

## THE MENU PLANNING PROCESS

Did you ever wonder how our menus are created? The planning process begins two months in advance. Our consultant, a registered dietician, develops six weeks worth of menus that constitute a repeating cycle. Every two months representatives of the nutrition program and our caterer review the menus for the next two months.

The goal of the menu planning process is to provide nutritionally balanced meals that meet 1/3 of the recommended daily allowance of nutrients for seniors. There are daily, weekly and monthly requirements that need to be met. These include the serving of at least 15 grams of protein daily, a daily source of vitamin C, and a limit of 700-800 calories per meal.

In addition, a good source of vitamin A must be served at least 3 times per week, whole meats such as chicken or turkey must be offered twice per week, and fruit at least 3 times per week. The fat content of meals must be on average less than 31 grams with a limit of 30-35% of calories from fat over the six week cycle. Meals must also be low in sodium with an average content below 1300 mg. with the exception of 2 higher sodium meals monthly. No salt may be added during the cooking process.

The menu planning team also tries to keep in mind the visual appeal of the meals and feedback from participants. Your input is important but individual preferences cannot be accommodated since approximately 2600 meals are prepared daily by our caterer. Sometimes there are other factors that must be met. An example of this is the use of gravies to help keep meat warm during the delivery process. If you do not want or like gravy, we suggest that you remove it before eating. Every attempt is made to deliver a hot, nutritious meal to our participants.

Finally, we would like to be able to provide more expensive menu items but our budget must be taken into consideration. One way we stretch that budget is through the use of government commodity foods such as juice, pudding, muffins, chicken, etc.

We hope this explanation helps you to understand the planning and effort that go into creating our menus. BON APPETIT!