



Plating Tips for Your Home-Delivered Meals Program

The Importance of Plating for Home-Delivered Meals

Plating adds value to the dining experience. An attractively-plated meal is more appetizing to diners and sends a message of quality that words can't express. **It tells people that you care about your craft and want them to enjoy their meals as much as you enjoyed preparing their meals.** This is especially important for older adults that are unable to leave their homes. Communicating this quality to people that are not able to access traditional dine-in meal services can positively impact the health outcomes of older adults. Some additional benefits include increasing participant retention, supporting the creativity of the kitchen staff and chefs, and setting a positive tone for at-home dining.

Key Presentation Factors to Consider

- **Color:** Color is an easy way to achieve beautiful plating. **Multiple colors are more appealing to the eye.** You can add color using fresh herbs and small edible garnishes.
- **Arrangement: Don't overcrowd a plate**—this can be overwhelming. Try to create visual interest with tactics such as laying chicken on top of veggies, rice, or pasta.
- **Texture:** Texture can increase meal satisfaction and takes two forms. One is the way food feels in the mouth: soft, firm, or crunchy. Second is the exterior

appearance of a food. **As with flavor and color, variety is key.** Food presented together on a plate should be balanced in texture.

Ideas for Enhancing Plating

Plating should be tailored to the populations you serve, the meal's cuisine (such as Italian or Taiwanese), and your delivery system such as daily, hot meals versus weekly, frozen meals. Here are some ideas that can be used for either scenario:

- Add an instruction card with ideas on ways to enhance the flavor of the meal with **available grocery items**, such as adding dried or fresh berries to shelf stable oatmeal packets or drying fresh bread in the oven to make breadcrumbs for any meal that needs a crunch.
- Deliver **small containers of fresh herbs** to allow for personalization in the flavor and look of meals.
- Make sure you also add information about **food safety**: how to store meals, how to reheat meals, when they should be thrown out, etc.

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