

"Really plan out your menu and try to branch off from the typical dishes. Differentiate, try something new each time."

- Volunteer coordinator

Introduction

Helping Hands is a guidebook for volunteers who provide meals to soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and other such facilities. It offers a practical resource for volunteers who donate prepared foods to community feeding organizations so they can create healthy and safe meals. The guidebook was created with the budget-minded and busy cook in mind.

Several agencies expressed the need for a guide that would provide advice to donors of prepared foods. Helpings Hands is that resource. Two graduate students enrolled in independent studies, supervised by Kathryn Kolasa PhD, RD, LDN, conducted interviews of agency directors and volunteers and developed the content.

Components of a Healthy Meal

A healthy meal provides important nutrients such as **vitamins, minerals, good fats and protein sources, and fiber**. The guidebook includes simple yet helpful ways to incorporate healthy foods into a menu while cutting out unnecessary fats and sugars. Furthermore, a healthy meal does not need to be expensive or complicated. We have included a variety of recipes that use affordable ingredients. Readers will also find helpful grocery lists and key time- and cost-saving tips.

Protein

- Choose lean meats, fish, poultry, or nuts
- Remove the skin from chicken and other poultry

Vegetables

- Use canned or frozen vegetables to save time in cooking
- Make a hearty salad using fresh vegetables and toppings such as fruits, nuts, or beans

Fruits

- Use fresh, canned, frozen or dried fruit
- Offer a quick fruit salad made from canned fruit packed in water and chopped bananas

Bread and Grains

- Choose whole grain breads and pasta
- Use brown rice in casseroles and soups

Desserts

- Use fruit as a healthy substitute for sweet desserts
- Replace regular sugar with sugar substitutes

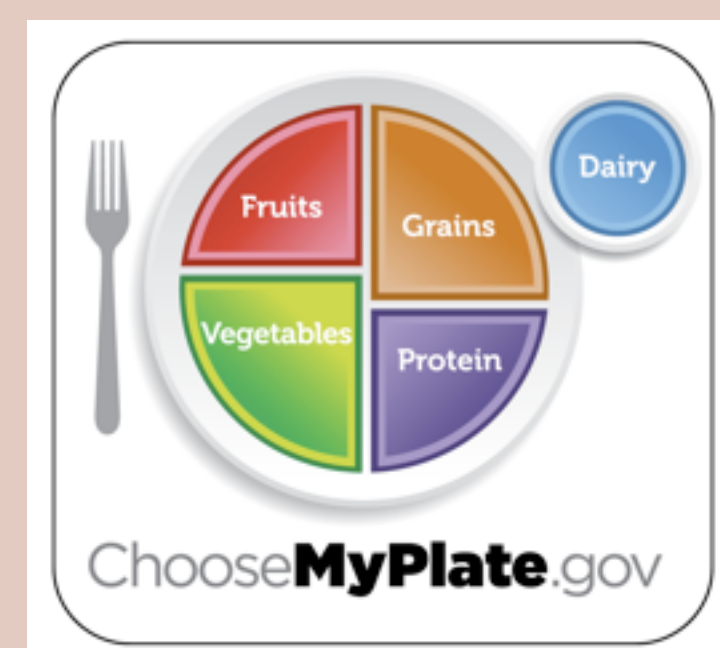
Beverages

- Offer sugar-free beverages instead of sweetened drinks
- Prepare iced tea using a sugar substitute instead of sugar

Serving Sizes

Before preparing a meal, it is important for volunteers to think about serving sizes and how many people will be eating the meal. This will help them determine how many ingredients to buy, save money in the long run, and keep portions in check.

