

Virginia Tech Healthy Meeting and Event Guide

Developed by Hokie Wellness



A tool to help campus event planners make the healthy choice the easy choice for every Hokie



INTRODUCTION

Meetings and events are a large part of workplace culture. Traditionally, food and beverages served are highly processed, sugar-dense, and low in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. In addition, meetings and events often involve a considerable amount of sitting time, which is not only linked to many chronic diseases, but can also reduce participants' energy, focus, and productivity.

Creating a culture of well-being in meetings and events is an important way to foster a healthier campus environment as a whole and cultivate social norms around healthy behaviors. This guide provides assistance for shifting the culture of meetings and events to one that makes the healthy choice the easy choice for employees, students, and campus visitors.



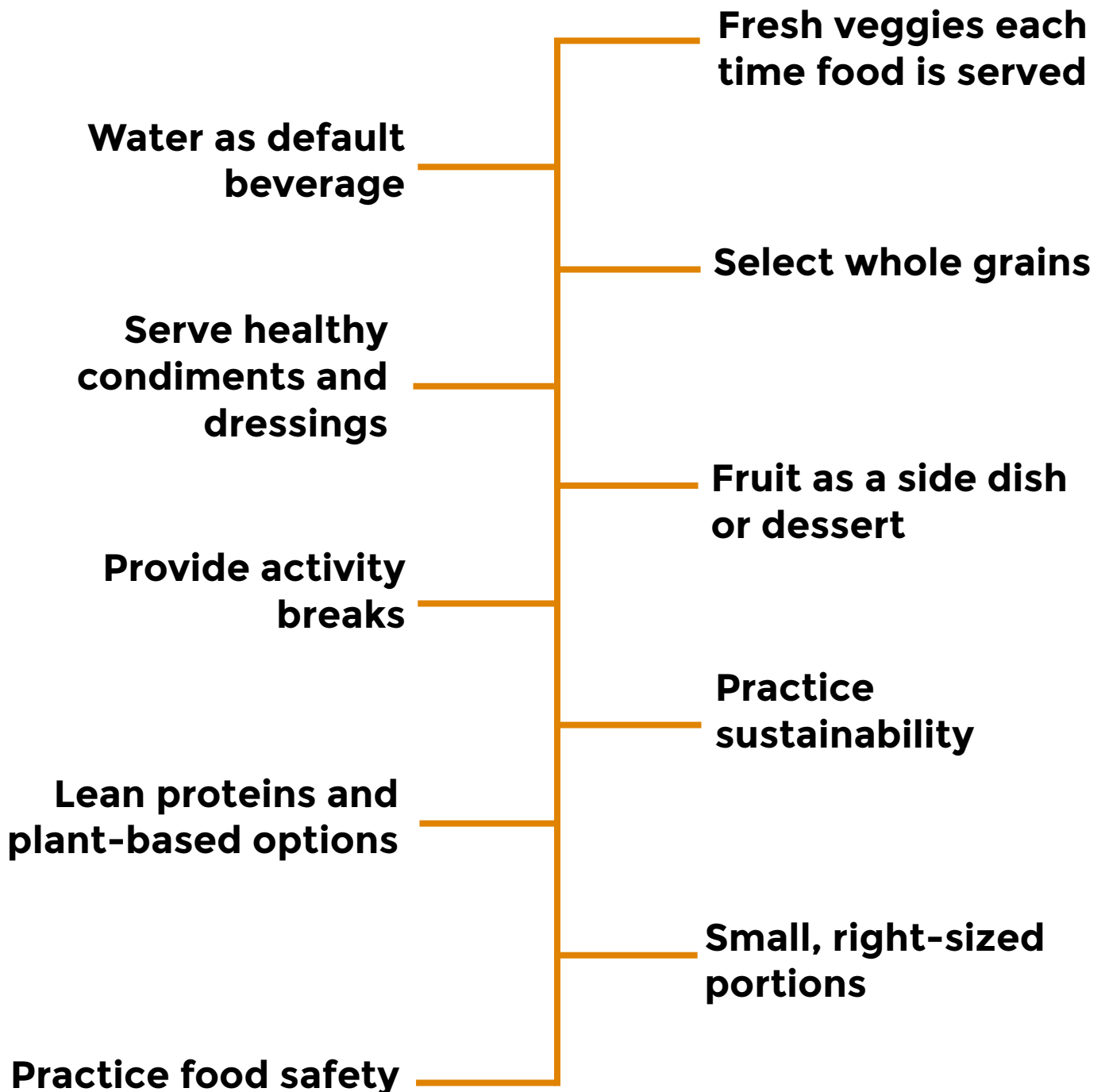
Campus members tasked with planning a meeting or event may use the evidence-based recommendations contained in this guide to provide healthful food and beverage choices, weave in opportunities for physical activity, and embrace “Ut Prosim” by practicing sustainability.

