

# SALAD BAR



## PROGRAM GUIDE

Reviewed by SCDHEC: Division of Food and Lead Risk Assessment  
Information adapted from the Nutrition and Aging Resource Center



South Carolina  
**DEPARTMENT  
ON AGING**

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## Background and Purpose

The information within this guide is intended to assist your agency with developing a salad bar model as part of the Older Americans Act Senior Nutrition Program. Salad bars can be planned to provide one component of a meal, such as a side salad or a fruit and vegetable plate, or they may provide a full meal depending on the number and types of food items that are provided at the meal.

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) recommends 4-5 cups of fruits and vegetables per day for adults 60 and older. However, the DGAs indicate that on average, these individuals only consume 3 cups towards this goal.

The Senior Nutrition Program can help address this issue and ensure that older adults are meeting the DGAs by offering a salad bar as part of their nutrition services. Salad bars increase food choice, provide plentiful fruit and vegetable options, and can result in increased fruit and vegetable intake.

### Goals:

- To promote the socialization of older individuals.
- To improve health and well-being.
- To diversify delivery methods and food options to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

### Target Audience:

Adults age 60 and older who are in greatest social and economic need with particular attention to:

- Low income older individuals
- Minority older individuals
- Older individuals in rural communities
- Older individuals with limited English proficiency
- Older individuals at risk for institutional care

# Salad Bar Location & Approval

As always, food safety measures must be followed in order to safeguard senior health and to provide the participants with food that is safe, unadulterated, and honestly presented. Salad bar programs, as part of the Older American Act Senior Nutrition Program, will only be considered for approval under these conditions:

- **Salad Bar On-site Service Operation:** The program is operated by a permitted facility that holds a valid SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) Retail Food Establishment Permit.
- **Salad Bar Remote Service Operation:** The program is provided at an alternate site, but the permitted facility that provides the food would operate the salad bar themselves under the provisions of Chapter 9-11 (A) 3 “Remote Service” of [SCDHEC Regulation 61-25 Retail Food Establishments](#). Under this arrangement, there are limitations and specific requirements that must be adhered to. The bar inserts need to be cleaned and sanitized at the permitted retail food establishment after each use. The facility receiving the food must verify proper temperature of foods delivered by a Retail Food Establishment under the Remote Service Operation. The temperature check will be done using a properly calibrated stem probe thermometer. This will ensure that the food has arrived either 41°F and below or 135°F and higher prior to being set up and served. If food is not at temperature, this will allow the staff at the meal site the ability to reject the food and ensure their clients are served safe food.
- **Food Safety Rating Confirmation:** Utilize the SCDHEC “Advanced Search” online tool to review full SCDHEC risk-based food safety and sanitation inspection scores to confirm compliance to SC Regulation 61-25 Retail Food Establishments: [SC Food Grades](#)

After reviewing if your program will use an “on-site” versus “remote” service, engage your [local SCDHEC office](#) and the SCDOA Registered Dietitian for further guidance to ensure all food safety requirements are incorporated into the planning.

## Salad Bar Meal Components

### Menus

Meals must meet the 1/3 Dietary Reference Intakes and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 by following the most recent [SC Department on Aging \(SCDOA\) Minimum Meal Specifications](#). The SCDOA Meal Pattern approach to menu planning will be the easiest way to meet the guidelines. The menus must be approved by a [Registered Dietitian](#).

The Senior Nutrition Program is an “**offer versus serve**” program which means that participants can choose the food items they want to eat and refuse items they do not want.

If a salad bar contains items from each required menu pattern area, the participant can choose what they want to eat. It is recommended that programs offer a few choices from each food group. This will ensure participants are happy with their meal choice and will increase their intake of important nutrients. It also ensures state menu requirements are met.

### Menu Components to be Offered

Menu development should be based on participant preferences and how you plan to use your salad bar:

- **Full salad bar:** Includes protein (e.g. chicken, fish, egg), vegetables, fruit, and grains. These items create the full meal excluding beverages.
- **Fruit and vegetable bar:** Participants choose their own options for a side salad or a fruit plate. These items are selected as an addition to the rest of their meal.

