

Orientation to School Nutrition Management

Customer Service, Merchandising, and Food Presentation

Instructor's Manual

Time: 1 ¼ hours



Key Area 2: Operations
Learning Code: 2200

2017

**Institute of Child Nutrition
The University of Mississippi
Building the Future Through Child Nutrition**

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The purpose of the Institute of Child Nutrition is to improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

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The mission of the Institute of Child Nutrition is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

VISION

The vision of the Institute of Child Nutrition is to be the leader in providing education, research, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

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Background Information

Note to Instructor: The purpose of the background information section is to help you become familiar with the context of the lesson. It is not a part of the lesson detail.

The school nutrition staff may think that customer service, food quality, and how food is presented to students do not influence student participation. After all, the school nutrition program provides meals at a reasonable price that meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, jointly issued and updated every 5 years by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In addition, school meals are offered at convenient times, served in a facility convenient to the customer, and may be the only food available during the meal period. While it is true that these factors influence participation, they do not guarantee all students, or even a majority of students, will eat meals at school. School nutrition customers are no different from the customers who choose any other business. They want to be valued and treated with respect. In other words, students want to be treated like a customer. The purpose of this lesson is to develop an awareness of the importance of customer satisfaction, merchandising, and food presentation to the success of the school nutrition program. An attractive service line filled with nutritious food that tastes good and a courteous, friendly, and respectful staff on the serving line communicates to the students that you care about what they want. Customer service is the foundation for everything school nutritional professionals do. The school nutrition program's mission, vision, policies, and procedures should relate back to the customer.

It is important for the school nutrition staff to know and understand the school nutrition customer in order to meet their expectations. School nutrition has many internal and external customers. These include teachers, administrators, parents, students, and others in the community who are interested in the well-being of children. However, the student is the primary customer, and the main focus of school nutrition is to meet the dietary needs of the student customer during the school day.

For customers to be satisfied, school nutrition programs must provide outstanding customer service. What is customer service? Customer service may be defined as a

combination of product, price, presentation, support, information, and delivery that has value to the customer. The product in the school nutrition program is a school meal. By putting the needs of the student first, the school nutrition program provides nutritious meals that enhance academic performance and encourage the development of lifelong healthy eating habits. This is consistent with the original purpose of the National School Lunch Program which is “to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation’s children.”

What does a student customer expect? Today’s children eat out more often than children in previous generations. They expect the food, atmosphere, staff, and service line to look just like the food they purchase when they eat out in a commercial restaurant. They have grown to expect quick service, receive value for their money, and be greeted by a pleasant server. They want to see food that looks attractive, is bountifully displayed, looks fresh, and is tempting to select. Students eat with their eyes. If it looks good, they taste it. If it tastes good, they eat it.

The importance of linking food presentation and merchandising to customer service cannot be overstated. Connecting to the student customers with attractive, healthy, and flavorful foods increases the likelihood that they will participate in the school nutrition program. If the meal service and food presentation do not meet the expectations of today’s student customers, they will choose other options for school meals. Maintaining a strong customer base can make the difference between financial success or failure for the school nutrition program. The school nutrition program must be customer focused!

Role of the School Nutrition Director

We can all agree that students are our primary customers in the school nutrition programs. However, students are not all alike. Today’s students are typically a very diverse group. Meeting the needs of a large group of students can present quite a challenge for the school nutrition program. It is a challenge that requires teamwork by the entire school nutrition staff. The school nutrition program director is the team leader and sets the tone for how the staff responds to the customer. It is important for the director to strategically integrate all aspects of the food experience into training for the

staff. As leader of the school nutrition team, if the director sets high standards, the rest of the team will reach up to them. Conversely, if a leader sets low standards, the staff will reach down to them.

The school nutrition staff may not realize how much they can impact customer relations. They also may not know what actions they can take to develop positive customer relations. Coaching is an effective way to teach customer service and food presentation skills to the staff. The four-step model of coaching includes (1) telling, (2) showing, (3) practice and feedback, and (4) action. All four steps in the coaching model are essential in achieving the desired behavior. As a coach and role model, the school nutrition director should provide immediate feedback and encouragement. Coaching should be followed up with the director/trainer modeling good customer service and food presentation skills and giving the staff an opportunity to practice what they have learned.

For school nutrition directors to achieve the goals of a school nutrition program, they must meet the expectations of today's student customer. The school nutrition environment should be more than just a place that provides students with access to reimbursable meals. The school nutrition director and the entire nutrition team should create a relationship between the customer and healthy eating, nutrition education, and an understanding of how appealing food contributes to the dietary choices of students. To ensure the continued relationship, it is important to ask customers what they think about food quality, food presentation, and customer service. This evaluation component of customer service provides ideas and suggestions for improvement and helps identify problems and solutions for solving problems.

