Polk County 4-H Culinary Challenge Contest
The Menu  Plan a menu for an indoor or outdoor meal. Try to have a variety of color, shape, texture, and temperature. Pay attention to keeping the meal nutritionally balanced. Make sure to note the occasion at the top of the menu card. (Ex. Lunch for Dad in the Field or Mother’s Day Brunch, etc.) You may write, type, or use a computer for the menu card, but it should be done by the 4-H’er. The correct information, neatly put, is more important than pretty paper or pictures.

The Food  Prepare one of the foods from the menu and bring it to the contest. There is refrigeration available at the Exhibit Building and a microwave for your use. There is no stove. Please plan your food choice accordingly. Keep in mind that it needs to hold up until the time your table is judged. It may be an individual or family sized serving. You may even create your own recipe!

The Table Setting  Bring along a table setting for one or two people. This should include a card table, tablecloth, runner or placemats, napkins, dishes, silverware, and a centerpiece. Your table setting should be appropriate for the menu you are planning. For example, an outdoor cooking menu may have a table setting of paper plates and a fancier meal may use china and formal silverware.

How the Contest Works  Displays will be set up by the 4-H’er the day of the contest. The judge will talk to each 4-H’er individually as the entry is judged. The food, menu, and table setting are all judged equally. Make sure to explain to the judge why you did what you did and ask questions! The judge will give you written comments as well as discuss with you things that you may be able to improve your table setting. Ribbon placings will be given out at the end of the event. All Grand and Reserve Champions will have their table settings on display at the Polk County Fair in the Exhibit Building (without the food item).

Youth may work individually or in pairs. You may also use the Culinary Challenge Theme at the Nebraska State Fair using a Nebraska Commodity and incorporate the designated food item into your menu and using that as your food product. Technology may be used if you wish to support your theme but is not required for a county project. If you are interested in the event at the Nebraska State Fair, technology must be used. Please look at the event for more specific information or contact Amy Peterson for more specific questions about the county OR the state fair event, which will be held in August.

Questions the Judge May Ask
Tell me about your table setting.
Why did you choose this theme?
Where did you get your recipe?
How long would it take to make your menu items?
How do you make your menu items?
In what order do you prepare your foods?
Is this an expensive menu? How could you reduce the cost?
What skills are needed to make your menu?
What nutrients are in your foods?
Is the menu balanced?
Does the menu have a variety of textures, flavors, colors, temperature, and nutrients?
Have you prepared this before?
How could you vary the menu? Can you reduce the calories?
Why did you set the table the way you did?
If you could change the table setting or menu, what would you do?
CREATING YOUR CULINARY CHALLENGE TABLE!

Food should look and taste good together! Flavor, taste, texture, color, shape and temperature all affect the way food influences us.

These five basic factors for menu planning can make your meal looking as good as it tastes! Use the following menu tips when deciding your menu plan.

**Flavor** is thought of as mild, strong, bitter, sweet, salty, or sour. One distinct flavor in a meal is recommended. Different flavors in a meal are usually appreciated rather than repeating the same flavor.

**Texture** can be soft, chewy, moist, dry, or crisp. A variety of textures in meals makes a great plate! This can add a lot of interest to a meal.

**Color** makes meals look as good as it tastes! Pay attention to colors to make sure they don’t clash or blend into each other. You can also emphasize colors with the plates and tables linens to complement the foods that you serve.

**Sizes and Shapes** include foods that are sliced, diced, striped and mashed! Meals that have different sizes and shapes are more appealing than one that is all the same size. Leave some foods whole and serve others in cubes or slices. Try not to have too many mixed dishes in a meal.

**Temperature** can vary from hot to cold or at room temperature. Remember to serve hot foods hot and cold foods well chilled. Some foods do better at room temperature. Try to plan both hot and cold foods in one meal.

