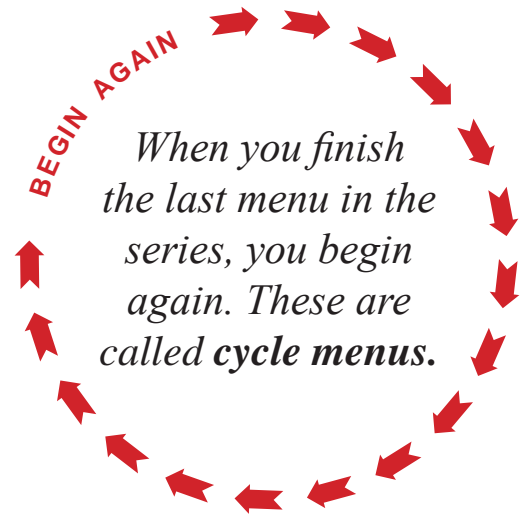


Menu Planning Grab and Go Lesson

Planning Cycle Menus for Child Care

Cycle Menu

A cycle menu is a series of menus planned for a period of time, for example, 3 weeks. The menu is different for each day during the cycle. After you serve the whole menu, you have completed the first cycle. The menus are then repeated in the same order. Because they turn over and start again, they are called a cycle menu.



Advantages of Using Cycle Menus

- Saves time because the same menus are repeated several times.
- Buying food is easier since you know what you will use ahead of time and know how much you will need of each food.

Cycle menus are also easy to change once they are planned. You can

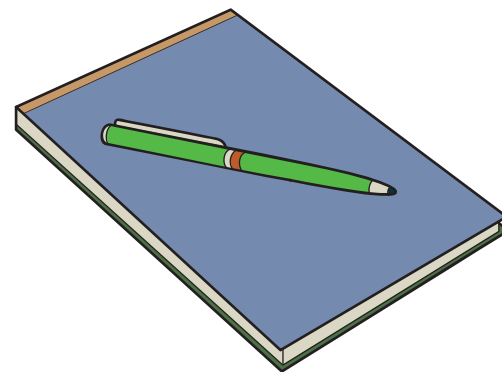
- substitute any foods not available with another food from the same food component.
- make special menus for birthdays and special occasions.
- try new foods and recipes.
- take advantage of food bargains and foods in season.
- use leftovers wisely.

Menu Planning Grab and Go Lesson

Planning Cycle Menus for Child Care

How to Plan a Cycle Menu

1. Gather your menu planning materials including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Pattern requirements and your recipes.
2. Decide the number of weeks your cycle menus will include. A cycle menu for child care should be at least 3 weeks, so the children will not be served the same combination of foods too often.
3. Plan the main dishes first. The main dish is your Meat/Meat Alternate. Foods such as pasta, rice, and vegetables may also be a part of the main dish.
4. Try to include a different main dish for each day in the cycle.
5. Vary the Meat/Meat Alternate from day to day.



