Client Choice
Handbook
2019

houston
foodbank
Filling pantries. Filling lives.

Overview

We all care about the individuals and families who come to our pantries because we share a collective belief that no one should have to go hungry. Client Choice is a way to show that we care enough to serve them in a dignified and personal manner.

The goal of this Client Choice Food Pantry Handbook is to provide food pantries with resources and assistance to operate their pantry as a client choice pantry.

Contents

Introduction

WHAT IS A CLIENT CHOICE PANTRY?

A Client Choice Pantry allows clients to select their own food instead of receiving a pre-packed or standard bag of groceries. With this method, clients do not have to take items they already have, do not like, or cannot eat for health or personal reasons.

WHY GIVE CLIENTS A CHOICE?

Imagine your family needs food. You have a few food items at home, but it is not enough to make complete meals for the next few days. You decide you need to visit a food pantry. When you arrive at the food pantry, you are handed a pre-packed or standard bag with some items you already have at home. There are also some items your family does not like. You're not sure what to do with the food. If you had been able to select the foods you need and liked, you could have added to your pantry at home to make your meals go further and last longer.

BENEFITS OF CHOICE PANTRIES

• Limits food waste - customers take food they will use and leave the rest for others

• Makes ordering easier - pantries know what popular food to stock

• Upholds the dignity of clients

• Meets clients' health needs

• Makes clients feel like they are food shopping for their own food and needs

• Helps pantry staffs get to know clients better

• Reduce time spent pre-packing food items

Client Choice Pantry Model Types

Setting up a Client Choice Pantry is a bit like putting together a puzzle: all the pieces fit together, but you have to find the right way! Take some time to review the client choice models. Talk it over with your team. Then decide together which model might be best for your pantry; you can also choose to use a combination of the models. Any space can be made to work as client choice! The models described in this handbook can be modified to fit your pantry, or you can come up with a different way to bring client choice into your pantry.

Many things may affect your decision about how to operate a client choice pantry. They include:

- Equipment needs
- Physical space
- Staffing

There are many ways to operate a Client Choice Pantry. How do you decide which set up is right for your pantry? The following models will give you an overview of the different options. For more details on each model, please see the Client Choice Pantry Model Comparison Chart on pages 14 and 15 of this handbook.

Client Choice Pantry Models

- Supermarket Model
- Table Model
- Inventory List Model
- Window Model

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: THE SUPERMARKET MODEL

NW Assistance Ministries' Joanne Watford Nutrition Center which is in NW Harris county is an example of the Supermarket Model Client Choice Pantry. Client walk through the aisles to select their items. This pantry serves approximately 1600 - 1700 individuals per month.

Client waiting area and intake area

Protein items

Clients shopping for bread items

Clients shopping

Clients shopping for produce

Freezer and refrigerator space

THE SUPERMARKET MODEL

Description

Food is set up on shelves by food groups. Clients walk through the space and select food off shelves according to pantry guidelines. The food storage room and the place where clients select their food can be in the same location. Staff do not need to move the food items on days when clients come in. The whole pantry's stock is open for clients. The space needs to be large enough to display foods and allow clients to walk through. This model allows clients to handle food and look at the labels just as if they were shopping in a grocery store. Pantry space will determine how many clients can shop at a time. This model is considered to be the most client-friendly, since it simulates a typical grocery shopping experience.

Four Easy Steps to Making It Work

1. Organize food on pantry shelves by food groups.

2. When clients sign in, the worker gives them a Food Card listing how many items they may take based on family size (see pages 24-25). Alternativity, you can place erasable labels on the pantry shelves.

3. Clients walk through the pantry alone or a team member can walk them through the process.

4. Like in a supermarket, clients can "check-out" and pack their food in a bag or box with the help of a pantry worker. Pantry workers also check to see if the client has taken the amount and type of food that they are allowed based on their family size.