**NOTE: Raw seed sprouts and homemade dressings, using non-pasteurized eggs, may not be offered on the Salad Bar. An example of homemade dressing using raw eggs and raw fish (anchovies) is Caesar Dressing. Only offer commercially manufactured dressings.**

Per Regulation 61-25, Section 3-801.11(C) - Special Requirements for Highly Susceptible Populations.

### Daily Offerings:

<b>Vegetables:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one choice of leafy greens</li> <li>• At least three vegetable choices (includes the leafy greens)</li> <li>• At least two different vegetable subgroups offered</li> </ul>
<b>Protein:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least two protein choices (meat or alternate)</li> </ul>
<b>Fruit:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one fruit choice</li> </ul>
<b>Grains:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one grain choice</li> </ul>
<b>Dairy and Alternates:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one serving</li> </ul>
<b>Fat/Oils:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one salad dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Vitamin A &amp; C:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one high Vitamin A source provided (can be from fruits and/or vegetables)</li> <li>• At least one high Vitamin C source provided (can be from fruits and/or vegetables)</li> </ul>

For detailed information regarding food groups, subgroups, serving sizes, etc., refer to pages 24-30 of the [SC Department on Aging \(SCDOA\) Minimum Meal Specifications](#)

<b>Spring Mix</b> (Vegetable: Dark-Green, Vit A & C)	<b>Cherry Tomatoes</b> (Vegetable: Red & Orange, Vit A & C)	<b>Green Bell Pepper</b> (Vegetable: Other, Vit C)	<b>Chicken Salad</b> (Protein)	<b>Whole Banana</b> (Fruit, Vit C)	<b>Ranch</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Roll</b> (Grain, whole-grain)
	<b>Chick Peas</b> (Vegetable: Beans, Peas, Lentils)	<b>Confetti Corn</b> (Vegetable: Starchy)	<b>Boiled Egg</b> (Protein)		<b>Italian Dressing</b>	<b>Seasoned Croutons</b> (Grain, refined-grain)

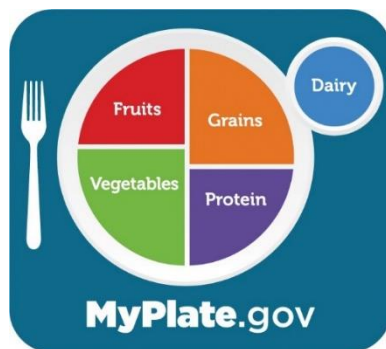
## “Building” A Plate

Participants should be encouraged to select the standard serving sizes from each of the food group when making their selections; Vegetables (2 servings), Protein (2-3, 1 oz servings), Fruit (1 serving), Grains (1-2 servings), and Dairy and Alternates (1 serving).

Again, the Senior Nutrition Program is an “**offer versus serve program**”. To encourage participants to build a balanced and colorful plate, providing nutrition education at or near the salad bar can help participants make healthier choices and to select food items that are most appropriate for chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure. For example, you can add [MyPlate Graphics](#) to label food items by their food group and instruct participants to choose an item(s) from each food group. A display plate could also be created for an additional visual element. The “Minimum Salad Bar Food Choice Recommendations” would also be helpful to post at or near the salad bar (see below).

### Minimum Salad Bar Food Choice Recommendations

Food group	Servings per meal	Example of 1 serving
Vegetables	2 servings	½ cup (4 oz) Vegetable the size of a baseball
Protein	2-3, 1 oz equivalents	1 egg or 1 oz of meat, which is the size of 2 dice; 3 oz meat is the size of smart phone or deck of cards
Fruits	1 Serving	½ cup (4 oz) Fruit the size of a baseball
Grains	1-2 Servings	½ cup (4 oz), 6 crackers, 1 roll Grain the size of the palm of hand
Dairy	1 Serving	1 milk carton or 8 oz, ½ cup calcium processed tofu, 1 ½ ounces hard cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, parmesan)
Fats/Oils	Use sparingly	1 tbsp. or the size of a thumb



## Planning for the Amount of Food to Serve

The first few times trying salad bar service may be trial and error. Forecasting the amount of food to serve will be easier if you have an idea of the number of people who will be using the salad bar. Production records can also be helpful in keeping track of the amounts needed on certain days. See [A Field Guide to Salad Bars in Schools](#) for an in-depth guide to planning for a salad bar.

