

**Overview of School Food Service A la Carte Data Collection
Using USDA Approved Services
Provided by the
University of Minnesota Nutrition Coordinating Center**

Introduction

The School Food Service A la Carte Data Collection will include the collection of a la carte recipe and vendor product information from designated schools for the TACOS (*Trying Alternative Cafeteria Options in Schools*) study. TACOS staff will collect accurate information on a la carte foods with the assistance of the Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC) at the University of Minnesota.

NCC was established in 1974 and has provided training for data collection and nutrient calculations for similar projects including the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study (SNDA), the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH) and Pathways, a study of American Indian school children.

TACOS staff will work with the cook manager and other food service staff at the recruited high schools to collect information on all foods offered in their a la carte areas. TACOS staff will then enter all collected a la carte data into NDS-R. TACOS staff will request “missing food” information for any products not found in the NDS-R database by brand name or as a distinct brand name or generic equivalent. TACOS staff will also request “missing food” information from NCC for products that do not have complete label information available, so accurate nutrition information can be obtained. NCC will provide TACOS staff with calculated nutrient data for each of these foods, which TACOS staff will then enter into NDS-R. These data can be analyzed to determine the nutrient contribution of a la carte foods compared at specific intervals during the study period: at baseline, in the Spring of 2001, and in the Spring of 2002.

TACOS Study Responsibilities

The TACOS Study has overall responsibility for the data collection. TACOS staff organizes the data collection, sets the schedule, and conducts the food service data collection. Study-designated data collectors review the information for completeness and accuracy prior to entry into NDS-R and before requesting missing food information from NCC.

Data Collection Training and Certification

TACOS will designate staff to participate in the NCC sponsored School Food Service Data Collection workshop. Prior to the data collection period, these designated data collectors need to successfully complete certification exercises to ensure the consistency and quality of data collected. At least one certified data collector will be involved in data collection activities at each school.

Data Collection Forms

School “A la Carte Data Collection” Notebooks will be used by the TACOS staff to facilitate organization, collection and processing of the school a la carte information. Notebooks will include copies of the data collection protocols, forms and instructions for completion and review. NCC school food service data collection forms were used as a template for the development of a la carte data collection forms.

Overview of the Data Collection Process

To conduct the nutrition analysis of a la carte offerings at baseline, in Spring 2001 and Spring 2002, TACOS staff will start by developing a list of foods that are offered in each schools’ a la carte service areas. For the baseline analysis, TACOS staff will utilize the a la carte inventory information collected at baseline. As the study progresses, staff will utilize the most current a la carte monitoring results to develop the list of foods for analysis.

During the baseline a la carte inventory at each school, TACOS data collectors will collect the following information for all foods for which a complete nutrition label is available:

- The name of each a la carte item,
- The name of the manufacturer or distributor of the food product,
- Serving size of the product in ounces or grams,
- Number of servings per package,
- Total package size,
- Calories per serving, and
- Fat grams per serving.

When the food label does not provide complete nutrition information, TACOS staff will collect the following:

- The full name of the food,
- The manufacturer’s name with any available contact information,
- A food product code number (if available), and
- Any other details that could help in obtaining the correct information for the product in question (i.e., percentage of fat or lean for meats, the weight per item and/or weight per case, etc.).

Nutrition information may not be readily available for certain foods, particularly foods that are prepared from a recipe or foods that are out of stock. TACOS staff will request recipes and information about recipe ingredients from the cook manager. TACOS staff will also provide the cook manager with a list of foods for which manufacturer or distributor contact information is needed to assist TACOS staff in obtaining more complete nutrition information prior to analysis.

TACOS Data Collectors will meet with the school food service staff at each school to explain the data collection procedures. A careful explanation of the how TACOS staff will complete the initial TACOS Ala Carte Inventory Sheets will be provided for the school food service staff with ample time for questions in an effort to ensure the quality of the data that TACOS staff will collect. At the end of the data collection period, the data collector reviews all of the data collected. Data collectors will identify missing information and work with the school food service staff to complete the forms.

After the final review and cross-check by the TACOS data collectors, food data and recipes are entered into NDS-R and missing food requests are sent to the NCC.

Preparation of A la Carte Data for Analysis

To prepare the a la carte data for analysis at each of the designated times during the study, TACOS staff members will begin by listing all a la carte foods offered in a given high school (from the TACOS A la carte Inventory Sheets) on the TACOS A LA CARTE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORM. TACOS staff will check each food against the NDS-R database to determine if the database contains nutrition information for each food by brand name, or if additional nutrition information is needed for a given food.