Acknowledgements

The Virginia Tech Healthy Meetings and Event Guide has been adapted from the UC Berkeley Healthy Meeting and Event Guide, produced by UC Berkeley’s “Be Well at Work” Wellness Program. Hokie Wellness, in collaboration with campus experts in dining, catering, sustainability, and recycling, has provided evidence-based recommendations based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the National Alliance for Nutrition and Physical Activity, and the Center for Disease Control. Images have been generously provided by www.unsplash.com via the Unsplash Creative Commons License.

10 TIPS FOR HEALTHY MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Make the healthy choice the easy choice at your meetings and events by following these guidelines:



1

Offer fresh vegetables each time food is served

According to the CDC, only 1 in 10 adults consume enough fruits and vegetables. On average, most adults need at least 2-3 cups of vegetables per day. Meetings and events present an opportunity to help participants and attendees meet this daily recommendation. Adding more vegetable options to a menu is simple.

- For a healthy breakfast menu, choose a vegetable quiche or frittata, a kale and sweet potato hash, or whole wheat pitas filled with roasted vegetables and egg whites.
- Include a vegetable stir fry, steamed vegetables, or a simple salad to a lunch or dinner menu.
- Serve mixed vegetable trays, edamame, or celery with peanut butter for snack options.

Nutrition Tip

Selecting a variety of colors when choosing vegetables provides a nice array of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytonutrients that the body needs to function optimally.

Green Tip

When grocery shopping for a meeting or event, consider stopping by a local Farmer's Market to buy produce. Local foods are harvested at their peak, so less nutrients are lost from farm to table. This is also a wonderful way to support local farmers and families.



2

Provide water as the default beverage

Water and other unsweetened hot and cold beverages are the best choices for healthy meetings. Make water pitchers more appealing by adding sliced lemons, limes, cucumbers, strawberries, oranges, pineapples, or any other fruit or vegetable. Consider serving sparkling water as a healthy substitute for carbonated sodas.

Other healthy beverage options include:

- unsweetened hot or iced tea
- decaffeinated or regular coffee
- 1% or skim milk



Cucumber Melon Water

- 5 cups water
- 1 cup ice cubes
- 1/2 cup honeydew melon cubes
- 1 cucumber, sliced
- handful of fresh mint leaves, torn

Berry Blast Water

- 8 cups water
- 1 cup raspberries
- 1 cup blueberries
- 2 kiwis, peeled and sliced
- small handful of mint, torn

Cranberry Orange Bliss Water

- 2 liters water
- 1 lemon cut into slices
- 1 blood orange cut into slices
- handful of fresh cranberries

Green tip:

Instead of serving bottled water, serve tap water in pitchers and encourage participants to bring their own refillable water containers.

3

Select whole grains instead of refined grains

The USDA recommends that at least half of daily grains consumed are whole grains. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy eating pattern have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases and often experience an increase in energy levels.

Whole grains can easily be incorporated into meetings and events by choosing any of the following menu options:

- Whole wheat sandwich bread, tortillas, pastas, and rice
- Whole grain bagels
- Oatmeal or grits
- Plain popcorn
- 100% whole wheat or rye crackers
- Dishes made with barley, quinoa, buckwheat, millet, or oat flour



Nutrition Tip

What is the difference between whole grains and refined grains?

