

# Eating Well at Work: Healthier Food at Potlucks and Special Events

Offering healthier foods at work events makes sense. The County Board of Supervisors encourages healthy food options at work as stated in the County's [Employee Health and Wellness Policy](#). Healthier employees are more productive and have lower health care costs--everyone benefits in the long run.

There is no need to eliminate all your favorite foods at special occasions. Having options is the key. Include some lighter, healthier alternatives. In fact, you can send your recipes to the [Wellness Program](#) for suggestions on making healthy substitutions that turn old-time favorites into healthier versions that are just as tasty.

## Healthy Ideas for “Goodie Days” and Celebrations

“Goodie Days” are often set up in common areas and can become a distressing gauntlet of rich food hard to avoid by co-workers trying to limit their calorie and fat intake. Consider combining all birthdays into a —once a month celebration or brainstorm for non-food ways to celebrate.

If you do serve food, make sure to always have a fresh fruit or vegetable option available. Here are some ideas on including lighter fare:

**Cut the Cake:** At office birthday parties consider angel food cake with fresh fruit toppings instead of the usual fat-laden cakes. Smaller portions save calories and fat. Cut smaller pieces of cake or serve mini cookies and brownie bites so attendees can choose their own smaller portion.



Here is an example of what one department did to make goodies **healthier and fun!** ~ [CEO-Strawberry Shortcake Employee Birthdays Celebration](#)

Compare:

<b>Fresh Strawberry Shortcake (above recipe), 1 serving</b>	154 calories	4 grams fat
<b>Frosted Birthday Cake (1/8 standard round cake)</b>	250-400 calories	10-15 grams fat

**Pass the Ice Cream:** Try low fat ice cream or frozen yogurt, topped with granola and real fruit for a healthier treat. (Thawed frozen strawberries make an easy healthy topping). Include a truly low-calorie treat with a float made from 1 scoop of low fat ice cream and diet root beer.

Compare these choices:

Food	Calories	Fat grams
Regular Root Beer Float (regular ice cream and root beer)	280	12
Diet Float with low fat ice cream ½ cup light ice cream (ex: Dreyer's Slow Churned ½ fat) Diet root beer (ex: Diet A & W root beer)	120	4.5
Sundae with chocolate syrup, nuts and whipped cream	470	25
Sundae with strawberries, low-fat ice cream and granola	230	6

Ditch "Donut Day": Regular donuts and pastries are loaded with fat and calories! Instead of a donut or pastry day, bring mini-bagels, mini low fat muffins and scones with flavored low-fat cream cheese, hummus, and/or jam. Check out the calorie and fat savings below.

Food	Calories	Fat
<b>Bagel</b>		
3-1/2" (grocery store: 2.5 ounces)	194	1
4-1/2 inches (bakery: 5 ounces)	440	3
Mini bagel	71	0
<b>Cream cheese</b>		
Regular (1 ounce; 2 Tablespoons)	98	10
Low fat (1 ounce; 2 Tablespoons)	65	5
Eggplant Hummus (2 Tablespoons)	45	3
Light laughing cow cheese (1 triangle)	35	2
Jam (1 Tablespoons)	56	0
Glazed donut (4-1/2")	299	14
Krispy Kreme Jelly donut	330	17
Starbucks cranberry orange muffin	410	20
Mini blueberry muffin	70	3
Starbucks large pumpkin scone	480	15
Mini scone	170	6



## Healthier Potlucks



Potlucks are a great way for workers to show off their culinary expertise and create camaraderie among staff. Make sure there are some healthier food choices available. Challenge co-workers to try new dishes with less calories and fat. Consider re-making your favorites into healthier lower-fat dishes. Some simple substitutions can make old-time favorites healthier and just as tasty. See the example of [Mom's Mexican Chicken](#).

Send your favorite recipes to the [Wellness Program](#) for suggested modifications.