1. **When foods appear in the NDS-R database by brand name:**

TACOS staff will identify those foods that appear in the NDS-R database by brand name. Staff will designate the foods by placing a checkmark in the column headed with a “V” (for Vendor Product) in the first set of shaded columns, and a checkmark in the column headed “N” (for listed in NDS-R) in the second set of shaded columns on the TACOS A LA CARTE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORM.

2. **When foods do not appear in the NDS-R database by brand name:**

For all foods that do not appear as a brand name item in the NDS-R database, TACOS staff will prepare data collection forms as follows:

a. **Packaged foods that do not appear as brand name items in the database:** TACOS staff will list each packaged food that does not appear in the database on the TACOS A LA CARTE FOOD LABELS FORM, and ask food service staff to provide as complete a food label as possible.

b. **Foods prepared partially or completely from scratch:** TACOS staff will complete RECIPE COLLECTION FORMS using recipes obtained from food service staff. TACOS staff will record all ingredients, amounts and preparation instructions for all foods prepared partially or completely from scratch by food service personnel.

Data Processing

Once the data collection process is completed, TACOS data collection staff begins to enter information into NDS-R. New Food requests for “Missing Food” information are sent to NCC, and NCC will provide TACOS staff with calculated nutrient data for each of these foods, which TACOS staff will then enter into NDS-R.

Development of NDS-R User Recipe Codes

All a la carte items are entered into NDS-R as individual NDS-R User Recipes records. TACOS Staff will develop a User Recipe Code for each a la carte item entered into NDS-R. The purpose of User Recipe Codes is to expedite the data entry process by reducing the need to conduct new

searches of the database as a particular food is offered in multiple schools, and to ensure that consistent data is entered for a given food across schools.

User Recipe Projects will be organized by the TACOS A la Carte Food Categories (listed below).

A la Carte Food Category: Project Name	User Recipe Project Abbreviations
• Chips/crackers	CHIP01
• Candy/candy bars	CANDY02
• Fruit snacks/gummi bears	FRSNX03
• Cookies/bars - packaged	COOKP04
• Cookies/bars - school prepared	COOKS05
• Dessert - packaged	DSSTP06
• Dessert - school prepared	DSSTS07
• Ice cream/frozen desserts	ICECR08
• Pastry - packaged	PASTP09
• Pastry - school prepared	PASTS10
• Breads	BREAD11
• Bagel	BAGEL12
• Bagel with cream cheese	BGLCC13
• Soft pretzel	PRTZL14
• Soft pretzel with cheese	PRTZC15
• Nachos with cheese	NACHC16
• French fried type potatoes & • onion rings	FFRY17
• Non-frozen dairy products	NFDRY18
• Fruit/vegetables	FRVEG19
• Entrée	ENTRE20
• Pizza – vendor	PZZAV21
• Pizza - school prepared	PZZAS22
• Salads	SALAD23
• Soup	SOUP24
• Soup combo	SOUPC25
• Breakfast items	BRKFT26
• Dressings	DRSG27
• Miscellaneous	MISC28

Within each User Recipe Project, *records* will be “user recipe” records. The User Recipe Codes for each a la carte food will include information to designate the food’s brand or manufacturer, the fat content (i.e., high fat or low fat) and a flavor descriptor (when the food is available in more than one flavor), and the package size. The NDS-R system limits User Recipe Codes to 12 characters, so User Recipe Codes will be developed as follows:

Up to the first 5 characters:	Brand or manufacturer abbreviation
The next 2-4 characters:	Fat content and flavor descriptor

(RF=reduced fat; LF=low fat; LT= Light)

The last 2-4 characters: Package size (for prepackaged products) or serving size (for cookies and other foods that are packaged with multiple servings). This portion of the code will also include a designation of the weight unit, utilizing “o” for ounces and “g” for grams.

Example: Best Maid Chocolate Chip Cookie, Low Fat: = BstMLFCC1.5o, where:
 BstM = brand/manufacturer,
 LFCC = Low Fat Chocolate Chip,
 1.5o = 1.5 ounces.

Development of TACOS Ala Carte Projects for Each School

Once all a la carte items are entered into NDS-R as individual NDS-R User Recipes in category specific User Recipe Projects, NDS-R Projects are created for each TACOS school. A new project will be created for each school. (School projects will be “menu” projects.)