The primary mission of school nutrition programs is to serve the student customer and to make certain that school nutrition is an important part of the school team. This lesson provides important methods and management tools that will support the school organization in achieving a nutritionally sound program that meets customer expectations.

Functional Area 6: Marketing and Communication

Competency 6.2: Develop a customer service infrastructure to promote the school nutrition program.

Source: *Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills for District-Level School Nutrition Professionals in the 21st Century* retrieved from: <http://ICN.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=284>

Lesson Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will be able to accomplish the following:

1. Identify the customer.
2. State how the principles of customer service, merchandising, and food presentation relate to attracting and keeping customers.
3. Demonstrate how to use menus and meal themes as part of a merchandising effort to attract and influence the preferences of children.
4. Develop a method for evaluating customer service.

Lesson-at-a-Glance

Time Allowed	Topic	Activity	Materials
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to lesson • Opener 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Pre-Assessment • “What Students Say” and “What Students Hear” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant’s Workbook • Pre-Assessment • Flip chart • Markers • Note cards
Objective 1: Identify the customer.			
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is your customer? • Know your customer—their needs and wants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify your customer • Needs and wants • What factors influence their eating habits? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant’s Workbook
Objective 2: State how the principles of customer service, merchandising, and food presentation relate to attracting and keeping customers.			
25 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key elements of food presentation • Establishing quality standards for menu items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of customer service, merchandising, food presentation, and quality meal service • ICN Quality Score Cards for Quick Breads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant’s Workbook • Muffins, one per participant
Objective 3: Demonstrate how to use menus and meal themes as part of a merchandising effort to attract and influence the preferences of children.			
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merchandising the school nutrition program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a motto or logo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant’s Workbook • Flip chart • Markers
Objective 4: Develop a method for evaluating customer service.			
10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why evaluate customer service? • Self-Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer feedback • Sample Taste Test form • Quality Food Service Survey (self-assessment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant’s Workbook
5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-Up suggestions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation • Post-Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluations • Post-Assessment
75 minutes = 1 ¼ hours			

Preparation Checklist

Instructions: The following tasks are necessary for presenting this lesson. Assign each task to a specific person and determine the date that each task must be completed. Keep track of the progress by recording information on the tracking form and checking off tasks as they are completed.

Task	Person Responsible	Completion Date	√
<p>Reserve equipment and gather supplies as needed for use on the day of class (six weeks prior).</p> <p>Instructor's manual Roster of participants attending for instructor</p> <p>Participants' sign-in sheets</p> <p>Pre/Post-Assessment</p> <p>List of equipment and supplies needed Microphone (preferably wireless)</p> <p>Computer to present slides and DVD</p> <p>Projector and screen</p> <p>Wireless presenter device and laser pointer</p> <p>Flip chart paper (self-adhesive strip sheets)</p> <p>Painter's tape (do not use masking tape)</p> <p>Markers (flip chart)</p> <p>Pens, pencils, note paper, highlighters, self-adhesive notes, page markers, index cards (each table)</p> <p>Name tags and table tents</p>	<p>Instructor</p>		
<p>Participants' Workbooks Agenda, roster of presenters/participants, and handouts</p>			
<p>Evaluation (lessons and/or overall for each participant)</p>			

Lesson Plan

Introduction

SHOW: *Slide Customer Service, Merchandising, and Food Presentation*

Instructor's Note: *Have slide on the screen as participants enter the classroom.*

SAY:

Welcome to Customer Service, Merchandising, and Food Presentation. The purpose of this lesson is to develop an awareness of the importance of customer service and an understanding of how merchandising and the presentation of food in the school nutrition program are part of customer service.

SAY:

How we offer food and treat our student customers are two of the most important elements of getting students to participate in the school nutrition program. Take a moment to reflect on the students that come into your cafeteria and the comments you hear as they go through the serving line. Visualize yourself as a student in your school.

