

National Park Service Healthy Food Choice Standards and Sustainable Food Choice Guidelines for Front Country Operations



June 5, 2012

Revised June 15, 2017

National Park Service Healthy Food Choice Standards and Sustainable Food Choice Guidelines for Front Country Operations

The *NPS Healthy Food Choice Standards and Sustainable Food Choice Guidelines for Front Country Operations* are designed to help the Service continue to build upon Call to Action Goal #8, Eat Well and Prosper.

These standards and guidelines were developed using a number of existing sources including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations \(2011\)](#); the [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#); and [21 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Part 101, Food Labeling](#).

The standards and guidelines are presented in two separate tables – one titled Healthy Food Standards and the other Sustainable Food Guidelines. Areas covered include food ingredients and choices, food preparation, and visitor/consumer education. The Healthy Food Standards provide food requirements that are straightforward and applicable irrespective of operation size. Sustainable food options can be more difficult to obtain and more expensive, and, therefore, need to be considered on a case by case basis. The sustainable food recommendations are guidelines rather than standards for front country operations, and should be used after considering technical and economic factors of the particular operation and the overall environmental benefit. Definitions for terms identified in the standards and guidelines are provided following the two tables in the [NPS Healthy and Sustainable Food Choice Glossary](#).

The Health Food Standards apply to new contracts effective in 2016. They may be applied for existing contracts if mutually agreed upon by the NPS and the concessioner. Concessioners are also encouraged to voluntarily adopt and exceed the minimum requirements where appropriate.

The NPS standards and guidelines focus on front country operations. The Service also manages concession contracts that provide food service in a variety of backcountry settings from hike-in lodges to rafting and mountaineering expeditions. There are unique nutritional requirements, logistical and other considerations associated with these types of operations. While the Service encourages healthy and sustainable food choices in all settings, it has not developed any standards for backcountry services.

The Service also provides food for visitors in a variety of retail settings from grocery and convenience stores to gift shops. The NPS will continue to seek out ways to foster the provision of healthy and sustainable food choices in these operations.

The cost and availability of goods, particularly those with sustainable food ingredients, can be higher than that of non-sustainable products. The Service will take such factors into consideration in its concession rate administration practices. The NPS will also collaborate with its concession partners to provide resources, tools, and training to parks and concessioners to assist in effective implementation of these standards and guidelines. The NPS will also recognize superior performance by concessioners in this area, both through regular evaluation processes and recognition programs.

Healthy and sustainable food choices and their availability and cost are evolving over time. The standards and guidelines will be periodically reviewed by the Service to ensure that they are appropriate based on the current state of the industry.

I. HEALTHY FOOD STANDARDS – FRONT COUNTRY OPERATIONS: These minimum standards apply to new contracts effective in 2016. They may be applied for existing contracts if mutually agreed upon by the NPS and the concessioner. The standards may be strengthened in existing contracts on a contract-by-contract basis following an NPS analysis of what is technically and economically feasible and appropriate given services, location and other factors specific to the contract. Concessioners are also encouraged to voluntarily exceed the minimum requirements where appropriate.

a. Food Ingredients and Choices: Applicable to the portion of the menu as specified.

i. Overall Menu: Applicable to the entire menu.

1. *Vegetable and Fruit Option:* Offer all entrées or full meals with at least one fruit or vegetable. Where food is available only à la carte, offer fruits or vegetables as side dishes on the menu.
2. *Low-fat and Fat-free Dairy:* Where milk and milk products are offered, offer low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products.
3. *Beverages with No Added Sugar:* Of the beverage selection offered, at least 30 percent have no added sugar (i.e., high-fructose corn syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, honey, sucrose, dextrose). Offering should be grouped when determining the percentage (e.g. diet flavored teas, diet sodas and non-diet sodas).

ii. For Certain Menu Choices: Applicable to two core menu items: one vegetarian and one non-vegetarian. Applies to sit-down meals as well as grab-and-go and cafeteria offerings.