Equipment Needs and Physical Location

Your pantry needs enough shelving space to display the available food in the pantry. A refrigerator or freezer with clear glass to view products is helpful for this model, but not necessary. If this type of equipment is not available, a list of available refrigerated and frozen foods can be posted for clients to choose from. Grocery carts and a table for "check-out" would also be helpful, but not necessary.

Pantry Team Member Tips

• It is important to have team members available before the pantry opens to ensure the pantry is organized and food is stocked on shelves.

• Team members may need to re-stock and straighten shelves during pantry hours.

• If a team member guides client through the pantry, this offers a chance to talk about the food options.

• If clients do not speak or read English, the pantry might need a translator or food pictures to help with the process.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: THE TABLE MODEL

Hebron SDA which is in the Acres Homes area in north Harris county is an example of a Table Model Client Choice Pantry. Hebron SDA sets up tables in the church's small Fellowship Hall to distribute groceries to about 400- 500 individuals per month.

Client intake station

Food storage

Resource table

Table set up

Clients selecting food items

Client shopping

THE TABLE MODEL

Description

If you do not have enough permanent space or equipment for a Supermarket Model, the Table Model might work best for you. Food is set up on tables by food groups. Clients walk by each table to select and pack their food. The pantry needs enough room for clients to walk by each table. Pantry workers can stand by the food tables to guide clients and answer questions about the food. This model can serve many clients at one time. This model allows clients to physically handle food as they would do shopping at a store.

Hebron SDA- grains

Three Easy Steps to Making It Work

1. Organize food on tables by food groups.

2. When clients sign in, the worker gives them a Food Card listing how many items they may take based on family size. Tables can also be labeled with the number of items that can be chosen from that table. (See pages 24-25)

3. Clients walk by the tables to select and pack their food.

Equipment Needs and Physical Location

Your pantry needs enough tables to display the available food. Arranging tables in a U-shape or an L-shape can maximize space.

Pantry Team Member Tips

• Team members may be needed before, during and after open pantry hours to set up, supervise and take down tables.

• It is helpful if the store room and the room displaying the food on tables are close together. If not, dollies or carts are helpful (but not required) to transport the food items.

• Work in pairs to lift heavy cases or containers of food onto tables.

• Staff can accompany clients or stand by each display table to help if needed.

• If clients do not speak or read English, the pantry might need a translator or food pictures to help with the process.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: THE INVENTORY LIST MODEL

Riverside Baptist Church Crisis Closet in Walker County is an example of an Inventory List model client choice pantry. This pantry serves approximately 200- 400 individuals per month.

Client sign-in station
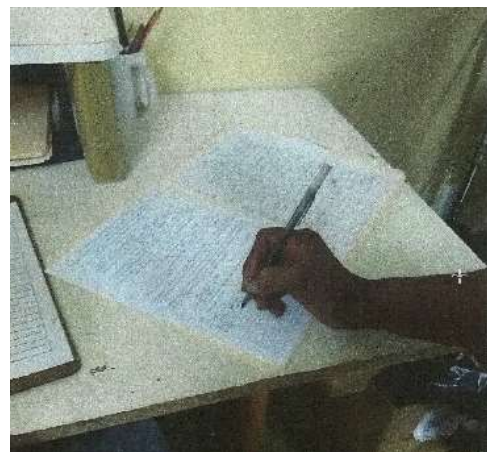

Client intake & client selects food items from list

Client file & item list is submitted to stock room

Volunteers read list, fill order, check off items

Order & file is delivered through second window

Client receives items & signs out

THE INVENTORY MODEL

Description

A list of food available is posted or given to clients. Clients select their food from the list. Team members then assemble the client's food bags based on the items selected from the list. This model is helpful for clients who have trouble moving around and for agencies with very limited space. Clients are able to select foods without having to leave their seats.

inventory list of available items

Three Easy Steps to Making It Work

1. When clients sign in, the staff member gives them a Food Card listing how many items they may take based on family size. The staff person also shows the clients the list of food available, which can be on a piece of paper or displayed on a white or chalk board.