Instructor's Note: *Pick a grade level and set up a couple of scenarios—student who just flunked a test, student who just was bullied in the hall, student who just broke up with a girlfriend/boyfriend—and ask them to put themselves in that role.*

SAY:

Think about the things they say about different foods, the menu in general, things they like, and things they don't like. Use the note cards in the center of the table, and list at least two things you hear from students. *(Pause for about 1 minute to allow participants to make notes.)*

Next, I want you to think about what the students hear from the school nutrition staff as they go through the serving line. This time, think broadly and write down what you believe are the two most common phrases or statements made to children as they go through school cafeteria serving lines across the United States. *(Pause for about 1 minute to allow participants to make notes.)*

DO:

(Workbook Activity-Group) “What Students Say” and “What Students Hear”

SAY:

Work together at your table or with your neighbor to compare notes. After you compare notes as a group, decide on the top two things students say as they go through the serving line, and two things you think children hear from the school nutrition staff when they are in the serving line.

Instructor's Note: *Preset the flip chart with the headings: “What Students Say” and “What Students Hear.” Ask one person from each group to report two comments under each heading. Post on the wall when finished.*

SAY:

As you can see, the comments are very revealing about what students say and hear when they enter our school dining rooms. You might be interested to know that based on an unscientific observational study conducted on a small sample of schools, the top six statements made to a child as they walked through the cafeteria line were:

SHOW: Slide Six Top Statements Made by Staff to Children in the Serving Line

SAY:

Instructor's Note: *You can read these statements in different ways to make it more humorous especially # 2.*

#6 “Next!”

#5 “What do you want?”

#4 “Come on and get moving!”

#3 “Stop talking!”

#2 “Enter your PIN, TRY AGAIN. Oh, just tell me your name and I will do it!”

#1 The most common thing said to student customers: ***nothing!!***

ASK:

Do you think these students hear something similar when they enter a restaurant or even a fast food establishment? NOT likely!

SHOW: Slide Statements Customers Hear When They Enter a Restaurant

SAY:

Examples of the most common things customers hear when they enter a restaurant or when the waiter or waitress comes to their table are:

- “Hi, may I help you?”
- “Great to see you today; hope you enjoy your meal.”
- “Great choice of food selections today.”
- “Don’t you look nice today?”

ASK:

What would the impact be on customer service and merchandising if every school nutrition employee said one or two of these phrases to the students when they enter the cafeteria or move through the serving line?

Role of the School Nutrition Director

SAY:

Let’s pause before we get into the lesson detail, and think about your role as the director in the service of our student customers.

ASK:

Will someone share your thoughts about the director’s role in customer service, merchandising, and food presentation in school nutrition programs? (*Allow one or two participants to respond.*)

SAY:

Look in the Background Information in the front of your Participant's Workbook for a discussion about the director's role in school nutrition.

Objective 1: Identify your customer.

SHOW: Slide Objective 1

SAY:

As child nutrition professionals, you serve a very diverse group of students. They may come from different cultural backgrounds, income levels, and from other states or countries. With all the diversity in schools today, you can be sure the students in your district have different likes and dislikes. Remember too, that even students with similar backgrounds often have different food preferences. The thing they have in common is that they are your customers, and they are the reason for the existence of school nutrition programs. So, our first objective is that you identify your customer.

ASK:

Who can tell me what comes to mind when we use the term "customer"? (*Pause and allow volunteers to discuss the question.*)

SAY:

The customers for school nutrition are students who have wants, needs, and expectations. It is important to ask them what they want and what expectations they have, and then work as a team to deliver those requests.

SHOW: Slide The Customer for School Nutrition

DO:

(Workbook Activity) Identify Your Customer

ASK:

Can you answer these questions about the customers in your district?

1. Who are the primary customers, and who are the secondary customers?
2. What influences the needs and wants of the school nutrition customers?
3. What factors or groups influence your customers' eating habits?

SAY:

Answer the three questions listed on the slide in the space provided. You may work as a team. Take about 3 minutes, and then I will ask some of you to share your ideas.

Instructor's Note: *After about 3 minutes, ask a person from one of the teams to answer. This should take about 1 minute per group. Ask if there are other ideas and then point out any of the items below that have not been mentioned.*

FEEDBACK:

Include the following points.

Question 1: Who are the primary customers and who are the secondary customers?

- *The students are the primary customers of the school nutrition program; and for the purpose of this lesson, we will focus on the student customer.*
- *Our secondary customers include school administrators, teachers, support staff, and parents.*

Question 2: What influences the needs and wants of school nutrition customers?

- *Diversity: Because students who come to the cafeteria are so different, feeding them can be quite challenging.*
- *Age: Certain characteristics are typically common to students at various stages or times in their lives; these characteristics influence their needs and wants.*
- *Peers: Our adolescent customers have strong social needs and are often influenced by their peers.*
- *Culture: Students come from many regional and ethnic backgrounds that influence eating patterns.*

Question 3: What factors or groups influence our customers' eating habits?

