

A LA CARTE DECISION RULES

TACOS A la Carte Monitoring and Tallying/Coding % LF Product Mix

LOWER FAT CRITERIA

Availability/Monitoring

To count as a lower fat food for monitoring purposes, a food must have:

- • 5 grams of fat per serving, or
- • 5 grams of fat per 100 grams of entrée product weight.

Eligibility for Promotional Activities

For a lower fat food to be promoted to students, the food cannot have sugar, corn syrup, or another added sweetener as the first ingredient.

DEFINING A LA CARTE FOODS

Definition: 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.

A la Carte foods WILL include the following:

- From designated a la carte lines or snack bar stations: All foods sold at designated a la carte and snack bar lines/stations will be counted as a la carte foods.
- From the main lunch line: 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.
- Breakfast items and/or after-school program foods sold at lunch.
- Miscellaneous / condiments that have their own PCS key so can be tracked.
- Food-based beverages (e.g. Milkshakes, fruit smoothies, yogurt-based and whole fruit as first ingredient).

A la Carte foods WILL NOT include the following:

- 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.).
- Food bar items (i.e., salad bar, pizza bar, potato bar, pasta bar, etc.), as students are usually encouraged to purchase these foods as a reimbursable meal.
- (For monitoring and tallying) Any foods offered less than three days per week (i.e., offered 1-2 days per week)
- Condiments or miscellaneous items that don't have their own key.
- Beverages (e.g. flavored ices, fruit juices, milk)

EXCEPTIONS:

In school districts that have a small percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced meals, items may be encouraged as part of the reimbursable lunch although a very small percentage of students purchase them this way. Edina and Chaska are examples of this, where perhaps 10% of students buy a sandwich for example as part of a reimbursable lunch, and 90% will buy the item as an a la carte sale. In these 2 districts, we will include in the a la carte

product mix those sandwiches and entrees that are sold both as a la carte items and as part of the reimbursable lunch.

LABELS AND SERVING SIZE FOR DEFINING “LOW FAT” ITEMS

For most items, LF definitions and classifications are based on the package label. In some instances, this protocol will result in inconsistently defining a food as LF or HF.

For example: PopTarts have two in a package. Each popTart has 5 fat grams.

Serving size = 1 PopTart;; defined as LF item (5 grams)

Serving size = 2 PopTarts: defines as HF item (10 grams)

Exception:

*Otis Spunkmeyer LF muffins are counted as LF (defined as two servings per package; each serving has 3 grams fat; 2 servings per muffin). Since TACOS staff encouraged the use of Otis LF muffins to FSD’s as a LF muffin alternative, and labels are inconsistent in serving size definitions, it was decided to count Otis LF muffins as LF item. This policy is inconsistent with the example above of PopTarts.

CATEGORIZING A LA CARTE FOODS

- Count animal crackers, graham crackers, trail mix and coated pretzels in the “Chips/Crackers” category.
- Change yogurt category name to “non-frozen dairy” to include yogurt, cheese, pudding, cottage cheese.

GROUPING FOODS FOR MONITORING & TALLYING/CODING PURPOSES

Foods WILL be counted together when they have:

- The same brand name, same product, same package size, same fat content (within 1 gram of fat), but different flavors
 - Nutri-Grain bars, LF PopTarts, Annie’s yogurt, bagels

Foods WILL NOT be counted together when they have:

- Different brand names but similar product (e.g., Lays potato chips and Old Dutch potato chips).
- Same brand name, same product, but different package sizes
 - Ranch-flavored Doritos in a 1 oz. package, and Ranch-flavored Doritos in a 1 3/4 oz. Package
 - One cookie vs. three cookies
- Same brand names but different products, even if similar fat contents
 - Little Debbie Zebra Cake and Little Debbie Nutty Bar.
 - Ridged vs. regular potato chips – same brand but different chip type (count as 2 different items)
- Same brand name, same type of product, same package size, but different flavor with different fat content
 - Quaker Chewy Granola bar, chocolate chip flavor with 3 grams of fat, and Quaker Chewy granola bar, peanut butter flavor with 5 grams of fat

- Baked cookies of different flavors eg. Oatmeal vs. chocolate chip, even if same MF and same size/fat content
- Muffins (similar to cookies) – considered different products even if same MF and size/fat content
- Pizza- different flavors count as different product, even if same brand and similar fat

