

FOOD SERVICE NEWSLETTER



A Note from the Administrator

This fall season, we are continuing to emphasize collaboration and feedback from you and other stakeholders. Many changes that are being made started with observations and suggestions from you,

who eat the food daily; meal preparation supervisors; and even facility superintendents. Keep sending input our way to help shape improvements statewide. I also want to thank every kitchen staff and incarcerated worker for their dedication and professionalism. Kitchens across the state are shifting gears to meet changing menus, supply cycles, and seasonal needs, so every shift matters. Whether they are coordinating deliveries, managing coolers, or plating meals, their work directly impacts the health, stability, and morale of more than 13,000 people every day.

Apply For A Food Service Job!

Besides being an important player in one of the most vital parts of DOC's daily structure, you'll gain valuable work experience, and job skills, while strengthening your accountability and teamwork muscles—all qualities that employers are seeking. If you are interested in joining a kitchen crew, please send your name and DOC number on a kite to your local kitchen or Jobs department.

FALL MENU UPDATE - GUIDED BY YOUR FEEDBACK

We are excited to announce the fall 2025 Menu! The new menu features changes guided by feedback shared during facility discussions and direct input from the incarcerated population. Our focus remains on providing balanced, satisfying meals while maintaining nutritional standards and fiscal responsibility.



A few items with lower overall preferences, such as chowder, certain seafood offerings, the fruit burrito, and Salisbury steak are being retired. In their place, the menu introduces several new and returning options that better reflect popular choices.

We are hopeful that these menu updates show our commitment to collaboration and responsiveness, balancing operational requirements with genuine feedback, ensuring that meals remain both practical and enjoyable across all facilities.

We have made room for more popular and requested options such as:

- Cheeseburgers with all the trimmings (lettuce, tomato, onions, pickles)
- Chicken and Waffles
- Stuffed Cheese Manicotti with Meat Sauce
- Beef Strips with Mongolian Sauce
- 4oz Chicken Sausage link
- Build-Your-Own Breakfast Burritos
- Turkey Medallions (real whole slices of turkey)



Breakfast items include Cream of Wheat, Grits, and new sausage links, while sides expand to include Macaroni Salad, Potato Salad, Beet Salad, Three Bean Salad, and Sweet Potato Tater-Tots (Nuggets). We have also added a new 1.5oz Ranch Dressing which has already been received favorably.

The goal remains simple: balanced meals that are Nutritionally sound and genuinely enjoyable and preferred by those who are served the food we prepare.

FALL AND WINTER HOLIDAY MENUS

This season, we are serving a traditional holiday feast that brings the flavors of comfort and gratitude to every serving. Fresh Garden salad with dressing. The main entrée is a generous serving of oven-roasted turkey, with classic herb dressing and rich home-style gravy. Sides include fluffy mashed potatoes, baked sweet potatoes, green beans, and a whole-grain dinner roll with margarine. Cranberry sauce adds the perfect hint of tart sweetness to round out the meal. To complete the celebration, finish with a slice of holiday pumpkin pie and seasonal fruit.



THE CURIOUS JOURNEY OF KETCHUP

The first known tomato-based recipe appeared in *The Virginia Housewife* in 1824, written by Mary Randolph—Thomas Jefferson’s cousin. Back then, ketchup was a local farm-made sauce that included anchovies! By 1837, entrepreneur Jonas Yerkes was bottling and selling tomato ketchup across the United States. A few decades later in 1876, the Heinz company entered the scene. American cooks began adding sugar to ketchup in the late 1800s, giving it a sweeter edge than its earlier, tangier versions. By the turn of the century, ketchup found itself at the center of a food safety debate—specifically about the use of sodium benzoate as a preservative.

Henry J. Heinz responded by reformulating his ketchup to rely on ripe tomatoes, sugar, and vinegar instead of chemicals, making it safer and tastier. The result? The thick, glossy, sweet-and-tangy ketchup that has since become the nation’s favorite condiment. From its fishy origins to its modern squeeze bottle, ketchup’s history is a reminder that even the simplest sauces have a story worth savoring.



MONTHLY SPECIAL MEAL PROGRAM LAUNCHES

Starting this month, each facility will host a Special Meal at the end of the month. The program was developed in response to requests from incarcerated individuals and staff, piloted successfully at one facility, and has now received the full support of DOC leadership.

Future months may include other traditional favorites or facility-inspired selections (specialty meals will pause in November and December due to the already planned holiday meals and will be starting back up in January). Menus will rotate; everyone is encouraged to collaborate on ideas that reflect both preference and practicality, ideas and feedback can be submitted directly to the Food Services Department.

The October meal features a 6oz serving of roast beef (made possible through a favorable purchase that balances quality and cost) with traditional sides, and a special dessert.



This program is an example of how feedback, collaboration, and leadership support can turn a small idea into a statewide initiative that benefits everyone and reinforces the value of community engagement. Food is one of the few things we all share, and when it’s done well, it strengthens morale across all facilities.

Do you have a food-related fact, recipe, or short food related story you want to share? Send it to the Food Service Administration for publication in the next issue.

YOUR VEGGIES ARE VARIED

The vegetable group is an important part of our day. Did you know that vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups based on nutrients that we need to eat throughout the week? The subgroups are dark green, red and orange, beans/peas/lentils, starchy, and other vegetables.

The beans, peas, and lentils group include black beans, kidney beans, Lima beans, black-eyed peas, and red, brown, and green lentils. Don’t let the name fool you, because green peas and green beans don’t belong to this group!

The beans, peas, and lentils group are unique because it can count toward either your vegetable or your protein intake for the day.



CLOSING THOUGHTS: RECOGNIZING TEAM EFFORT

The months ahead bring new menus, new opportunities, and continued focus on improvement. Food service work is demanding, but it remains one of the most meaningful parts of daily operations.



We want to recognize kitchen teams for consistently meeting production standards, maintaining clean workspaces, and for the support of training new workers. The professionalism of the people in the kitchens and the care for what they do is evident three times a day, 365 days a year. We thank you for showing up, staying committed, and setting an example for others; what you do every day matters.