To plan what food items to include in the salad bar, start by surveying participants and asking questions like:

- Do you plan on choosing items from our new salad bar?
- Please select from the items below to indicate foods you enjoy. (For this question, make a list of items you plan to serve and ask them to circle their answers. It may be helpful to list food items by their meal component category. Leave a blank for participants to add any items not listed).
- Do you have any allergies or foods that you avoid?

## Salad Bar Set-up

Your salad bar unit should have four to six “wells” for pans to hold food items. Half-size, two-inch-deep pans are recommended so that utensils will not fall into the food. Depending on your equipment, you may be able to use six-inch-deep pans for items that do not require utensils like whole fruit. Numerous quarter, half, and full pans may be needed, as well as utensils such as tongs, spoodles, and ladles. Lids for the pans may also be helpful to keep food covered prior to the meal.

Any self-service unit used should be National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) approved equipment. When purchasing a self-service unit, you must know what type of bar you want to have and your budget. An example of a mobile salad bar can be found here: [Cambro - Versa Food Bar](#)

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What type of salad bar do we want? Will we be serving hot food, cold food, or both?
- Where will the salad bar be placed? Is there electricity available in that area?
- How much would we like it to hold (i.e., how many wells)?
- What other features do we want? For example:
  - Breathe guards/sneeze guards that flip up or stay in place.
  - A drain.
  - Access to either sides, or just one.
- How easy is the salad bar unit to clean?

## Guide for Serving Utensils

Large Tongs	Lettuce, spinach, romaine
Small Tongs	Broccoli, cauliflower florets, cucumber slices, cherry tomatoes, sliced bell peppers
2 oz Spoodle	Diced chicken, cheese, diced boiled egg, tuna salad, kidney beans, cottage cheese
4 oz Spoodle	Applesauce, mandarin oranges, grapes, fruited yogurt
1 oz Ladle	Salad dressing, oil, vinaigrette

## Self-Service and Disease Outbreak Considerations

- Providing hand sanitizer at the beginning of the service line can help decrease instances of cross contamination and infection caused by participants using shared utensils.
- Any time illnesses are increasing in your area (such as during flu season or increased rates of COVID-19), a self-service salad bar may need to be limited or avoided all together. Consider using alternative serving methods such as having participants line up in a socially distanced manner on one side of the salad bar while staff/volunteers serve them from the other side.
- Serving prepackaged food is another way to allow participants to pick up their food items at the bar without the risk of multiple people using the same utensils.
- Always use a clean plate for each trip to the salad bar.
- Participants must use the utensils provided with each item and not with different items on the salad bar
- Post a sign or notice that foods on the salad bar may contain one of the 9 major food allergens and post a diagram of those items. This can be found on the FDA website: [U.S. Food and Drug Administration- 9 Major Food Allergens](#)

Refer to [SCDHEC Regulation 61-25 Retail Food Establishments](#) for full food safety requirements.



# Holding Time

Not only is cold buffet food unappetizing, it can also be dangerous. Anytime the temperature of TCS (Time/temperature Control for Safety) food falls between 41–135°F, the number of pathogens in the food start growing quickly. The longer food stays in the Temperature Danger Zone, the more dangerous it becomes.

## Check the temperature of held food

Don't rely on the thermometers on the holding units alone. In order to prevent foodborne illness at your establishment, you should check the internal temperature of hot and cold-held food periodically to make sure it stays out of the danger zone. The internal temperature of food should be checked using a properly calibrated stem probe thermometer designed to measure hot and cold temperatures.

## Hot holding temperatures should stay above 135°F

It's important to keep held food out of the temperature danger zone. Check food warmers, steam tables, and hot holding units regularly to make sure hot TCS foods are being held at 135°F or hotter.

## Cold holding temperatures should stay below 41°F

Just like hot TCS foods, pathogens in cold TCS foods can reach dangerous levels if the food stays in the temperature danger zone too long. To keep them safe, make sure the cold holding tables, freezers, and refrigeration units keep cold-held foods at 41°F or colder.



## Temperature Log

Product	Starting Time/Temp	Temp. at 30 mins.	Temp at 1 hr.	Temp at 1.5 hrs.	Temp at 2 hrs.	Discard Time	Initials