Since you never know what might show up at a potluck, pass around a sign-up sheet with indications for healthy options. Offer suggestions for fresh fruit (salads or kebabs), raw vegetable plates and salads. Picking up ready-made vegetable platters and fruit plates can be a time-saving option for the busy co-worker or the person who doesn't like to cook.

**“Salad bar” potluck:** Here's an idea for a different kind of potluck. **Assign everyone to a bring one item:** sliced cucumbers, chopped celery, grape tomatoes, cauliflowerettes, broccoli tops, baby carrots, sprouts, canned garbanzo and kidney beans, shredded low-fat cheese, whole wheat mini pitas or small whole grain rolls, and an assortment of low-fat salad dressings. Arrange lettuce in 1 to 2 large bowls and set up your own salad bar on a couple of long tables. A crock pot of low-fat soup or chili adds a heartier touch.



Here is an example of what one County Department did to make food healthier and fun!

~ HSA-Gourmet Salad Bar Luncheon

**Tostada Bar potluck:** There are probably several co-workers who make —world famous beans or meat toppings. Encourage everyone else to pitch in with fresh shredded lettuce, chopped tomatoes, low-fat shredded cheese, low-fat sour cream, diced avocados or guacamole, several kinds of salsas, fat-free or no-fat pot beans, 100% whole wheat flour tortillas, and small corn tostada shells. Be sure to include fresh fruit for dessert along with more traditional sweets. Make an —exotic fresh fruit salad with fresh pineapple, kiwis, berries and melons in season topped with grated fresh coconut.

**BBQ's:** Office BBQs set in local parks are a great way to get together and encourage physical activity. Arranging games seems a natural for most party planner, but be sure to include some healthier food selections, too. Offer baked chips, fresh fruit and vegetable plates with low-fat dip, green salad with low or no-calorie dressing choices, low fat hot dogs (ex: Healthy Choice®) or turkey burgers, Veggie Burgers (ex: Boca ®burgers) and 100% whole wheat buns.

## Healthy Options for Catered Meetings and Special Events



Healthy eating is balanced eating. Healthy eating does not mean that everything you serve has to be low-fat, low-salt, low-sugar and high fiber. Just make sure that you offer more choices that are healthy and fewer choices that are not.

Healthy foods are beautiful, appetizing, delicious, and satisfying. There are many healthy and tasty options for foods and beverages at special events. Resolve to offer at least some healthier options:

- ~ Fruits and vegetable plates with low fat dips are healthy and beautiful. Grilled and roasted vegetables are so tasty they don't need butter or sauces.
- ~ Baked, roasted or grilled meats and fish are delicious alternatives to fatty and cheese-laden casseroles and lasagna. Avoid breaded, fried, and —stuffed main dishes. Try a vegetarian entrée.
- ~ Offer smaller portions of rich entrees, appetizers and desserts. This cuts down on calories and fat—and —mini portions can be fun and attractive, too.



See the tables below for specific suggestions on healthier choices for breakfasts, lunches, dinners, snacks and receptions.

### Suggestions for Healthier Choices

CHOOSE . . .	INSTEAD OF . . .
<b>For Beverages</b>	
~water- (plain spring water or flavored carbonated with no sugar)	~soda pop
~coffees or teas, including decaffeinated & herbal teas	~fruit flavored drinks
~100% fruit or vegetable juices	
~low-fat or skim milk	~whole or 2% milk
<b>For Breakfasts</b>	
~fresh fruits, dried fruits,	~sweetened canned fruits
~unsweetened juices	~juices
~non-fat or light yogurt	~regular yogurt
~small bagels – 3-1/2" or smaller	~regular bagels
~small or mini muffins – 2-1/2" or smaller	~regular or large muffins
~100% whole grain bagels or muffins	~Croissants, donuts, sweet rolls, pastries
~low-fat, whole grain and nut granola bars	
~toppings of light trans-free margarine or butter	~regular butter
~low-fat cream cheese jam or jelly	~margarines with trans fat regular cream cheese
~nut butters like almond or peanut butter	
~unsweetened cold cereals	~sweetened cereals
~instant hot cereals (no sugar added)	~flavored and sweetened instant hot cereals
~whole grain waffles and French toast	~waffles or French toast made from white bread
~lean ham or Canadian bacon	~bacon or sausage
~vegetarian sausage or bacon substitutes	

