

**Healthy** Carolina  
University of South Carolina

# Healthy Meetings Guide

A tool for planning healthy meetings  
and events.



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA

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## WHY A HEALTHY MEETINGS GUIDE?

Healthy Carolina and campus partners have collaborated to develop the Healthy Meetings Guide. This tool was inspired by the American Cancer Society's Meeting Well™, a guide developed for use in the workplace when incorporating wellness strategies into meetings and events is a priority. The Healthy Meetings Guide is designed to be a resource for helping faculty, staff and students easily integrate new healthy practices into meetings and to make healthy meetings the norm at the University of South Carolina. Our guide outlines how to select the healthiest menu options from Carolina Catering and other catering companies, offers ideas for how to plan a healthier meeting, provides tips on how to accommodate special dietary needs, suggests ways to incorporate physical activity into your meetings and promotes sustainable dining practices.

At Healthy Carolina, we approach health and wellness as a holistic, well-balanced approach to living. The University of South Carolina is committed to creating a healthy work environment and a culture of wellness for faculty, staff and students. Promoting healthy lifestyles and habits during meetings and events on campus helps to work towards creating a healthy work and study environment for all members of the University community. Making our meetings healthy helps create a healthier campus.

## HOW WERE THESE GUIDELINES DEVELOPED?

These guidelines were developed with the assistance of the registered dietitians on campus and are based on principles derived from Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2009. The recommendations found in this document are supported by the Healthy Eating Council of the Healthy Carolina Coalition. The dietary guidelines represent evidence-based advice to promote health and reduce the risk for major chronic diseases, encouraging most Americans to:

- Eat fewer calories.
- Be more active.
- Make wise food choices.



# A HEALTHY BALANCE

## FOODS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

If you are planning an event, you want your participants to be energized and productive.

Offering access to healthy foods and physical activity can:

- Help attendees get the most out of the event.
- Support the overall health of all attendees.
- Help reduce attendees' risk for chronic disease and obesity.
- Model healthy behaviors.

## MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES SIMPLE AT YOUR MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Follow the eight general tips for healthy meetings and the recommendations throughout this guide. You will find recommended foods and beverages and tips on working with Carolina Catering and other catering companies to develop a healthy, energized meeting.

## GENERAL TIPS FOR PLANNING MENUS AND SNACKS

1. Keep variety, balance and moderation in mind.
  - Vary the selections to include something from every food group.
  - Provide a balance between healthier options and less healthy options, like sweets and desserts.
  - Provide less healthy options in moderation.
2. Consider not providing food at every meeting.
3. Offer a variety of grains (especially whole-grain foods) and fruits and vegetables.
4. Always have water available.
5. Provide fat-free, low-fat or low calorie foods and beverages.
6. Offer foods and beverages that are low in added sugars.
7. Serve foods that are low in salt and sodium, such as unsalted pretzels, popcorn, or baked chips; grilled or roasted entrees; and entrees cooked with spices and herbs instead of salt.
8. Include smaller portions such as mini muffins or mini bagels and one-inch, low-fat cheese squares.
9. Consider offering only beverages at mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks.

# ACCOMMODATING SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS AND REQUESTS

## PLANNING FOR SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS

Do not forget to check with participants or other attendees to ensure that the food offerings you plan will meet their dietary needs or restrictions. If you are planning a small, in-office meeting, you might want to send an e-mail indicating that people should respond if they have any special meal requests. If you are planning a larger event, consider including a question regarding dietary needs on the registration.

### SAMPLE REGISTRATION QUESTION

Special Dietary Requests (check one or more)

- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Dairy-free diet
- Gluten-free diet
- Food allergies \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## TIPS FOR ACCOMMODATING DIETARY REQUESTS

**VEGETARIAN DIETS** are free of meat and meat products.

- Avoid serving meat products (beef, chicken, pork, seafood) or broths made from meat stock.
- Meat replacements for the vegetarian diet can include dry beans, such as kidney, black, or garbanzo beans and lentils; soy products, such as tempeh and tofu; nuts and seeds; or broth made from vegetable stock, dairy products or eggs.

**VEGAN DIETS** are free of animal products.

- Avoid serving animal products, including beef, chicken, pork, other meats, seafood, dairy products, eggs, honey, animal gelatin or broth made from animal stock.
- Meat replacements in the vegan diet can include beans such as kidney, black, or garbanzo beans and lentils; soy products such as tempeh and tofu; nuts and seeds; or broth made from vegetable stock.

