



How to Build a Grocery Store Tour A toolkit for professionals



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Section 1: Introduction and Overview

Food Access and Nutrition Network (FANN) is a statewide educator of food and nutrition news and information in Texas. Our education focuses on creating healthier communities through strategies and initiatives that increase healthy, affordable food access & food and nutrition education in low-income, low-access, underserved communities. FANN maximizes its reach by providing cross-sector collaboration, news, information sharing, and education to professionals that educate and serve the public. FANN is a 501 (c)(3) statewide nonprofit organization in Texas.

The Smart Shopper Program, a grocery store toolbox, is an initiative designed to improve and strengthen community nutrition education and food literacy skills in moderate to low-income communities. The program offers professionals information on grocery store education including food data and training. In addition, the program provides the general public with nutrition and food literacy education online to empower participants to make informed, healthy, and affordable food choices for good health. It offers participants a virtual tour of a grocery store with lessons based on each section of the store. Participants are introduced to new foods, learn how to read food labels, how to identify nutrient dense foods, and learn how to save money while shopping at the grocery store and more.

1.1 What are grocery store tours?

A grocery store tour is a guided, hands-on, interactive educational session offered by a nutrition or health professional to share knowledge with consumers on how to develop strategies to make informed dietary choices and increase healthy and affordable food and drink purchases to have better health outcomes. The tour takes participants through various sections of the grocery store introducing them to foods and their nutritional value, comparing products based on the nutritional fact labels, offering budget-friendly shopping tips and helpful recipes. The guided tour allows participants to ask questions on topics that were highlighted by the educator. This allows improved participant engagement during the educational session. Grocery store tours can be a helpful supplement to any educator's community nutrition program. Use grocery store tours as a fun, interactive learning activity to complement and enhance learning from other nutrition education classes your organization may offer.

1.2. Why is grocery store education important?

Grocery store education is important because increasingly high rates of obesity, diabetes and heart disease in our communities has gotten the interest of healthcare practitioners and researchers in identifying nutrition intervention strategies to increase access to healthy foods and beverages. Since most food purchasing decisions are made in grocery stores, these settings are unique places for community interventions aimed at influencing food buying decisions that promote better food choices and improve health outcomes for a healthier life.

Buying food is a basic necessity for all households. It is also the first experience with nutrition education or food literacy that consumers unknowingly have in their daily lives. The grocery shopping experience forces the consumer to make informed dietary choices of what their household will eat in the coming days. As people shop for their groceries, they are continuously making choices in each major section of the grocery store. This is typically first seen in the produce section of the store where consumers determine if they will buy produce or

bypass this section of the grocery store. Will they buy blueberries rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants or will they choose bananas which are cheaper in price? A single mother of four shopping for chicken may choose chicken thighs with the skin rather than skinless chicken breast, the leaner and healthier option of the two. A consumer who suffers from high blood pressure may select a can of soup while shopping. The can of soup may increase their blood pressure due to the high amount of sodium it contains. If the consumer was educated on how to read food labels, they would have known that the amount of sodium was almost seventy-five percent of the daily intake recommendation.

Unfortunately, lack of nutrition knowledge, consumer budget and other household pressures sometime detract shoppers from making better food choices. Providing nutrition intervention strategies that focus on food literacy education and improving poor dietary practices at the community level may help to minimize these effects and create better health outcomes for the public. Healthy dietary patterns have the potential to increase one's life span, lower the risk of serious health issues, and help those living with chronic diseases manage their conditions and prevent future complications (CDC ¹, 2021).

1.3. Research and Data on Poor Diet & Consumer Shopping Habits

Several of the leading causes of death in the U.S can be attributed to poor nutrition. Although the link between poor dietary practices and chronic disease risk has been established, many Americans do not meet current dietary recommendations. According to the American Diabetes Association (2022), about 35% of Americans under the age of 20 have been diagnosed with diabetes with a total cost of \$327 billion in the U.S. in 2017. The incidence of type 2 diabetes among Americans younger than 20 years old is also significantly greater among racial and ethnic minority groups than among whites (CDC, 2021). Other chronic disease such as Heart Disease, Cancer and Stroke are also impacting millions of Americans.

Below is a list of the Top 10 leading causes of disease according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Heart disease, cancer, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and obesity are some of the most preventable chronic diseases and conditions.

1. **Heart Disease** (Diet-Related Disease)
2. **Cancer** (Diet-Related Disease)
3. COVID-19
4. Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)
5. **Stroke**
6. Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases
7. Alzheimer's Disease
8. **Diabetes**
9. Influenza and Pneumonia
10. Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis

As adults grow older, they have a higher chance of developing certain diet-related diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, cancer and/or osteoporosis. These can be managed through diet modifications and effective nutrition intervention strategies that are free and accessible to the public

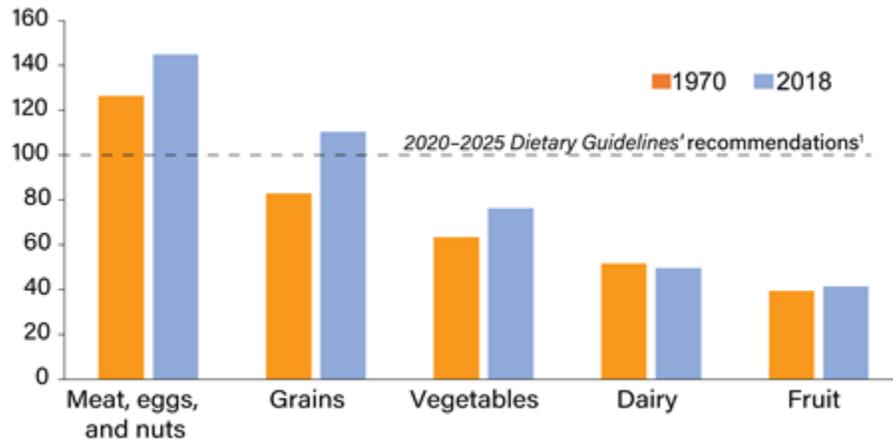
Americans are falling short of recommended dietary guidelines.

Grocery store tours are also important because Americans are falling short of the recommended guidelines. Nutrition interventions centered about consumer buying habits may help to improve dietary choices.

Consumers have been making some improvements in their diet over the years however, they are still falling short of the recommended dietary guidelines for 2020-2025 in several areas.