Start your menu by design. Use the following as your guide for what to include. Start with the main entrée, and then add in the others.

| Main Entrée: _____________________________ | Vegetable/Fruits: _____________________________ |
| Breads: _____________________________ | Dessert: _____________________________ |
| Beverage: _____________________________ |

Look at the meal you planned. How does it meet the five basic factors of menu planning? Is there one distinct flavor and others that enhance this flavor? Is there a variety of textures, colors, sizes, shapes and temperatures?

| Flavor: _____________________________ | Texture: _____________________________ |
| Color: _____________________________ | Size and Shape: _____________________________ |
| Temperature: _____________________________ |
COMMON MENU MISTAKES

Boring meals usually happen because of the following mistakes. Keep these in mind as you plan your meal!

**Flavor**
- All bland flavors
- Too many strong flavors
- Repetition of food or flavors
- No tart or acid flavor
- Too many sweet or too many sour foods

**Temperature**
- Too many foods of the same temperature
- Hot foods not hot
- Cold foods not cold

**Color**
- Too many foods of the same color
- No contrast or variation
- Clashing or unpleasant colors

**Size and Shape**
- Too many mixed dishes
- Too many small pieces the same size
- Too many similar shapes
- Lack of variety in sizes

**Texture**
- Too many soft foods
- Too many chewy foods
- Too many crunchy or crispy foods
- Lack of variety in texture

As you look at your menu, think about your main entrée. What additional flavors would complement it? For color, remember that the more fruits and vegetables you have in your menu, the more colorful your plate. Thinking about textures helps you include different kinds of foods according to MyPlate. No one likes all soft and mushy foods or foods that are all crunchy. Add chewy breads, crunchy vegetables and soft and tender pasta. These can also add different sizes and shapes to your plate. What about the temperature? Are they all chilled? Hot and steamy? Think about what it takes to prepare your menu and if this can be done to get the meal out on the table.
TIPS FOR SETTING A TABLE

- The table should be clean; it can be left bare or a table covering can be used as the background for the food and the items may be placed on top of it. A table covering helps protect the table and muffles the noise of clanking glassware and dishes.
- Placemats or tablecloths can be used for special occasions.
- Dinnerware and flatware should be chosen as appropriate for the occasion and that complement each other. Matching or blended colors or textures in the dishes or contrasting something different makes a table setting look attractive.
- Table setting items should be appropriate for the meal served. Snacks on paper plates are appropriate while home-cooked dinner should be served on attractive dishes to help show it off.
- The napkins are usually folded into oblongs, and placed next to the forks. The fold of the oblong should be to the left so that it opens like a book.
- The beverage glass is placed about one inch above the tip of the knife.
- If coffee or tea is served, the cup is placed on the saucer and set to the right of the spoon one inch from the edge of the table. Have the handle pointing to the right.
- Salad and dessert bowls may be placed left of the forks and napkin or at the tip of the fork.
- Only the utensils needed are placed on the table.
- Place the main dish in front of the head of the family. If it is hot, it needs a table protector or trivet with it.
- Foods that are used together should be placed together, such as bread and butter or potatoes and gravy.
- Serving spoons should be placed on the table beside the food bowls rather than in them until you begin serving the food.
- The centerpiece should be attractive. Simple ones, such as fresh flowers, a plant, or fruit can be used. If candles are used, they should be of the length, so that if they tilt, they would be above eye level.
- The centerpiece should be low enough so that the people at the table can see over it; it should be colorful and blend with the tablecloth and the dishes; and be fresh and clean looking.
- When a food is commonly prepared in more than one way, avoid confusion by describing the method of cooking, such as ROAST TURKEY or FRENCH FRIED POTATOES.
- List each food with the exception of butter, cream, sugar or salad dressing, unless it is something special like HONEY BUTTER or POPPYSEED DRESSING.
- List beverages last.
- Plan the spacing and arrangement of the items on the menu so that the written menu is symmetrical.
MAKING MEALTIME MANNERS MATTER!

The following guide is a basic set of traditional rules for setting the table. Different cultures follow different rules for table etiquette – ask for clarification, if needed. This traditional example can be used in a formal as well as an informal one. To set the table, the 4-H’er needs a “place setting” for each person. Table setting contests will commonly require at least one table setting on display - check the county for specific details.