- *How customers feel at a particular time of day*
- *The perception of how food served in the school meals program looks and tastes*
- *The amount of time to eat and enjoy the company of their friends*
- *The environment of the dining room*
- *Whether or not there is positive reinforcement of behavior*
- *The beliefs and practices of parents and teachers*

Source: Institute of Child Nutrition. (2003). *Focus on the Customer: Building a Customer-Focused Child Nutrition Program*.

ASK:

What about the students who do not eat in the cafeteria? Are they customers? (*Ask one or two participants to respond.*)

ASK:

What about the students who are free eligible that eat lunch but do not eat breakfast? Are they potential customers? (*Allow several participants to respond.*)

ASK:

What are some of the reasons free eligible students do not eat school meals? (*Allow one or two participants to answer.*)

SAY:

These students are certainly potential customers, and it is important to understand the needs and wants of ***all*** customers as well as potential customers. By understanding what they want and what they need, schools can make more informed decisions about how to respond to customer preferences. In order to understand how needs and wants of our student customers influence whether or not they eat school meals, we must define what we mean when we use the terms “needs” and “wants”. A *need* is something you *have* to have, something you cannot do without. A *want* is something you *would like* to have; it is not absolutely necessary, but you think it would be a good thing to have.

DO:

(Workbook Activity) Needs and Wants

SAY:

Work with your team to list two nutrition or food-related needs and two wants of the typical school-age child.

1. List two “needs.”
 - a.
 - b.
2. List two “wants.”
 - a.
 - b.

Instructor's Note: Ask someone from each table to report the team's ideas. If time permits, you may want to list on a flip chart. Allow discussion as the list is compiled. There are no right or wrong answers.

Objective 2: State how the principles of customer service, merchandising, and food presentation relate to attracting and keeping customers.

SHOW: Slide Objective 2

SAY:

Our next objective is to learn how the principles of customer service, merchandising, and food presentation relate to attracting and keeping customers. If we are going to meet the needs as well as growing demands of our customers, we need to understand how the basic principles of food presentation influence our customers' choice to eat or not eat in the school meals program. Think about this: regardless of the establishment you enter, whether it's a restaurant or retail store, the successful business grabs your attention as soon as you enter. The same rules must apply in the school nutrition program.

Instructor's Note: Have the group think about their reaction to a meal which had macaroni and cheese, cauliflower, white milk, a white roll and canned pears.

SAY:

Presenting food creatively can turn a dull looking foodservice line into a bountiful marketplace of healthful and appetizing eating opportunities. Students have the same impressions as most of us when deciding what they will select and eat as they come through the school meals serving line.

DO:

(Workbook Activity) Principles of Customer Service, Merchandising, Food Presentation, and Quality Meal Service

SAY:

Answer the questions and statements in the workbook activity as we discuss the information.

ASK:

Can anyone tell me some of the first impressions that might influence a student's decision to eat in the school nutrition program? (*Pause and allow participant discussion.*)

SAY:

Your answers are excellent. I think we can all agree that

1. We eat with our eyes—then our mouths.
2. If it looks good, we'll taste it. If it tastes good, we'll eat it.

Let us see how this works!

SHOW: Slide 5 Key Elements of Presentation

SAY:

Great food presentation includes several key principles. You may want to list some of these in your Participant's Workbook:

- First, presentation must follow the basic rules of menu planning. Good menus have a variety of colors, textures, shapes, and heights. And don't forget that simplicity plays a role.
- Second, there must be an organized and well decorated display or serving line. Fill the serving line with bright colors and have the food bountifully and attractively displayed.

SHOW: Slide Colorful Serving Line 1

SHOW: Slide Colorful Serving Line 2

SHOW: Slide Colorful Serving Line 3

SAY:

In the next few slides, you will see ways that the school nutrition team can present food to increase eye appeal and stimulate appetite. As you view the slides, you may think:

- We don't have the materials, tools, or ingredients to do this.
- We can't afford this.
- We don't have staff with the talent; after all, we do not employ professional chefs.

You are right about the challenges, but think about this: Could your program partner with a local chef? Could you establish standards so your staff could do some of these things? Can you modify ideas to use in the cafeteria? For example, you can decorate the serving line or arrange the food in a more colorful and pleasing manner.

SHOW: Slide Color

SAY:

Using color to increase eye appeal is one of the basic principles of menu planning.

ASK:

How often do you observe the finished plates in the cafeteria line? Are you always pleased with the color? (*Allow a few comments.*)

SAY:

Sometimes color in food is changed based on how it's prepared.

SHOW: Slide Color: Preparation Techniques

SAY:

You can see from this slide how overcooking can change the color and appearance of food.