A. FOR EACH SCHOOL:

- Create a new project on the **Project and Record Selection** window in NDS-R.
- In the **Project Information** screen, type the following:
 - Project Name = School name
 - Project Abbreviation = School TACOS ID #
 - Record Type = Menu

B. WITHIN EACH SCHOOL’S PROJECT:

- Create one menu record for each year of data.
- From the **Project and Record Selection** window, select the project you want to add/create a record for and then select the **NEW** button on the **Record Selection** pane. If you are on the **Record Information** window, select **Record → New**. Complete the **Header Information** in the following manner:

- **Menu ID** = 01 (baseline= 01; Spring 2001= 02; Spring 2002 = 03)
- **Menu Name** = *baseline; Spring 2001; Spring 2002*
- **Interviewer** = *initials of first, middle, last name of TACOS data staff member*
- **Version** = 01; 02; 03 (to coincide with the phase of data collection/entry)

Within each TACOS School NDS-R project, each a la carte category will be represented by a specific time of day in the menu record. (The hour of all categories will be “12,” CHIPS will be entered as “12:01” CANDY will be entered as “12:02”, etc.)

A la Carte Food Category	NDS-R Coding System for Menu Record
• Chips/crackers	12:01
• Candy/candy bars	12:02
• Fruit snacks/gummi bears	12:03

• Cookies/bars - packaged	12:04
• Cookies/bars - school prepared	12:05
• Dessert - packaged	12:06
• Dessert - school prepared	12:07
• Ice cream/frozen desserts	12:08
• Pastry - packaged	12:09
• Pastry - school prepared	12:10
• Breads	12:11
• Bagel	12:12
• Bagel with cream cheese	12:13
• Soft pretzel	12:14
• Soft pretzel with cheese	12:15
• Nachos with cheese	12:16
• French fried type potatoes & • onion rings	12:17
• Non-frozen dairy products	12:18
• Fruit/vegetables	12:19
• Entrée	12:20
• Pizza – vendor	12:21
• Pizza - school prepared	12:22
• Salads	12:23
• Soup	12:24
• Soup combo	12:25
• Breakfast items	12:26
• Dressings	12:27
• Miscellaneous	12:28

➤ For each a la carte category/meal entered, complete the **Meal Information:**

- **Time:** *will reflect the a la carte category (12:01; 12:02; etc.)*
- **Name:** *Lunch*
- **Location:** *School*
- **Note:** *type in the name of a la carte category for this group of foods*

Each a la carte food will be entered within it's appropriate a la carte "time of day"/category. TACOS data entry staff will use the TACOS A la carte Food User Recipe Projects/Database created earlier in the data analysis process to specifically indicate which a la carte food is offered at the school.

Missing Food Data Requests

Many prepackaged a la carte foods can be found in the NDS-R database by brand name. For foods that are not listed by brand name, some options exist for determining how the food can be entered in NDS-R before requesting missing food information from NCC.

In the NDS-R manual, Section A8 – Missing Foods provides information on how one can resolve missing foods without generating a new food request. NDS-R manual recommends the following:

1. Check the New Food Supplements of the NDS Quarterly on the NCC web site (<http://www.ncc.umn.edu/newsletter/index.htm>).
2. Review the data entry rules (NDS-R manual, Appendix 15) for a possible solution.
3. Determine if the missing food is a generic item or a brand-name product.
 - a. If the missing food is a generic item, check to see if the food is similar to something that currently exists in the NDS-R database. If it is similar to an existing food entry, select the existing food and record the selection as a data-entry rule for future reference should the same food be reported again.
 - b. If the missing food is a brand-name product, obtain the nutrients and ingredient list from the product label. [Schools may be able to provide this information. If you cannot obtain label information from the school, ask them to provide as much information about the product as possible, including brand name, flavor (if appropriate), package weight, purveyor, purveyor contact name and phone number. Use this information to contact the school's purveyor to obtain nutritional information and an ingredient listing.] Attempt to enter a similar generic or brand-name food product in the existing NCC Food and Nutrient Database. Use the following general guidelines to compare the calories, protein, fat, carbohydrate, and sodium values between the missing brand-name product and the similar entries to help you select an appropriate match. Nutrient tolerances are per 100 grams of product.

Calories	± 85.00 kcal
Protein	± 5 gm
Total fat	± 2.50 gm
Total carbohydrate	± 10.00 gm
Sodium	± 100.00 mg
4. If the new product falls within these tolerances per 100 grams, choose the existing NDS-R entry. If not, submit as a new food request to NCC.