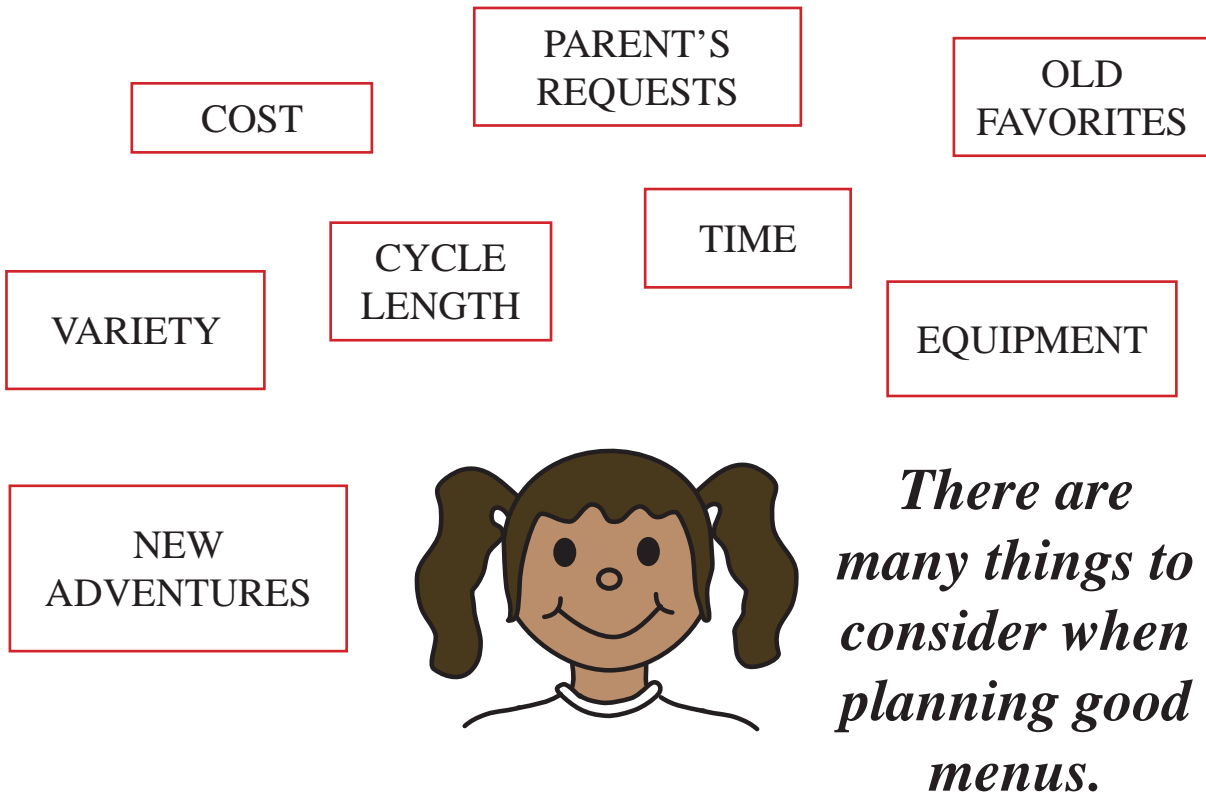
Example of Good Planning	
Monday: Spaghetti with Meat Sauce	Tuesday: Chicken Nuggets
Example of Poor Planning	
Monday: Baked Chicken	Tuesday: Chicken Nuggets

6. Add foods to go with the main dish. Be sure you have included all of the CACFP Meal Pattern requirements—Milk, Fruits/Vegetables, Grains/Bread, and Meat/Meat Alternate.
7. Plan menus for breakfast and snacks.
8. Do not repeat any food too often.
9. Include a variety of foods to meet nutrient needs of children.
10. Think about the children’s likes and dislikes.
11. Consider special requests of parents.

Menu Planning Grab and Go Lesson Planning Cycle Menus for Child Care

12. Include different shapes, colors, textures, temperatures, and flavor.
13. Think about the equipment and time you have available.
14. Balance higher-cost foods with lower-cost foods over several days or a week.
15. Use some recipes you have prepared before, but be willing to try new ones.

For more information on how to plan menus, see other *CARE Connection* materials on this topic. Tips on menu planning are also available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service resources for child care, online at <http://teamnnutrition.usda.gov>.



Menu Planning Grab and Go Lesson

Planning Cycle Menus for Child Care

Cycle Week Number _____		Week of Service (date): _____				
Make copies of this form and use a separate form for each week of the cycle.						
Use your CACFP Meal Patterns for breakfast, lunch, and snack to be sure you include all requirements.						
Components		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
BREAKFAST	Milk					
	Fruits/ Vegetables					
	Grains/ Bread					
LUNCH	Milk					
	Fruits/ Vegetables					
	Grains/ Bread					
	Meat/Meat Alternate					
SNACK	For snack serve 2 of these 4 components					
	Milk					
	Fruits/ Vegetables					
	Grains/ Bread					
	Meat/Meat Alternate					