Estimated average U.S. consumption compared to recommendations, 1970 and 2018

Percent of 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines' recommendations

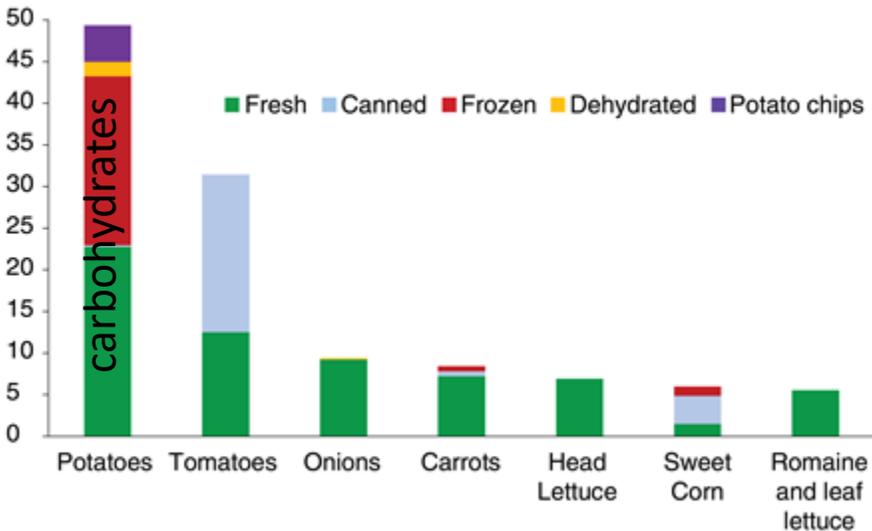


¹Based on a 2,000 calorie-per-day diet.
 Notes: Loss-adjusted food availability data are proxies for consumption. Rice availability data were discontinued in 2010 and thus are not included in the grains group.
 Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Loss-Adjusted Food Availability Data and 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines.

The above comparison between 1970 and 2018 of the five major food groups illustrates that although Americans are consuming more fruits and vegetables than they did in 1970, on average their 2018 consumption of meats, eggs and nuts and grains was higher than the recommended guidelines. Fruit, vegetable, and dairy consumption was also well under the recommended guidelines for 2020-2025.

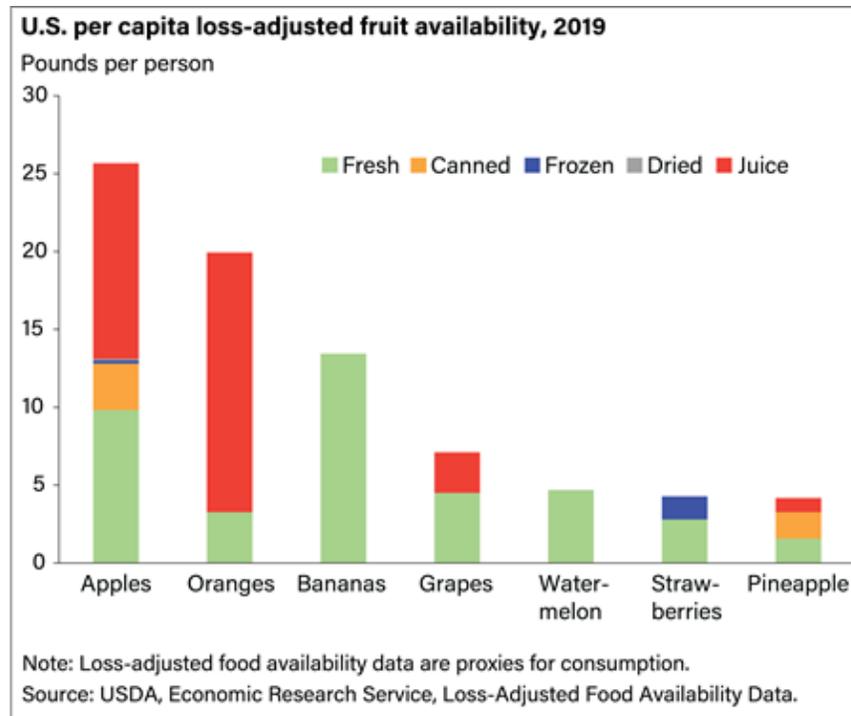
U.S. per capita loss-adjusted vegetable availability, 2019

Pounds per person



Note: Loss-adjusted food availability data are proxies for consumption.
 Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, Loss-Adjusted Food Availability Data.

According to the CDC, a diet including various fruits and vegetables may help reduce the risk of many leading causes of illness and death, yet only one in ten Americans get enough fruits and vegetables CDC ², 2021. The above 2019 graph demonstrates that Americans are not making the best food choices when it comes to vegetable intake. Potatoes, high in carbohydrates are one of the top vegetable selections for most households. Americans are also buying potatoes in frozen bag quantities which indicates that they prefer fried hashbrowns and french fries as well as chips. In fact, Americans would also rather purchase a head of lettuce with little nutritional value than dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, collard greens, swiss chard and others that contain high density nutrition.

