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CANADA’S NEW FOOD GUIDE: Eating Healthier to Live Better

Video duration – 15:25

In January 2019, Health Canada released its new revised food guide. It was the first update of the nutritional eating manual in 12 years. Long gone is the emphasis on serving sizes and the five food groups. Replaced now with larger portions of fruit and vegetables and more proteins — some from plant based sources and whole grains. The Food Guide has been around for 77 years, and is used by meal planners in many Government run institutions like schools, prisons and retirement homes. But what does it really mean to everyday Canadians?

Related Content on curio.ca
• Do Canadian schools need a food services makeover?
• Food for Thought
• The Great Food Revolution: Food of the Future (Part 4 of 4)
• News in Review, December 2017 – Mind, Body and Spirit: Exploring Healthy Options
• The Secrets of Sugar
VIDEO REVIEW
BEFORE VIEWING

Think about your most recent lunch or dinner. Record exactly what you had to eat and drink.

- Rank your meal on a scale of 1-5 from not very healthy (1) to really healthy (5).
- Is this meal a reflection of how you normally eat?
- Which drink or food item was the unhealthiest? Which was the healthiest?
- How could you introduce healthier options into your diet?

WHILE VIEWING

1. How many years has it been since Canada’s Food Guide was updated?
   - a) 12 years
   - b) 5 years
   - c) 2 years
2. What proportion of the Canada new food guide “plate” is filled with fruits and vegetables?
   ❑ a) A quarter of the plate ❑ b) Half of the plate ❑ c) The size of your palm

3. The food guide warns against eating processed foods. ❑ TRUE or ❑ FALSE

4. The meat and dairy industries have lobbied the government to be positively represented in the food guide. ❑ TRUE or ❑ FALSE

5. Which of the following are behaviour tips is included in the new food guide?
   ❑ a) Eat with others ❑ b) Cook more often ❑ c) Enjoy your food

6. Canada’s Food Guide is the second most requested document on the Government of Canada website. ❑ TRUE or ❑ FALSE

7. Which type of food is the Canada’s new food guide encouraging you to eat more of?
   ❑ a) Protein ❑ b) Plant-based foods ❑ c) Kale
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Give students the opportunity to talk to an elbow partner for a few minutes or use these questions as part of a class discussion:

1. Catherine Parsonage from the Toronto Foundation for Student Success voices her concern that some Canadians don’t have access to the kind of foods being recommended in the guide. What do you think she means? What factors would limit access to healthy food?

2. Were you surprised that most people who were asked about Canada’s Food Guide did not know about it?

3. Were you taught about Canada’s Food Guide in school?

4. Do you think the government should spend money informing Canadians about healthy ways to eat? Why or why not?
AFTER VIEWING

Return to your notes on the meal you detailed in the Before Viewing section. Use the new edition of Canada’s Food Guide to rank the health of this meal. Did your ranking change when using the new food guide? Why?
There used to be no other way to get this kind of information about nutrition and food. Now it's at your fingertips on your smartphone. So we're still doing something we started doing 50, 60 years ago, even though we don't really need to be doing it anymore.

– Aaron Wudrick, Canadian Taxpayers Federation

It is the responsibility of the government to do its best to provide us with guidance and support to make healthier choices easier. So I'd rather the government be in our fridges than the food industry, right?

– Dr. Yoni Freedhoff, University of Ottawa
ACTIVITY #1: Analyzing Media

Canada’s Food Guide is an interesting example of a media text that includes photographs, text and visual placement to present an argument. Answer the questions below based on the new Food Guide.

Consult the Canada’s Food Guide website if you need help answering these questions: [https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/](https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/)

1. Who created Canada’s Food Guide?
2. Why was it created?
3. Who is the intended audience?
4. What techniques are used to attract your attention?
5. How might different people interpret this graphic?

