



Make Your Mark Webinar Series: Choice March 19, 2020 Offer More Choices Tip Sheet

The goals of the nutrition services authorized under Title III-C of the Older Americans Act are to reduce hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, promote socialization, and delay adverse health conditions. Congregate meal sites provide nutritious meals and venues for older Americans to socialize. For some seniors, this may be their most nutritious meal of the day.

Senior Nutrition Providers (SNPs) strive to serve meals that meet the palates of their clients. After all, seniors must eat the food for it to be nutritious. Comfort foods (e.g., beef pot roast) are favorites among seniors. However, the personal preferences of seniors have expanded to include global flavors and healthy choices¹. SNPs should offer healthy-options including vegan and vegetarian, on-trend menu concepts (e.g., grain bowls), international flavors, and ethnic cuisine (e.g., Mediterranean) in addition to home-style choices².

SNPs must meet their clients' expectations of providing outstanding quality and taste while managing labor and food cost. Resources are available on the [National Resource Center for Nutrition and Aging](#) website to assist providers with this topic. The purpose of this tip sheet is to focus on "Speed Scratch," a celebrated buzz word in the foodservice industry, Speed Scratch means using convenience or ready-made products and adding a few fresh ingredients.³ Speed scratch recipes include minimal on-hand ingredients and limited steps to prepare the recipes.

Foodservice operators are looking for solutions to offset labor and skill issues prevalent in the foodservice industry. Speed Scratch Recipes are one way for operators to maximize and combat these on-going headwinds. The goal for operators implementing scratch-based cooking is two-fold. They meet OAA nutrition requirements and satisfy their guests' increasingly sophisticated taste preferences.⁴ Speed Scratch recipes can help operators simplify menu development, optimize available resources, and address evolving client tastes.

Benefits of speed scratch include:

- Saves time and labor costs
- Adds value and quality
- Assures consistency
- Supports seasonal flexibility
- Simplifies menu development and design
- Lowers need for inventory and equipment
- Easy to implement
- Exceeds customer expectations

Seniors enjoy options with menu selections, and choice increases meal satisfaction.⁵ Production and meal delivery systems directly impact the foods served. Speed Scratch recipes can help operators simplify menu development, optimize available resources, and address evolving client tastes.

Benefits of choice include:

- Ability to offer both meat and meatless entrees
- Can average out food cost with a higher and lower price meal
- Easier on the kitchen staff by balancing the level of preparation difficulty
- Offer variety and choice
- Can cater to varying food preferences among "older" and "younger" seniors

The "watch-outs" of choice include:

- Difficulty in menu writing to ensure both entrée choices go with the other menu items
- Forecasting the amount of each entrée
- Restaurant-style is harder to serve
- Offering two favorite entrees

Measuring meal satisfaction is vital to understanding whether seniors consume and enjoy their meals. SNPs should request input from their congregate meal clients. Information gathering can be as simple as casual conversations or can include formal surveys. The Administration for Community Living POMP survey can be used to survey home-delivered meal clients <https://acl.gov/programs/pomp>. Incorporate survey results into upcoming menus to ensure the highest level of client satisfaction.

References

¹ McCorquodale, A. Senior living community's dining program creates community. Available at: <https://www.food-management.com/senior-dining/senior-living-community-s-dining-program-creates-community>.

² Wolf-James, L. Dining trends in senior living communities. Presentation at the 2018 Association for Nutrition and Foodservice Professionals Annual Conference and Expo. Available at: <https://www.anfponline.org/docs/default-source/events/2018/handouts/ace/dining-trends-in-senior-living.pdf2>.

³ Cook with Campbells. Speed scratch cooking. Available at: <https://www.cookwithcampbells.ca/articles/speed-scratch-cooking/>.

⁴ Scratch cooking: A step by step recipe for success. Available at: <https://www.foodservicedirector.com/menu/scratch-cooking-step-step-recipe-success>.

⁵ Abbey KL, Wright OR, Capra S. Menu Planning in Residential Aged Care-The Level of Choice and Quality of Planning of Meals Available to Residents. *Nutrients*. 2015 Sep 9;7(9):7580-92. doi:10.3390/nu7095354. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4586549/>.