Member's Quarterly

Fall 2017 Edition

Feature

Planning Food Menus at Work

Common sense nutrition is anything but common



Teri R. Gentes

We have a number of catered meetings at breakfast and lunch. With so many people today with food allergies and special requests, can you give us some suggestions as to how we plan our food orders while maintaining a sensible budget?

Personal dietary needs/preferences are more predominant now than ever. Once upon a time, when food wasn't mass produced, overly processed, genetically modified, over consumed and additive laden (sugar, sodium, dyes, texturizers, flavours, colors, stabilizers), many of today's dietary diseases were non-existent. This is currently not our reality in today's world as more and more people contend with very specific dietary needs and/or determine to eat more healthfully.

Excess nutrient void food consumption has caused numerous digestive disorders with ever increasing numbers of people afflicted with food intolerances and allergies. Symptoms show up in numerous ways including chronic pain, fatique, inflammation, indigestion, insomnia, headaches, hormonal imbalances, weight gain, acne, hair loss and more.

In today's information inundated society, common sense nutrition is anything but common. Even decades ago Einstein said, "Common sense is not so common". Compounding this problem are the contradictory approaches on exactly what constitutes a healthy diet. Everyone has their beliefs and opinions influenced by industry, the media, so called diet gurus, culture, religion and of course their emotional attachments to food. However, a general poll of employees will quickly reveal most aspire to feel, look and age as wonderfully as possible.

Eating in the workplace can often be one of the most deviant culprits in sabotaging one's healthy intentions compromising the entire workplace environment. It's no secret that healthier people are more productive, personable, co-operative and motivated, improving company morale. When it comes to food allergies and special requests, regardless of an individual's specific dietary needs, quality nutrient dense food requirements are universal. In order to have employees embrace, commit and sustain nutritional menu choices, it is imperative to establish a corporate culture dedicated to healthy diets and lifestyles.

To create acceptance of such an initiative, educating employees on the correlation between food and health is necessary. Research validates 80% of our diseases are related to diet and lifestyle. In addition, subbing in fabulous tasting nutrient dense

food offerings is absolutely necessary — no one likes to feel they are being deprived of delicious foods. Collaboration with the caterers is necessary in providing quality food choices accommodating those with dietary restric-

tions, as well as those with dietary liberty.

The top food allergens are dairy, wheat, soy and corn with eggs, shellfish, tree nuts and peanuts running close behind. This may appear to be quite the challenge to accommodate, however with such a predominance of dietary related diseases, most caterers are already offering a wide variety of low-tono food allergens, low sodium, gluten free and vegan menu options that sub in well for the proverbial muffins, sandwiches, wraps, pasta salads, sugar



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laden cookies, etc. Super food shakes, main meal salads and salad stations, dairy/gluten free wraps, gluten free pastas and power bars are becoming increasingly popular.

These healthier options reap a win-win situation. Nutrient dense whole foods optimize one's overall health, mental capacity, blood sugar, triglyceride, hormone and energy levels. They also help with mood and weight management and more.

Make sure to consult with a quality caterer or qualified dietician/nutritionist to assist you in planning menus suitable for everyone for your next event. Offering healthier menu selections today makes perfect sense. Your employees will thank you and everyone will reap the benefits!

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