A table setting should include the following items:
- Dinnerware (plates, cups, saucers, and bowls)
- Glassware (glasses of all shapes and sizes)
- Flatware (forks, spoons, and knives)
- Napkins
- Centerpiece
- Placemats or tablecloths (optional)

The following rules for setting a table correspond to the numbers seen in the table setting illustration.
1. The flatware, plate, and napkin should be one inch from the edge of the table.
2. The plate is always in the center of the place setting.
3. The dinner fork is placed at the left of the plate.
4. If a salad fork is used, it is placed to the left of the dinner fork.
5. The napkin is placed to the left of the fork, with the fold on the left. It can also go under a fork, or on top of the plate.
6. The knife is placed to the right of the plate with the sharp blade facing in towards the plate.
7. The teaspoon is placed to the right of the knife.
8. If a soup spoon is needed, it is placed to the right of the teaspoon.
9. The soup bowl may be placed to the right of the teaspoon.
10. The drinking glass is placed at the tip of the knife.
11. If a salad plate is used, place it just above the tip of the fork.
12. The cup or mug is placed to the top right of the spoons.

Tips for setting a table
- The table should be clean; it can be left bare or a table covering can be used as the background for the food and the items may be placed on top of it. A table covering helps protect the table and muffles the noise of clanking glassware and dishes.
- Placemats or tablecloths can be used for special occasions.
- Dinnerware and flatware should be chosen as appropriate for the occasion and that complement each other. Matching or blended colors or textures in the dishes or contrast something different make a table setting look attractive.
- Table setting items should be appropriate for the meal served. Snacks on paper plates are appropriate while a home-cooked dinner should be served on attractive dishes to help show it off.
- Only the utensils needed are placed on the table.
- The centerpiece should be attractive. Simple ones, such as fresh flowers, a plant, or fruit can be used. If candles are used, they should be of the length so that if they were lit, they would be above eye level.
- The centerpiece should be low enough so that the people at the table can see over it; it should be colorful and blend with the tablecloth and the dishes; and be fresh and clean looking.
WRITING THE WINNING MENU

An appropriately written menu should follow the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate. As a general guideline, a meal should have at least four different food groups to help balance out what the body needs every day to get all the nutrients needed. For the Culinary Challenge, your meal should have something from all five food groups to help you learn more about MyPlate and menu planning. MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet using a familiar image—a place setting for a meal. Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate or in your cup or bowl. For more information, go to http://www.choosemyplate.gov/.

Build a Healthy Eating Style

MyPlate is a reminder to find your healthy eating style and build it throughout your lifetime. Everything you eat and drink matters. The right mix can help you be healthier now and in the future.

All food and beverage choices matter. Focus on variety, amount, and nutrition

- Focus on making healthy food and beverage choices from all five food groups including fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy to get the nutrients you need.
- Eat the right amount of calories for you based on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level.
- Building a healthier eating style can help you avoid overweight and obesity and reduce your risk of diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Choose an eating style low in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars

- Use Nutrition Facts labels and ingredient lists to find amounts of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars in the foods and beverages you choose.
- Look for food and drink choices that are lower in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar.
  - Eating fewer calories from foods high in saturated fat and added sugars can help you manage your calories and prevent overweight and obesity. Most of us eat too many foods that are high in saturated fat and added sugar.
  - Eating foods with less sodium can reduce your risk of high blood pressure.

Make small changes to create a healthier eating style

- Think of each change as a personal “win” on your path to living healthier. Each MyWin is a change you make to build your healthy eating style. Find little victories that fit into your lifestyle and celebrate as a MyWin!
- Start with a few of these small changes.
  - Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
  - Focus on whole fruits.
  - Vary your veggies.
- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Move to low-fat and fat-free dairy.
- Vary your protein routine.
- Eat and drink the right amount for you.

Support healthy eating for everyone
Dairy Group
*Move to low-fat and fat-free dairy.* All fluid milk products and many foods made from milk are considered part of this food group. Most Dairy Group choices should be fat-free or low-fat. Foods made from milk that retain their calcium content are part of the group. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not. Calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) is also part of the Dairy Group. Eat the equivalent of 3 cups of foods from the Dairy Group each day.

Fruit Group
*Focus on Whole Fruits.* Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed. Eat the equivalent of 1 ½ - 2 cups of fresh, canned or frozen fruits per day.