**General Instructions for A LA CARTE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING
(For TACOS Staff)**

1. TACOS staff will create a list of all A la Carte food items for entry into NDS-R, utilizing the A LA CARTE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORM.
2. TACOS staff will collect and process the data for all a la carte items for which specific nutrition information is available through the NDS-R database. **TACOS staff will process food items utilizing the NDS-R database when:**
 - a. The item in question is listed by brand name in the NDS-R database,
 - b. The item fits a standard of identity (such as peanut butter, fresh or frozen fruit, bagels, sandwich buns or rolls, and similar items), or
 - c. A brand name food equivalent (i.e., nearly identical food of the same brand and same fat content, but different flavor) or a generic food equivalent (nearly identical food, but not listed as a brand name) exists in the NDS-R database, and no nutritional claims have been made for the food in question.
3. All other food items will require the assistance of NCC to obtain accurate nutrition information for data entry. TACOS staff will collect food product labels for all other a la carte foods. **Food label information is required if the item is not listed by brand name in the NDS-R database and the item fits Vendor Product criteria:**
 - a. The food has been nutritionally altered to contain 25% or less of a nutrient (such as fat, or saturated fat) or 25% fewer calories than the regular or reference product.
 - b. The food has been fortified with a nutrient (such as a breakfast bar that has been fortified with vitamins and/or minerals).
 - c. The food item could vary significantly from a standard food product in terms of ingredients and/or nutrient content. For example:
 - Baked goods, mixes, frozen dough and ready-to-eat products (e.g. cookies, muffins, pancakes, waffles, sweet rolls, donuts)
 - Desserts or dessert mixes
 - Entrée/combinations (e.g. burritos, lasagna)
 - Frozen potato products (e.g. french fries, hash browns, potato rounds)
 - Frozen treats/desserts
 - Meat, fish and poultry nuggets, patties, fingers, and sticks
 - Non dairy cream, sour cream or whipping cream
 - Pizza including breakfast types
 - Potato mixes
 - Sauces and sauce mixes
4. TACOS staff will list all food items for which a label is required on the A LA CARTE FOOD LABEL FORM, and request these from the school food service staff if possible and/or find out who the school's purveyor is for each item so TACOS staff may contact them. TACOS staff will then forward these labels or nutritional information obtained to NCC staff for processing. NCC will determine the correct nutritional information for each product and provide the information to TACOS staff for data entry.

5. TACOS staff will organize a la carte items by categories and determine the average nutrient content within each category. Categories will include foods with similar characteristics, as follows:

A la Carte Food Category	User Recipe Project Abbreviations	NDS-R Coding System For School Menu Record
• Chips/crackers	CHIP01	12:01
• Candy/candy bars	CANDY02	12:02
• Fruit snacks/gummi bears	FRSNX03	12:03
• Cookies/bars - packaged	COOKP04	12:04
• Cookies/bars - school prepared	COOKS05	12:05
• Dessert - packaged	DSSTP06	12:06
• Dessert - school prepared	DSSTS07	12:07
• Ice cream/frozen desserts	ICECR08	12:08
• Pastry - packaged	PASTP09	12:09
• Pastry - school prepared	PASTS10	12:10
• Breads	BREAD11	12:11
• Bagel	BAGEL12	12:12
• Bagel with cream cheese	BGLCC13	12:13
• Soft pretzel	PRTZL14	12:14
• Soft pretzel with cheese	PRTZC15	12:15
• Nachos with cheese	NACHC16	12:16
• French fried type potatoes & • onion rings	FFRY17	12:17
• Non-frozen dairy products	NFDRY18	12:18
• Fruit/vegetables	FRVEG19	12:19
• Entrée	ENTRE20	12:20
• Pizza – vendor	PZZAV21	12:21
• Pizza - school prepared	PZZAS22	12:22
• Salads	SALAD23	12:23
• Soup	SOUP24	12:24
• Soup combo	SOUPC25	12:25
• Breakfast items	BRKFT26	12:26
• Dressings	DRSG27	12:27
• Miscellaneous	MISC28	12:28

**Procedure for Completing the TACOS A la Carte Data Collection and Processing Form
(for TACOS Staff):**

The TACOS A LA CARTE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORM is designed for use by TACOS staff when entering information into NDS-R in preparation for analysis of a la carte offerings for each of the high schools.

