

Salad Bar Guide: FAQ

Why offer a salad bar?

Salad bars increase food choice, provide fresh fruit and vegetable options, and can result in increased fruit and vegetable intake by senior nutrition program (SNP) participants.

How might a salad bar meet my state's full-meal nutrition requirements?

State policies that allow for menu patterns are most friendly to implementing a salad bar, although salad bars may be permitted by state policies requiring nutrient analysis. SNPs are "offer versus serve" programs, which means that participants can choose the food items they want to eat and refuse items they do not want. If a salad bar contains items from each required menu pattern area, the participant can choose what they want to eat. A full salad bar should include protein (e.g., chicken, fish, egg), vegetables, fruit, dairy, and grains. These items create the full meal excluding beverages.

How can we include nutrition education?

Providing nutrition education at or near the salad bar can help participants make healthier choices or select the food items that are most appropriate for chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure). For example, you can add MyPlate Graphics to label food items by their food group and instruct participants to choose an item(s) from each food group.

How can we make a self-service salad bar safe for our participants?

Encouraging handwashing and providing hand sanitizer at the beginning of the service line can help decrease instances of cross contamination and infection caused by participants using shared utensils. Consider using alternative serving methods such as having participants line up on one side of the salad bar while staff/volunteers serve them from the other side. Have separate utensils for each item and a sneeze guard. Offering prepackaged salads is another way to reduce risk of cross-contamination by multiple people using the same utensils. Education regarding how to avoid the spread of illnesses while using a salad bar or other self-service meals may also help keep participants safe.

Where can I get more information?

For more salad bar information, resources, and examples, check out the full [Salad Bar Guide](#) from the Nutrition and Aging Resource Center. The Guide also includes planning tips, equipment needs, and links to health inspection and safety resources.

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