2. Clients write on a piece of paper, check a list of choices, or tell a worker their food choices.

3. The pantry team packs the selections into a bag or box.

Equipment Needs

Your pantry needs materials to make a list of foods in stock. You can use paper, pens/pencils, and clip boards for creating a paper food list. A copy machine or computer printer is helpful to make copies of the paper list for clients. Or you can write the food list on a dry erase board or a chalk board and place it in a visible location.

Pantry Team Member Tips

• Update shopping list as inventory changes.

• Use waiting time to share nutrition handouts, recipes, cooking demos and other menu ideas with the client.

• If clients do not speak or read English, the pantry might need a translator or food pictures to help with the process.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: THE WINDOW MODEL

This pantry is an example of the Window Model Client Choice Pantry. This small pantry serves approximately 145 clients a month with a 468 square foot waiting room and a 180 square foot storage room.

Entrance of Church

Client intake station

Client waiting area

Food storage area

Pantry storage area

Client picking up groceries

THE WINDOW MODEL

Description

Clients select the type of food they want by standing outside of the pantry and verbally selecting the food items they would like by looking at the items that are on the shelves. Pantry staff then pack the food bags according to the clients' choices and family size. This model helps offer client choice when the pantry has limited space and/ or limited staffing. One special consideration is that the window model can only serve a small number of clients at one time.

Four Easy Steps to Making It Work

1. Organize food on shelves by food group and ensure that all items are visible from the window or door.

2. When clients sign in, the worker gives them a Food Card listing how many items they may take based on family size, or a sign can be placed by the window with all the details.

3. Clients select food by pointing to the items they want.

4. The worker picks the food items off the shelf and packs the food into a bag or box.

Equipment Needs and Physical Location

Half door or window that provides easy viewing of pantry storage space.

Pantry Team Member Tips

• It is important to have team members available before the pantry opens to ensure the pantry is organized and food is stocked on shelves.

• If clients do not speak or read English, the pantry might need a translator or food pictures to help with the process.

MODEL COMPARISON CHART

MODEL	DESCRIPTION	EQUIPMENT	SPACE
Supermarket	Food is set up by food groups inside the pantry. Clients select their food as they walk through the pantry. Workers may help guide clients through their choices or check them out when they have finished shopping.	Shelving **Optional:** Refrigerators and freezers with clear glass doors to view products. Carts to move food Check-out table Food Cards showing clients how much food they can take.	A space large enough to display food on shelves and enough room for clients to walk through safely.
Table	Food is set up on tables by food groups. Clients walk by each table to select and pack their food.	Tables **Optional:** Carts to move food. Food cards showing clients how much food they can take.	A space large enough to set up tables with room to walk in between the tables.
Inventory list	A list of food in stock is posted or given to clients. Clients select their food from the list. Workers then assemble the clients' food bags.	Paper or board/dry erase board to list food in stock. **Optional:** Clipboards to hold paper lists. Copy machine or computer printer. Food cards showing clients how much food they can take.	Will work in any space. Intake area and food storage area do not need to be next to each other.
Window	Clients stand outside the pantry area, but can see the food in the pantry. Clients select by pointing to the food they want.	Shelving visible to clients. **Optional:** Half door with counter at entry to pantry. Food cards showing clients how much food they can take.	Will work in any space where clients can see the food.

MODEL	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGE
Supermarket	Pantry team members have more one-on-one time with clients, enriching their volunteer experience. Allows clients to ask workers specific questions. Store room and place where clients select food are the same. Many clients can be served at one time. This is the most client friendly model as it simulates	Planning in advance is required to set up foods by food groups. May need additional space, shelving and tables.
Table	Don't need a dedicated pantry space. Many clients can be served at one time.	staff need to set up and break down tables. Lifting food onto tables may be difficult for some staff.
Inventory list	Very small space needed to offer client choice. Clients can select food for themselves without leaving their seat in the intake area. Good for clients with limited mobility.	Difficult for clients with low reading level or English as a second language. Need to update food list as inventory changes.
Window	Very small space needed to offer client choice.	Can only serve a limited number of clients at one time. Clients are further away and can't hold the product. This is difficult for clients with low reading level or English as a second language.

