Preparing and Evaluating a Commodity Food Recipe in the Elementary School Setting
By
Aleen Alnimri, Michaela Adkins, Mark Boron

BACKGROUND

- School nutrition programs in the United States are key providers in feeding nearly 74 million children living in the nation.¹
- Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program are required to meet certain guidelines.
- These guidelines limit fat and sodium and ensure access to appropriate protein, fruits, and vegetables for optimal child growth.
- Children can be picky eaters and it can be a challenge to create food choices that are pleasing to the students and meet the guidelines.
- In this project, students from the senior dietetics class at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) worked with foodservice staff from Erma Siegel Elementary School (ESES) to create a menu item utilizing commodity foods.
- There were twenty-one participants, both male and female between the ages of 10 to 42.

METHODS

- After meeting with the food service manager, we made a list of potential recipes we could use that would meet the cost and nutrient guidelines, use at least one commodity food, and have a high degree of acceptability with the students.
- After a cost analysis was conducted, a chicken salad with grapes and apples recipe was determined to be optimal for the experiment.
- The participants were asked to sample the recipe and answer a short survey.
- A nutrient analysis was performed using the FoodWorks 17 software program to compare the nutrients to the guidelines.
- The survey data was compiled and analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2016.

RESULTS

- Based on the results, most of the participants either “really like” or “like” the chicken salad according to its appearance, taste, and smell.
- Since the cost per portion was only $0.34, it would be a good recipe for schools on a tight budget.
- The recipe fell below the guidelines for calories, sodium, and trans-fat, but for saturated fat it was 3% over.
- Chicken salad with apples and grapes is a good candidate for school entrées because it includes two food groups (meat and fruit), meets most of the nutrient and cost guidelines, and children like it.
- Overall this was a very easy recipe to prepare, with only four steps and eight ingredients.
- Our recommendation to ESES was to use a light mayonnaise in the recipe to fix it being over in saturated fat and we hope it will one day be featured on the official lunch menu.

REFERENCE