# POWER Nutrition Policy



**Background**

The Promoting Optimal Weights through Ecological Research (POWER) group recognizes the importance of nutrition and is cognizant that, as a public health research group, we have a responsibility to model healthy food choices to ourselves, our peers, and the community at large. A significant part of the day is spent at work; accordingly a large part of our nutritional intake occurs while we are in the workplace. For this reason, it is also of personal significance that the food choices we make at work be in the promotion of our own individual health.

Our nutrition policy is based on the assumption that an environment which promotes healthy food choices is an environment in which these choices are more likely to occur. Our policy does not intend to restrict personal choice or freedoms at large, but rather to create an environment in which the healthy choice is the easy choice.

**Recommendations**

A POWER Catering policy should:

* Be *mandatory* for all events hosted by POWER;
* Be strongly *recommended/ encouraged* for events hosted by affiliated units, research groups, etc.;
* Consider Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating as the *minimum* standard to be followed, and where possible, exceeded;
* Be respectful of the environment;
* Be respectful of cultural and traditional diets;
* Allow for departures from the policy *in moderation* (e.g. special occasions such as holidays, major milestones etc.)

A POWER Catering policy should *not*:

* Dictate the types of food items that staff can bring from home for personal or shared consumption;
* While we should not restrict items from being brought to the workplace, we should mandate that less healthy options not be openly displayed in public areas. This includes the display of items such as candy, baked goods etc. in reception areas and would extend to the desks of individuals in these roles.

**General**

* The first consideration should always be whether food is required for a meeting or event at all. Food should not be served merely for social reasons; a short event that occurs between meal periods may not require the provision of food.
* Consider offering food only at longer meetings, or meetings which occur during typical meal times (i.e., between 7:30 – 9:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., after 5:00 p.m.)
* Consider the recency of previously served meals/ snacks (e.g., a mid- morning or afternoon snack may not be necessary during breaks at an event which also includes meals on either side of the break).
* Limit portions to a reasonable size (sizes should approximate those in Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating).
* When less healthy options are served, healthy options must also be available in greater quantities.
* Baked goods, cookies and pastries should not be regular choices and should not be served unless a full meal is also being provided. Additionally, these items should not be served more than once per day at a single POWER event.
* Vegetarian options should always be available and clearly indicated.
* In order to reduce waste, details regarding the nature of refreshments served should always be made available in advance of the meeting. For example, the meeting announcement or agenda could include a statement indicating that “coffee, tea, and water will be served” or “beverages and a light lunch will be provided.”

**Implementation**

 *Beverages*

* Water should always be the beverage standard and should be available at every event. Ideally, water should be served from jugs or large coolers when possible, rather than individually portioned water bottles.
* Coffee and tea service should always include decaffeinated options. Lower fat milk options (e.g. 2% milk or half and half 10% cream) and both sugar and sugar-free sweeteners should also be offered. Creamers over 10%, flavoured creams, and whiteners should be avoided.
* If fruit or vegetable juice is served, it should always be 100% real juice (unsweetened) and should be served in sizes of 250 ml or less.
* Serve lower fat milk and alternatives (2% or less milk and/or fortified unsweetened soy-beverages, where available).
* Soft drinks (including diet soda), energy drinks, flavoured waters, etc. are of low nutritional value and are therefore not recommended and should not be served.

*Foods*

* Include a wide variety of appropriately portioned items such as:
	+ Fibre-rich foods such as whole-grain pasta, brown rice and whole- and sprouted- grains in items such as bagels, wraps, muffins, crackers, etc.
	+ A selection of whole or cut fruit and vegetables should be present at every meal or snack and should be washed and ready to eat.
	+ Low-fat meat and alternatives. Order items which are baked, poached, grilled steamed or broiled (never fried).
	+ Low-fat milk and alternatives options such as low-fat milks and soy milks, low-fat cheeses, 2% yogurt, etc.
* Items which are high in saturated fats and/or sodium, or are heavily processed or are of low nutritional value should not be served, including:
	+ Processed cheeses, meats and poultry
	+ Full-fat dairy such as 18% coffee cream or full-fat yogurt
	+ Baked goods (such as pastries, Danish, croissants, donuts)

**Checklists**

*Required*

* Water
* Vegetables and/or fruit (washed and ready to eat, required when food is served)

*Optional*

* Wholegrain breads, pastas, crackers etc.
* Low-fat meat and alternatives (legumes, tofu, nuts etc.)
* Low-fat milk and alternatives (cheeses, yogurts etc.)

*Remember*

* Keep portion sizes reasonable (refer to Canada’s Food Guide for Healthy Living)
* Vegetarian options must be present
* Desserts and baked goods should be limited

**Catering**

When ordering catering, consider the following:

* **Portion size**. Ask your caterers to pre-cut larger portions into smaller servings.
* **Sauces and Dressings**. Can your caterers provide sauces and salad dressings that are lower in saturated fat and sodium? Can they be served on the side? Moreover, can you make selections which are lower fat, such as selecting tomato-based over cream-based sauces?
* **Dairy**. Can lower fat options be served with coffee (2% milk or half and half, instead of coffee cream)? Can lower fat cheeses and yogurts be served, in portion sizes as indicated in Canada’s Food Guide?
* **Whole Grains**. As you caterer to use whole grain products for sandwiches and wraps.
* **Baked Goods**. Ask for low-fat muffins and breads, with smaller portion sizes (or cut in half). Ask for high-fat, low nutritional value products such as danishes and croissants to be limited or omitted.

Where possible, select a caterer that is responsive to the nutritional and other requests of POWER.

**This policy was developed by:**

Sherry Trithart, MA, Kate Storey, PhD, RD and Andrea Cliff of the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta. It can be downloaded at: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~powerlab/resources.html> and is available for public use.