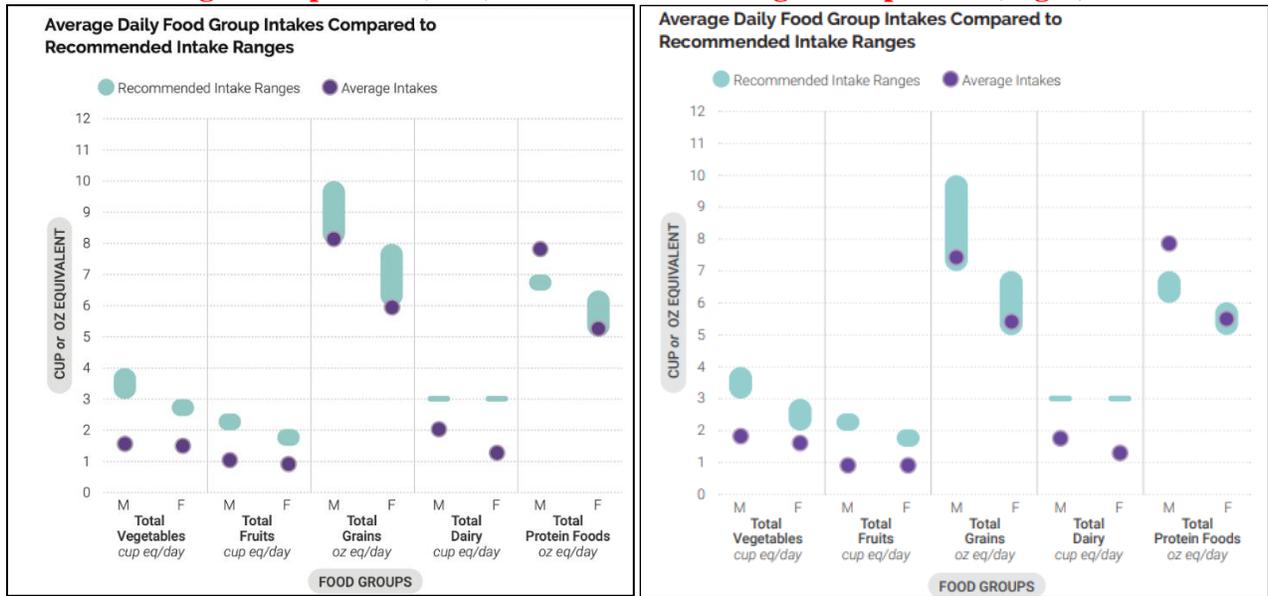


Americans also fall short of the recommended 2020-2025 dietary guidelines for fruit intake. The above 2019 USDA graph of the U.S. top fruit choices illustrates that households prefer to buy certain fruits like apples, oranges, and grapes in juice form rather than consume it in whole fruit form. Juices purchased through the center aisle of the grocery store often contain added sugars which is a less healthy option than buying whole fruit in the produce section. Food education through grocery store tours would be helpful as an intervention to change consumer behavior through their shopping habits.

Another perspective also illustrates that Americans still are falling short of the 2020-2025 recommended guidelines as seen in this comparison of age groups 19-30 and 31-39 below.

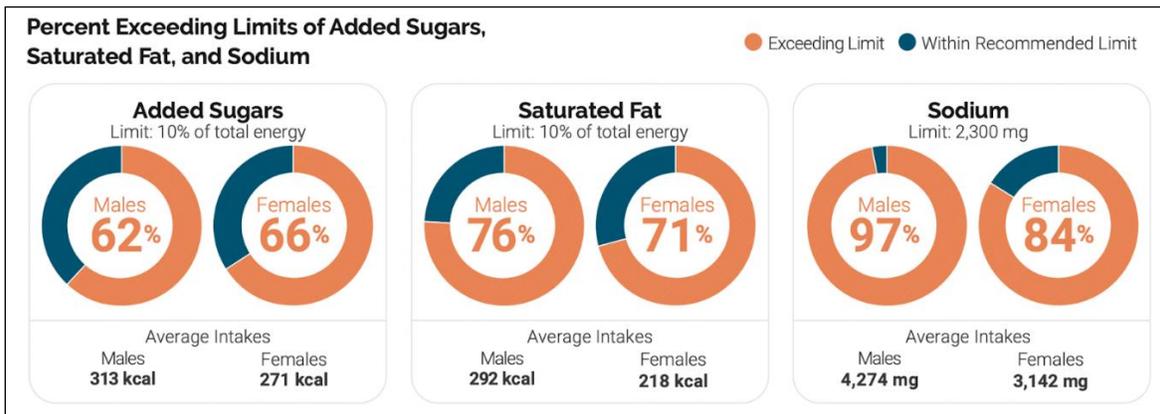
Age Group 19-30 (Left)

Age Group 31-59 (Right):



Source: 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The above are the average daily food group intakes compared to recommended intakes. Fruits and vegetable consumption still falls short of the recommended guidelines and Americans do not meet the recommended intake of three to four cups of vegetables and two to two and a half cups of fruit. On the other hand, men exceed the recommended intake range for protein, while women meet the lower end of the protein range.



Source: 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Additional data shown above on food intake patterns suggests that Americans are also consuming more sugar, salt and fat in their diet. Households are exceeding the daily 10% limit of added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium according to the USDA, 2020. Additionally, they both exceed the sodium limit of 2,300 milligrams per day again exacerbating the need for community nutrition intervention strategies such as grocery store tours.

Purchasing habits of low-income Americans: SNAP Data, 2011

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a report describing the foods that are typically purchased by SNAP households formally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. According to the USDA, having good knowledge about food choices and purchasing behaviors is important in the process of promoting healthy food choices especially for low-income households. There are several meaningful outcomes associated with this report. First, the report shows that consumers are primarily focused on the center of the grocery store where items are packaged and high in salt, fat, carbohydrates, calories, and preservatives. Additionally, this report illustrates that SNAP participants are not purchasing fruits and vegetables identifying the need for more food literacy education. The report is also a useful tool for professionals because the data can be compared to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). One way to improve these behaviors among SNAP recipients is to use grocery store tours as a vehicle for nutrition intervention, which is one method to improve purchasing habits.

The USDA, 2016 report found that the top ten commodities by spending in SNAP households were as follows:

1. Soft drinks (Highest)
2. Liquid milk products (fluid milk)
3. Beef grinds
4. Bag snacks
5. Cheese
6. Baked bread
7. Cereal (cold)
8. Fresh chicken
9. Frozen handhelds (i.e., frozen breakfast, lunch, and dinner items)
10. Lunch meats

The report although meaningful, also has several limitations. First, SNAP data was from 2011 and no other studies have not been undertaken since then by the federal government. The data is also not generalizable to the entire population who purchase food at grocery stores. Another limitation of the report is that shopping data did not come from purchases made through all SNAP-authorized vendors such as farmers markets and convenience stores- meaning that this data does not include all SNAP-eligible food expenditures. Regardless of these limitations, it provides some insight into what SNAP participants are buying at the grocery store (Purchasing Habits of SNAP Participants-Food and Nutrition Service U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016). Food and Nutrition Professionals can also use the data to compare it to the current dietary guidelines also known as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

Grocery Store Tour Outcomes

There are multiple factors that may play a role in consumer's purchasing and eating habits including social determinants of health such as housing, education, income etc. According to a study from the University of Memphis, grocery tours are an effective vehicle to improve purchasing habits. At the beginning of their study, 78% of participants reported eating less than three fruits and vegetables per day, and after this study, 86% of

participants agreed that the grocery store education helped them increase the number of fruits and vegetables they eat in a day (Williams-Hooker, R & Dragutsky, E. 2015).