Food	Amount	Size – visual
Pasta	1 ounce dry or ½ cup cooked	Small computer mouse
Bread	1 ounce (1 slice)	Deck of cards
Salad greens	1 cup	Baseball
Broccoli	1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked	Tennis ball
Baked potato	1 medium potato	Small computer mouse
Cheese	1 ½ ounces	3 dominoes
Meat or poultry	~4 ounces raw or 3 ounces cooked	Deck of cards
Grilled or baked fish	3 ounces	Checkbook
Casserole	1 cup	Cupped palm
Fresh fruit	1 cup	Baseball
Juice	6 ounces (¾ cup)	Small juice glass



Helping Hands

A Guidebook for Volunteer Meal Providers

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Time and Cost Saving Tips

Volunteers will also find helpful grocery lists and some time and cost-saving tips. Contributors are encouraged to make donations in light of several principles:

- They are urged to plan ahead. First, they should determine what is possible for them to do, purchase ingredients, and prepare the food in advance.
- They should make extra portions of their regularly planned meals and freeze them for future volunteering.
- They can shop at discount grocery stores. If they prepare food for large groups, they can buy the ingredients at wholesale food stores. Make use of coupons and store-brand products.

"We can't always fulfill preferences, but we try to come close; we try to provide something appealing while doing our best to keep it healthy."

- Volunteer coordinator

Importance of Food Safety

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year roughly 48 million people in the United States get sick from a food-borne illness, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service recommends four simple steps for keeping food safe:

Clean → Separate → Cook → Chill

Bacteria grow and multiply when in the “danger” temperature zone between 41°F and 135°F. Use an instant-read thermometer to ensure that foods are cooked to a safe temperature.

Food	Cook until the following is reached (F)
Beef, roasts and steaks	145° minimum
Ground beef, pork, veal, lamb	160°
Ground turkey, chicken	165°
Whole chicken and turkey	165°
Poultry thighs, wings, and legs	165°
Stuffing (alone or in poultry)	165°
Pork	160° (medium-well done)
Ham, raw	160°
Ham, pre-cooked (to reheat)	140°
Eggs	145° (the yolk and egg white should be cooked until firm)
Egg dishes	160°
Leftovers and casseroles	165°

"The importance of healthy, balanced, nutritious meals is multiplied tenfold when serving to children."

- Volunteer coordinator

"It was a reminder to me that the appreciation of healthy food travels across all economic borders."

- Volunteer

Sample Menus

The table below provides sample menus that volunteers may find helpful while planning their meals. Costs are approximate.

Meal	Dish	Servings per recipe	Cost per serving	Total cost
Enchilada Night	Bean Enchiladas	4 servings	\$0.50	\$2.00
	Citrus Salad	8 servings	\$0.45	\$3.60
	Corn and Green Chili Salad	4 servings	\$0.40	\$1.60
				\$7.20
Hearty Chicken Dinner	Baked Chicken	5 servings	\$0.70	\$3.50
	Au Gratin Potatoes	8 servings	\$0.65	\$5.20
	Cucumber Salad with Tomatoes	4 servings	\$0.55	\$2.20
	Easy Fruit Salad	14 servings	\$0.25	\$3.50
				\$14.40
Comforting Soup and Salads	Brunswick Stew	8 servings	\$0.80	\$6.40
	Crisp Broccoli Salad	8 servings	\$0.40	\$3.20
	Carrot and Raisin Salad	4 servings	\$0.25	\$1.00
	Banana Bread	12 servings	\$0.10	\$1.20
				\$11.20
Festive Holiday Feast	Beef Pot Roast	8 servings	\$0.90	\$7.20
	Green Bean Sauté	6 servings	\$0.35	\$2.10
	Hearty Mashed Potatoes	6 servings	\$0.50	\$3.00
	Apple Cranberry Salad Toss	8 servings	\$0.55	\$4.40
	Mock Southern Sweet Potato Pie	16 servings	\$0.10	\$1.60
				\$18.30
Simple Summer Dinner	Baked Pork Chops	6 servings	\$0.95	\$5.70
	Snappy Coleslaw	4 servings	\$0.10	\$0.40
	Herbed Potato Salad	6 servings	\$0.45	\$2.70
	Peach Crisp	6 servings	\$0.30	\$1.80
				\$10.60

Recipes

The array of recipes presented here may complement our sample meals or other meal plans. Shopping lists are included for convenience.

