

Meal Management, Planning and Recipe Adaption

Whether a person is cooking for one or for an entire family, planning meals will not only save, time, effort and money, but will also improve eating habits.

Benefits of planning meals

Individuals and families are more likely to eat healthy, balanced meals that will meet their nutritional requirements.

It allows for greater variety in the meals eaten each week.

Individuals and families tend to shop for groceries more efficiently, as they have a list of the items they need, eliminating impulse buying or overspending.

It can save money, as dining out and reliance on takeaways is reduced.

Factors to consider when meal planning

Healthy eating guidelines

Current healthy eating guidelines and the food pyramid should be considered when meal planning, as they help individuals to prepare balanced meals containing the correct proportions of nutrients required.

For example, eat five or more portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables daily.

Use low-fat milks, low-fat or no-added-sugar yoghurts and reduced-fat cheeses.

Specific dietary requirements

Consider the dietary needs and nutritional requirements of all individuals when meal planning as these can vary greatly, e.g., children require a higher carbohydrate intake than older people as children are more active.

Certain individuals may require specialist foods or modified recipes, e.g., individuals with coeliac disease can't have gluten and vegetarians can't have meat or meat products.

Religious beliefs also need to be considered, e.g., Hindus do not eat beef, so a meal needs to be planned in order to suit their needs.

Availability of foods

Choose foods that are in season when meal planning, as they are cheaper and taste better, e.g., strawberries and tomatoes are in season during the summer.

If people live in rural areas it may be hard to access certain ingredients, such as spices from around the world. This limits the dishes that can be prepared.

Resources

Time: consider the time available to prepare, cook and serve the food when meal planning. Ensure dishes chosen can be completed on time, e.g., a stir-fry may take 30 minutes to prepare, and cook compared to a stew that may require three to four hours. Convenience foods can be useful when time is limited, e.g., white sauce for lasagne. However, they should not be used excessively due to their high fat and salt content.

Money: consider the amount of money available. When money is limited use finances wisely by purchasing cheaper cuts of meat, choose pulses and eggs as cheap protein food and shopping around for good value.

Food preparation and cooking equipment: certain meals require specific food preparation or cooking equipment. Check what equipment is available before planning meals, e.g., a wok may be needed for a stir-fry. If available, use time-saving equipment, e.g., a food processor, to speed up food preparation processes.

Skills and knowledge: consider existing cookery skills and knowledge. People with competent cooking skills may be able to plan more adventurous meals, whereas less experienced cooks may depend more on convenience food.

Occasion

If planning a meal for a special occasion, consider the type of occasion, as specific foods may be required, e.g., turkey at Christmas.

People

Consider the number of people eating when meal planning, as the larger the group the more ingredients needed.

People's likes and dislikes should be taken into account to ensure everyone enjoys the meal and food is not wasted.

Menu design

Guidelines for designing a menu

1. Read the exam question thoroughly. Highlight the specific group of people for whom you have been asked to design a menu. Highlight any special requirements, e.g., high fibre or low fat.
2. Using a full A4 page of your exam paper, draw a box with a ruler.
3. Give the menu a title, e.g., 'Menu for an adolescent'.
4. Divide the menu into courses, as asked for in the exam. For example, Menu for a day (this must include breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks). Two-course menu suitable for the main meal of the day (this must include starter and main course or main course and dessert).

5. A balanced meal contains at least three out of the four main food groups from the food pyramid. To ensure a meal is balanced, draw a mini food pyramid on the side of the page (for a menu for a day, each of the meals will require a food pyramid). Each time you include a food group, such as fruit and vegetables, tick the shelf on the pyramid. Do not add foods from the top shelf of the food pyramid.
6. Check that the foods selected meet any specific requirements outlined in the exam question, e.g., no meat or animal products if asked to design a menu for a vegan.
7. Explain each food type and cooking method thoroughly in the menu. For example: baked fillet of salmon, served with steamed carrots and broccoli florets, and boiled baby potatoes.
8. Include a drink, e.g., water or milk, with each course or menu.

Recipe adaptation

To adapt a recipe is to substitute, alter quantities or omit ingredients.

Reasons why recipes are adapted

Recipes are adapted to:

Meet current healthy eating guidelines.

Cater for specific dietary requirements.

Add interest or variety to the diet, e.g., adding nuts to a stir-fry for a crunchy texture.

Increase or decrease the quantity served, as most recipes serve four people.

Substitute expensive ingredients for less expensive ones, e.g., using textured vegetable protein (TVP) instead of steak mince in a lasange.

Suit personal likes or dislikes, e.g., omitting mushrooms from a curry.

How to adapt a recipe

Original spaghetti Bolognese	Modified recipe	Reason
Knob of butter	1 tablespoon of olive oil	To reduce saturated fat intake.
100 g of smoked streaky bacon, finely diced	Omit	To reduce saturated fat intake.
250 g of minced beef	250 g of lean (less than 5% fat) steak mince or 250 g of TVP	To reduce saturated fat intake, or to make the dish suitable for a vegetarian diet.
1 onion		

1 beef stock cube	250 ml of homemade beef stock	To reduce salt intake and to enhance flavour.
1 teaspoon of sugar	Omit	To reduce sugar intake.
1 teaspoon of salt	Omit	To reduce salt intake.
1 jar of tomatoe sauce	1 tin of chopped tomatoes	To reduce sugar intake. Tomato sauce has approximately 4 g of sugar per tablespoon.
500 g of spaghetti	500 g of wholemeal spaghetti	To increase dietary fibre intake.
50 g of Parmesan cheese	30g of low-fat cheese	To reduce saturated fat intake.
	Add 1 grated carrot, 50 g diced celery and 6 sliced mushrooms	To increase vegetable and dietary fibre intake.
	Add fresh parsley	To enhance flavour.