ASK:

Have you ever had this happen in one of the schools in your district? What can directors do to help the food preparation staff understand why overcooked food diminishes the appetite? (*Allow comments.*)

SHOW: Slide Texture

SAY:

Did you know that texture is one of the most important attributes used by consumers to assess food quality? Think about how eating a taco gives your mouth a sensation of different textures. By combining crisp with soft foods, or vice versa, we get great presentation, and it is a party in our mouths! Of course, you don't have to combine the two textures in the same dish, but both should exist on the menu. When we go into a restaurant and order a green salad to go with our entrée, it's often because we want a mixture of textures, though that particular thought may be more subconscious than conscious.

ASK:

What are the texture combinations in the meal on this slide that make it more interesting? *(Allow 1 or 2 participants to answer.)*

FEEDBACK:

Combining crunchy carrots and crisp lettuce with the grilled chicken strips salad is much more appealing than a plain serving of chicken strips.

SAY:

When you are developing a menu, think about terms you can use to describe the texture in menu items to help students perceive them as appealing.

SHOW: Slide Texture Names

ASK:

How many of you use descriptive terms to describe the menu items when you publish the district menus? *(Ask participants who answer yes if they would like to share some of their favorite descriptive terms with the group. Ask participants to make notes in their Participant's Workbook if they hear descriptive terms they want to use.)*

SAY:

The next presentation principle involves shapes in food. Have you ever thought about how combining shapes makes food more appealing? We can add eye appeal by combining natural shapes or creating new shapes.

SHOW: Slide Shapes: Food Variety 1

ASK:

What shapes look appealing in this tray? *(Pause and allow 1 or 2 minutes for discussion.)*

SHOW: Slide Shapes: Food Variety 2

SAY:

A variety of shapes gives the impression of a variety of foods. Children will look at a sandwich cut in a different way as a different food.

SHOW: Slide Shapes Food Variety 3

SHOW: Slide Shapes Food Variety 4

SHOW: Slide Simplicity

SAY:

Simple, clean lines and shapes are most pleasing to the eye. Too much food on a plate or a tray that is too small causes the food to look messy and unappetizing. Notice the clean-cut lines of the food and how the soup is merchandized to make it whet the appetite.

SHOW: Slide Height

SAY:

A variety of heights is important for food presentation. Look at this slide and ask yourself, "How can I apply this concept in my schools?"

ASK:

Do any of you have techniques that you would like to share about how you add height on the serving line to make the food presentation more appealing? *(Allow participants to volunteer suggestions.)*

SHOW: Slide Self-Serving Packaging

SAY:

Pre-prepared or prepackaged salads are a great merchandising option for schools. Healthy, tasty, and attractive prepackaged salads offer students variety and choices. Presentation makes a big difference in selling prepackaged meals. Part of the challenge is to showcase the food products in an appealing way. This slide shows a relatively simple way to make a variety of salads and display them in an appealing manner.

ASK:

Can you think of ways a director can motivate the staff to implement the basic rules of food presentation? Take a minute to discuss ideas with your team. *(Allow a couple of minutes for participants to discuss and then ask for volunteers to respond.)*

Instructor's Note: *This can be done as a large group activity to save time—don't spend more than 2 minutes on this activity.*

FEEDBACK:

- Well planned menus take into consideration the principles of food presentation.
- Think of food presentation as an art.
- Remember that no matter how skillful you become at planning menus, the final presentation is a critical last step.

SAY:

You cannot talk about customer service and food presentation without discussing quality meals and meal service. The ICN publication, *Focus on the Customer*, reminds us that quality meal service relates to the entire school nutrition program, starting with the time the food is received at delivery and continuing to the time the customer leaves the dining room. Each school nutrition program should set quality standards that can be used to evaluate each menu item to ensure that an acceptable standard is in place. The quality standards should become part of the standardized recipe, and all production staff should be familiar with each standard. Foods that do not meet the quality standard should never be served to customers.

Establishing Quality Standards for Menu Items

SAY:

Quality standards and product evaluation are important aspects of food and nutrition customer service.

ASK:

What do we mean by quality standards? *(Allow one or two participants to respond.)*

FEEDBACK:

Food quality standards are the characteristics of food that are acceptable to consumers.

This includes factors such as:

- appearance (size, shape, color, and consistency),
- texture or consistency, and
- flavor and seasoning.

Using quality scorecards is an excellent way to evaluate food products for quality. The quality scorecards developed by ICN for use in *Culinary Techniques for Healthy School Meals* list the desirable characteristics of the various foods. Quality scorecards should be used by the employee responsible for preparing the menu item to score the finished product before placing it on the line.

