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Review: Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events

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Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events. 2006. From Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health, 11 page booklet, download at www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com. Accessed November 2006.

Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events is a manual for individuals who are in charge of planning food-related events. This manual provides guidelines on offering more healthful food and beverage options at any type of event.

Do you notice that at office celebrations the buffet is full of high-fat, high-calorie offerings? Are there alternatives to donuts and pastries in the coffee room? Worksites are notorious for encouraging unhealthy snacking and menus. *Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events*, from the North Carolina Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch of the North Carolina Division of Public Health, may be the first step in informing office staff or program planners about healthful alternatives.

Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events provides 5 guidelines for event planners to follow. The guidelines are: (1) offer healthful food choices at breakfasts, lunches, dinners, potlucks, and receptions; (2) offer only healthful foods at midmorning or midafternoon meeting breaks; (3) identify and promote more healthful food and beverage providers; (4) keep food safe to eat; and (5) lead by example. Several tips to promote these healthful guidelines are presented, such as asking the vendor to stock the vending machine with baked chips, animal crackers and granola bars, and to stock the break room and refrigerator with 100% fruit juices and single-serving packages of vegetables; and asking the caterer to use lower-fat or fat-free preparation methods.

The Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events possesses numerous strengths. The booklet contains many helpful suggestions for planners. For instance, the manual lists more healthful food and beverage options—such as water, skim milk, unsweetened tea, fresh fruit, whole-grain products, and grilled or broiled meats—to serve at events. The fat and caloric content of commonly served food items are included, with sample menus for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Additionally, the manual is straightforward and easy to read, and it is written appropriately for the target audience. To motivate the reader, the booklet provides background information on why it is important to offer more healthful food and beverage options.

In general, the information presented is helpful, although there are a few areas for improvement. The use of colors adds more to the booklet by making the different sections eye catching, but in the sample menus the use of colors is confusing and distracting. The suggestions and tips are useful, but they are repetitive throughout the manual; specifically, the sample menus provide the same food and beverage

options in multiple areas in the booklet. *Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events* would be more beneficial by expanding the variety of food and beverage suggestions in the sample menus.

Overall, the *Eat Smart North Carolina: Guidelines for Healthy Foods and Beverages at Meetings, Gatherings, and Events* is a simple and useful tool that consumers, school food service directors, and event planners could use. This booklet provides many tips that can be easily used at any food-related function at a workplace or even at home to promote healthful eating habits. And best of all, it is downloaded free from the Web.

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