



Hosting Healthy Gatherings

Background:

To support employee well-being, it is important to make healthy food options accessible. The Hosting Healthy Gatherings guide can help with planning a work gathering that incorporates healthy food options. In order to create a healthier work environment and to provide employees with easy access to healthy options, the City and County of San Francisco has passed [food/beverage guidelines](#) for food served at city meetings or events.

Goal:

Ensure healthy food and drink options are available at all workplace gatherings including potlucks, picnics, meetings, and social events with food options.

Get Support from Leadership

- If interested in **catering**, check with your finance department for the most up to date city-approved vendors.
 - ✓ It may be helpful to have caterers point out healthy options on their menus as well as options that have lower calorie and salt content. Share this guide with the catering vendor to ensure they make appropriate considerations.
 - ✓ Communicate with the caterers that some items may need to be kept separate to avoid cross-contamination. For example, keeping wheat foods separate from the meal. Items to be kept separate (dressings, breads, dairy, nuts).
 - ✓ Swap dessert for whole fruits.
 - ✓ Request that the caterer label lunch boxes according to dietary need (e.g., V-vegan, GF - Gluten Free.)

Healthy Food and Drink Choices

Provide a list of healthy ideas to employees or event facilitators, of entrees, sides, desserts, appetizers, and snacks for potlucks, social gatherings, or work events with food. Incorporating fruits and vegetables in each dish can be a good way to limit the use of added sugars while getting lots of nutrients.



When appropriate, use this guide to make considerations that include at least one healthy option at every workplace gathering

What are the City of San Francisco's Healthy Social Guidelines?

- **Water** should be made available in meetings and events.
 - ✓ (Bottled water, water pitchers, dispensers, or having employees bring their own reusable bottles are some ways to make water accessible). If able, provide incentives such as fruit slices or cucumber that employees can infuse into their water
- Food items should be served in **smaller portions**, where possible
 - ✓ This can be implemented by using smaller plates and cutting foods like sandwiches and bagels in halves or quarters. Another option is to have plates already prepared or served with smaller portions and left on a table that people can just grab without worrying about serving sizes. Be sure to check with [health and safety guidelines](#) before hosting an in-person gathering where people will be eating together.
- **Vegan, vegetarian**, and Gluten Free **options** should be offered where possible
- Healthy food items should be served. These include:
 - ✓ **Fruits, vegetables**, whole grains, low fat and low-calorie foods
 - ✓ **Low fat** dairy and **lean** meats
 - ✓ **High protein** versions of condiments (e.g. peanut butter, almond butter)
 - ✓ **Lower fat** versions of condiments (e.g., salad dressings, mayonnaise, cream cheese, sour cream dips)
 - ✓ Foods **without added sugar** and that are **low sodium**



- ✓ Food prepared by **healthy cooking techniques** such as baking, roasting, broiling, grilling, poaching, steaming, or stir frying instead of pan frying or deep fat frying
- ✓ Foods that have **zero trans fats**

A Brief Definition and Look at Dietary Needs:

- **Vegetarian:** Vegetarians avoid all types of meat, including beef, poultry, fish, pork and other types of seafood. Vegetarian catering should be thoughtful and intentionally meat-free rather than several side dishes.
- **Vegan:** Vegan catering should follow vegetarian guidelines while also avoiding any animal by-products, such as eggs, dairy, and honey.
- **Dairy-free:** People who are dairy-free enjoy a diet without most dairy products. They may, however, enjoy alternative dairy products such as almond milk or soy cheese.
- **Gluten-free:** Gluten-free excludes bread, pasta, and even some spice mixes and salad dressings.

Remember to Consider Dietary Restrictions:

There are many people with dietary restrictions such as, vegan, lactose intolerant, diabetic, gluten sensitivity, and nut allergies. You'll want to ensure that all food is safe for everyone. Below are a few tips to support those with dietary restrictions.

1. Ask about food sensitivities and/or dietary restrictions *prior* to hosting a gathering.
2. Make sure that some items are kept separate to avoid cross-contamination. For example, keeping wheat foods separate from the meal. Items to be kept separate (dressings, breads, dairy, nuts).
3. Label items/meals according to dietary need (e.g., V-vegan, GF - Gluten Free.)



Ideas for Virtual or Remote Work Events

- Choose a produce.** Employees can provide ideas of a **produce** they would like the team to try to make a meal with. (Ex. Making a meal with sweet potato). They can vote on a produce to include in their dish for the work meeting/event and present it to the team.
- Recipe Sharing.** Have each person on the team fill out a [recipe card](#) and then share these recipes with everyone. Employees can try creating these recipes to eat during the meeting or event.
- Preparing the same dish together.** The team can choose a recipe or dish to make before the event. During the event, everyone can make the same dish at the same time virtually.

Host an Activity for your Gathering

- Request a food demo for your workplace by filling out this [Request Form](#).

Try New Things

- Try to incorporate a “Meatless Monday” or meatless work event or meeting. Instead provide a variety of plant-based alternatives.
- Provide plant-based dips, salsa, bean dips, hummus, as an alternative low-fat dip
- Take a local trip to the farmer’s market with your team for your next team outing. The team will be able to explore and pick up fresh and healthy produce. Go back to the office and share your farmer’s market picks!
- For drinks, provide sparkling water, tea or 100% fruit juice instead of soda or drinks with added sugars. Try having a tasting party with sparkling water or juice to guess the flavors!



Additional Tips

- Be sure to check with [health and safety guidelines](#) before hosting an in-person workplace gathering where people will be eating together.
- Presentation can play a big role. Having healthy food dishes arranged and presented nicely can attract people to reach for those dishes. (Ex. Presenting fruits or vegetables in a nice spread on a charcuterie board)
- Create mini signs of the different dishes being served and brief nutritional benefits (Example. Roasted broccoli and Sweet Potatoes. Rich in Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Fiber and Potassium!) — or simply highlight the colorful choices (fruits and vegetables) in the dish!

Resources

[CDC Guide for Healthy Meetings, Conferences and Events](#)

[University of Minnesota- Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars and Catered Events](#)

[American Cancer Society- Meet Well](#)

[My Plate: Prep for parties and Potlucks](#)

[AHA Healthy Eating Toolkit](#)