DO:

(Workbook Activity) ICN Quality Scorecard for Quick Breads

Instructor's Note: *If possible, purchase a variety of muffins in sufficient numbers so each person has a muffin or a half of a muffin to score.*

SAY:

We are going to evaluate muffins using the ICN Quality Scorecard for Quick Breads. For your school nutrition program, it is best to use a product that has been prepared according to a USDA standardized recipe. For this lesson, we have a purchased product for you to score. Remember, purchased products should be evaluated before awarding the bid. Look in your Participant's Workbook for the scorecard. Take 10 minutes to pick up your muffin and complete the scorecard. You may want to partner with someone and score two muffins. Be sure to make comments when appropriate. *(Tell participants to mark "NA" by the bullet referring to a biscuit's appearance, but evaluate the muffin using all other quality standards. Allow time for participants to complete the scorecard.)*

Quality Scorecard for Quick Breads

Date: _____ **Recipe:** _____

Prepared by: _____ **Quality Scored by:** _____

Directions: When the food is ready to serve, use this Quality Scorecard to evaluate the quality. Mark **Yes** when the food meets the standard and **No** when it does not. Mark **NA** (not applicable) when a specific quality standard does not apply to the food being evaluated. Use the **Comments** section to explain why a food does not meet a standard.
Remember: If a food does not meet the quality standards, it should not be placed on the service line.

Quality Standard	Yes	No	NA	Comments
Appearance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Color is evenly light to golden brown. ▪ Sides are even and straight. ▪ Muffins have slightly rounded tops with no cracks. ▪ Muffins have rough, pebbled tops. ▪ Biscuits have a level top with no bumps. 	<input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> 	
Texture or Consistency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crust is tender. ▪ Crumb is moist but not doughy. ▪ Texture is even without large holes or tunnels. ▪ Bread breaks easily without crumbling. 	<input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> 	

<p>Flavor and Seasoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bread is fresh-tasting. ▪ Bread is free from foreign flavors such as rancid or sour taste. ▪ Flavor is light and pleasing. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Holding (Service) Temperature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Temperature should be appropriate for the product. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Source: Institute of Child Nutrition. (2009). *Culinary techniques for healthy school meals*. Retrieved from <http://www.theicn.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20091028015951.pdf>

ASK:

Did anyone have a muffin that did not meet all the quality standards listed on the Quality Scorecard? *(Allow a few participants to discuss and tell the class how they scored the muffin.)*

ASK:

Did anyone have a muffin that met all the quality standards? *(If someone answers yes, have them show the muffin and tell why they thought it met all standards.)*

SAY:

Remember, as the director you should work with your employees to set standards for quality, and then look for ways to meet these standards every day. Training will be important. Make sure your employees understand the standards and know how to meet them.

Objective 3: Demonstrate how to use menus and meal themes as part of a merchandising effort to attract and influence the preferences of children.

SHOW: Slide Objective 3

Merchandising Your Product

ASK:

Now that you have planned great menus and provided for beautiful food presentation, how do you convey that message to the students? (*Allow one or two to participants to respond.*)

SAY:

Merchandising is the way you encourage students to participate in the school nutrition program. How you present food and menus is extremely important, so is how your employees present themselves. Having a clean and bright serving line and staff in attractive uniforms is a signal that your school offers a quality program.

As a director, you must constantly deliver a message to everyone that your meals look good, taste good, and are the best bargain in town. Part of this message is through your marketing plan. However, part of merchandising is connected to food presentation. One excellent way to merchandise the food being served in the school nutrition program on any given day is through well-written menus that are published in an attractive manner.

SHOW: Slide Elementary School Menu

ASK:

How can the menu contribute to a merchandising program? (*Allow a couple of participants to respond.*)

FEEDBACK:

- Well-written menus with descriptive terms may influence students to want to eat in the cafeteria.
- Menus that include nutrition information help both parents and students understand that school meals are good for you.

ASK:

Think about this—when you go into a restaurant, are you influenced by the description of the menu item that you decide to order? (*Allow discussion.*)

SHOW: Slide Smarter Lunchrooms

Instructor's Note: *Explain that Smarter Lunchrooms was developed by a collaborative group, and they are working to come up with best practices which are simple, no cost, or low cost solutions that are reproducible and promote healthful eating habits. If possible, go to the website and read through the topics on the checkerboard. Tell the participants or show them that underneath each square there is additional guidance.*
<http://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/>

SHOW: Slide Serving Lines: Look Appealing

ASK:

Which of these displays would be most appealing to you if you were the customer?
Would you be critical of the jumbled-up display? (*Allow participants to comment.*)

SAY:

Most of us would likely react in a positive way to the more organized display of milk, and we would most likely criticize the less organized display if we were the customers. Put yourself in the shoes of the students, and develop a plan to ensure your serving lines are always clean, attractive, and organized. The impact of placement on the serving line should never be regarded as unimportant. Looks sell!