6. Which lifestyles, values and points of view are represented?

7. Which lifestyles, values and points of view are left out?

Some of the experts asked to attend consultations with Health Canada for the creation of a new guide included people specializing in areas like food security, obesity prevention, body image, Indigenous populations, nutrition, sustainability, diabetes and chronic disease prevention. These experts had to sign a confidentiality agreement stating they would not talk about the process or the content of the consultations. Why do you think Health Canada asked these experts to sign consent forms?
ACTIVITY #2: Comparing Food Guides

Your next task is to compare the food guides from around the world found on the following pages. Use the questions below to create your comparison — you can also add your own questions.

- What shape is used for the guide?
- Are foods categorized in groups?
- Are quantities of foods suggested?
- What foods are included?
- Are there any recommendations made about healthy eating?
- How does each countries food guide compare to the Canada Food Guide?

Korea’s Food Guide
France’s Food Guide
There are eight Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Antigua & Barbuda.

These Guidelines aim to promote healthy eating habits and an active lifestyle in order to prevent chronic nutrition-related diseases among the members of the population.

1. **Know and practise the Guidelines**
   - Eat different types of foods every day.
     - When planning meals, think of different colors, tastes, and nutritional values.
   - Include a variety of vegetables in your daily meals.
     - Use vegetables in meat/poultry/fish dishes and to make interesting drinks.
   - Choose to eat a variety of fruits daily.
     - Eat local fruits when in season because they are cheaper and of better quality.
   - Limit the use of salt, salty foods, and salty seasonings.

2. **FATS AND OILS**
   - Use more fresh herbs and seasonings and cook with less salt.

3. **SUGARS AND SWEETENERS**
   - Reduce the intake of food and drinks that are high in sugars and fats.
   - Read food labels to identify the amount of sugars and fats.

4. **VEGETABLES**
   - Make Physical Activity a part of your daily routine.
     - Do some moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes each day (swim, brisk walk, cycle).

5. **FRUITS**
   - Give baby only breast milk for the first 6 months of the baby’s life.
   - Baby needs only breast milk and no water.

6. **FOOD FROM ANIMALS**
   - Use safe food handling and food storage practices.
     - Wash hands before and during food preparation. Store foods covered and at the correct temperature.

7. **PEAS, BEANS, AND NUTS**

8. **STARCHY FOODS**
Japan’s Food Guide

Japanese Food Guide Spinning Top
Do you have a well-balanced diet?

for one day

Grain dishes
(Rice, Bread, Noodles and Pasta)
5-7 SV

Vegetable dishes
3-5 SV

Fish and Meat dishes
(Meat, Fish, Egg and Soy bean dishes)
2 SV

Milk
(Milk and Milk products)
2 SV

Fruits

Enjoy Snacks, Confection and Beverages moderately!


※SV is an abbreviation of “Serving”, which is a simply countable number describing the approximated amount of each dish or food served to one person.
ACTIVITY #3: Food Lobby Groups

What is a lobby group?

Lobbying is any attempt by private groups to influence the decisions of government. Lobby groups in Canada have to register so the general public are aware that these groups are meeting with government officials or sending them “communication reports” detailing their interests. Lobby groups can contribute to democratic decision making or they can interfere in democratic decision making by arguing from the point of view of their own self-interests.

How could lobby groups impact the creation of a new food guide?

Since the food guide is created by the government, consultations were held with the general public and experts in health and nutrition. Food lobby groups were also included in the consultation process but many experts warned that the food lobby cared more about profit than the healthy diets of Canadians.
**TASK:** Create your own adaptation of the visual for the new Canada’s Food Guide based on the interests of ONE of these four Canadian food lobby groups. Also, create a two (2) minute multimedia “pitch” to nutritionists and medical experts on your suggested changes.


**Lobbying** got its name from the observation that people would try to influence the votes of legislators in the lobby outside of the legislative chamber.

According to Maclean’s magazine, among the top lobbying groups in Canada in terms of number of communication reports and meetings granted with elected officials are banks, oil and gas companies, beef and chicken farmers, mining companies, and General Motors — who recently made the decision to shutter their car plant in Oshawa.
SOURCES