1. *Light/Lite:* Entrée including sides is light¹, containing up to approximately 800 calories for adults and 600 calories for children when prepared according to the recipe.
2. *Low Fat:* Entrée is designated as low fat.
3. *Low Sodium:* Entrée is designated as low sodium.
4. *Whole Grains:* Where grains are offered in entrées, then a whole grain option must be offered for that item as the standard choice.

b. Food Preparation

1. *Portion Sizes:* Offer half servings or reduced portion sizes when possible (e.g., when items are prepared in bulk such as pasta and soups and are served to order).
2. *Frying Oil Used:* Offer the choice of steamed and grilled food rather than cooking in fat when food is made to order. Do not use artificial trans fats in frying or as an ingredient in any food items on the menu.

c. Food Education

¹ Underlined terms are defined in the *NPS Healthy and Sustainable Food Choice Glossary*.

1. *Signage and Labeling:* Use a designated symbol and key to identify “healthy choice” options which meet the NPS healthy food choice standards on menus, signs, or other materials to educate visitors on these items.² Use signs or other materials to educate visitors on the importance of healthy food.
2. *Placement:* For grab and go food establishments, healthier options are placed where they are noticeable and likely to be purchased.
3. *Nutritional Data:* For staple healthy food menu items, provide specific nutritional information upon request that includes, at a minimum, the labeling facts recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The percent of daily nutritional values and vitamin labels are not necessary.
4. *Marketing:* Do not offer fried food items as "specials" or "featured" items.

² Concessioner menus and menu boards are subject to review and approval by the Service per NPS policy and concession contract.

II. FOOD GUIDELINES - FRONT COUNTRY OPERATIONS: Concessioners are encouraged to voluntarily apply these guidelines where appropriate. These guidelines may also be used to determine requirements for new contracts, following an analysis of what is technically and economically feasible and appropriate given services, location, overall environmental benefit and other factors specific to the contract. These guidelines may also be used to identify criteria for existing contracts, which can be applied if mutually agreed upon by the Service and the concessioner.

a. Food Ingredients and Choices:

1. Sustainable Seafood³: Where seafood options are offered, provide those procured from responsibly managed, sustainable, healthy fisheries.
2. Fair Trade: Offer coffee that is fair trade-certified.
3. Sustainably Grown: Offer coffee that is shade grown.
4. Seasonal, or Locally or Regionally Produced: Offer seasonal or locally or regionally produced products and ingredients.
5. Organic: Provide menu items that could be labeled as being “made with organic ingredients”, “organic” or “100 percent organic.” Note: Organic foods are not genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
6. Hormones and Antibiotics: Offer meat, seafood and eggs that have no hormones and no antibiotics added.

b. Food Education:

1. Signage and Labeling: Use a designated symbol and key to identify “sustainable choice” options on menus, signs, or other materials to educate visitors on these items.⁴ Such items meet one or more of the sustainable food choice attributes. Use signs or other materials to educate visitors on the importance of sustainability and the sustainable components of the food and beverage operation.

³ Underlined terms are defined in the *NPS Healthy and Sustainable Food Choice Glossary*.

⁴ Concessioner menus and menu boards are subject to review and approval by the Service per NPS policy and concession contract.

National Park Service Healthy and Sustainable Food Program Glossary

This glossary contains common definitions and sources of terms used in the *Healthy Food Standards and Sustainable Food Guidelines Tables*. These terms are used in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations](#) (2011); the [2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#); and [21 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) Part 101, Food Labeling](#); and several other sources including state, local, and institutional standards where federal criteria were not available.

Fair Trade

Fairtrade International: Fair Trade - defines a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in developing countries. For additional Fair Trade definitions, see: [Fair Trade website](#)

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

7 CFR 205: GMOs are organisms whose growth and development has been influenced by means that are not possible under natural conditions or processes and are not considered compatible with organic production. Such methods include cell fusion, microencapsulation and microencapsulation, and recombinant DNA technology (including gene deletion, gene doubling, introducing a foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes when achieved by recombinant DNA technology). Such methods do not include the use of traditional breeding, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in vitro fertilization, or tissue culture. (See definition of “excluded methods” in regulatory citation.)

