
(con't) PRE-FRIED FOODS

Fried and pre-fried foods represent foods commonly served in fast food restaurants. Fast food items have a negative impact on the nutritional quality of the diets of children and adolescents and may increase risk for obesity. Children who consume fast foods consume more calories, total fat, and soft drinks, and less milk, fruits, and non-starchy vegetables compared with those who do not. Schools have a responsibility to model and reinforce healthy eating habits; therefore, pre-fried food items should not be available at every meal. School meals should help teach children healthy lifestyle habits by offering a variety of healthy foods every day.

What are Pre-fried Foods?

A pre-fried food is a food item that is submerged in oil during the cooking process. Whether the item is pre-fried, par-fried or flash-fried, it has been cooked in oil and is generally high in fat content and calories.

Using Commodities to Meet These Standards

Nutritional value is an important factor in the selection of processed commodity foods. The State Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs is exploring different options for processing commodity chicken items that are not pre-fried. Some examples include chicken fajita meat and grilled chicken products. Child Nutrition Programs is also searching for breaded pre-fried chicken products that are lower in fat and calories.

Menu Tips

- Decreasing the number of pre-fried menu items may require rearranging or balancing menu items. Try incorporating new entrées such as a teriyaki chicken rice bowl with steamed vegetables or replace a breaded chicken patty with a grilled version of the same item.
- Similar products from different manufacturers can have vastly different nutritional values. Look for chicken nuggets with lower fat and calories to place on the menu.

Recipe Ideas

- Alter current recipes to reduce the amount of pre-fried items on your menu. Replace the crispy chicken in your salad with a grilled chicken fajita meat. Instead of serving a fried burrito, offer a baked version with a side of salsa.
- For side items, instead of offering French fries, try mashed potatoes, noodles or rice. Roasted baby red potatoes may be a hit with older children.