A la Carte Foods included in the analysis:

For the TACOS Study, the term “A la carte” will refer to any foods sold in the school cafeteria that are not counted as part of the reimbursable meal. All foods sold at designated a la carte and snack bar lines/stations will be counted as a la carte foods. Foods sold on the main lunch line that are also sold individually at a la carte stations (e.g., entrees—pizza, sandwiches—unless counted as part of a reimbursable meal; packaged snack foods, cookies, etc.) will be counted as a la carte foods.

A la Carte Foods NOT included in the analysis:

Foods sold on the main lunch line as part of a reimbursable meal, even if sold individually as an extra portion on the main lunch line (e.g., extra entrée, extra serving of french fries, etc.) will not be included in the a la carte analysis. Likewise, food bar items (i.e., salad bar, pizza bar, potato bar, pasta bar, etc.) will not be included in the analysis, as students are usually encouraged to purchase these foods as a reimbursable meal.

1. Complete a **separate set** of TACOS A LA CARTE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORMS for **each high school**. Place the ID label for the school in the designated box at the top of the form. Record the date on which data was initially entered on the form on the line labeled “Date of Collection.”
2. Complete a **separate form** (TACOS A LA CARTE DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORM) for **each a la carte category** listing all a la carte foods specific to each a la carte category. Place the ID label for the school in the designated box at the top of the form. Record the date on which data was initially entered on the form on the line labeled “Date of Collection.”
3. In the first column of the form, list all of the foods offered within that a la carte category, using current information on a la carte offerings for the school in question. For the baseline analysis, the baseline a la carte inventory will provide current information on a la carte offerings in each school. At later points in the study, updated a la carte monitoring results will provide the most current information on a la carte offerings for nutritional analyses.
4. In the second column of the form, record package weight or serving size of the food in question.
5. In columns 3 through 6 (the first set of shaded columns), indicate whether the food is a school prepared recipe, a vendor product, a commodity item or “other,” using definitions provided by the Nutrition Coordinating Center (NCC) during Food Service Data Collection training. Place a checkmark in the appropriate column to indicate the source of information for each food.

6. In column 7, record contact information for the manufacturer or distributor of the product. Contact information will expedite the process for collecting additional nutritional information on the product, if needed.
7. Columns 8 - 11 will be used to indicate whether nutrition information for the food in questions is available in the NDS-R database, or if “missing food” information needs to be requested from NCC. In columns 8 -11, place a checkmark in the appropriate column to indicate that:
 - The food is available in the NDS-R database as a brand name item (N),
 - The food meets a standard of identity (S),
 - The food has an identified generic or brand name equivalent (G), or
 - Nutrition information is not available for the food, and a “missing food” request needs to be sent to NCC.
8. Use Columns 12 and 13 when the food in question is not available in the NDS-R database, and inadequate nutritional information is available to determine a close match to a brand name or generic alternative. In these cases, “missing food” information must be requested from NCC. Place a checkmark in column 12 to indicate that complete nutritional information and ingredient listing has been requested from the distributor or manufacturer.
9. Place a checkmark in column 13 when nutritional and ingredient information has been received from the distributor or manufacturer. Review the nutritional information to determine whether the food is similar in nutrition content to other foods in the NDS-R database. If a close match is available, place a checkmark in column 10 (headed by the letter “G”) to indicate that a suitable generic or brand name equivalent has been identified for the food in question, and enter the information for the equivalent food in NDS-R.
10. If no suitable generic equivalent can be found for the food in question, complete a New Food Request Form. Provide this form, with any available label and nutrition information for the food, to the TACOS NDS-R Certified Data Collector for her to submit to NCC. Place a checkmark in column 14 when the request for “Missing Food” information has been submitted to NCC.
11. Place a checkmark in column 15 when the missing food information has been entered into NDS.
12. In column 16, record the User Recipe Name (up to 12 characters) that was assigned to the food when entered in the NDS-R database.
13. Repeat steps 2-11 for each a la carte category data form and the foods within the category.

Instructions for Completing the TACOS RECIPE COLLECTION FORM (For TACOS Staff)

- **Recipes are a combination of two or more foods mixed together.**

- For example: *cake prepared from a recipe or a mix and frosting, hot dog on a bun, or taco meat.*
- Use a separate **RECIPE COLLECTION FORM** for each recipe.