Note: Non-GMOs are not necessarily organic.

Note: Organic foods cannot be GMOs.

Light or Lite

21 CFR 101.56: “Light” or “lite” are terms that may be used on the label or in the labeling of a meal product and a main dish product, provided that the food meets the definition of “low in calories,” or “low in fat,” and a statement appears on the principal display panel that explains whether “light” is used to mean “low fat,” “low calories,” or both. (Refer to regulatory citation for more specifics on use of these terms.)

Low Fat

21 CFR 101.62: “Low fat,” “low in fat,” “contains a small amount of fat,” “low source of fat,” or “little fat” mean the food has a reference amount customarily consumed greater than 30 grams or greater than 2 tablespoons and contains 3 grams or less of fat per reference amount customarily consumed; or, the product contains 3 grams or less of total fat per 100 grams and not more than 30 percent of calories are derived from fat for meal products and main dish products. (Refer to regulatory citation for more specifics on use of this term.)

Low Sodium

21 CFR 101.61: “Low sodium,” “low in sodium,” “little sodium,” “contains a small amount of sodium,” or “low source of sodium” mean the food has a reference amount customarily consumed greater than 30 grams or greater than 2 tablespoons and contains 140 milligrams or less sodium per reference amount customarily consumed. The terms may be used on the label or in the labeling of foods provided that it meets these requirements. (Refer to regulatory citation for more specifics on use of these terms.)

Made with Organic Ingredients

7 CFR 205: "Made with organic ingredients" means that the product contains at least 70 percent organic ingredients.

No Antibiotics Added

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) [Meat and Poultry Labeling Terms](#) define "No antibiotics added" as a term that may be used on labels for meat or poultry products if sufficient documentation is provided by the producer to the Agency demonstrating that the animals were raised without antibiotics.

No Hormones Added

USDA FSIS [Meat and Poultry Labeling Terms](#) define "No hormones added" to mean:

Hormones are not allowed in raising hogs or poultry. The claim "no hormones added" cannot be used on the labels of pork or poultry unless it is followed by a statement that says, "Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones."

"No hormones administered" is a term that may be approved for use on the label of beef products if sufficient documentation is provided to the Agency by the producer showing no hormones have been used in raising the animals.

Organic

7 CFR 205: "Organic" is a labeling term that refers to an agricultural product produced in accordance with The Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, as amended (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.) and associated regulations.

Note: Organic foods cannot be GMOs.

Seasonal

H.R. 2419: "Locally or regionally produced agricultural food product" is any agricultural food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in: The locality or region in which the final product is marketed, so that the total distance that the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product; or
The State in which the product is produced.

Shade-grown

Coffee grown under a canopy of trees in a manner that is supportive of environmental sustainability including providing migratory bird habitat. Shade-grown may be demonstrated through certification through non-profit organizations such as the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center or the Rainforest Alliance.

Sustainable Seafood

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [FishWatch Program](#) defines sustainable seafood as "fish and shellfish caught for human consumption by fishermen operating under sustainable fishery management systems that conserve fish stocks and the ecosystems that support them." Verifying the health and sustainability of U.S. and international fisheries is not always simple. Domestic fisheries are managed by State and Federal agencies under legally established fisheries management plans. International fisheries are managed under sovereign laws and international treaties. Guidance on how to make sustainable seafood choices is found on the NOAA [Fish Watch website](#)

Whole Grains

USDA, Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010: Whole grains are grains and grain products made from the entire grain seed, usually called the kernel, which consists of the bran, germ, and endosperm. If the kernel has been cracked, crushed, or flaked, it must retain the same relative proportions of bran, germ, and endosperm as the original grain to be called “whole grain.” Many, but not all, whole grains are also a source of dietary fiber.