Getting Started

Before making the switch to client choice, plan ahead by doing the following:

Stock more of the popular food.

- What foods do your clients often ask for?

- Do you run out of some food before others?

Stock less of the unpopular food.

- What food do you receive back in food drives?

- What food do you find in trash containers outside the pantry?

- What food do you have problems giving out?

Make food drives count! If you organize or benefit from food drives, encourage people to donate specific foods that are popular with your clients.

Offer several recipes to your clients. Recipes that can use the same staple ingredients for three days are helpful for clients to plan balanced meals.

Display selection tips for clients. By displaying tips and cooking suggestions for making healthier choices toward a balanced meal, this may help move fresh produce and other unpopular items more quickly.

www.choosemyplate.gov/infographics

Change the foods you offer clients from time to time. In the meat and non-meat protein group, offer salmon, ground beef, and venison at one time; and tuna, ground turkey, and peanut butter at another time. Change is good!

Remember: Your pantry will be setting item limits, so you won't see much of a difference in the amount of food you give out. You may see one big difference: quick turnover of the popular food and more leftovers of unpopular food. Client choice will help you make the most of limited resources, by keeping more food on your shelves! Since you will be giving your clients the food they want, they may need to visit your pantry less often.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Greeter
The greeter will greet and acknowledge all customers in a friendly and professional manner. The greeter is responsible for the opening and closing of door or entrance/exit, directing customers to the client sign-in table, as well as giving an overview of how the program operates to all new clients.

Sign-In
Sign-In person(s) watches over client intake process or fills out TEFAP paperwork for clients. This position makes sure forms are completed thoroughly, as well as signed by each client.

Stocker
The stocker position organizes, and stocks shelves that clients will be shopping from during distribution.

Product Organizer/Inventory Control
The Product Organizer will log all incoming food. This volunteer will make sure the product that comes in from the Foodbank or various food drives is checked, dated, separated and stocked.

Shopping Assistant
The Shopping Assistant works directly with the client while they shop. This person will engage the client in conversation while making sure they take the correct amount specified for each family size.

Bagger
The Bagger will bag all the client's groceries after they are finished shopping.

Carrying Assistant/Runner
The Carrying Assistant or Runner will make sure the clients get everything to their vehicle quickly and efficiently and help the client load all their items into their vehicle.

Manager/Supervisor
The Manager or Supervisor makes sure the pantry is operating smoothly and efficiently.

Floater
The Floater will be responsible for helping out where needed. This person will float from station to station to make sure everything is running smoothly, and other volunteers don't need help. This person will also relieve other volunteers from their job duties for a short time if they need a break or time away.

*Not all of these positions are needed to run a Client Choice Pantry. The above positions are simply suggestions.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Won't our pantry run out of food if we have client choice?** Client choice does not mean clients can take any amount of food they want. Pantries have guidelines for how much food clients can take according to household size.

2. **How will we know what food to stock?** With client choice, popular food moves faster. After a few months, you will see how to stock your food, how often to order, and how much to order.

3. **How can we move unpopular food or items that may spoil quickly, such as ripe fresh fruit and vegetables?** When offering these items to your clients, let them take as much as they can use. Being generous with extra servings of fruits and vegetables can help move these items quickly. Contact the food bank for help in marketing some of these foods to your clients through cooking demonstrations, food tastings and recipe handouts.

4. **Does client choice mean we have to increase our variety of food?** Not at all, you can keep the same types of food. If you usually pack a can of corn, peas and carrots in every bag, now clients can select three of any of the vegetables: corn, peas or carrots.

5. **Will client choice cost more for the pantry?** Many food pantries have successfully made the change from the standard pre-packed food bags to client choice without additional funds. The client choice system can require fewer staff and volunteer hours since the bags are packed as clients come in and select their food. Compared to standard prepacked bags, client choice can cost less to operate!