**DAIRY-FREE DIETS** are free of any dairy foods or foods derived from dairy products.

- Avoid sources of dairy, including milk in any form, cheese in any form (including cottage cheese and cream cheese), sour cream, yogurt and frozen yogurt, sherbet, ice cream, half and half, whipping cream, coffee cream, pudding, custard, butter (including artificial butter flavor), ghee, margarine (unless labeled "dairy free" or Kosher), casein and caseinates, whey, rennet, lactose and lactulose, curd, lactalbumin and lactoglobulin.
- Replacements for dairy products can include: soy cheese; soy products such as tempeh and tofu; soy, rice or lactose-free milk; or vegan margarine.

**GLUTEN-FREE DIETS** are free of any foods derived from gluten-containing cereals and grains.

- Avoid sources of gluten, including barley, bran, couscous, flour (wheat), kamut, malt, matzo, pasta, rye, seitan, semolina, soy sauce, spelt, sprouted wheat or barley, teriyaki sauce, triticale, udon, wheat, beer, brewer's yeast, coloring, fillers, flavorings, graham flour, hydrolyzed plant and vegetable proteins, MSG, some meat preservatives, spices, or textured vegetable protein.
- Meal replacements can include rice instead of pasta or pasta entrées made with rice or gluten-free noodles; burritos, tacos, or quesadillas made with corn tortilla; gluten-free pancakes and waffles; or chicken salad instead of pasta salad.

## CAROLINA CATERING CAN HELP

If you are planning a meeting on campus and plan to serve refreshments or food, you will most probably be collaborating with Carolina Catering to develop a menu. It is easy to work with Carolina Catering to plan for healthy food and refreshment offerings. Their printed menu is only a guideline to get you started. They will be flexible and are eager to accommodate requests, especially when it comes to assisting you in making healthy options available. Be sure to ask about pricing when substituting healthier options, as sometimes this may alter cost slightly.

## TIPS FOR REQUESTING HEALTHY OPTIONS FROM CATERING COMPANIES:

### BOXED LUNCHES

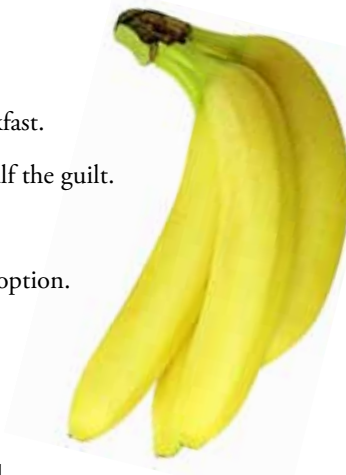
- Request sandwiches prepared with whole-grain bread or wraps and pasta prepared with whole-grain noodles.
- Request Baked! Lays® or pretzels instead of regular chips.
- Consider boxed salad lunches (which can include salad, hummus and fruit) instead of a classic boxed lunch.
- Consider fruit over starch-based sides.
- Ask for dressings served on the side.

### HOT SERVED MEALS OR BUFFETS

- Request whole-wheat rolls instead of white dinner rolls.
- Specify a preference for whole-wheat pasta to be substituted for regular pasta.
- Discuss vegetable preferences with catering staff. Indicate that it is important for vegetables to be cooked in a healthy method, such as steaming, grilling, or baking and request that they not be served in cheese, cream sauces or with butter. Your caterer can suggest delicious alternatives.
- Vegetarian options are always available.
- Ask about high-protein entrée alternatives.

### HEALTHY BREAKFASTS AND COFFEE BREAKS

- Choose whole-grain bagels and muffins for your bakery choices when ordering Carolina Catering's Executive Continental Breakfast.
- Request that bakery items be cut in half, for all the taste, but half the guilt.
- Stone-ground grits have more fiber than traditional white grits.
- Choose mini pancakes instead of French toast for the lower fat option.
- Offer sugar-free syrup and jams.
- Select "mini" options when possible. Carolina Catering offers mini muffins.
- Any time your order includes bagels, it will come with light and regular cream cheese, but you can also request peanut butter for a great source of protein.
- Keep in mind that Canadian bacon and honey-baked sliced ham are lower in fat than applewood smoked bacon and jumbo sausage links.
- Offer an oatmeal bar, complete with raisins, cinnamon, nuts, and brown sugar.
- Offer a yogurt bar with granola and dried fruits or serve individual yogurt cups.



### SNACKS

- If you are serving light refreshments, choose low calorie, nutrient-dense options.
- Whole fruits like apples and bananas make great snacks and are available upon request.
- Trail mix with dried fruits, nuts, and small bits of candy is a great high-protein option.
- Carolina Catering's hummus with pita wedges platter is another healthy alternative to the typical chips and pretzels.
- Consider offering a veggie platter. The price for a raw vegetable platter with low-fat dip or hummus is the same as the price of a grilled vegetable platter.
- Choose the fresh fruit and cheese platters instead of the deli platter to encourage attendees to eat more fruits and dairy.
- When ordering the cheese and cracker platter, be sure to request whole-grain crackers.
- Request whole-grain breads when ordering the deli platter.