Whole grains keep all the original parts of a grain intact (the bran, the germ, and the endosperm), all three of which contain health-promoting nutrients.

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Refined grains are stripped of valuable nutrients in the refining process. This process strips away virtually all of the wheat's fiber, 90% of Vitamin E, and more than half of its B vitamins.

Catering Tip

When working with a catering service, simply request that dishes be made with whole grains instead of refined grains, if possible. Most caterers are happy to make this easy switch.

4

Serve healthy condiments and dressings on the side

Choose nutritious ways to boost the flavor in your food by swapping condiments like mayonnaise, ketchup, honey-mustard, and regular ranch dressing for healthier alternatives such as:

- Pesto
- Hummus
- Guacamole (contains healthy fats)
- Mustard
- Fresh salsa
- Tahini
- Ketchup without added sugar, salt, or preservatives
- Sriracha
- If serving mayo, try an avocado oil-based option



Serve dressings on the side and choose lighter options:

- Yogurt-based dressings
- Red wine and olive oil-based vinaigrettes
- Homemade Italian dressing
- Avocado oil-based dressings
- Green goddess dressing by Primal Kitchen
- Extra virgin olive oil

Simple Vinaigrette Recipe

- 3 TBSP extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 TBSP white wine vinegar
- Pinch of kosher salt and black pepper
- 1-2 TBSP chopped fresh herbs
- 1 finely minced garlic clove

5

Provide fruit as a side dish or dessert

Bright, seasonal fruit is a healthy way to satisfy a sweet tooth while making progress toward meeting the daily recommendation for fruit consumption. Depending on their age, sex, and physical activity level, the USDA recommends that most adults eat at least 1 1/2 - 2 cups per day of fruit.

The following menu items are great options for adding fruit to a menu:

- Mixed fruit kabobs
- Fruit tray
- "Make your own" yogurt parfait bar (toppings: fruit, granola, nuts)
- Fruit salad
- Yogurt-dipped strawberries, bananas, blueberries
- Fruit pizza with yogurt sauce base
- Fruit-infused ice cubes for water dispensers
- Dessert or breakfast fruit tart
- Strawberry or watermelon sorbet without added sugar
- Baked apples or peaches with cinnamon
- Grab-and-go fresh fruit bowl

Most caterers offer at least a couple of the options listed above if requested.



6

Build in activity breaks

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that adults move more and sit less throughout the day. For optimal health benefits, adults should participate in an average of about 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity daily. However, many Americans are sitting for the vast majority of the day without breaks to stand or move around.

Hokie Wellness recommends that meeting and event organizers plan a two to three minute activity break each half-hour, or a five minute activity break each hour, to help participants work toward achieving the daily physical activity recommendation.

In addition to activity breaks, leaders may choose to implement the following:

- Begin meetings by inviting participants to stand and move however they wish during the meeting.
- Consider implementing walking meetings if the agenda is short.
- If possible, integrate exercise balls in place of some of the chairs in the event space.
- For conferences or all-day gatherings, schedule a space with access to physical activity equipment or walking trails to support engagement in activity before and after the event, as well as during breaks.
- Identify someone to facilitate a physical activity break for the group:
 - Hokie Wellness can provide a variety of physical activity programs for any meeting or event.
 - Many departments across campus have Wellness Champions who are trained to facilitate various wellness activities within their departments. To find out if your department has a Wellness Champion, or for questions about becoming a Wellness Champion, visit www.hokiewellness.vt.edu.
- Include information in meeting agendas and event programs that outlines places to walk around the meeting area as well as details about any activity breaks that are planned throughout the day.

Tips for leading activity breaks

Be sure to:

- Provide activities that are both fun and safe
- Allow each participant to join in at their own pace and comfort level
- Include activities that are not overly strenuous and are inclusive of all abilities
- Allow enough space for activities to be performed comfortably



Considerations for participants with disabilities

- Give participants the opportunity to inform you of any accommodations needed prior to the meeting or event.
- Adapt activities accordingly to meet the needs of participants. Appropriate modifications may include slowing down the pace or modeling stretches that can be done either sitting or standing.
- Schedule “free movement” breaks in which participants can move in any way they like for the allotted break time.