To complete the form:

1. Attach the School ID label.
2. Record the recipe name.
3. Circle the meal in which the recipe was served, either breakfast or lunch (*in most cases, recipes will be for the lunch meal.*)
4. Record the total number of servings the recipe makes. (Note: This number is not usually the same as the number of students served.)
5. Record the serving size.
6. Record each recipe ingredient on a separate line.
 - Include a complete description of each ingredient. For example: *whole wheat flour, instant non-fat dry milk powder or extra lean ground beef.*
 - If an ingredient is a recipe, use a separate RECIPE COLLECTION FORM. For example: *taco meat used in a tostada.*
 - If an ingredient is a vendor product, collect the label. For example: *fat free cheese used in lasagna.*
 - Leave a blank line between each recipe ingredient.
7. Record the amount of each ingredient. For example: *½ gallon chopped; 1 pound; 1 number 10 can. Do not use # to represent “pounds” of an item.*
8. Indicate if amounts listed are raw, cooked, edible portion or as purchased and includes refuse.
9. List general preparation instructions in the **Recipe Preparation** section at the bottom of the form. Note if items are drained or drained and rinsed. Include the type of fat used for frying hash browns, french fries and scrambled eggs and the fat and/or salt added to instant mashed potatoes.
10. Use additional pages as needed.
11. Sign and date the form.

**Procedure for Reviewing the TACOS RECIPE COLLECTION FORM
(For TACOS Staff)**

1. Review the RECIPE COLLECTION FORM header for completeness and accuracy. The serving size is especially important and must correspond with the serving size recorded on the TACOS A la Carte Inventory sheets and TACOS DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORMS. If the Total Number of Servings made by this recipe is not recorded, ask the cook for this information.
2. Review each recipe ingredient.
 - Provide a complete description for each recipe ingredient. For example: *dried onion flakes*, *water pack tuna or egg noodles*. Use the **Documentation Checklist** to review the information.
 - Check to see that the amount is in a standard unit such as weight, volume or a count unit such as the number of pieces. Indicate if the food is measured raw or cooked, and is edible portion only or if it as purchased and includes refuse.
 - Review the general preparation instructions to be sure to include details that would affect the final product. For example, if items are undrained, drained, or drained and also rinsed. Include fat used in frying or salt and fat added to instant mashed potatoes.
 - If the recipe ingredient is a recipe, like a taco meat recipe (*meat and seasoning*) in a tostada recipe, be sure that a RECIPE COLLECTION FORM has been completed for both the taco meat recipe and the tostada recipe. Be sure that the recipe name and the serving size correspond with the ingredient name and amount on the RECIPE COLLECTION FORM.
 - If the recipe ingredient is a vendor item, be certain that the label or product fact sheet included have complete nutrient, ingredient and serving size information.
3. Sign and date the bottom of the form to verify that the review has been completed.

**Instructions for Completing the TACOS A la CARTE FOOD LABEL FORM
(for TACOS Staff)**

Collect labels for specified a la carte foods.

1. Collect package labels for a la carte food items listed on the A LA CARTE FOOD LABEL FORM. Be sure the label includes:
 - Food name and/or brand name
 - Product code or item number necessary for ordering purposes
 - Manufacturer's name, address and telephone number
 - Nutrient information/nutrition facts
 - Serving size
 - Ingredient list
 - Preparation instructions if applicable
2. Record the Manufacturer or Distributor information for each a la Carte food item listed.
3. Place a check () in the "Label Provided" column when you have collected the label and recorded the manufacturer/distributor information.
4. Place the labels or photocopies of the labels in the envelope/box labeled " A la Carte Food Labels."

**Instructions for Collecting Vendor Product Information for TACOS
(For TACOS Staff)**

Meal items that are Vendor Products may include but are not limited to pre-breaded chicken nuggets, frozen pizza and frozen burritos.

Recipe ingredients that are Vendor Products include packaged cake mix, spaghetti sauce and taco seasoning mix.

All foods with a nutritional claim are Vendor Products. This includes fat-free hot dogs, low sodium cheese, and fortified juice.

Collect labels for each vendor product served.

1. Collect package labels for Vendor Products. Be sure the label includes:
 - Food name and/or brand name
 - Product code or item number necessary for ordering purposes
 - Manufacturer's name, address and telephone number
 - Nutrient information/nutrition facts
 - Serving size
 - Ingredient list
 - Preparation instructions if applicable
2. If a Vendor Product is offered in more than one ala carte food sold at one school (i.e., pizza sauce used in a school's pizza recipe and also sold as a dipping sauce in ala carte stations) and/or offered in more than one school, only **one** label is needed.
3. Place the labels or photocopies of the labels in the envelope/box marked "Vendor Product Labels."