Another study conducted by University of North Carolina; Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention looked at a nonprofit program called Cooking Matters. The free program is a guided grocery store tour program that teaches participants (adults who experience limited food resources) four important grocery shopping skills, including food label reading, comparing unit prices, finding whole-grain foods, and three ways to purchase produce as a 1.5 hour guided in-store tour (NFH, 2011).

The study found the following:

- 74% of the participants shop with higher confidence
- 72% managed to get more produce for their money
- 89% of families managed to save money
- Food security increased from 53% to 64%
- Food label comparing went from 40% to 83%

The data shows that grocery store tours not only help families make better food choices to eat healthier, but they also help families save money by stretching their food budgets which allows them to put more food on the table for their families.

Other data from the program provided by the University of North Carolina Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, 2022 found the following:

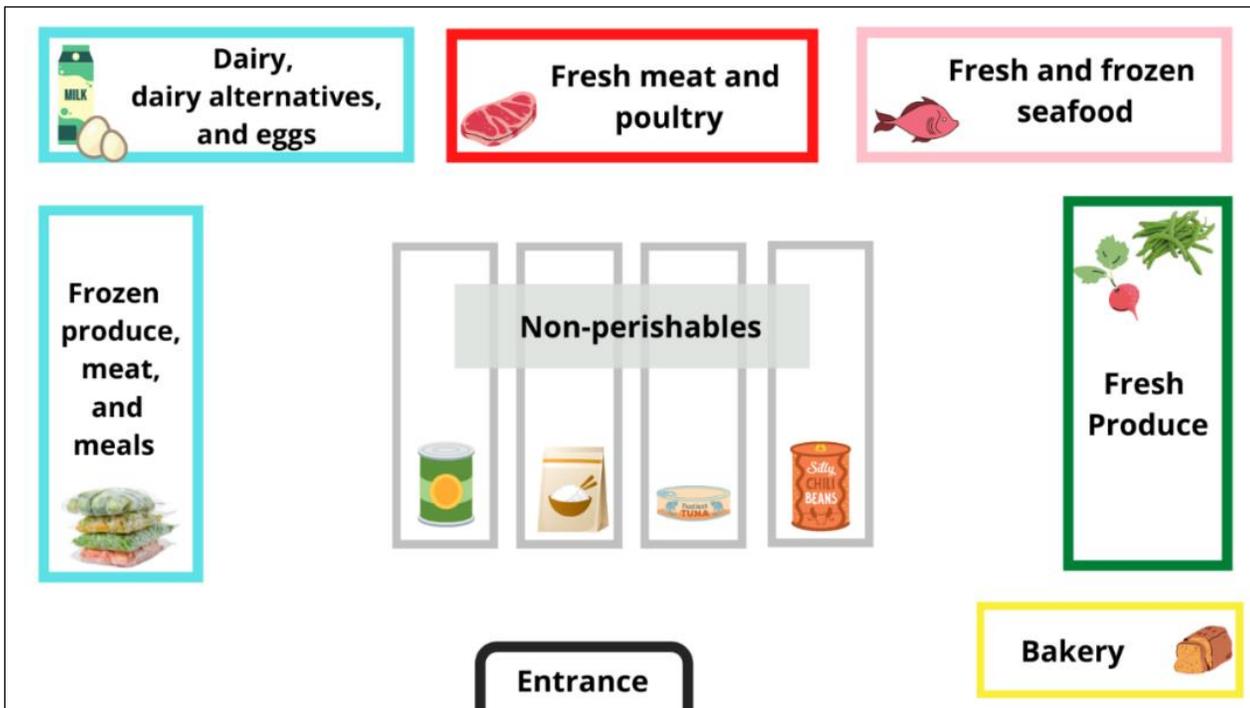
- 76% of families bought more fruits and vegetables.
- 62% of families bought more low-sodium foods.
- 55% of families bought more low-sugar foods.
- 62% of families bought more lean proteins.
- 54% of families bought more low-fat dairy.
- 85% of families bought fewer unhealthy foods.

According to Nikolaus et al. (2016), grocery store tours are a unique vehicle for nutrition education and need the collaborative effort of multiple parties, such as the grocery store, the agency, and participants. Grocery store tours although limited in number are also increasing in popularity. Unfortunately, there is limited information on the effectiveness of grocery store tours and there is a need for more evidence-based studies.

Section 2: Grocery Store Marketing

2.1. Grocery Store Set-Up

Grocery stores are arranged in various ways that guide consumers to behave a certain way while shopping. Most non-perishables are located in the center of the store while perishables are typically located along the perimeter aisles.



2.2. Methods Grocery Stores Use to Increase Consumer Spending

The look and feel of a grocery store have a big influence on consumers' behavior, specifically their purchasing habits. Through engaging sensory experiences, many retailers can lure consumers into their stores and increase spending and time spent shopping.

According to Best Marketing, 2017, some strategies that grocery stores use are:

- Placing sweet treats and sugar-filled cereals at eye level for children
- Promoting buy one, get one free specials on unhealthy snacks
- Placing specific items on end caps to highlight certain products to encourage spending
- Providing larger shopping carts
- Placing bakeries near the front of the store to make consumers hungry through the smell of fresh baked goods
- Placing meat and dairy sections toward the back to make consumers walk through the fully stocked aisles to get consumers to add more to their shopping cart
- Narrower checkout lines that make it harder to get rid of products that aren't needed
- Playing certain selections of music to make the consumer linger in the store

Smart Shopper Tips to Save Money

It's possible to avoid retail marketing and create smarter shopping habits by following these simple steps:

1. Avoid shopping while hungry - hungry shoppers often spend more and purchase more high-calorie items
2. Avoid pre-prepared food - although they may be convenient, they are also more expensive
3. Create a shopping list and know the store's layout - this will keep you from roaming throughout the store and possibly purchasing unnecessary items
4. Use only cash or debit cards - having a budget or limit will prevent you from purchasing unnecessary items
5. Buy in season fruits and vegetables
6. Buy frozen fruits and vegetables. Frozen produce is typically cheaper
7. Buy WIC approved items which tend to be cheaper

8. Use coupons and in-store incentives

Section 3: Early Planning Stages of Your Program

In this section, you will find a detailed plan of action that will set you on track for success, by ensuring you are well-prepared to execute your in-person grocery store tour.