Vegetable Group
*Vary your veggies.* Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the Vegetable Group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed. Eat the equivalent of 2 - 3 cups of raw or cooked vegetables per day.

Grain Group
*Make at least half your grains whole.* Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain is a grain product. Bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits are examples of grain products. Eat 5 - 6 ½ ounce-equivalents with 3 ounce-equivalents or more of whole-grain products and the remaining grains should come from enriched or whole-grain products.

Protein Group
*Vary your protein routine.* All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group. Eat 6 ounce-equivalents each day. Choices need to be varied among fish, beans, peas, nuts and seeds, as well as the lean meat and poultry.

*Serving sizes based on a 2,000 calorie/day diet plan. See following chart for more specific age-related recommendations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>DAIRY</strong></th>
<th><strong>FRUIT</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dairy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Daily recommendation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Daily recommendation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years old</td>
<td>2 cups*</td>
<td>1 cup**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years old</td>
<td>2 1/2 cups*</td>
<td>1 to 1 ½ cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years old</td>
<td>3 cups*</td>
<td>1 ½ cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years old</td>
<td>3 cups*</td>
<td>1 ½ cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years old</td>
<td>3 cups*</td>
<td>1 ½ cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years old</td>
<td>3 cups*</td>
<td>2 cups**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### VEGETABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years old</td>
<td>1 cup**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years old</td>
<td>1 ½ cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years old</td>
<td>2 cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years old</td>
<td>2 ½ cups**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Daily recommendation* for children and girls:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years old</td>
<td>2 ½ cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years old</td>
<td>3 cups**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Daily recommendation* for boys:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years old</td>
<td>3 cups**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years old</td>
<td>4 cups**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more while staying within calorie needs. Source: [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

### GRAINS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Daily recommendation*</th>
<th>Daily minimum amount of whole grains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years old</td>
<td>3 ounce equivalents</td>
<td>1 ½ ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years old</td>
<td>5 ounce equivalents</td>
<td>2 ½ ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years old</td>
<td>5 ounce equivalents</td>
<td>3 ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years old</td>
<td>6 ounce equivalents</td>
<td>3 ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### PROTEIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Daily recommendation*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years old</td>
<td>2 ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years old</td>
<td>4 ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13 years old</td>
<td>5 ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18 years old</td>
<td>6 1/2 ounce equivalents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Menu Writing Guidelines

The following guidelines are suggested when writing or planning a menu:

• Descriptive terms should be used that give information about the temperature, texture, color, or other special characteristics of the food or method of preparation.

Examples: Chilled Apple Cider, Broiled Sirloin Steak, Cream of Asparagus Soup.

• Menus should be written in symmetrical arrangement on the page, with the foods listed in the order they are served.

Examples:

- Broiled Hamburgers
- Baked Potato Sour Cream
- Broccoli Glazed Carrots
- Hot Rolls
- Iced Tea

• Words should be capitalized except articles and prepositions; words such as “or”, “and”, “of”, “with”, etc. should not be capitalized. Example: Cream of Mushroom Soup.

• Foods should be grouped by courses. The item of most importance should be listed first.

Example: Broiled Hamburgers.

• Foods served with an accompaniment should have the food listed first.

Example:

- Baked Potatoes Sour Cream
- OR
- Cheddar Cheese Cubes
- Rye Chips

• When the main dish has two or more accompaniments, the main dish should be centered on one line and the accompaniments should be on the same line on either side or written on the line below.
Example:

Rye Crisp Chicken Soup Saltines
OR
Chicken Soup
Rye Crisp Saltines

• Butter, cream, sugar, or salad dressings are not written on the menu unless they are special in some way.

Examples:

Crusty Rolls
Whipped Butter
OR
Wedge of Thousand Island
Lettuce Dressing

• The beverage(s) should be listed last.

Example: Iced Tea.

• Extra spacing should be allowed between courses. The following is an example of how a three course meal is properly written:

Examples:

French Onion Soup
Whole Wheat Wafers
Celery Sticks Assorted Olives

Prime Rib of Roast Beef au Jus
Potato Soufflé
Asparagus with Hollandaise Sauce
Mixed Green Salad
Hot Rolls Whipped Butter

Lemon Ice
Coffee Hot Tea