

# Healthy Meeting Guidelines

Adapted from NANA meeting and conference guidance at [www.healthymeeting.org](http://www.healthymeeting.org) and in collaboration with the Nutrition Department, the Harvard Chan Student Association, the Office for Student Affairs, and Sebastian's Café at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. For more healthy meeting resources, visit *The Nutrition Source* at <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/>.

## Introduction and Rationale

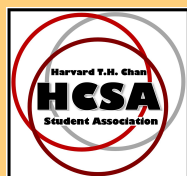
Creating a culture of health and wellness in meetings and conferences is an important way to help people eat well and be physically active, foster healthier work environments, and cultivate social norms around healthier choices and behaviors.

Studies show a strong relationship between the physical and social environments of the workplace and the health behaviors of employees. Nearly half of most people's waking hours are spent at work, and many of those hours are spent in meetings and conferences. Unfortunately, the foods and beverages available at meetings and conferences are often high in saturated fat, added sugars, and sodium, and contain few fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Currently, many people in America eat excessively large portion sizes, too much saturated and trans fat, sodium, added sugars, and refined grains, and not enough fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Implementing healthy meeting standards helps to create a supportive environment that cultivates a culture of health and helps employees and students to eat well. Adopting healthy meeting standards sends the message that health is important to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and that we support the health of our community. It models healthy behavior and supports the health promotion efforts of our school, ensuring that we "walk the walk."

Harvard University Dining Services' Sebastian's Café supports healthy meeting recommendations with a range of convenient service and menu selections, and is happy to work collaboratively with you to create unique menus tailored to your guests' tastes. When planning an event, talk to the manager or chef at Sebastian's—they are happy to work with you to develop an appropriate menu and address any allergies, religious dietary restrictions, or concerns you may have about the food.

**In the recommendations that follow, the symbol "★" signifies that Sebastian's fulfills that recommendation by default. All other recommendations are readily supported by Sebastian's upon your request.**



# Healthy Meeting Guidelines

## General Recommendations

- Support healthier choices, provide leadership and role modeling, and help to create a social norm around healthier choices and behaviors.
- Do not place candy or candy bowls in the meeting space.
- Inform meeting attendees about the healthy guidelines you are adhering to at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Consider displaying a sign at the catering table of your event to tell people that the food being served follows healthy meeting guidelines.
- Offer nutritious food and beverage options.
  - Offer recommended servings of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, especially for all-day meetings.
  - Place healthier foods and beverages in prominent positions, where they are most likely to be seen and more likely to be chosen.
  - Post calories, ingredients, and potential allergens in worksite cafeterias and at conferences and meetings when appropriate and/or possible.
- Consider only serving coffee, tea, and water (instead of sugar-sweetened beverages) at breaks that are not mealtimes, and provide time for stretching, mindfulness, or meditation.
- ★ Provide reasonable portions of foods and beverages (i.e., avoid large portions).
- ★ Ensure healthier options are attractively presented, appealing, and taste good.
- ★ Prioritize sustainable practices when possible, by minimizing waste, ensuring compost and recycling bin accessibility, and sourcing products from sustainable producers.

## Nutrition: Beverages

- Make water or sparkling water the default beverage.
- Only offer unsweetened or non-caloric beverages. When serving 100% juice, consider diluting it with water or sparkling water, or offering it in 8 oz glasses.
- Offer low-fat or non-fat milk with coffee and tea service in addition to or in place of half and half.



## Nutrition: Food

- Offer fruits and/or vegetables every time food is served.
- Provide a vegetarian option.
- If serving breakfast, aim for choices like steel-cut oatmeal, plain yogurt, fruit, nuts, and/or eggs. Avoid serving pastries or muffins, but if specifically requested for a catered event, offer whole grain pastries and muffins with fruits and nuts, and cut them in half.
- For lunches, breaks, or regular meetings serve fruit as dessert. For snacks, serve nuts, vegetables, and fruits.
- When planning an event with under 25 people, consider using a buffet, or asking your guests beforehand if they would prefer a half or full portion for their meal.
- ★ Offer reasonable portion sizes. In buffet lines or self-service, support sensible portions by offering reasonably sized entrees and appropriately sized serving utensils and plates.
- ★ Use whole grains whenever possible (100% whole grain or whole grain as the first ingredient), instead of refined grains and potatoes.
- ★ Serve healthier condiments and dressings in bottles and offer them on the side. Do not offer fat free dressings as flavor and taste are usually achieved by adding sugar and salt.
- ★ Offer lower-sodium options.
- ★ When offering meat, serve only poultry, fish, and shellfish. Avoid processed and red meats.
- ★ For special occasions and dinner, cut desserts in half or serve small portions.
- ★ Offer foods prepared in a healthy way (grilled, baked, poached, roasted, braised, or broiled).