7

Practice sustainability

Meeting and event organizers can embrace Ut Prosim by being mindful of sustainable practices throughout the planning process. These practices include minimizing waste, encouraging recycling, and sourcing products from sustainable producers.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- Provide meeting materials to participants online or on a flash drive
- Instead of bottled water and plastic cups, provide tap water with reusable cups or glasses
- Reduce packaging when serving food (e.g. serve food on platters rather than boxed lunches)
- Encourage and advocate for an RSVP from all participants in order to obtain an accurate headcount for food and beverage orders
- Utilize reusable plates, glasses and linens in place of disposable options
- Do not use disposable decorations, balloons, or styrofoam if possible
- Use recycled/biodegradable paper
- "Bring your own, take it home" - encourage participants to bring their own reusable food and beverage containers and take home leftovers they do not consume
- Recycle the following items:
 - Aluminum cans/foil, steel and tin cans
 - Glass jars and bottles
 - Plastic bottles, cups, containers
 - Film plastic
 - Paper (i.e. cardboard, newspaper, magazines)
- Donate leftover food and beverages:
 - Unopened, non-perishable items can be donated to local food pantries
 - Leftover food and beverages that have been opened or prepared can be offered to participants who wish to take leftovers home with them

7

Practice sustainability (cont'd)

Support the Environment + Local Community

If possible, try to minimize the distance between the source of food and the event to both reduce fuel emissions as well as invest in the local economy.

- Choose caterers and restaurants that source foods locally
- Look for local brands in stores or visit the farmer's market to purchase food for the event or meeting (e.g. fruit for fruit tray, artisan breads, jams and jellies, vegetables for vegetable tray, etc)
- Plan menus around which foods are in-season. Visit www.seasonalfoodguide.org to find out what is in season for your region



The Impact of Buying Local Foods

Higher nutritional value, as food has not been sent off to be processed

Reduces environmental impact

Supporting local businesses strengthens the economic base of the community

Promotes local agriculture

Local foods support local families

Increased access to produce at the peak of ripeness

Local foods likely contain less or no pesticides

8

Include lean protein + plant-based menu options

When choosing protein options for an event menu, be mindful of the way food is prepared, select lean proteins, and be sure to offer at least one plant-based protein option.

Lean proteins have less than 10 grams of total fat, less than 4.5 grams of saturated fat, and fewer than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per 3.5-ounce portion, according to the USDA.

Lean protein options include:

- Skinless chicken or turkey (white meat)
- Pork loin
- Tenderloin
- Salmon
- Ground sirloin
- If serving cold cuts as part of a sandwich platter, choose unprocessed, nitrate/nitrite-free meats that have been sliced fresh from the deli
- Low-fat or non-fat dairy products (milk, yogurt, cottage cheese)
- Egg whites

Plant-based lean protein options include:

- Beans and lentils
- Tofu or tempeh
- Edamame
- Foods made with nuts, nut butters, or seeds



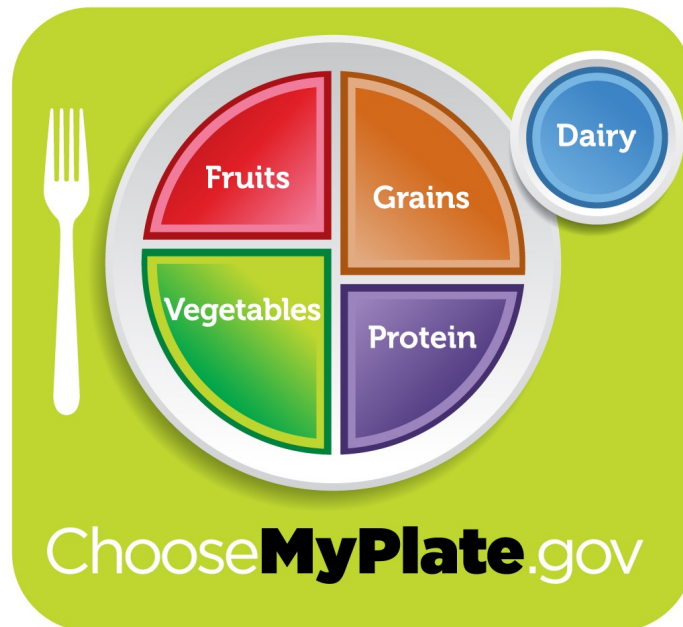
Remember that using a high-fat cooking method can turn a lean protein into a high-fat protein. Healthier food preparation methods include grilling, baking, steaming, or sautéing. When placing catering orders, request foods that are prepared using these methods.

