



The Kearney Center: Healthy and Filling Meals

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Good Shepherd Leads by Example

by Jessica Plank, Second Harvest Mobile Pantry Intern

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of getting a behind-the-scenes look at how meals get made at The Kearney Center. The head chef, Bill Schack, was gracious enough to let me into the kitchens while Good Shepherd Catholic Church was preparing their big Friday dinner.

Although I was originally sent over to assist with healthier diabetes-friendly meals, I discovered that Good Shepherd Catholic Church already knew a thing or two about how to build a healthy plate.

On the Menu

- Meatloaf
- Cauliflower & broccoli
- Mixed vegetable medley
- Mashed potatoes
- Bread
- Fresh fruit salad

What Good Shepherd Gets Right

The lead volunteer of Good Shepherd told me that they have been tweaking the meatloaf recipe for months, and their attention to detail paid off.

By focusing on a protein-based entrée, Good Shepherd frees up the rest of the plate for a

variety of carbohydrate options that are both nutrient rich and filling. The cruciferous vegetables, cauliflower and broccoli, are relatively low in carbohydrates and provide an excellent source of Vitamin C.

Meanwhile, the starchy corn and peas in the mixed vegetable medley are balanced by non-starchy green beans and carrots. With vegetable forward sides that are filling in fiber content, carbohydrate count is kept in check.

Bill Schack occasionally joked that the meal must not meet my standards for diabetes-friendly nutrition, but on the contrary the meal was healthy. Since Good Shepherd was smart in choosing the meatloaf and vegetables, regular carbohydrates such as mashed potatoes, bread and fruit could still be included in moderation.

Surprise Meatloaf Ingredients!

Don't worry, we're not referring to the chemical-laden kind of additives! The secret ingredient was whole oats instead of bread crumbs, along with vegetables like chopped bell pepper and celery. Even grated carrot or zucchini can be added, all providing for a filling and nutritious entrée.



Tips for Making a Healthy Meal

Learn different ways to incorporate healthy choices into your meal planning for The Kearney Center.

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How Agencies Can Help

There are specific things you can do as an agency to streamline the process for meal preparation.

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Tips for Making a Healthy Meal

Making a healthy meal can seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Following a few simple tricks, planning a balanced meal can come together quickly.



The USDA MyPlate provides an easy reference for the layout of a meal. In general, higher fiber foods found in vegetables, fruits and whole grains will provide a satiating meal. Here are a few other suggestions:

- ✦ Feature different non-starchy vegetables throughout the dish, both as a side and within the entrée.



- ✦ If choosing a carbohydrate dense entrée like macaroni & cheese or lasagna, have non-starchy vegetables as the side and fruit for dessert.
- ✦ Include fresh fruit when possible. If using canned fruit, choose those in extra light syrup or in its own juice.
- ✦ Have fruit or a small dessert but not both. Examples of portion size include 2 small cookies or a 2-inch square brownie.

- ✦ Choose sauces and soups that are lower in sodium. Try halving the salt in traditional recipes.

NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES EXAMPLES

artichokes, asparagus, green beans, beets, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, eggplant, mushrooms, okra, onions, peppers, radishes, salad greens, dark leafy greens, yellow squash, spaghetti squash, zucchini, sugar snap peas, tomato, turnip



How Agencies Can Help

America's Second Harvest of the Big Bend works directly with The Kearney Center by donating USDA surplus as well as setting up purchases from our warehouse.

Several third-party organizations volunteer to make meals at The Kearney Center but not all of them can pick up directly from Second Harvest unless they are already one of our partnered agencies.

Here are some ways you can specifically help:

1. Follow in the footsteps of Good Shepherd Catholic Church and consider planning a healthy meal.
2. Have an idea of what you plan to make a few weeks in advance.

3. If there is a specific food item or ingredient that you need for your meal, you can work with head chef Bill Schack and have him directly order from Second Harvest to be delivered at The Kearney Center on the day of the meal.

- ✦ The Kearney Center inventory typically has rice, dried beans, dried lentils, oats, lasagna noodles, as well as tomato/spaghetti sauce in stock. While the inventory at Second Harvest varies, items for order include an assortment of frozen and dried food items.