Step 1: Get Your Agency Approval

Before you begin your grocery store tour, meet with your agency leadership to determine if this is approved.

- Meet with your team to determine if this type of service is in line with your department's goals and the goals of your agency or organization. Make sure that your department also has enough staff in place to provide the grocery store tour.
- Create a detail plan for your grocery store tour and how you will accomplish your objectives.
- Next, present your plan to your agency leadership to get buy-in and approval to move forward.
- You may need to circle back to your agency to get additional approvals should you need them. For example, the grocery store may want your agency to carry certain limits of insurance liability and that will need their approval and signoff. (See step 3).

Step 2: Select a Grocery Store in Your Service Area

- Define your target audience.
- Where will your store be located? You can also drive around your service area to determine what grocery stores are located within it. Consider a grocery store that is centrally located in your service area.
- Is your service area located in a low-income, moderate income or higher income community? Low-income people typically do not shop at higher end grocery stores. It would be counter-intuitive to partner with a high-end brand if your target audience shops at less-costly stores.
- Check to see if your grocery store already provides grocery store tours. If they do, chances are that they will not allow you to also conduct one in their store. Some grocery stores offer grocery tours for the public, however most charge for the service. You may want to still ask.
- The grocery store you select should be near public transportation such as a bus line or rail service. You may also want to ensure that the bus stop is located within a close distant to your grocery store. This is especially important for low-income participants who do not have access to a vehicle. If the participants cannot access the grocery store via public transportation, you may wind up with low participation.
- Most all grocery stores are ADA compliant and are wheelchair accessible. You may however want to check the width of the aisles before making your selection.
- You may want to select the grocery store with a good selection of fresh produce over others.

Step 3: Talk to The Store Manager

The store manager is your key point of contact with your grocery store and is often the key decision maker within the store. Some stores may also ask you to first go through their corporate office for approval.

- Set up a meeting with your store manager to discuss your ideas for the grocery store tour.
- Explain the value-added benefits of your initiative to the store. (See below).

Benefits for the grocery store

- Increase in traffic from new customers, leading to increased revenue
- The initiative has a positive public relations benefit to the store which also could be used by the store for marketing purposes
- The initiative offers a public health benefit to the community

- The store manager will most likely include his second in charge, the assistant manager, and any other key department heads in the meeting.
- Ask if the store will require your agency to carry general liability insurance at certain limits. The grocery store does not want to be held liable should any injuries occur on the tour either by participants or your agency staff. If your agency has general liability insurance coverage, the limits may not be adequate for the store. The store may require you to have higher limits of coverage.
- Remember that the grocery store manager is your key point of contact. However, they may appoint a designee as the liaison between the store and agency/organization.
- Once you get tentative approval from the manager for your grocery store tour, move to step 4.

Step 4: Create A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Once you get a verbal ok from the grocery store to move forward, the next step is to create an MOU or Memorandum of Understanding between your agency/organization and the grocery store. The MOU is an agreement between both parties. The MOU defines the scope of the grocery store tour service, what will happen and who is responsible for doing what.

- The MOU must be signed by both parties-grocery store manager and agency/organization. Typically, the binding party within the agency is the Executive Director or CEO.

Step 5: Staffing and Contingencies

During the early planning stages, define which staff members will provide the grocery store tours. A grocery store tour should be provided by trained nutrition and/or health professionals.

- Make sure that you have enough staff to run the program.
- Most tours are conducted with only one staff member; however, you can have an assistant helping the primary educator. Assistants could be staff, interns or volunteers who are familiar with the program.
- Ideally, you may want to have two staff available to provide the education in case one is out for any reason. This will help you maintain coverage should an unforeseeable event occur, and the primary educator is unable to come in for the day. If staff do not show up on the set day of the tour, participants will be left waiting and may be upset. They may also ask store employees where the educator is which will result in the manager finding out. This could jeopardize the entire program so always plan for contingencies.
- If the grocery store tour needs to be cancelled for any reason you should have a list of at least 2-3 contacts from the store that you can notify. If the cancellation is the day of the tour, you will need to call the store contact immediately to notify them of the cancellation. Text the store contact as well in case they are unable to answer their phone for any reason. They may be busy handling issues at the grocery store. If the cancellation is a few days before the tour, email the store first to notify.
- Next notify all tour participants that the tour is being cancelled. Try to give your participants at least one hour notice before the tour starts to give participants riding the bus enough notice to not take the bus. You should always have a prepared a list of all participants on the tour and have their cell phone

numbers available should you need to contact them immediately. Text your participants first, then follow up with a phone call. Participants may not check their email on a frequent basis.

Step 6: Outcome Data & Metrics

Planning for your grocery store initiative most likely included a community needs assessment or some other form of evaluation to determine if there was a need for the initiative in the first place. The next step is to defining goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes for the program. Outcomes also known as metrics are important elements to determine the effectiveness of your intervention strategies and show program participation and success. This data is important to the agency and its donors. The data is also important for the grocery store as well. The grocery store will want to know if the program is making a difference for those who have participated. The grocery store may want a report from your agency on a monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis. Any reports or updates that the grocery store wants regarding your program should be included in the MOU. It is always best practice however to give the grocery store an update on your program as a courtesy, regardless of if they ask for one or not.

Evaluations to consider:

- Community Needs Assessment (conducted during planning stages of the program)
- Environmental SCAN (conducted during planning stages of program)
- Consider developing pre/post surveys for your grocery store tour
- Give participants a pre-survey to establish a baseline of their knowledge on different topics before the participants begin the grocery store tour.
- Give participants a post-survey at the end of the grocery store tour.
- Once participants have completed the program, consider providing evaluation forms for participants to complete and give feedback about the program/tour. This will help give you information about what things you may need to change or adjust.

Step 7: Marketing and Recruitment Plan

It's important to have a clear marketing and recruitment strategy for your grocery store tour program. This will ensure that your program maximizes its reach to participants. Without a marketing and recruitment plan in place, your program risks low participation rates or no participation at all.