<b>CHOOSE . . .</b>	<b>INSTEAD OF . . .</b>
<b>For Lunches or Dinners</b>	
-salads with dressings on the side	-salads with added dressing
-low-fat or fat-free salad dressings	-regular salad dressings
-soups made with vegetable puree or skim milk	-soups made with cream or half and half
-pasta, vegetable or tofu salads with low-fat dressing	-salads made with mayonnaise or cream dressing
-sandwiches on 100% whole grain bread, pita, or wraps	-sandwiches on croissants or white bread
-lean meats , poultry, fish, tofu	-high-fat meats (such as ribs or brisket), poultry with skin
-low-fat cold cuts (3 g fat/oz)	-high fat cold cuts, salami, pepperoni, sausage, bacon
-water-packed tuna or salmon	-oil-packed tuna or salmon
-grilled, baked, or broiled meat, poultry, or fish	-fried meats
-marinated meats, poultry, or fish	-rich cream and cheese sauces or gravies
-low-fat cheeses (less than 6 grams of fat per ounce)	-regular cheeses
-tomato-based sauces	-cream, butter or cheese sauces
-baked potatoes with low-fat or vegetable toppings	-baked potatoes with butter, sour cream, and bacon bits
-steamed vegetables	-cooked vegetables in cream sauce or butter
-100% whole grain breads or rolls	-croissants or white rolls
-margarine without trans-fatty acids	-margarines with trans fat
-mustard, catsup, and light mayonnaise	-regular mayonnaise or rich sauces
-lower fat and calories desserts: fresh fruit, fruit salad, low-fat ice cream, low-fat frozen yogurt, sherbet, sorbet, angel food cake with fruit topping	-higher fat and calories desserts: ice cream, cheese cake, pies, cream puffs, large slices of cake, fruit tarts, pie, cobbler
<b>Appetizers or Snacks for Receptions</b>	
-fresh vegetables, cut up	-tempura or deep fat fried vegetables
-low-fat dressing, salsa or tofu dip	-creamy high fat dressings or cheese dips
-cut up fresh fruits and vegetables	-chips or cookies
-low-fat, —lite popcorn (5 g fat or less/serving)	-regular popcorn or buttered popcorn
-whole grain crackers (5 g fat or less/serving)	-regular crackers
-dips made of salsa, low-fat cottage cheese, hummus or low-fat salad dressings	-dips made from regular mayonnaise, sour cream, cream cheese or cheese sauce
-baked or low-fat chips, pretzels (less than 7 grams of fat per oz)	-regular chips
-grilled or broiled chicken brochettes without skin	-fried chicken, chicken with skin
-miniature fruit or vegetable kebabs	-kebabs with chicken liver, bacon, or high fat meats -fatty BBQ ribs
-miniature meatballs made with lean meat	-large meatballs made of high-fat meat, meatballs served in gravy or high-fat sauces
-broiled or poached seafood: shrimp, salmon, scallops, -oysters, clams	-deep fat fried seafood, seafood in high-fat sauces

<b>CHOOSE . . .</b>	<b>INSTEAD OF . . .</b>
~mushroom caps with low-fat bread-based stuffing	~mushrooms with high-fat cheese stuffing or marinated in oil
~miniature vegetable pizzas with tomato sauce and light cheese	~pizza with pepperoni, Italian sausage or other high-fat meats
~vegetable sushi rolls or vegetable spring rolls – fresh, not fried	~egg rolls or fried spring rolls
~small cubes of cheese (3/4 squares or smaller)	~large cubes of cheese
~raw or roasted, unsalted nuts	~salted nuts or sugar-coated nuts like beer nuts

