



Lance Cpl. Anthony Castro, field artillery cannoneer, and Cpl. Devin Royal, field radio operator, both assigned to Battery B, Battalion Landing Team 3/5, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, toast bread on the mess deck of the USS Rushmore.
(PHOTO COURTESY: CPL. TIMOTHY CHILDERS, USMC)

Mastering HEALTHY Options

Marine Corps Menu is Prepared for Revised DoD Standards

When the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) last reviewed and revised its master menu in 2012, the primary focus was to continue increasing healthy options, such as featuring more foods that are lower in total, saturated and trans fats.

Having set that course, the Marine Corps already has a wide variety of healthy options available and anticipates it will not have to make dramatic changes when revised Department of Defense (DoD) menu standards are released once the final review is complete.

No release date has been announced, but the revised DoD menu standards contain a range of recommendations organized across many food categories, such as vegetables, fruits, grains, meats, dairy, etc.

The Marine Corps updates its master menu at least every three years. It also reviews menus annually and makes changes in response to customer feedback collected through patron surveys, as well as market trends and updated scientific evidence.

As a result, the USMC recipe database consistently provides a wide variety of healthy options. The USMC follows a 21-day menu cycle except for breakfast, which is typically on a weekly rotation because of the more limited variety of items.

BREAKFAST

Marine Corps breakfast meals start with assorted dry and hot cereals, as well as eggs/omelets. Available sides are breakfast meats, such as bacon, sau-

sage (pork and turkey), creamed beef, ham, Canadian bacon and corned beef hash. Supplementing the menu on a rotational basis are pancakes, waffles, French toast, rice and potatoes.

In addition, Marines can also choose from a variety of breads and pastries, as well as fruits, juices and milks.

“Many Marines consume breakfast, and we generally would mimic the civilian trends in this regard,” said Lt. Col. Richard Kohler, USMC, director Marine Corps Food Service and Subsistence Program. “From a nutritional, health and productivity position, all personnel should eat a meal prior to the start of the day.”

Breakfast is beneficial in fueling Marines and service members physically and mentally to perform daily activities. It is a reminder to “break the fast” following a period of sleep during which food is not consumed but the body continues burning calories.



Lance Cpl. Robert Carroll and Petty Officer Third Class John Gomolchak eat breakfast before a morning patrol at Forward Operating Base Zeebrugge, Helmund Province, Afghanistan. Most mornings, breakfast for the Marines consists of cereal and chocolate milk. (PHOTO COURTESY: SGT. BOBBY J. YARBROUGH, USMC)

Cpl. Andrew Donnelly, an assaultman with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, picks out his breakfast sides at Anderson Hall Dining Facility, MCB Hawaii. The chow hall is a financially savvy choice for Marines and sailors who live in the barracks and want to make most of their money to build a healthy diet. (PHOTO COURTESY: CPL. JAMES A. SAUTER, USMC)

“In order to perform and function optimally, members need to refuel both the body and the mind, as the muscles and the brain rely on a constant source of energy,” Kohler said. “If food is not consumed, the body continues to need calories and begins to break down the stored energy in the muscles and liver (glycogen) and even muscle tissue. Although most members have significant fat stores, it is not readily available for energy.”

Exercising without prior fueling is particularly troublesome. “As energy needs quickly outpace the body’s ability to break down stored fuel, the ability to think and reason suffers, resulting in poor performance and judgment and possible accidents,” Kohler said. “In some cases, time and schedules conflict and in response the Grab ‘n’ Go concept works to fill the void.”

These quick, healthy meals are very important to a Marine with little time to eat, but who wants to maximally fuel both body and mind. “Grab ‘n’ Go is especially important for those who exercise in the morning and need to replenish used energy stores yet are short on time,” Kohler said.

The Marine Corps does not track increases in the Grab ‘n’ Go program, but Kohler maintains it is gaining popularity at breakfast, and encouraging eating in the morning rather than skipping an important meal.



NUTRITIONAL PROGRAMS

Nutritional programs are set up to educate Marines to select healthy choices. Basic nutritional training is initiated for drill instructors and recruits. Also, nutritional education is included as part of a Marines’ annual training requirements. Any Marine can take the Marine Corps Institute Nutritional Training Course.

Emphasizing the importance of healthy eating for performance is the Marine Corps’ Go For Green program, entitled “Fueled to Fight” (F2F). Developed in 2011, F2F includes nutrition education and is named to be more appealing to the war fighter, as well as to emphasize the importance of healthy eating for performance.

An F2F component involves training for mess hall diners, as well as foodservice personnel preparing and serving the food. Only the foodservice personnel training component is released. “An updated Food Management Information system release is pending and, once fielded, will allow and require that all items served in the mess halls be color coded ‘Green,’ ‘Yellow’ or ‘Red’ based on some specific F2F guidelines,” he said.

Diets for the healthy military population are planned and assessed using quantitative estimates of nutrition intakes established by the Military Dietary Reference Intakes (MDRI), which is intended for use by personnel involved in menu development, evaluation and service.