Marketing, Promotion, and Incentives

Marketing to recruit participants to your program is the most important thing that you can do to drive participants to enroll or attend your grocery store tour.

Here are some helpful tips to market your program:

- Announce the program on your agency's website and allow participants to sign-up online.
- Use social media platforms that most likely relate to your target audience to market your program.
- Send out an email blast to your agency's client distribution list.
- Send out an email blast to your agency's distribution list of community partners, informing them of your new service that their clients could benefit from.
- Provide flyers announcing the next grocery store tour and give them out at your agency. You can provide them in your waiting area and ask the receptionist to hand them out when people sign in for services.
- Set up face to face meetings with external agencies in your service area informing them of your new program/service. Offer to give a presentation at their next all staff meeting so that all providers are aware of your service.

- Provide flyers to agency partners. Ask agency partners to hand them out when a client/patient comes in for services to inform them about the program.
- Use incentives to promote and retain participants. Incentives help to motivate or encourage participation in your program. Some examples you can use for your grocery store program may include things such as certificates, grocery store coupons, grocery tote bags, gift cards for food and others.

Step 8: Consider Your Educational Materials

It's important that you create educational materials for your program. Educational materials can be nutritional handouts, pamphlets, study guides, recipes, and others on topics such as cooking, food literacy, nutrition, healthy eating, budgeting, food safety etc. Examples of a handouts or educational materials that you might want to create and distribute to your grocery store tour participants could be a handout on reading food labels, a handout on reducing sodium intake, a produce pamphlet on what's in season or a recipe card for a healthy meal.

Many online programs also make creating and designing educational materials easy. While you can use traditional programs such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, other online programs exist that can offer ease for this experience. One popular website is Canva, located [here](#). Canva offers easy-to-edit templates with various pictures, fonts, and elements to make good quality educational materials. While there is a paid version, Canva has a free version that does not require payment information.

Helpful Websites for Educational Materials:

You can find free educational materials through food associations, academic institutions, state, and government websites. For nutrition educational materials the USDA offers the following:

- USDA MyPlate website located [here](#). This website offers a wide variety of handout material that can be filtered by:
 - Audience (adults, children, teenagers, etc.)
 - Topic (healthy eating, dairy, vegetables, salt smart, etc.)
 - Resource type (activity sheets, available in Spanish, fact sheets, etc.)
- USDA nutrition.gov website located [here](#). This website offers a variety of nutrition-related printable handouts.
- USDA SNAP-Ed Connection website located [here](#). This website offers nutrition education materials that are grouped by topics, such as cooking, nutrition and healthy eating, and food safety.
- The resource guide located at the end of this toolkit also includes an extensive list of websites with printable handout materials and templates.

Section 4: About the Grocery Store Tour

This section of the toolkit provides some helpful things to think about when putting the various components of your tour together.

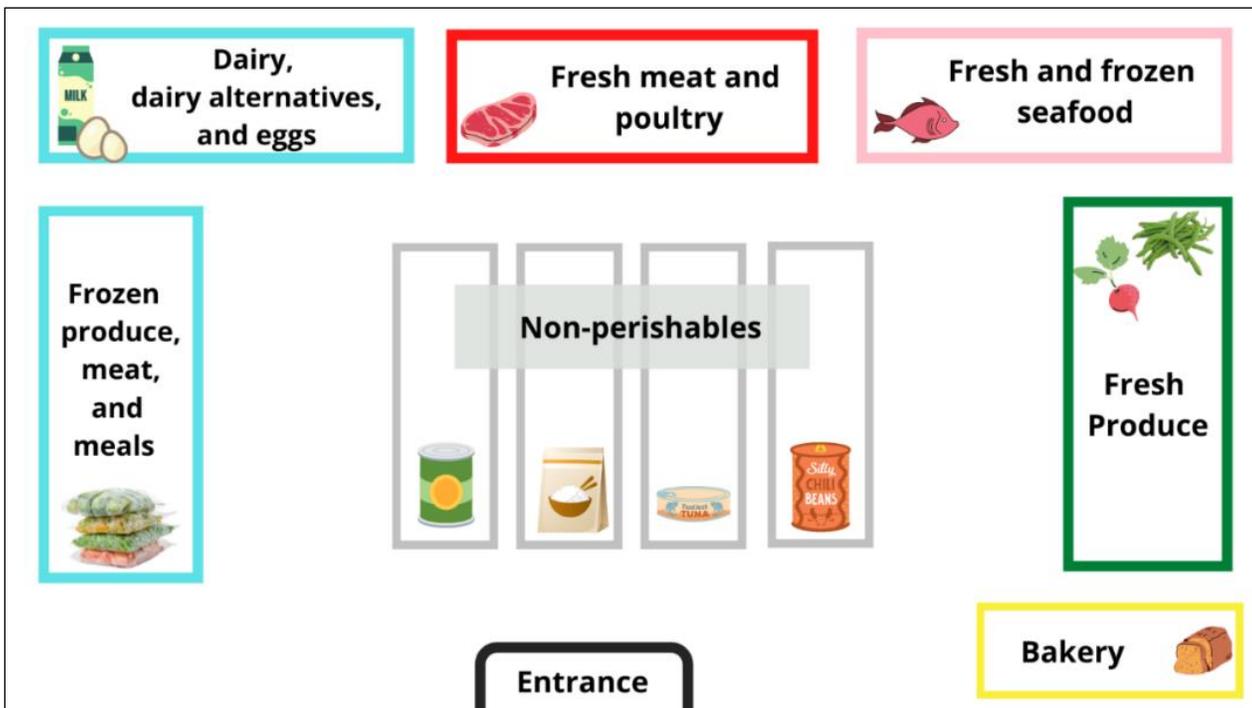
4.1 The Grocery Store Layout

The Store Layout

Grocery stores are arranged in various ways that guide consumers to behave a certain way while shopping. Most non- perishables are located in the center of the store while perishables are typically located along the perimeter aisles.

The natural flow of the grocery store can be used to guide participants through the different grocery store departments. Although the natural flow of the grocery store will depend on the store itself, generally, the flow is as follows (from entry to exit):

1. Fresh produce
2. Bakery & deli
3. Meat, seafood, and poultry
4. Dairy, dairy alternatives, and eggs
5. Frozen food and non-perishables



4.2. The Tour

Pre-planning The Tour

When planning your general tour layout think about these other important factors.