9

Provide small, right-sized portions

Portion sizes have grown substantially over time. Many meetings and events, particularly those with pre-plated meals, often offer participants more than needed. Consider serving food on self-serve trays with sandwiches, wraps, and baked goods cut in half to allow participants to choose their desired amount of food based on individual hunger levels. Request “mini” portions of sweet desserts.

Ideally, menus will provide adequate options to allow participants to follow the balanced MyPlate model, if they choose to do so.



Green tip

Advocate for RSVPs when coordinating events and meetings. This will provide a more reliable headcount in order to cut down on wasted food and supplies.

10

Practice food safety

Special care should be taken to ensure food safety practices are in place at all meetings and events. Following these recommendations will help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness:

- Rinse all fruits and vegetables prior to serving.
- During a gathering, hot food should be kept **hot** (above 140 F°) and cold foods should be kept **cold** (below 40 F°). Anything else is considered the food “danger zone”, which foodborne pathogens thrive in.
 - Chaffing dishes or an oven can help to keep food warm. Serving cold dishes over buckets or bowls of ice can help keep food cold. At catered events, catering staff should monitor food temperatures and remove food that has been sitting out at an unsafe temperature. At potluck-style events, careful care should be taken to ensure someone is checking food temperatures periodically.
- Even if it is held at a safe temperature, food should be consumed or refrigerated within two hours, or one hour if it is an especially hot summer day (90 F° or higher).

Other tips

When serving food, put out smaller amounts to ensure the food stays fresh and in the oven or refrigerator as long as possible. Re-stock as needed.

Once trays or dishes are nearing empty, put out fresh trays rather than refilling the original ones, if possible.

If serving food outside, be sure to cover trays in order to keep bugs and critters out.

People handling food should wash their hands thoroughly prior to doing so. People who are ill should not handle food or utensils that other participants will come into contact with.



Sample healthy menu ideas - Breakfast

Healthy Breakfast Items

Proteins

- hard boiled eggs
- low-fat or nonfat yogurt
- made-to-order omelets
- vegetable frittata or quiche
- black bean and egg white burritos
- almonds for yogurt parfait (+HF)
- low-fat cottage cheese
- chia seeds in oatmeal (+HF)
- low-fat or skim milk
- peanut or almond butter for toast, oatmeal, bagels (+HF)
- avocado slices for topping omelet, toast, bagel, etc. (+HF)

Vegetables

- vegetable frittata or quiche
- open-face breakfast sandwich with spinach, tomato, and egg
- kale and sweet potato hash
- veggie pita with red peppers, spinach, and egg whites
- veggie omelets

Carbohydrates

- whole grain mini bagels
- whole wheat toast
- steel cut oats
- shredded wheat cereal, uncoated
- fruit
- whole grain waffles
- low-fat or nonfat yogurt
- quinoa (can be used to prepare muffins, pancakes, frittatas, breakfast bars, or as a topping for yogurt parfaits)
- whole grain english muffins
- beans (use in breakfast burritos or breakfast casseroles)

Fruit

- fresh assorted fruit tray
- fruit and yogurt parfait
- apple and banana muffins
- breakfast fruit skewers
- fruit salad
- berries over bran cereal
- banana + peanut butter

(+HF = also a healthy fat)

Sample healthy menu ideas - Lunch

Healthy Lunch Items

Proteins

- bean salad
- hummus (+HF)
- peanut or almond butter sandwich (+HF)
- quinoa salad
- salmon (+HF)
- grilled chicken, white meat turkey
- lentil soup
- tofu stir-fry
- black bean or soy burger
- steak salad with lean cut of beef
- avocado wrap (+HF)

