

Offering Multiple Meals as Part of Summer Non-Congregate Meal Service

As part of non-congregate summer meal service in rural areas, program operators may provide bulk food items that contribute to multiple meals for children. Program operators should consider the following when offering multiple meals for pick-up or via delivery:

Overall Considerations

- **Parent Guardian Time and Availability** - Offer foods that are pre-prepared and do not require cooking and chopping.
- **Age/Developmental Abilities of the Children Served** - Offer fruits and vegetables that are washed, cut, and ready to eat.
- **Literacy Level of Families** – Offer foods that require minimal preparation before they are served to children. Providing menus and instructions using pictures and in the primary language spoken at home.
- **Access to Kitchen Appliances and Cooking Tools** - Offer foods that do not require pots, pans, large refrigerators, knives, and other items to prepare or store them.
- **Access to Potable Water** - Offer foods that do not require the addition of water, cooking in water, or washing before eating.
- **Food Safety Risk** - Offer foods that are pre-washed or pre-cooked. Providing food safety instructions using pictures

Food Amounts

- Note that the amount of foods needed to meet meal pattern requirements does not always equate to common can and container sizes available on the retail market. In these instances, more food than what is required would need to be provided if Program operators wish to use retail packages. Program operators would need to round up and provide the next full-size container.

Food Quality

Distributing multiple days' worth of meals may present food quality challenges. Below are some tips to consider:

- For sandwiches and wraps, package bread separately from sandwich fillings and provide instructions on how parents, guardians, and older children can assemble the sandwiches at mealtime.
- For pre-made salads, package dressings separately from salad greens and provide instructions on how to dress the salad at home.
- Avoid stacking meals to prevent damage. Large rolling carts can help transport meals in single layers around the distribution site.

Communicating What Makes a Meal

- Program operators are strongly encouraged to provide parents and guardians and older children with a list of the items they are receiving, and how much of each food, should be served at each

meal. When possible, Program operators should provide this information in multiple languages and use visual aids, such as pictures.

What Food Items May Be Provided in Bulk?

- Foods that normally credit towards reimbursable meals under the SFSP or SSO.
- Foods that are recognizable as a meal component in a reimbursable meal.
- Foods that do not require much preparation or the addition of other ingredients (aside from water) before eating.

Can Frozen Foods Be Provided?

- Yes. Frozen foods, which require minimal preparation other than heating, may be provided as part of meals if they meet meal pattern requirements. Providing foods in a frozen state may present a safe way to offer perishable foods for consumption later in the week (for example, 4 or 5 days after distribution).