



Network for a Healthy California—Retail Program

Food Demonstration

T R A I N I N G K I T



Introduction

The *Network for a Healthy California—Retail Program (Retail Program)* provides a social marketing framework for the implementation of community-based merchandising and promotional activities for supermarkets, small chains, and independent stores in an effort to influence the purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables among low-income Californians.

The *Retail Program* uses a combination of in-store merchandising, such as point-of-sale signage and recipe cards; and promotional activities, such as food demonstrations and store tours to educate consumers about selecting and preparing fresh, canned, frozen, dried, and juiced fruits and vegetables at the point of sale.

The *Retail Program* works closely with each *Campaign* and *Program* within the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* to train representatives from community-based organizations, schools, churches, and health care agencies to conduct effective food demonstrations, store tours, and other promotional activities held at local food retailers. As a result, the *Retail Program* has become an invaluable partner for local retailers concerned about the health of the community they serve.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to provide partners of the *Network* with the knowledge and resources to effectively conduct a fun, interactive, and healthy food demonstration. If you are not part of a *Network*-funded project or you are performing demonstrations at locations outside of the retail environment, this toolkit will still provide adequate guidance for you to perform food demonstrations in your community.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Building and maintaining a partnership with a retailer in your community is critical to an effective food demonstration. For help on beginning a retail partnership, please review the partnership building materials available on the *Retail Program* Web site at: www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/retail. Once you've formed a partnership with a retailer, this toolkit will provide guidance on how to plan, promote, prepare, implement, and evaluate an interactive and effective food demonstration.



Overview

PORTRAIT OF A FOOD DEMONSTRATION

One way to promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables is to allow people to taste samples of quality fruits and vegetables such as fresh mango chunks, vegetable sticks, canned asparagus spears, or dried pineapple rings. While simple “taste tests” like these are a great way to showcase a particular item or expose a consumer to a new fruit or vegetable, a more effective way to encourage consumers to buy and prepare more fruits and vegetables is to host a food demonstration. A food demonstration is a “how to” presentation that involves instructing participants about ingredient selection, guiding them through each step of a recipe, and tasting a finished product.

An effective food demonstration will include:

- A recipe that meets nutrition standards set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These nutrition standards are known as the *CDC Products Promotable Criteria* (see [Appendix B](#))
- How to select and store the fruits or vegetables highlighted in the recipe
- How to prepare the recipe
- The health benefits of the recipe
- Ideas on how to fit the recipe into a family’s meal plan
- An attractive display of the finished product
- A tasting of the finished product



FOOD DEMONSTRATION BASICS

A food demonstration should present one or more recipes over a time span of 3 to 4 hours. A 4-hour demonstration is the best way to reach a large number of community members as they shop, but if your retail partner imposes time constraints, your food demonstration should last at least 3 hours. The number of people reached at your demonstration depends on the size of store, the time of the demonstration, and the effectiveness of any pre-promotions you have conducted.

A 4-hour demonstration with 4 staff members and ample space may look like this:

TIME	DESCRIPTION
9:15 – 10:00 am	Set Up
10:00 – 10:30 am	Food Demonstration Recipe 1
10:30 – 11:00 am	Fruit, Vegetable, and Physical Activity Game Wheel Activity/Q&A
11:00 – 11:30 am	Food Demonstration Recipe 2
11:30 – 12:00 pm	Fruit, Vegetable, and Physical Activity Game Wheel Activity/Q&A
12:00 – 12:30 pm	Food Demonstration Recipe 1
12:30 – 1:00 pm	Fruit, Vegetable, and Physical Activity Game Wheel Activity/Q&A
1:00 – 1:30 pm	Food Demonstration Recipe 2
1:30 – 2:00 pm	Fruit, Vegetable, and Physical Activity Game Wheel Activity/Q&A
2:00 – 2:30 pm	Clean up

Alternatively, a 3-hour demonstration with limited staff and space may look like this:

TIME	DESCRIPTION
11:30 – 12:00 pm	Set Up
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Food Demonstration Recipe 1
1:00 – 1:30 pm	Recipe tasting and Q&A (until samples run out)
1:30 – 2:30 pm	Second Demonstration of Recipe 1
2:30 – 3:00 pm	Recipe tasting and Q&A (until samples run out)
3:00 – 3:30 pm	Clean up

Each example varies by the number of staff available, the amount of foot traffic at the store, the amount of time the retailer allowed for the event, and the amount of space available to set up other activities. While your demonstrations will vary due to these factors, one thing that should remain the same is your ability to engage, educate, and empower consumers by letting them see, taste, and smell how wonderful fruits and vegetables can be.



QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED BY RETAILERS

While discussing your food demonstration with your retail partner, be prepared to address a variety of concerns that they may have. By allowing you to conduct a food demonstration at their store, retailers are giving you access to their valued customers which they have worked very hard to secure. What you do and say at your demonstration will reflect on them long after you've packed up and gone home. Understanding this responsibility will enable you to become a greater asset to your retail partner. Likewise, they will value your role in providing their customers with a professional, interactive, and beneficial service.

How much will these food demonstrations cost me?

- Remember that there are food demonstration companies out there that charge for their services. Reassure your retail partner that you are offering a free service and that your main objective is to increase fruit and vegetable sales at their location. Focus on the service that you are providing your retailers customers in the form of education and informative materials.

Quick tip:

- This would be a good time to mention or show your retail partner the free Nutrition Education Reinforcement Items (NERI) you will give to their customers to increase fruit and vegetable sales.

- Ask if the ingredients needed for the demonstration(s) can be donated. If the retailer cannot provide donations and is firm on this decision, you will need to purchase the appropriate ingredients.

Quick tip:

- Before you ask for food donations, it's a good idea to estimate how much you will need. Use the food quantity calculation chart on [page 8](#) to estimate how much of each ingredient you will need. Depending on the recipe you choose, you can provide samples for over 200 people for under \$40.
- If your retail partner cannot donate the food you will need, ask if you can purchase it at a discount. Do not use donations from other retailers for your food demonstration.

Will these demonstrations add to my staff's workload?

- Be very clear with your retailer what their responsibilities will be on the day of the demonstration (providing a space for the demonstration, allowing the use of their sink, access to an electrical outlet, etc).
- Gauge your retailer's interest. If they have a staff member that they would like to have trained on *Network* messages, invite the staff member to participate. If your retailer seems reluctant, be prepared to perform your demonstration with minimal involvement from their staff.

This sounds messy, what about the clean up?

- Reassure your retail partner that you'll be responsible for keeping your demonstration area clean and safe (i.e., putting a mat over extension cords and wiping up spills so customers won't slip).
- Give your retail partner an estimate on how long it will take you to set up and break down your demonstration area on the day of the event.