The Marine Corps does not set nutritional guidelines and Marines are not expected to calculate specific nutrient requirements, but are encouraged to eat a variety of nutrient-dense

Agreement Brings Dispensed Juice Beverages to Food Service

Lyons Magnus and Ocean Spray Cranberries have signed a licensing agreement that makes Ocean Spray beverages available at more restaurants, hotels, schools, convenience stores and health care facilities.

Lyons Magnus is introducing Ocean Spray branded dispensed beverages to the foodservice market. Varieties include Cranberry Juice Cocktail, Orange Juice, Apple Juice, Lemonade, Cran-Grape, Cran-Lemonade and Diet Cranberry Juice Drink.

With the agreement, Lyons Magnus’ dispensing expertise and foodservice infrastructure combines with Ocean Spray’s juices, juice drinks and brand recognition.

“We are excited to combine the resources of our unique manufacturing strategies with the strong consumer brand recognition of Ocean Spray to offer foodservice operators a unique advantage in offering products that will resonate with consumers,” said Kent Walrack, president and COO of Lyons Magnus. “Our objective is to create a positive consumer experience in foodservice locations by offering great-tasting, high-quality Ocean Spray products in order to help increase their visits to those foodservice operators who offer our products.”

foods readily available at mess halls.

“When this is the consistent practice,” Kohler said, “the required nutrients will be consumed, as no single food or food group can provide all the essential nutrients needed.”

HEALTHY OPTIONS

When the Marine Corps master menu was revised in 2012, changes primarily aimed to increase healthy options, foods that are lower in total, saturated and trans fats, as well as added sugars.

Cooking methods also are being revised to reduce calories and fat, as well as improve the nutritional value of meals served to Marines.

“A significant change being proposed is the replacement of shortening (containing trans fat) with mono and polyunsaturated oils whenever possible,” Kohler said. “Further, only trans-fat free oils for frying and trans-fat free spreads will be used. This will require coordination with the food vendors and the procurement community.”

At the same time, more menu items are being made from scratch to reduce the number of highly processed foods and increase offerings rich in Omega 3 fatty acids.

“The goal is to continue cooking more from scratch as staffing levels permit,” Kohler said. “The revised DoD Menu Standards will help to push this initiative forward, as ingredients in some prepared foods, such as MSG and trans fat, are being eliminated whenever possible.”

All the services are cooperating to update the Armed Forces Recipe cards for taste, nutritional value, preparation methods, sodium content, etc. With more than 3,000 recipes and variations, he said, the initiative is expected to be completed over several years with revisions put into service as they are finalized.

“Once the revised DoD Menu Standards are approved, the services will coordinate with DLA Troop Support, via the Prime Vendor Programs, to obtain healthier items from vendors for use throughout the foodservice program,” he said. “This will require a phased-in approach as inventories are depleted and restocked with healthier items.”

DOD MENU GUIDANCE

When released, the revised DoD menu standards do present the potential for changes across the USMC master menu that will add to the variety of healthy options available to Marines.

Each category in the revised DoD menu standards

contains specific guidance. For example, a guideline in the meats and entrées section specifically addresses the fat content of breakfast meats. Entrées must feature a choice of two breakfast meats, one of which must be lower in fat (less than 12 grams per serving for patties/links and less than 5 grams of fat per serving for turkey bacon, Canadian bacon and center-cut bacon).

Other recommendations specific to breakfast are: fruit and fruit juices; grains and starches; dairy and eggs; fats and oils; sodium; beverages; and condiments.

Bananas are to be offered at breakfast when available along with a choice of two or more 100 percent fruit juices. A potential change needed across the Marine Corps under the revised DoD menu standards is juice supplemented with calcium and/or vitamin D, when available.

Revised Marine Corps menu standards for grains and starches require that all sliced bread contain whole grains with at least 2.5 grams of fiber per slice, and that at least one bread option is fortified with folate and iron.

One goal is to supplement fiber content in the Marine Corps diet. The revised standards, if approved, would require that cereal bars be offered with at least 2.5 grams of fiber per serving. A potential Corps-wide change is that the cereal bars may be substituted for a whole-grain bread choice.

Grains contribute to lower fat content in the Marine Corps diet. Revised standards recommend one whole-grain hot cereal without added fat is available at breakfast. Also, low-fat and/or low-calorie alternatives, including fruit, reduced-fat pastries, reduced-fat muffins, are recommended when donuts, sweet rolls or other pastries are served.

Under Dairy and Eggs, all milk is fortified with vitamins A and D with 1 percent or skim as the primary milk at every meal, when available. All meals should have low-fat and fat-free yogurt. Decaf coffee is also recommended to be available at all meals.

Egg whites or egg substitutes with reduced cholesterol are an alternative to whole egg items, based on demand. A potential change needed across the Corps is to offer Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) –enhanced eggs when available and if subsistence funding is sufficient.

Potential changes needed across the Marine Corps are only trans-fat free (0 grams of trans fat per serving) fats and oils used in recipes and for frying, and only trans-fat free spreads be used.

Butter must still be offered at all meals as a condiment.

—GFS