### DESSERTS

- Request that dessert bars and cookies be cut in half so that portion sizes are smaller, but you still satisfy everyone's sweet tooth!
- Consider offering whole fruit as a dessert, such as apples and bananas.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOODS AND BEVERAGES

The table below is arranged by category. If you know what type of meal you will be serving, start with that category and consider each item you might include. Whenever possible, try to choose items listed in the recommended column for optimal health. It is okay to include some items from the “not recommended” column, but only if you balance these with more healthy options.

Category	Item	Recommended	Not Recommended
<b>Beverages</b>	Coffee	Served with skim or low fat (1%) milk	Served with half and half or cream
	Juice drinks	100% fruit or vegetable juice	Fruit or vegetable drinks
	Milk	Skim or low fat milk, enriched low-fat soy	Reduced fat (2%) or whole milk
	Soft drinks	Diet soft drinks	Full-calorie soft drinks
	Tea	Unsweetened iced tea with lemon slices or hot tea	Sweetened iced tea
<b>Breakfast</b>	Fruit	Fresh, whole, or cut fruit, dried fruit	Canned fruit in sweetened syrup
	Bagels	Small or cut in half; whole grain, rye, or pumpernickel served with reduced fat cream cheese or peanut butter	Large; white bagels or sweet flavors of bagels
	Cereal	High-fiber cereals (i.e., raisin bran) with low-fat milk and low-fat yogurt; oatmeal	Cereals with added sugar
	Muffins	Small or cut in half; made with wholegrain, bran, fruit	Large; chocolate chip or sugar-topped; made with trans fats or partially hydrogenated oils
	Baked goods	Small slices of quick bread (i.e., banana nut, pumpkin), reduced fat/calorie granola bars, small muffins	Doughnuts, sweet rolls, pastries, coffee cake, large muffins, cinnamon rolls
	Breakfast meats	Honey-baked sliced ham, Canadian bacon	Smoked bacon, sausage links, or patties
	Grits	Stone ground grits or regular grits	
	Pancakes & French Toast	Whole-grain flour or fruit pancakes, with reduced sugar syrup, or fresh fruit	French toast; regular syrup, fruit flavored syrups
	Eggs	Unsalted; scrambled, hard-boiled	Salted
	Potatoes	Baked breakfast potatoes	Sautéed or fried breakfast potatoes
	Biscuits	Whole-grain flour; mini-sized biscuits	White biscuits
	English muffins	Whole-wheat English muffin	White English muffin
	Yogurts	Light yogurt (low-fat or low calorie)	Full-fat, sugar-sweetened yogurts
Spreads	Light margarine (without trans fats), reduced or low-fat cream cheese, spreadable fruit, jam, nut butters (without trans fats)	Butter, regular cream cheese, spreadable cheese	

Category	Item	Recommended	Not Recommended
<b>Boxed Lunches</b>	Sandwich bread	Whole-grain wraps, whole grain, rye, or pumpernickel bread	White bread, croissants, rolls, or subs
	Chips	Baked! Lays® or pretzels	Regular chips
	Popcorn	Low-fat, “lite” popcorn	Regular or buttered popcorn
	Salads	Vegetable-based, fruit-based, pasta salads made with whole-wheat pasta and a reduced fat meat or oil-based dressing	Potato salads, white pasta salads
	Other Meats	Lean meats (such as poultry without skin, fish, lean beef, or lean ham) served grilled, broiled, baked, steamed, poached, or roasted	Pan fried, deep fried, or breaded meats, poultry with skin, bacon, sausage, and high-fat cold cuts
<b>Hot Lunches and Dinners</b>	Soups	Made with broth, vegetable puree or skim milk, vegetables, beans, wild rice, or barley	Made with cream or half and half, only meat or egg noodles
	Pastas	Whole-wheat pasta; sauces made from wine, tomato, or vegetable base; sauces made with lean meats; quinoa	White pastas; Alfredo, butter, or cream sauces
	Vegetables	Steamed, grilled, baked; marinated in vinegar or spices	Fried, marinated in oil, served in cheese, cream sauce, or butter
	Potatoes	Baked and served with low-fat sour cream and vegetable toppings; oven roasted; baked or mashed sweet potatoes	Served with butter, sour cream, bacon, cheese; mashed potatoes served with gravy
	Rice	Wild rice and brown rice	White rice
	Dinner rolls	Whole-grain rolls; consider not serving rolls	Croissants or white rolls
	Pizza	Whole-wheat crust, toppings including tomato sauce, part skim mozzarella cheese, or vegetables	Thick or white crusts, toppings including high-fat meats like pepperoni or sausage, excessive cheese
	Dips	Salsa, low-fat cottage cheese, or hummus; made from low-fat mayonnaise, low fat sour cream, or reduced fat cream cheese	Made from mayonnaise, sour cream, cream cheese, or cream sauce
	Salad dressings	Reduced fat or low-fat dressing, vinaigrette or Italian dressings; vinegar and oil	Full-fat ranch and blue cheese dressings
	Condiments	Serve condiments on the side; choose low-fat or reduced-fat options, like mustard	Condiments served on food items instead of on the side; mayonnaise
<b>Desserts</b>	Cookies & bars	Small or cut in half; oatmeal raisin, fig bars, brownies made with applesauce instead of oil	Large cookies or brownies, cannolis
	Cakes	Carrot cake made with applesauce and added pineapple, cake garnished with fruit puree	Cheesecakes, cakes with sugar-based icings, Tiramisu
	Pies	Fruit pies or cobblers	Pecan or chocolate pies