Vegetables

- minestrone soup
- chopped salad (add healthy protein such as beans, grilled chicken, fish)
- veggie stir-fry
- lettuce wrap
- fresh vegetable tray with hummus (+HF)
- tomato, lettuce, onion, cucumber, peppers for sandwich fixings
- roasted eggplant pasta
- mashed sweet potatoes
- roasted root vegetables
- veggie spring rolls in lettuce

Carbohydrates

- whole grain wrap
- whole wheat sandwich (add lean deli meats carved fresh from deli, peanut butter, hummus, or avocado + vegetables)
- pasta salad made with whole wheat pasta noodles
- whole wheat quesadilla
- quinoa salad
- taco bar with whole wheat soft tortillas

Fruit

- fruit salad
- strawberry salsa with corn chips
- berries to top salad
- "make your own fruit kabob" station
- melon balls for dessert

(+HF = also a healthy fat)

Sample healthy menu ideas - Snacks

Healthy Snack Items

Proteins

- mixed nuts (+HF)
- nut butter spread for fruit (+HF)
- yogurt
- hummus (+HF)
- cottage cheese
- edamame
- lentil salad
- roasted chickpeas
- part-skim cheese sticks
- Sargento Balanced Breaks snack packs

Vegetables

- celery sticks with peanut butter
- tomato salsa
- mixed vegetable tray with hummus (+HF)
- sugar snap peas
- pickles
- beet, sweet potato, or kale chips
- veggie pinwheels

Carbohydrates

- granola bars with <5 g sugar per serving
- pretzels
- plain popcorn with no added salt
- brown rice cakes
- whole wheat crackers

Fruit

- yogurt-dipped berries
- fruit and oat bars without added sugar
- simple fruit salad
- pineapple and avocado salsa
- sliced melon
- cinnamon apple chips
- dried/dehydrated fruit

(+HF = also a healthy fat)

Healthy Meeting and Event Checklist

What's your score?

Meeting and event coordinators are encouraged to use this checklist as both a planning tool and a post-meeting or event assessment tool to work toward creating a culture of healthy meetings on campus.

Did you...

_____ Offer fresh vegetables?

_____ Provide water as the default beverage?

_____ Serve whole grains?

_____ Choose healthy condiments and/or dressings?

_____ Offer fruit?

_____ Build activity breaks into the agenda?

_____ Take measures to minimize waste, encourage recycling, and/or source products locally?

_____ Include a lean protein and plant based option?

_____ Provide small, right-sized portions?

_____ Take measures to ensure food safety?

Healthy Tips for Working with Caterers

Many caterers offer healthy menu options and are eager to work with meeting and event coordinators to design a nourishing and diverse menu. When working with caterers, keep the following tips in mind:

- Prior to placing a catering order, obtain feedback from participants regarding food allergies, cultural or personal preferences, and other restrictions. Communicate these requests to the catering team in order to create an inclusive and safe menu for all attendees.
- Communicate sustainability requests such as reusable or recyclable utensils, locally-sourced food when available, or ask for a zero-waste event. A zero-waste event is one with a goal of minimizing the amount of material that goes into a landfill by employing practices such as using sustainable or minimal packaging, avoiding single-serve items, providing a composting station, and more. Some caterers, including Personal Touch Catering in Owens Hall, will work with meeting and event organizers to facilitate a zero-waste event when given adequate planning time.
- Share the Healthy Meeting and Event Guide Checklist with caterers in order to help them design a menu that best fits the recommended guidelines.
- If possible, ask caterers to provide food labels for each food item that includes common food allergens. For example, it may be helpful to place “contains gluten”, “contains shellfish”, and “contains nuts” signs in front of items that contain these allergens.
- Ask for desserts to be served as “mini” portions.



Sample Healthy Catering Menus

The following healthy catering menu options have been provided by Personal Touch Catering, a part of Virginia Tech Dining. These selections represent a small sample of the many innovative, nutritious, and tasty menus that Personal Touch Catering is able to provide.

