory, cucumbers, eggplant, leeks, leafy greens (arugula, collard greens, kale, lettuce, mustard greens, spinach), mushrooms, okra, onions, peas, peppers, potatoes, pumpkin, radishes, rutabaga, scallions, shallots, sweet potatoes, turnips, zucchini Apples, apricots, avocados, cherries, clementines, dates, figs, grapes, lemons, melons, nectarines, olives, oranges, peaches, pears, pomegranates, strawberries, tangerines, tomatoes
Other	Aleppo pepper, anise, basil, bay leaf, chiles, cloves, cumin, fennel, garlic, lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, pepper, rosemary, sage, savory, sumac, tahini, tarragon, thyme, zatar

For information on other diets such as African-Heritage diets and common foods eaten see: [Traditional Diets | Oldways \(oldwayspt.org\)](https://oldwayspt.org).

3.4 Religious Considerations

Religious practices may influence a resident's food choices and eating patterns. Some residents may follow all the practices rigidly, while others may follow some of the practices depending on their own belief system.

For example, some residents may fast on specific days, or occasions. Fasting may involve exclusion of food on specific days, or at certain times, or avoidance of only certain foods such as meat on specific days or times.

It is best to discuss religious practices with individual residents and their families to have a better understanding of their practices, and how to accommodate them.

Specific examples may include the following:

- Jewish or kosher dietary laws:
 - follow specific rules of purchasing, storing, preparing, cooking and eating of foods that comply with Jewish dietary laws referred to as kosher
 - only kosher meat is consumed
 - does not allow consumption of pork, pork products, or shellfish
 - eggs should not contain blood spots
 - meat products are not eaten at the same time as, or immediately before or after, any foods or meals containing milk
- Muslim or halal practices:
 - follow specific rules of Muslim law for the preparation of specific meats referred to as halal
 - only halal meat is consumed
 - does not allow consumption of pork or pork products (including gelatin)
 - fasting during the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset. Food is eaten before dawn and after dusk. Exact dates of Ramadan vary each year as the Islamic calendar is shorter than the Gregorian calendar.
- Latter Day Saints do not consume coffee, caffeinated tea, or alcohol.
- Seventh Day Adventists mainly follow a vegetarian diet. See Section 4.3.3 for more information on a vegetarian diet.

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- Residents that follow an Abrahamic religion and Jains (ancient Indian religion) are mainly vegetarian or vegan. See Section 4.3.3 for more information on a vegetarian diet.
- Hindus and Sikhs may not eat beef, pork, or other meats for religious, cultural, or personal reasons.
 - Beef
 - avoid suet and tallow
 - Pork:
 - avoid lard, pepsin, pork (bacon and ham), and trypsin
 - avoid gelatin-containing products (jellies, gelatin desserts, yogurt, milk pudding, and cheese)

3.5 Vegetarian Diets

Vegetarian Types

Usually, an individual who follows a vegetarian diet does not eat meat, poultry, or fish. However, there are many kinds of eating plans that could be called vegetarian and it is important to discuss this with the resident to find out their personal practices.

A resident may choose to follow a vegetarian diet for health, ethical, environmental, personal, or religious reasons.

Types of vegetarian eating includes:

- Vegan: no animal products in any form
- Lacto vegetarian: allow milk and other dairy products
- Ovo vegetarian: allow eggs
- Lacto-ovo vegetarian: allow milk, dairy products, and eggs
- Pesco: allow fish, milk, dairy products, and eggs
- Pollo: allow poultry, fish, milk, dairy products, and eggs

For more information on [Vegetarian diets](#), refer to Section 4.3.3.

References

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