

Food Programming for Summer Camp

Leonard B. Day

Let us plan for the time when a horde of hungry youngsters will look to us for three meals a day. Let us plan carefully and in detail, for the results of our efforts will be on display three times a day to a critical group. A good food program will promote an atmosphere of good fellowship that lends itself to spiritual development.

The menus must be prepared before planning the purchase of non-perishable food and after determining what supplies will be available to the camp from the School Lunch Program. Whatever foods are supplied without cost must be incorporated into the menus in order to provide good meals at reasonable cost. With the exception of breakfast, menus should not be repeated in less than weekly cycles. The age of the campers is taken into consideration in planning the meals. The older groups usually prefer the more sophisticated dishes. Full use should be made of fresh fruits and vegetables available at reasonable cost in the latter weeks of the summer.

Before rushing to the market place with your grocery list, it is well to check into the tax exempt status of your camp organization, as most states grant exemptions to non-profit corporations. It is advisable to shop around among the whole-sale grocery companies and have the camp's credit established at the firms where you plan to trade. The purchase of canned goods in No. 10 cans in case lots is usually the best buy; however, split case lots can often be purchased without increase in case lot prices. The largest package commensurate with your needs will probably be the most economical. The perishables such as vegetables, fruits, eggs, meat, chicken, and ice cream will be cheaper in case or gallon lots provided the refrigerated space is available for storage.

Adequate Refrigeration Necessary

Every effort must be made to secure adequate refrigeration, as the availability of some foods from the School Lunch Program depends upon the cold storage facilities available for service. The proper preparation and preservation of foods depends greatly on refrigeration in summer weather. A careful check of the operating condition of these facilities is time well spent.

Storage Room for Dry Supplies

It is important to provide a secure storage room for dry supplies and limit the access thereto. Only those having direct responsibility for the food service should be permitted entrance to this supply room. It is well to remember in this connection that "Everyone's business is no one's concern."

Careful and Diplomatic Supervision

While every phase of the food program has ample room for error, the cook has the least opportunity to correct or conceal his misjudgments. The use of volunteers, unpaid cooks and kitchen helpers is wide-spread. This practice necessitates careful and diplomatic supervision by the head cook. It is helpful to use known and established recipes, as most housewives will be unfamiliar with quantity cooking.

Cooking at High Elevations

Since many camps are located in the higher elevations, careful consideration of the effect of altitude on cooking and baking is necessary. For example, at 7,000 feet elevation, water boils at 198 degrees. The cooking of food in quantity requires the use of large pots and pans and ovens. It is a mistake to try to satisfy this requirement with a multiplicity of household utensils.

Serving the Food Properly

Serving the food properly is a very important consideration, Hot food must be served hot and cold food must be served cold. The food must have an appetizing appearance and aroma. The cost of spices, seasonings, food colors and decorative foods is small compared to the beneficial effect achieved by their use. The serving area must be clean and well-lighted. The meal should be served without contact between hand and food. Those persons serving in the line should be neat in appearance with clean aprons. A helpful, pleasant attitude should be projected by those serving the food. The whole effect of the serving area should be such as to contribute to the anticipation of the campers.

Use of Leftovers

Even the most experienced cooks will be unable to estimate the exact quantities of food needed for each meal; therefore, there will be leftovers. With economy as our' watchword, we must try to use as much leftover food as possible. Leftovers must be changed in appearance, taste and form. For example: corn bread, toast and dry are served again in meat loaf or puddings. Mashed potatoes will appear again in soup, salad, or patties. Well-prepared leftovers are often more in demand than the original dish.

Sanitation—An Ever Present Concern

Sanitation in the camp kitchen and dining area is the ever present concern of those who work with food. Copies of the state law and other official requirements for public eating places should be available for reference and all requirements of the law should be carefully followed. Separate and convenient 'toilet and bathing facilities are advisable for food service personnel. All camp staff members should be made aware of the dangers of food poisoning and be prepared to correct at once any unsanitary conditions.

'STAY OUT OF THE KITCHEN'

The kitchen is a busy place for about 14 hours a day. A crowded kitchen can be a dangerous place. All personnel not connected with the food service should be requested to refrain from loitering in the kitchen area. A coffee break between meals at an established time and place helps to reduce traffic in the kitchen area. Limited sales from the Canteen or Trading Post at coffee break time does not seem to seriously affect the appetites of average campers.