**Instructions for Reviewing Vendor Product Information for TACOS
(For TACOS Staff)**

1. Check to see that product labels have been collected for each vendor product listed on the RECIPE COLLECTION FORM.
2. Clip the label(s) to the RECIPE COLLECTION FORMS. Photocopy the label if it is part of a bulky box or package and cannot be easily removed, if it is part of an aluminum can or if it is heavily soiled. Be sure that the required information is legible.
Required information includes:
 - Nutrient information
 - Ingredient information
 - Serving size information
 - Preparation instructions, if applicable
3. If nutrient and information are not available, provide the following:
 - Product code number or item number necessary for ordering from the vendor
 - Name of the manufacturer or vendor
 - Address of the manufacturer
 - Telephone number of the manufacturer
4. Check the **Vendor Product List** if in doubt about what labels need to be included. Contact NCC with any questions about collecting vendor food labels.

**Instructions for VENDING DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING
(For TACOS Staff)**

1. TACOS Staff will create a list of all vending machine food items for entry into NDS-R, utilizing the TACOS VENDING DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING FORM.
2. TACOS staff will collect and process the data for all vending food items for which specific nutrition information is accessible through the NDS-R database. **TACOS staff will process food items utilizing the NDS-R database when:**
 - a. The item in question is listed by brand name in the NDS-R database,
 - b. The item fits a standard of identity (such as peanut butter, fresh or frozen fruit, bagels, sandwich buns or rolls, and similar items), or
 - c. A brand name food equivalent (i.e., nearly identical food of the same brand and same fat content, but different flavor) or a generic food equivalent (nearly identical food, but not listed as a brand name) exists in the NDS-R database, and no nutritional claims have been made for the food in question.
3. All other food items will require the assistance of NCC to obtain accurate nutrition information for data entry. TACOS staff will collect food product labels for all other vending foods. **Food label information is required if the item is not listed by brand name in the NDS-R database and the item fits Vendor Product criteria:**
 - a. The food has been nutritionally altered to contain 25% or less of a nutrient (such as fat, or saturated fat) or 25% fewer calories than the regular or reference product.
 - b. The food has been fortified with a nutrient (such as a breakfast bar that has been fortified with vitamins and/or minerals).
 - c. The food item could vary significantly from a standard food product in terms of ingredients and/or nutrient content. For example:
 - Baked goods, mixes, frozen dough and ready-to-eat products (e.g. cookies, muffins, pancakes, waffles, sweet rolls, donuts)
 - Desserts or dessert mixes
 - Entrée/combinations (e.g. burritos, lasagna)
 - Frozen potato products (e.g. french fries, hash browns, potato rounds)
 - Frozen treats/desserts
 - Meat, fish and poultry nuggets, patties, fingers, and sticks
 - Non dairy cream, sour cream or whipping cream
 - Pizza including breakfast types
 - Potato mixes
 - Sauces and sauce mixes
4. TACOS staff will contact the vending company and/or product manufacturer to obtain food product information for all other vending food items. Required product information includes:
 - Nutrient information

- Ingredient information
 - Serving size information
 - Preparation instructions, if applicable
 - Product code number or item number necessary for ordering from the vendor
 - Name of the manufacturer or vendor
 - Address of the manufacturer
 - Telephone number of the manufacturer
5. TACOS staff will forward the food product information to NCC staff for processing. NCC will determine the correct nutrition information for each product for analysis and provide the information to TACOS staff for data entry.
6. TACOS staff will enter data into NDS-R for each vending food item. TACOS staff will organize vending food items by category and determine the average nutrient content within each category. Categories will include foods with similar characteristics, as follows:
- Chips/salty snacks
 - Breads (bagels, soft pretzels, rolls) (?)
 - Crackers
 - Cereals (?)
 - Nuts
 - Sugar candies, fruit leathers, gummi snacks
 - Candy bars, chocolate candies
 - Frozen desserts
 - Pastries, prepackaged
 - Cookies/bars, prepackaged
 - Entrees, school made/prepared (?)
 - Side dishes, produce
 - Non-frozen dairy (yogurt, cheese)

(You will likely want to revise the categories used for vending analysis from what is listed above.)