- Fresh fruit – will be counted individually; the N counted in the denominator will be the N usually offered in a la carte (e.g. Three fruits offered at least 3x/week; from a pool of six different fruits). APPLES will be counted as one item, even if several varieties are offered (e.g. Granny Smith, Red Delicious, Golden Delicious).
- Soups – N counted in the denominator will be the N usually offered in a la carte (e.g. One of three possible LF soups is counted as one; one of three HF soups is counted as one; N counted depends on N usually made available daily, even if particular flavor varies from a possible larger N)
- Soups – Soups will NOT be counted in denominator if can't tell whether soups offered are LF or HF. (e.g. Two soups offered per day, but fat content of soups varies)

A la Carte Analysis:

“Grouped foods” will be entered individually into NDS-R and base analysis on all products regardless of how we count the food for monitoring and tallying/coding purposes.

CONDIMENTS

Considerations:

- Condiments may include mustard, ketchup, jam/jelly, barbecue sauce, salad dressings and other sauces; they may be individually packaged in small portions or available in larger containers for self-serve with pump dispensers, ladles, etc.
- In many schools, certain condiments are sold individually, including cheese sauce, cream cheese, and caramel sauce. When these items are keyed separately, it is possible to track sales of particular condiments.

RE: Condiments for the TACOS Study, we will:

1. Try to make lower fat condiments more available to students, and document their availability when completing a la carte data collection.
2. Track condiments that are keyed individually, such as cheese sauce, honey mustard sauce, caramel sauce, cream cheese, etc.
3. Count specific condiments in the denominator for %LF mix ONLY if they have their own key and are tracked as a separate item that is clearly identifiable as LF or HF. (e.g., cream cheese, cheese sauce, red sauce).
4. In general we will not be counting in the denominator or tracking sales of items keyed under a grouped key such as “spreads”, “miscel”, or “condiments” “dressings”

SALAD, SOUPS, PASTA AND POTATO BARS

Self-serve salad bar or other bar(s) that is a la carte and not part of the reimbursable lunch. Since it is self-serve, it would be difficult to quantify what a student might choose. For this reason, we will not analyze the salad bar offerings, but rather will document what the salad bar includes so we can describe what is offered. We will treat pasta and potato bars in the same way.

CHEESE SAUCES

A school may offer 2 different cheese sauces, perhaps on 2 different lines or because their purveyor may send 1 of 2 brands of sauces.

- If one sauce is high fat and the other is low fat, we will count them separately for monitoring and inventory purposes.
- If both are high fat, we count as 1 item for both monitoring and inventory purposes.

BREAKFAST AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- For inventory and analysis—collect information on all ala carte foods (including those offered during breakfast and/or after-school programs **only** if they are offered at lunch too).
- On monitoring forms—Indicate how often the ala carte foods are offered (i.e., 2x/week).
- For collecting menu inventory and calculating %LF mix count breakfast items and/or after-school program foods in the denominator that are sold at lunch.

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY FOOD CRITERIA

On some labels (Nutri-Grain Bars, Pop Tarts) it may be difficult to determine if sugar is the main ingredient. The ingredient listing may give “filling” as the first ingredient of which sugar may be the first ingredient, but it may be difficult to determine if the total sugar content of the product is in fact higher than the total flour content, etc. In these cases, we will include foods with similar ambiguous ingredient listings among foods we can promote (if their fat content is less than 5 grams of fat/serving or 100 grams).

Some frozen novelties (i.e., fruit ices) have water listed as the first ingredient, followed by sugar. For promotional activities, we will NOT promote foods for which the ingredient panel lists water followed by sugar as the first ingredients. We will promote smoothies only if the first ingredient is fruit.

Combined Items

For menu data collection and %LF product mix calculations, combined foods in which fat content cannot be determined will be coded DK:

Cereal – coded as LF or HF

Cereal with milk – coded as DK

Cream Cheese – If key HF and LF cream cheese on same key, code as DK or not counted. If keyed specifically as HF or LF, can count as HF or LF.

Beverage Issue

In general, beverages will NOT be included in the intervention or product mix %LF calculations. However, some food-like beverages WILL be included, if one of the following ingredients is the first ingredient:

Whole fruit (e.g., strawberries, apples, bananas)

Ice cream or yogurt (e.g. Smoothies, floats, milkshakes)

*Fruit juices or milk will not be included in the product mix calculations or intervention; nor will beverages with these items listed as first ingredient.