- What is the natural flow of the different sections of the grocery store?
- Where will the tour start and end?
- Where will participants meet once they arrive to the store?
- Is the store noisy? Are there areas in the store that are quieter?
- How big are the aisles? Do you think it will be large enough for your tour group and regular customers?
- Will printed resources be necessary? How will they be used and distributed during the tour?
- Will you need to bring other staff to assist you with the tour?
- Should you do a dry run of your tour to work out any issues that may need to be improved?

Keep The Size of the Tour Small

The size of your tour should ideally be 10. This number will need to be approved and negotiated with the store manager.

- Consider those with health conditions and disabilities including those in wheelchairs.
- Having the tour during the day when most children are at school will allow parents to not be distracted on the tour.
- Having smaller groups will allow all participants on the tour to hear the educator more clearly.

Contact Information for Participant and Store Management

It's important to have an open channel of communication with store management and tour participants. Always have the most current contact information for both the tour participant and the store management. Should there be changes regarding the tour such as agency staff changes due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances or cancellations of the tour, everyone will need to be contacted prior to the start of the tour. It may be helpful to send out a reminder email to store management prior to the tour date. This should be done at least one to two days prior to the tour date. You may also want to send a reminder text to your participants the day before to remind them of the tour as well including the time they should arrive.

Best Time to Host a Tour

The manager is likely to determine the time the tour can take place. Ideally, the morning time is generally better as shelves are typically well-stocked. The morning is also ideal because the store itself would be in off-peak hours with less traffic. However, it is important to stay flexible with the store times given.

Length of The Tour

The total length of time for your tour should be pre-determined through discussion between the agency and the store manager. The length may also depend on the educational activities planned during the tour.

Typically, one hour to an hour and a half (1.5 hrs.) is a reasonable length of time. Tours that are too long may not be acceptable for some participants, especially as they may have other commitments including children. Another consideration is to add buffer time for participants that do not arrive on time.

The following is an example of a tour that is one hour:

- First 10 minutes: Welcome, introductions, pre-surveys (if necessary)
- Next 40 minutes: The grocery store tour
- Last 10 minutes: Questions, post-surveys, thank-you's

4.3. The Tour Script-What to Say on The Tour

A pre-determined tour script, lesson objectives and activities will help the tour educator stick to the educational talking points they have planned. It is easy to become sidetracked or forget what you want to say. Having a printed tour script handy, that you can glance at should you get stuck or forget during the tour, will help you stay on track. The pre-determined tour script can be typed word-for-word, making for easier contingency planning. Otherwise, scripting the most important information will do if everyone on the team (including contingency staff) has a clear understanding of the educational talking points of the tour.

Consider sticking to a couple of main topics with appropriate talking points instead of trying to cover everything in one tour. Trying to cover too much information in a short period of time, may leave participants

overwhelmed, leading to poor information retention. The lesson plan guides what the educational talking points should be.

The lesson plan should line up with the tour objectives. For example, if the objective is to increase participant knowledge about reading and interpreting nutritional facts labels, the lesson plan should include information about educational topics related to reading nutritional facts labels. Lesson plans should be specific, for example, how to spot high and low sugar content in breakfast cereals using the nutritional facts label or how to identify high sodium on a can product.

In addition to providing educational talking points during the tour, consider adding tour activities that complement the educational content and get your participants engaged. The type of activity you offer would depend on what you are trying to teach. Activities could also be opportunities for participants to brainstorm meal ideas, find certain foods, create healthy food swaps, and more. Activities should ideally be educational, fun and engaging. You could include visual aids and resources for activities as well, such as fill-in sheets. Refer to our resources guide for more.

4.4. Educational Topics for Talking Points

The following are general educational topics you can consider when planning your educational content. Focus on the most important points you want to share. You may need to expand the amount of time needed for your grocery store tour if you wish to cover a lot of content. The following talking points are based on the MyPlate five major food groups Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, and Dairy that are recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Produce-Fruits & Vegetables:

- Americans do not eat enough fruits and vegetables
- MyPlate can be used to show 1/2 plate of fruit and vegetables per meal.
- Highlight vegetable variety and the rainbow of different colors including nutrient content
- Frozen and canned options of fruits and vegetables are a great way to save money
- Highlight in-season produce and the advantages
- Highlight the difference between organic vs non-organic produce

Protein-Meat, Eggs and Nuts:

- Highlight a variety of protein sources such as lean meat and nuts, eggs, dairy, and seeds as well as canned and packaged vegetable sources like beans, dry peas, lentils, and split peas
- Consider comparing the cost of whole pieces of meat vs pre-portioned pieces as they are often cheaper
- Compare the difference between ground turkey and ground meat
- Compare the differences in fat content and saturated fat in ground meat

Grains:

- Compare the different types of breads
- Discuss the difference between whole grain and non-whole grain breads
- Highlight whole grain options for cereals and pastas, and consider comparing fiber in whole grain and refined options
- Bread can be frozen if it is bought in bulk during store specials
- Show cereal comparisons and highlight whole grain options or sugar content

Dairy:

- Compare the different types of dairy and non-dairy products such as milk, almond milk, silk milk etc.
- Have a discussion on the fact that 90% of Americans do not reach their recommended daily value for calcium intake
- Highlight that plant-based "milk" products like almond milk can be consumed as a source of calcium, but they are not part of the dairy group as they are not the same as dairy

Other Education & Healthful Tips:

- Highlight cost-saving options like canned and frozen produce options
- Highlight the value of using store coupons and helpful grocery store apps for e-coupons
- Provide education on sugary beverages and alternatives including water. Highlight the fact that sugary beverages are one of the top sources of added sugar in the American diet.
- Talk about how important it is to avoid shopping while hungry - hungry shoppers often spend more and purchase more high-calorie items.
- Educate the shopper about the cost of pre-prepared food - although they may be convenient, they are also more expensive.
- Educate the consumer about creating a shopping list and know the store's layout - this will keep you from roaming throughout the store and possibly purchasing unnecessary items.
- Prepare a budget-having a budget or limit will prevent you from purchasing unnecessary items. Use only cash or debit cards.
- Consider educating about food product dating such as "best if used by/before" or "use-by" dates

