

NYC Meals and Snacks: Better for You and the Planet

City agencies and their contractors follow the NYC Food Standards to help make the meals and snacks they serve healthier and more environmentally sustainable. This includes food and beverages served at schools, older adult centers, shelters, child care centers, correctional facilities, and public hospitals and through City programs.

The NYC Food Standards are reviewed and revised every three years. Here are some ways the standards help make meals and snacks served on City property healthier:

Promote Whole and Minimally Processed Plant Foods

The standards:

- At least two servings of **fruits and vegetables** must be served at lunch and dinner every day.
- Half of all grains served must be **whole grains**.
- At least two servings of **plant proteins** must be served at lunch and dinner every week.

How these standards make meals and snacks better:

- Eating mostly fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains, such as oatmeal, brown rice, whole wheat bread, and corn tortillas, is good for your health and may help you manage or reduce your risk of high blood pressure and heart disease.
- Plant proteins, such as beans, lentils, tofu, nuts, and seeds, are low in saturated fat and provide plenty of protein, fiber, and other nutrients that support general health. Eating more plant protein and less animal protein may also be less harmful to the environment.

Encourage Healthier Beverages

The standards:

- **Water** is served with all meals.
- No more than 6 ounces of **100% juice** can be served every day.
- Only 1% or nonfat **milk** with no added sweeteners can be served.

How these standards make meals and snacks better:

- Drinking water and limiting 100% juice is one way to limit drinks high in sugar while staying hydrated.

Limit Highly Processed Foods

The standards:

- **Processed meat** cannot be served.
- All items must contain a limited amount of **salt**.
- All meals and snacks must contain a limited amount of **added sugars**.
- Items with **low- or no-calorie sweeteners, artificial colors, or certain flour additives and preservatives** cannot be served.

How these standards make meals and snacks better:

- Processed meat is linked to some cancers.
- Eating too much salt increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.
- Added sugars are put into foods and beverages when they are processed. Added sugar intake is associated with increased risk of type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease, and tooth decay.
- Low- or no-calorie sweeteners, artificial colors, and certain flour additives and preservatives do not provide nutritional value and may be associated with health risks.

Limit Beef

The standard:

- **Beef** is limited to one serving at lunch and one serving at dinner every week.

How this standard makes meals and snacks better:

- Beef can be high in saturated fat, which is linked to heart disease.
- Beef production is a large contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, which harm the planet. Since 2019, NYC's greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by 29%, which may be partially linked to NYC serving less beef.

For more information, visit nyc.gov/healthyworkplaces.