SAY:

Today, we want to help you get started thinking about ways you can merchandise the food and the school nutrition program. Writing a menu with descriptive terms is a start, but you should take it to the “next level.” Think about ways to present the menu to the students and then design a message. We are going to do a short activity to get your

creative juices flowing. Take your ideas from this activity back to your office and start merchandising.

DO:

(Workbook Activity) Themes

SAY:

Work as a group and develop a theme to use for a week in the school nutrition program. This theme can become part of your marketing plan for next year. List one specific way you can incorporate this theme into each one of the following areas of your school nutrition program:

1. The cafeteria
2. Working with teachers to integrate it into education
3. Marketing (i.e. menu, etc.)

Record your theme and plans of action for incorporating the theme on flip chart paper, and post on the wall when you finish. To help get your thought process started, look at the examples below.

Themes:

- Eat from the Rainbow
- Adventures in Healthy Eating
- Holiday Themes (Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, etc.)

Objective 4: Develop a method for evaluating customer service.

SHOW: Slide Objective 4

ASK:

Why do we need to evaluate our customer service? *(Allow two or three participants to respond.)*

SHOW: Slide Why Do We Evaluate Customer Service

FEEDBACK:

We evaluate our customer service to get the following information:

- to know what our customers think of our service,
- to gain ideas and suggestions for improvement, and
- to identify problems and solutions for solving problems.

SHOW: *Slide How Do We Evaluate Customer Service*

ASK:

How do we get this information from our customers?

FEEDBACK:

Ask customers for feedback, listen to what they say, and observe what they do.

DO:

(Workbook Activity) Customer Feedback

SAY:

Will someone from each group get a flip chart sheet to use in the next activity? As a group, record five characteristics or things that will help you get to know your customers' likes and dislikes. The characteristics can be on any component of the school nutrition program from food quality to dining environment. Take about 5 minutes to prepare the list. When you finish, post the sheet on the wall for everyone to view. One person from each group will report.

Instructor's Note: Allow 5 minutes for the teams to discuss and list the five characteristics. Then have someone from each team report. Allow all teams to report.

SAY:

Remember local policy will affect any evaluation conducted on school premises. You may need to get permission to do a written survey. Both formal and informal evaluations are useful. Examples of formal evaluations are surveys, focus groups,

interviews, and guided discussions. Informal evaluations include taste tests, customer feedback cards, quality scorecards, and temperature checks.

Instructor's Note: Refer to the workbook *Sample Taste Test Form*.

DO:

(Workbook Activity) Sample Taste Test Form

SAY:

The Sample Taste Test Form is one example of a form you can use to conduct taste tests with young children. With this form, children can simply mark the sad or the happy face to signify their dislike or like of the food they are sampling. This form will work well with kindergarten or first grade children. You may have surveys and other taste test forms that you have used at your school. This is the same taste test form that was used for the *Chefs Move to School* contest to develop recipes.

Sample Taste Test Form:

Instructions:

Circle or X the number that best answers each question; 1 is the worst and 6 is the best.

						
How does the food look?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How does the food taste?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How is the texture? How does the food feel in your mouth?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How does the food smell?	1	2	3	4	5	6
Was it the right temperature?	1	2	3	4	5	6
How do you like the food?	1	2	3	4	5	6

SAY:

We can take the information we gather from our customers and make necessary changes.

ASK:

Can you think of changes you have made based on customer feedback? If so, will you share your ideas? (*Allow one or two participants to respond.*)

SAY:

Perhaps you learned that the milk is not cold enough and the food is not hot enough. Perhaps you learned that the cafeteria servers do not smile and greet your student customers. Many times the adjustments we need to make to improve customer service do not require money—only a listening ear, observant eye, and the desire to serve the best quality of food.

Self-Assessment

SAY:

And finally, we must remember that self-assessment is as important as the evaluations that other people do. Look in your Participant's Workbook for a survey related to food quality and dining. Take 2 or 3 minutes to look at the self-assessment related to meal quality in your district. After you finish, we will ask some of you to share your thoughts on the benefits of using this type of evaluation tool and how it might be used.