## HAVE AN ACTIVE MEETING!

Incorporating physical activity into meetings can mean a more productive meeting. Research has shown that physical activity breaks can lead to increased energy, attention span, participation and reduced fatigue, all of which can mean a more productive meeting or event! Participation in a physical activity break should be completely voluntary and should allow participants to move at their own pace. Increase the activity level during your meeting using these suggestions:

- A physical activity break can be anywhere from two minutes to an hour, so no matter how long your meeting, you can fit one onto the agenda.
- For all-day meetings, aim to provide a 15-minute physical activity break in the morning and another in the afternoon.
- Shorter breaks might be provided during transitions, such as a 1-2 min stretch break or a 5 min, low-impact aerobic activity.
- A physical activity break does NOT need to make people sweat, cause pain or discomfort or be professionally organized and led.
- Icebreaker activities are another great way to involve physical activity and get people out of their chairs.
- Consider a 20–30 min walk break, or if your group is small, have a walking meeting.
- Encourage participants to take the stairs by providing directional signs and reminding participants of stairwell locations before breaks.
- Provide a walking map of the area showing good walking routes if participants are unfamiliar with the campus. Healthy Carolina's guide to walking routes at USC is available online at: [www.sc.edu/healthycarolina/initiatives/al](http://www.sc.edu/healthycarolina/initiatives/al)
- Ideas for shorter meeting breaks include: slowly stretching neck, shoulders, arms, hands, back, legs and feet; leading a brisk walk around the inside or outside of your building; or marching in place.
- Give participants incentives for being active. Provide forms to keep track of activity participation and draw prizes for those who meet specified goals for your meetings. For instance if your office or department meets once per week, draw prizes on a monthly basis and draw prizes at the end of the day for all-day meetings.



## SUSTAINABLE DINING

There are several simple steps your organization can take to ensure your meetings follow basic sustainable practices. When choosing a caterer, ask if they provide “real” plates as opposed to other disposable options with their service or compostable products if disposable is the only option. See if providing food, beverages and condiments in bulk containers is an option to minimize waste. Choosing locally-owned restaurants to cater your meeting is also a way to invest in your community.

### HEALTHY MEETINGS CHECKLIST

USE THE FOLLOWING CHECKLIST TO ENSURE THAT YOUR MEETING PROMOTES GOOD HEALTH FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS:

- Does the menu for your meeting include a variety of food choices?
- Does your meeting include some form of physical activity?
- Did you include both fruits and vegetables with each meal and snack?
- Are whole-grain breads, cereals, rice, and pasta incorporated into meals?
- Are there options for participants with special dietary needs, such as vegetarian, lactose-intolerant, or gluten-free diets?
- Did you request low calorie and low or reduced fat items where possible?
- Did you specify that dressings, sauces and condiments should be served on the side?
- Did you request that mini versions of items like muffins, bagels, cookies and brownies be served or that the items be cut into smaller portion sizes?
- Will you provide water in bottles or pitchers at breaks and meals?
- If serving drinks other than water, will you offer a selection of low calorie beverages? These could include unsweetened tea with lemon and diet soft drinks.

# Healthy Carolina

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Campus Wellness has a registered dietitian available to answer questions related to nutrition and diet. Contact Campus Wellness about Nutrition Consultations and Services at 803-777-3175.



[www.sc.edu/dining/catering](http://www.sc.edu/dining/catering)

[Catering@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:Catering@mailbox.sc.edu)

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### Resources

*Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010.* Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Retrieved on September 17, 2013 from: [www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2010.asp](http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2010.asp).

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