Breakfast

Whole grain english muffin with egg and cheese
Greek yogurt parfait with granola and blueberries
Fresh fruit assortment (cantaloupe, honeydew, apples)
Oatmeal with craisins and walnuts

Salads

Shrimp salad (orzo, fresh herbs, tomatoes, cucumbers, shrimp)
Roasted vegetable (squash, onion, pepper, arugula, penne)
"Build your own salad" bar

Other Entree Plates

Lemon herb chicken with wild rice and fresh green beans
Broiled salmon with Israeli cous cous and apple fennel slaw
Grilled chicken parmesan with spaghetti squash and tomato sauce
Grain-stuffed portabella with cauliflower rice and blistered tomato sauce

Dessert

"Banana Split" (with vanilla greek yogurt, strawberries, berry compote)
Chocolate bark (pretzels, nuts, dried fruit, coconut)

To order any of these items for your next meeting or event, please contact Personal Touch Catering at 540-231-5827 or catering@vt.edu.

Best Bites on Campus

Virginia Tech has built an impeccable reputation for on-campus dining facilities. There are a wide array of healthy options to choose from, should you decide to take your meeting on the move or order from one of Dining Services' award-winning centers. Below, you will find the "Best Bites" from a few of these dining centers. "Best Bites" are high in essential nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, low in saturated fat, and taste great.

Owens Best Bites

Variabowl

- Chicken burrito bowl
- Add vegetables to your burrito bowl
- Salad without rice

Wan

- Stir fry
- Lean meats and vegetables

Dish

- Daily vegetable
- Lean meat and fish specials
- Green beans
- Rotisserie chicken

Turner Place Best Bites

Qdoba

- Ask for a whole wheat tortilla or order a bowl
- Choose grilled meats
- Choose brown rice
- Load up on vegetables
- Light on cheese and sour cream

Bruegger's Bagels

- Whole wheat bagel
- Zesty egg white sandwich
- Fresh-cut fruit salad
- Mediterranean mozzarella salad
- Harvest chicken salad

Squires Food Court Best Bites

Au Bon Pain

- Herb chicken salad
- Turkey or roast beef on sprouted grain bread
- Napa chicken with avocado wrap with whole-wheat tortilla
- Low-fat triple-berry muffin
- Sweet turkey wrap with whole-wheat tortilla

Burger 37

- Turkey burger
- Veggie burger
- Sweet potato fries

West End Market Best Bites

Leaf and Ladle

- Flatbread with veggies
- Garden vegetable soup
- Power greens salad
- Garden fruit and nut salad
- Braised tempeh Asian bowl
- Chili

Seven Seventy Wraps

- Roasted cauliflower wrap
- Choose spinach or whole-wheat tortillas
- Two-bean Mexican wrap
- Grilled chicken wrap

Resources used for Healthy Meeting and Event Guide

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Helpful Contacts and Resources

Hokie Wellness Resources

Lactation Rooms

Lactation facilities for nursing mothers are available throughout campus. Employees, students, or campus visitors who would like to use a lactation room should contact Hokie Wellness to request an access code prior to use.

Hokie Wellness Champions

Virginia Tech Hokie Wellness Champions are employee volunteers that are instrumental in supporting Hokie Wellness by promoting well-being programs to their departments, colleagues, and friends on campus. Wellness champions receive specialized training to deliver wellness programs at their staff or team meetings. If your department has a wellness champion, please utilize their knowledge and training to build a wellness education topic into your agenda from time to time. Employees who are interested in becoming a wellness champion should contact Hokie Wellness.

Individualized Wellness Programs

Hokie Wellness offers a variety of individualized programs for meetings and events upon request. Examples of program topics include mindfulness, stretching and activity breaks, overview of programs and resources, healthy sleep, healthy nutrition, stress management, and more.

For more information, contact Hokie Wellness at 540-231-8878 or hokiewellness@vt.edu.

Other Helpful Contacts

Virginia Tech Office of Sustainability
540-231-4300
sustainability@vt.edu

Virginia Tech Dining Services
540-231-3933
dining@vt.edu

Personal Touch Catering
540-231-5827
catering@vt.edu

