



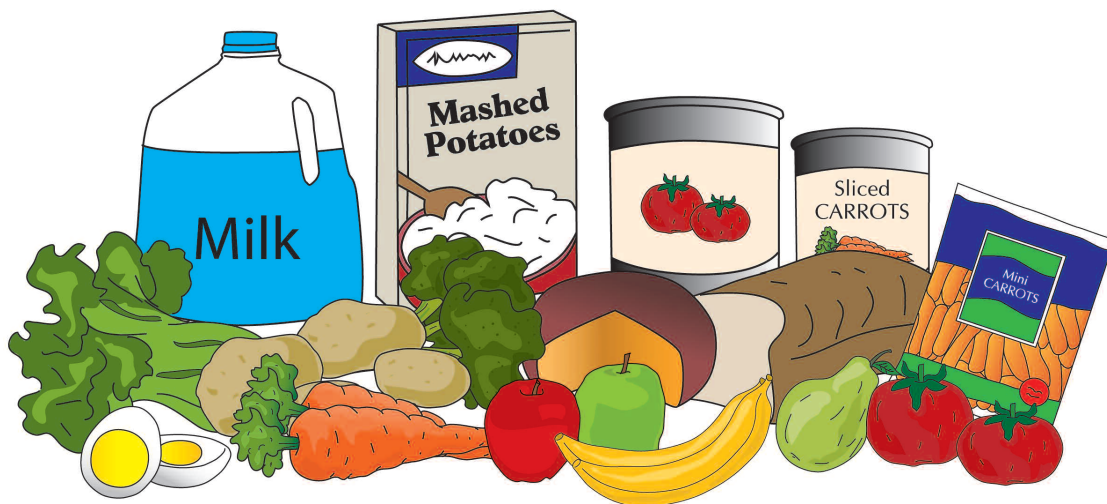
# Fact Sheet

## Cycle Menus

A cycle menu is a series of daily menus for a set length of time, such as 3 weeks. Each menu in the series is different. After the series has been served, it is repeated. That is why it is called a cycle menu.

### How to Get Started

- Get your copy of the CACFP Meal Pattern requirements.
- Gather your recipes.
- Decide on the number of weeks for the cycle.
- Choose the main dish (meat/meat alternate) first to plan around.
- Try to plan a different main dish for each day in the cycle, alternating between types of meats.
- Then add the vegetables, fruits, and grains. Be sure to include the meal pattern requirements.



## Tips

- Vary the preparation methods in a day's menu so equipment, such as ovens, will not be overloaded.
- Consider the season and include foods that are in season.
- Balance, over a week, higher-cost foods with lower-cost foods.
- Vary the shapes, colors, temperatures, textures, and flavor of foods.
- Include raw and cooked vegetables.
- Include a variety of foods so children get a wide range of nutrients.
- Try some new recipes along with the standard ones.
- Remember that cycle menus can be adjusted to allow for holidays, unexpected leftovers, or seasonal produce.
- Consider when fresh foods will arrive and how long they will last.
- Consider delivery times and storage capacities of freezers and refrigerators.



## References

- National Food Service Management Institute. (2006). *Mealtime memo for child care: Using cycle menus*. Retrieved November 7, 2008, from [nfsmi.org](http://nfsmi.org)
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- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Team Nutrition. (2000). *Building blocks for fun and healthy meals*. Retrieved November 13, 2008, from [www.fns.usda.gov/tn](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn)

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