Entrees

Baked Pork Chops*
 Source: SNAP Recipes. Yield: 6 servings

Shopping list:	Ingredients:
pork chops (center cut) onion green bell pepper red bell pepper black pepper	6 pork chops, lean center-cut, 1/2-inch thick 1 medium thinly sliced onion 1/2 cup chopped green pepper 1/2 cup chopped red pepper 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Preheat oven to 375°F. Trim fat from pork chops. Place chops in a 13 x 9-inch baking pan. Spread onion and peppers on top of chops. Sprinkle with pepper. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Cover pan and bake 30 minutes. Uncover, turn chops, and continue baking for an additional 15 minutes or until no pink remains or internal temperature reaches 160°–170°F.

Nutrition facts per serving: 160 calories; 9g total fat; 350mg sodium; 17g protein.

Sides & Salads

Apple Cranberry Salad Toss*
 Source: SNAP Recipes. Yield: 8 servings

Shopping list:	Ingredients:
lettuce apples walnuts (enough for 1/2 cup chopped) dried cranberries green onions vinaigrette dressing (i.e. balsamic)	1 head of lettuce (about 10 cups) 2 medium sliced apples 1/2 cup chopped walnuts 1 cup dried cranberries 1/2 cup sliced green onions 3/4 cup vinaigrette dressing

Toss lettuce, apples, walnuts, cranberries, and onions in large bowl. Add dressing toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Nutrition facts per serving: 140 calories; 5g total fat; 10mg sodium; 2g protein. Serving Size: 1/8 of recipe.

Breads

Banana Bread II*
 Source: SNAP Recipes. Yield: 12 servings

Shopping list:	Ingredients:
cornmeal flour sugar baking powder egg vegetable oil skim milk	1 cup cornmeal 1 cup all-purpose flour 2 tablespoons sugar 1 tablespoon baking powder 1 egg 1/4 cup vegetable oil 1 cup skim milk

Heat oven to 425°F. Grease 8- or 9-inch square pan. Measure cornmeal, flour, sugar, and baking powder into a large mixing bowl. Stir to combine ingredients. Crack egg into a small bowl and beat with a fork to combine white and yolk. Add egg, oil, and milk to flour mixture. Mix until ingredients are well blended. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, until firm to touch or wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Nutrition facts per serving: 140 calories; 5g total fat; 140mg sodium; 3g protein. Serving Size: 2-inch square.

Desserts

Easy Fruit Salad*
 Source: SNAP Recipes. Yield: 14 servings

Shopping list:	Ingredients:
fruit cocktail, canned bananas oranges apples low-fat yogurt, pfla colada or other flavor	1 can (16 oz) drained fruit cocktail 2 sliced bananas 2 oranges cut into bite-size pieces 2 apples cut into bite-size pieces 8 oz low-fat yogurt, pfla colada or other flavor

Mix fruit in a large bowl. Add yogurt and mix well. Chill in refrigerator before serving.

Nutrition facts per serving: 70 calories; 0g total fat; 10mg sodium; 1g protein. Serving Size: 1/2 cup.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the many volunteer reviewers of Helping Hands: Benjamin Chapman, PhD, Food Safety Extension Specialist, NC State University; Nancy Harris, MS, RD, LDN, FADA, East Carolina University; Robin High, MPA, RD, LDN, Pitt County Health Department; Barbara Ingham, PhD, Food Science Extension Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Kathryn Kolasa, PhD, RD, LDN, East Carolina University; Laura Palmer, MS, RD, CD, Purdue University; Laura Zelenak, MS, Stevens Point Area Public School District, WI. Special thanks to Isabel V. Taylor who generously donated her layout and design skills. Thanks also to Kathryn Kolasa, PhD, for conceiving of and initiating this project, and for offering her expert guidance throughout. There have been no funding sources for this project.