Good Grinding for Wise Dining
Choosing Foods
Lesson 12: Meal Planning
“Let’s make a meal plan, yes, we can”

**Action:** Ask someone in the audience to assist you. Give the tally sheet to this person and have them count the number of participants in the audience. Record the number of participants on the tally sheet. At the end of the lesson, you will ask the participants 3 questions and your assistant will record the number of people agreeing with the statement on the tally sheet.

**Action:** Pass out “Meal Planning” handout. Begin lesson when everyone has received a handout.

**Action:** How many of us know what we are going to eat today, or for this coming week? Have any of us waited until we are hungry or waited until the clock says it is dinner time to figure out what we are going to eat?

**Read the following:** Today, we are going to talk about meal planning and why we should plan our meals ahead of time. Meal planning helps us to organize our recipes and meals so we can plan ahead to have budget friendly, balanced, fun, great tasting, and nutritious meals. We may be able to increase the nutritional value of our meals when we cook our own foods at home because we can control our own budget and the foods we eat.

How many of us know that we can avoid mealtime panic and large grocery bills by taking a little time to make a weekly or even a monthly menu? We can write it on a calendar or make a list. At the same time we can start a grocery list of ingredients that we will need. Planning ahead will help us avoid wasting time and energy looking in the pantry or at the store for certain foods.
Meal planning also allows us to have a variety of foods so we don't have to eat the same foods all the time. If we plan our meals ahead of time we will not have to worry about what we are going to eat, we can relax, sit down, and enjoy our mealtime. Low-cost, healthy meals don’t just happen—they’re planned. Let’s make a meal plan, yes, we can.

Action: Everyone repeat with me, “let’s make a meal plan, yes, we can.”

“Let’s make a meal plan, yes, we can.”

Let’s first look at the big picture for healthy, balanced eating. We should aim for a variety of colorful fruits and veggies, and try to make at least half of our starches “whole grain.” We should also go lean with our protein, add 2-3 servings of low-fat milk products daily, and go easy on sugars, fats, and salt.

Action: What is our most favorite meal time? Is it breakfast, lunch, or dinner?

Menu planning is usually based around creating a main dish and adding one or two side dishes to make it a complete meal. For example, we can serve chili over brown rice or leftover spaghetti noodles as the main dish, and add a green tossed salad or microwaved frozen vegetables as our side dish.

To complete the meal we could eat fruit as dessert. We could have a fruit and yogurt parfait, “almond float” and fruit, or pudding with a sprinkle of cookie crumbs. All we need as a final touch is a beverage that could be hot, like tea, or cold, like low-fat milk. Or, we could also try combining ice and fruit in a blender to create a cool, refreshing slushy drink.
Read the following:

What should we drink with our meals or snacks? Water is a great choice with any of our meals or snacks. It’s satisfying between meals, too. We want to drink water regularly and not wait until we feel thirsty. When we get thirsty, it usually means that our body's fluids are already well below what is necessary for best health, so let’s drink water before we become thirsty or feel a dry mouth. Living in Hawaii, we are fortunate to have delicious water available from our faucet, so let's drink it. Water is healthy and easy on my wallet.

Action:
Have participants repeat the following:

Everyone repeat with me, “water is healthy and easy on my wallet.”

Read the following:

When planning our menu, we can use shortcuts and plan leftovers for use in another meal or two. For example, we can buy a cooked *rotisserie chicken*, bake a few potatoes, microwave some vegetables, and serve them along side a green salad for a balanced, colorful meal. Later we can use some of the leftover chicken in soup, stew, on a green salad, or in a sandwich. Leftover baked potatoes can be cut up and added along with leftover cooked vegetables to make a hearty casserole or soup.

Did you know that the most expensive food we buy is the food we throw away? This food could be our leftovers, or something we bought too much of when it was on sale. We can prevent this waste if we plan ahead. It’s easy when we make a meal plan.

Action:
Have participants repeat the following:

Everyone repeat with me, “let’s make a meal plan, yes, we can.”

“Let’s make a meal plan, yes, we can.”
*Optional: Read the following:*

After this lesson, I will demonstrate how to prepare tuna sunshine mix.

**Read the following:**

Plan at least one really easy meal per week, like sandwiches, wraps, or tacos. And keep ingredients for simple meals on hand in case of emergencies. These foods might already be part of our staples, such as pasta, frozen or canned veggies, and jar spaghetti sauce. If we like pizza, we can keep ready-made crusts, a jar of pizza or spaghetti sauce, cheese, canned mushrooms, or other type of vegetables that we have on hand.

To make sure our food is being kept at a safe temperature, we should take a cooler and ice packs or coolant for the cold foods we buy at the grocery store. We should take the groceries straight home in a cooler and refrigerate or freeze them as soon as possible. Food should NOT be left out at room temperature for more than two hours. When in doubt, throw it out.

**Action:** Everyone repeat with me, “when in doubt, throw it out.”

**Ask the following question:** How many of us snack several times throughout the day instead of having three regular meals?

**Read the following:**

When we eat our snacks, we could think of them as mini-meals. Eating five or six mini-meals can be just as healthful as eating three larger meals a day.
Action: Have participants repeat the following: Everyone repeat with me, “let’s make a meal plan, yes, we can.”

Read the following: Now I am going to read three statements. Please raise your hand if you agree with the statement. The first statement is: I plan to use "meal planning" suggestions for quick, budget-friendly, and healthful meals and snacks.

Action: Ask your assistant to count the number of participants who raise their hand and record on the tally sheet.

Read the following: How many of you agree with this next statement: I plan to throw food out if I am unsure it’s safe to eat.

Action: Ask your assistant to count the number of participants who raise their hand and record on the tally sheet.

Read the following: The last statement is: Water is healthy and easy on my wallet. How many people agree with this last statement?

Action: Ask your assistant to count the number of participants who raise their hand and record on the tally sheet.

Read the following: That’s the end of this activity. Thank you for listening. Please check with your doctor or health care professional before making dietary changes.
**Optional**: Tuna Sunshine Mix Demonstration (see Recipe Index Pg 231)
This mix may be served on bread or crackers, or as a veggie dip.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read the following:</th>
<th>Now we will make tuna sunshine mix. To make this recipe we need tuna, carrot, nonfat powdered milk, mayonnaise, and pepper. Before preparing the tuna sunshine mix, I will wash my hands with soap and water.</th>
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| Action:            | Wash hands with soap and water before beginning. Follow recipe directions:  
- DRAIN tuna.  
- GRATE carrot.  
- In a medium bowl, MIX tuna, carrot, powdered milk, mayonnaise, and pepper together.  
- COVER and REFRIGERATE until ready to SERVE |
| Read the following: | Come and taste this delicious tuna sunshine mix. We can use it on bread or crackers, or as a veggie dip. |
| Action:            | Pass out the food. |