Section 5: Resource Guide

1. Recipe weblinks (non-exhaustive)

- Recipes for healthy kids by USDA ([click here](#)) and by SNAP4CT ([click here](#))
- Multicultural recipes
 - Multicultural childcare recipes by USDA ([click here](#))
 - Multicultural recipe cards by TDA ([click here](#))
- Healthy, thrifty holiday menus by SNAP-Ed connection ([click here](#))
- Recipes according to seasonal guide by SNAP-Ed connection
 - Spring recipes ([click here](#))
 - Summer recipes ([click here](#))
 - Fall recipes ([click here](#))
 - Winter recipes ([click here](#))
- Recipes by category
 - Recipes categorized by SNAP-Ed partners ([click here](#))
 - Recipe video collections by SNAP-Ed partners ([click here](#))
 - WIC foods and recipes by Texas WIC ([click here](#))
 - Recipes according to meal type (breakfast, lunch, dinner, side dish, salads..)
 - By CalFresh ([click here](#))
 - By Iowa State University Extension ([click here](#))
 - By Illinois Extension ([click here](#))
 - By Purdue Extension Nutrition Education Program ([click here](#))
 - No added sugar recipes by SNAP4CT ([click here](#))
 - Gluten-free by Food Talk ([click here](#))
- Vegetarian and Vegan recipes

- By Food Talk-vegetarian ([click here](#)) and vegan ([click here](#))
- Recipes according to the source of protein by Kansas State Extension ([click here](#))
- Beverage recipes by Food Talk ([click here](#)) and Purdue Extension ([click here](#))
- No-fuss quick recipes:
 - 5 ingredients or less by SNAP4CT ([click here](#))
 - 5 ingredients or less by Food Talk ([click here](#))
 - Quick and easy meals by SNAP4CT ([click here](#))
 - Less than \$5 meals by Food Talk ([click here](#))
- Recipes in Spanish:
 - By University of Delaware Cooperative Extension ([click here](#))
- USDA MyPlate kitchen recipes ([click here](#))
- Printable recipe cards by USDA SNAP-Ed connection ([click here](#))

2. In-season produce guides

- SNAP-Ed seasonal produce guide ([click here](#))
- Texas Department of Agriculture seasonal produce guide ([click here](#))

3. Grocery shopping resources

- Weekly menu planner by Utah State University Extension ([click here](#))
- Food shopping print materials by USDA MyPlate ([click here](#))
- Grocery budget calculator ([click here](#))
- Printable grocery shopping package handout by Utah State University Extension ([click here](#))
- Modifying a recipe to be healthier by Ohio State University Extension ([click here](#))
- Printable MyPlate grocery store bingo activity ([click here](#))
- Canned foods printable infographics by the Canned Food Alliance ([click here](#))
- Food safety education materials by USDA WIC Resource System ([click here](#))

4. Print resources

- Printable MyPlate graphics ([click here](#))
- Printable educational nutrition infographics by USDA MyPlate ([click here](#))
- Print materials by USDA MyPlate tip sheets ([click here](#))
- Activity sheets for various settings ([click here](#))
- How to read nutrition facts label by Oregon State University ([click here](#))

5. Other useful weblinks

- Thrifty Meal Plan by the VA ([click here](#))
- Nutrition education materials by the USDA SNAP-Ed connection ([click here](#))
- Spanish language materials by USDA SNAP-Ed connection ([click here](#))
- SNAP retail locators by Food and Nutrition Service ([click here](#))

6. Evaluation and outcome tools:

- Food resource management from the SNAP-Ed toolkit ([click here](#))

7. Mock signup sheet

SIGN UP LIST: IN-PERSON GROCERY STORE TOUR (MOCK)

OFFERED BY: Organization name

DATE AND TIME: Mon, January 4, 2022
10:00 am - 11:00 am

COST: Free / \$5 / \$

LOCATION: XYZ grocers
4 Houston Way
Houston, TX, 77007



ABOUT THIS IN-PERSON GROCERY STORE TOUR:

- We are pleased to have you join our grocery store tour. You will learn about choosing budget friendly fresh produce
- You must sign up to join this tour. If you bring someone with you, they must sign up as well.
- Meet the presenters at the front of XYZ grocers 5 minutes before.
- Please bring ...
- If you have questions, please contact us at (number)

#	NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			9
10			

8. Mock blank sign up sheet

SIGN UP LIST: IN-PERSON GROCERY STORE TOUR

OFFERED BY:

DATE AND TIME:

COST:

LOCATION:



ABOUT THIS IN-PERSON GROCERY STORE TOUR:

-
-
-
-
-
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-
-

#	NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			9
10			

9. Mock recipe card

Whole Grain Strawberry Pancakes

Serves: 7 servings

Ingredients

• 1 ½ cups whole wheat flour	• 1 tsp baking powder	• ¼ cup water	• 3 Tbs sugar
• 1 container (6 oz) plain yogurt, fat free	• ½ tsp baking soda	• 1 ¾ cups sliced fresh strawberries (or other berries)	• ¾ cup water
• 3 Tbs sugar	• 3 eggs	• 1 container (5-6 oz) strawberry yogurt, fat free	

Instructions

1. Heat griddle to 375°F or heat 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Grease with canola oil if necessary (or spray with cooking spray before heating).
2. In a large bowl, mix together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt; set aside.
3. In a separate bowl, beat eggs, plain yogurt, water, and oil with a fork or whisk until well blended.
4. Pour egg mixture all at once into flour mixture; stir until moistened.
5. For each pancake, pour slightly less than ¼ cup batter from cup or pitcher onto hot griddle. After 1 to 2 minutes or until pancakes are bubbly on top, puffed, and dry around edges, flip them over. Cook other side 1 to 2 minutes or until golden brown.
6. Top each serving (2 pancakes) with ¼ cup sliced strawberries and 1 to 2 tablespoons strawberry yogurt.



Nutrition Information
 Calories: 240
 Total Fat: 9g
 Protein: 1.5g
 Sodium: 9g
 Total Carbohydrates: 150mg
 Added Sugar: 5g
 Fiber: 4g

10. Mock blank recipe card

Title of the Recipe:

Serves: _____

Ingredients:

Instructions:

Picture of Food

Nutrition Information
 Calories:
 Total Fat:
 Protein:
 Sodium:
 Total Carbohydrates:
 Added Sugar:
 Fiber:

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