

Enhancing Cultural Mealtimes in Long-Term and Residential Care: Serving Diversity with Flavour and Care

Culturally inclusive meals are a vital aspect of person-centred care. They respect diversity and tradition, honour residents' identities, promote dignity, foster belonging, and enhance overall wellbeing.

To those with the authority to create impactful change, this resource highlights recommendations for creating culturally inclusive mealtime practices

Serving Diversity: Recipes for Inclusive Mealtimes

1 At Intake

- Take time to learn each resident's cultural and religious meal preferences, as well as favorite meals, recipes, condiments, and spices
- Encourage families to share their resident's favorite recipes, cultural dishes, and cultural cooking methods with culinary staff



2 In the Kitchen

- Partner with local cultural organizations, culinary schools, diaspora groups, food suppliers, chefs, and/or restaurants to:
 - Educate facility kitchen staff on diverse cooking methods and presentation practices
 - Source traditional ingredients
- Offer a variety of side dishes (e.g. rice, quinoa, pickled vegetables, beans/lentils, plantains, etc.)
- Retain traditional flavour in texture-modified and low-sodium meals by using culturally appropriate herbs and spices



For a complete list of recommendations:

Scan this QR code



3 At the Table

- Place culturally appropriate condiments and spices on the table (e.g., chili, fish sauce, vinegar, chutneys, etc.)
- Offer menus and mealtime communication aids to residents in their preferred language
- Allow residents of shared culture to sit together or create designated cultural dining spaces
- Offer flexible timing of meals that align with residents' cultural, religious, and social needs
- Ensure culturally meaningful meal presentation including traditional utensils and serving styles (e.g., glass teacups, chopsticks, finger food, etc.)



Flavour Connection: Bringing Culture to the Table

4 Family Involvement

- Listen to family feedback about mealtime experiences
- Invite families to be a part of the menu planning process
- Consult with families to create cultural dining environments
- Provide designated spaces for communal family and community dining



5 Community Connection

- Host cultural food nights with community organizations, diaspora groups, and/or families
- Celebrate cultural holidays with community organizations, diaspora groups, and/or families
- Facilitate residents' participation in community gatherings such as potlucks, festivals, or local cultural gatherings outside the facility



Policy on the Plate: Making Room for Taste

6 Facility Culture Change

- Provide training for all staff in relevant cultural food preparation, customs, traditions, preferences, and cultural inclusivity practices
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration among all levels of staff during mealtimes
- Ensure policies are in place and resources are available to enable staff to deliver culturally inclusive mealtimes



7 Advocacy

- Advocate for cultural mealtime accommodation policies
- Lobby for increased funding for culturally appropriate food supplies and services
- Create enforceable compliance criteria
- Use your position to advocate for higher-level policy changes and the creation of laws or regulations that mandate culturally inclusive care

***Note:** By 'culture' we are referring to all cultural, ethnic, and religious mealtime practices.

These recommendations are from a scoping review conducted in 2024, which identified barriers, facilitators, and recommendations to culturally inclusive mealtimes in long-term and residential care facilities. This review was conducted by the University of Calgary Centre on Aging.