Instructor's Note: *Monitor the group and when participants finish the self-assessment, ask them to share their thoughts about the self-assessment instruments and whether or not they have managers do self-assessment. Suggest to them that they could use this as a survey in addition to a self assessment and use it on all levels of potential customers. Note that this self-assessment is also from Focus on the Customer.*

DO:

(Workbook Activity) Quality Food Service Survey (Self-Assessment)

SAY:

Think about how your school district is currently engaged in improving quality meal service to provide excellence in customer service. Check each item as *Mission Accomplished*, *Mission in Progress*, or *Mission Needs Attention*. If you don't know which term is applicable, then write the word "unsure".

Quality Food Service Survey

	Mission Accomplished	Mission in Progress	Mission Needs Attention
Quality Meal Service			
Tasty food is served at the peak of freshness and at the appropriate temperature.			
Foods served have a variety of color, texture, height, and flavor.			
Food is displayed attractively on an organized serving line/counter.			
Servings are placed neatly on the plate or tray without spills.			
Food is served according to menu description.			
A variety of food choices is available.			
Prepared items follow standardized recipes.			
Fresh fruits and vegetables are offered daily.			
There are correct and consistent food portions for all customers.			
Safe Food			
Temperature of foods on the serving line is checked often.			
Food safety programs are implemented.			
Spills are cleaned promptly.			
Serving and eating utensils are clean.			
A clean place to sit is available after being served.			
Personnel are neat and clean.			

	Mission Accomplished	Mission in Progress	Mission Needs Attention
Dining Environment			
Service line moves smoothly with few backups.			
Dining area is attractive and appropriately decorated.			
Arrangement of table and chairs is attractive and supports social interaction.			
Staff is efficient and friendly, and environment is customer-service oriented.			
Staff embraces the value of quality meal service as part of customer service.			
Merchandising Efforts			
Menus are distributed to students on a regular basis.			
Students are involved in the menu planning process.			
Menu terms are descriptive and appeal to students.			
Menus are publicized with nutrient content.			

SHOW: Slide Thank You

DO:

Ask participants if there are any questions about the lesson and discuss answers.

Thank participants.

Follow-Up Suggestions

1. Ask students to give you feedback on meal service provided in the school nutrition programs.
2. Develop a theme day/week/month to promote the school nutrition program.
3. Ask each school site to complete the self-assessment form for Quality Food Service.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Coaching	A four-step training technique that involves (1) telling, (2) showing, (3) practice and feedback, and (4) action.
Culture	The behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group
Customer	A person who buys a product or service
Customer service	A combination of product, price, presentation, support, information, and delivery that has value to the customer
Eye appeal	The quality of appealing to the eye; attractiveness; beauty
Food texture	The feeling of the food in your mouth—not just one thing but lots of different sensations felt all at once
Merchandising	Any practice that contributes to the sale of products to a retail consumer
Primary customer	In school nutrition, the primary customer is any student enrolled in the school district that is eligible for the reimbursable school meals programs.
Quality food standards	The quality characteristics of food that are acceptable to consumers—includes external factors such as appearance (size, shape, color, gloss, and consistency), texture, and flavor; and internal factors such as safety aspects
Secondary customer	Secondary customers in the school nutrition program are the school district's faculty, administrators, support staff, and guests that are invited to eat at the school. Meals served to secondary customers are not eligible for reimbursement.
Taste test	A tool used to gather information about the flavor of a food or product

Supplemental Resources

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Pre/Post-Assessment

Customer Service, Merchandising, and Food Presentation

1. Characteristics of food that are acceptable to consumers are referred to as
 - a. Food Quality Standards
 - b. Culinary Techniques
 - c. Food Presentation Principles
 - d. Nutrient Standards

2. A technique used to encourage students to participate in the school nutrition program is
 - a. Nutrition Education
 - b. Customer Feedback
 - c. Merchandising
 - d. Forecasting

3. A key element of food presentation is
 - a. Texture
 - b. Height
 - c. Shape
 - d. All of the above

4. Which of the following is a **false** statement about factors that influence student eating habits?
 - a. Adolescent customers have strong social needs and are often influenced by their peers.
 - b. The age of a child has no influence on their food likes and dislikes.
 - c. The beliefs of parents about food customs influence student eating patterns.
 - d. The environment of the dining room can have an effect on a student's desire to participate in the school nutrition program.

5. A technique used to gather information about the flavor of a food product is known as
 - a. Quality Food Standard
 - b. Eye Appeal
 - c. Taste Test
 - d. Food Texture

Answers: 1(a), 2(c), 3(d), 4(b), 5(c)



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