

## McGill Sustainable Events Certification Program

# Healthy and Sustainable Meal Event Planning

## Have A Balanced Plate

- Choose foods that will create a balanced plate, comprising of half the plate fruits and vegetables, a quarter of the plate protein, and a quarter of the plate grains (preferably whole grains). For more information, see [Canada's Food Guide](#).
- Make water the drink of choice.
  - Tip: Make it fun by adding slices of fruit, herbs, or even cucumbers.
- For buffet-style events, place vegetables as the first items.
  - Tip: For buffet-style and grab-and-go events, select a smaller plate size to promote mindful eating and reduce food waste.
- For grab-and-go events, ensure healthy options are just as accessible in this format.
  - Tip: Cutting up fruits and vegetables into bite sized pieces can increase their appeal.
  - Tip: Offer smaller portions (e.g. small sandwiches) to encourage attendants to consume a variety of foods.
  - Tip: Serve bite-size dessert portions and include fruit and whole grain options (e.g. oatmeal raisin cookies, mini yogurt parfaits, or bite-sized black bean brownies).



## Portion Sizes of Main Meal

- Planning for an appropriate portion size will help to reduce food waste.
- Pasta or other cooked grain: 1 cup is the recommended serving size, roughly the size of a tennis ball.
- Meat or fish: 3 to 4 oz is the recommended serving size, roughly the size of a deck of cards.

## Include Plant-Based Options

- Common plant proteins include beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, and tempeh.
- Plant proteins are equally as nutritious as animal protein, more cost-efficient, and gentler on the environment, making them great staples for meal events.
  - Tip: Look for legumes, including beans and lentils, when selecting meals. They can easily be incorporated into soups, chili, and salads. They also can be used to create burger patties or substituted for meat in many main courses.

## Ask About Dietary Restrictions

- Ensure information is gathered on attendant dietary restrictions prior to event. This will ensure that all attendants have a suitable meal.
- When possible, adjust meal items to be suitable for common dietary restrictions.
  - Tip: Rather than a cream of broccoli soup, make a vegetable soup to accommodate potential lactose-free and vegan individuals.
  - Tip: Select gluten-free grains such as quinoa, buckwheat, or rice to accommodate gluten-sensitive individuals.

## Food Purchasing

- When possible, create dishes that include seasonal items. This will also reduce food cost, as seasonal items typically are less expensive to source.
- When possible, purchase locally grown food.
- Consider ways to limit plastic packaging and disposables by requesting bulk service with washable plates and cutlery or compostable options.
- Select foods that are steamed to preserve nutritional value.
- Have dressings and sauces served on the side and include lower fat options like yogurt-based dips.
  - Tip: Read nutrition labels and include foods with less sodium and saturated fat. Less than 5% daily value means a food item is low in that nutrient. 20% or greater daily value means a food item is high in that nutrient.

## Use Accredited Recipes

- Explore recipes assembled by [Dietitians of Canada](#).



## Minimizing Food Waste

- Sell tickets to your event so that the number of guests is known in advance. This will help to reduce overproduction of food.
- If possible, seek advice from individuals who have executed a similar event. They may have insight on appropriate food quantities to prepare.
- Ensure that there is a plan in place for possible meal event leftovers. Depending on the event, leftover options may include donation of food, freezing for a later time or selling leftover food in an appropriate setting.