6. **Our volunteers don't like change, what happens if they don't like giving clients a choice?** If you think you may encounter resistance to a choice system, start by making small changes, such as having clients select items, such as fresh produce. Each month you can increase the number of foods that clients select, while pre-packing the rest. Eventually, you will make the switch to full client choice. Small steps will help volunteers and clients alike feel good about the changes. Often volunteers are happy to no longer be packing bags, because this can be hard work! Client choice gives team members the opportunity to speak to clients about likes and dislikes enhancing the consumer's experience and restoring client dignity.

7. **Will client choice mean more work for my volunteers?** Implementing a client choice pantry will not require more time from workers, but it will mean using their time differently. Volunteers will spend more time serving and talking with clients instead of packing bags. Most of the volunteer time will be spent during program service hours rather than before clients arrive.

8. **We have a line around the block for our pantry, how can we offer client choice in our program?** If your program uses two hours to pack bags and two hours to give out bags, this totals four hours of volunteer time. Since you no longer need volunteers to pack bags beforehand, you can use all four hours of volunteer time to serve clients. You can let your clients know that your program hours will now be longer, so they will not all arrive at the same time.

9. **Our pantry is very small. How do we physically make Client Choice work?** Often the biggest concern of traditional pantries considering conversion is that there is not enough space to operate a Client Choice pantry. But with a little creativity, all sizes of pantries can work a successful Client Choice model! Below are some things to keep in mind when planning for the physical conversion:
   - Adjust the arrangement of food on the shelves to suit client shoppers
   - Convert some storage space to aisles with shelves to increase the total "browse-able" area and allowing more clients to shop at a single time.
   - Use stackable or expandable shelving units to maximize the use of space between the floor and the ceiling.
   - Downsize bulky counters and put shelves in this space or use the window model

10. **How can our client choice pantry accommodate the needs of senior citizens?** This is of interest to pantries converting to client choice since senior citizens may have special dietary and physical needs and/or limitations that need to be addressed. This is where the shopping assistant will prove truly vital. Volunteers can help senior clients read labels, assist in selecting foods, carry the basket or push the cart, and even do the physical shopping for the client. Each client may have different needs that the volunteers should be able to accommodate. While it may be difficult to plan ahead for all types of senior needs or disabilities, there are several things that you may want to consider while strategizing the implementation of client choice:
    a. **Placement of items on the shelves**: If your pantry uses tall shelving units to maximize space, be sure to have a volunteer that can reach all shelves aiding the clients who may be unable to reach as high. Do the same for items placed on shelves near the floor as some clients may be unable to bend down far enough.
    b. **Baskets and/or carts**: While your pantry is strongly encouraged to utilize at least one or the other, make sure to have physically-able volunteers in the event that certain clients are unable to either hold a basket or push a cart on their own.
    c. **Reading, browsing, and making food selections**: Visually impaired clients will have difficulty knowing what foods are available to them and a hard time reading labels to compare nutrition facts or product details. It may be necessary to tell the client about every food option, read labels, and make very important decisions for the client, such as identifying certain food items that contain or do not contain certain ingredients.
    d. **The physical layout of the aisles and shelves**: Some clients may arrive at the pantry using walkers, canes, or wheelchairs. For these clients to "shop" successfully (or simply accompany the volunteer as the volunteer pushes and loads the cart or basket), you may wish to consider the width of each aisle or distance between shelves to accommodate all types of mobility-aiding equipment.
    e. **Products for seniors**: With so many seniors frequenting the pantries, your client choice pantry may wish to stock personal items mostly relevant to senior citizen living.

What are Partners saying about Client Choice?

"We at Riverside Baptist Church Crisis Closet feel giving each client the choice or to select the items they prefer keeps down waste.   If they do not like items chosen earlier, they may not like or cannot eat which results in them throwing away." **Riverside Baptist Church**

*"We were able to go from that concept [prebagged groceries] into really a **small supermarket** so now we are giving them the choices, so we don't have so much waste, we are giving them choices of healthy things and people leave there with adequate supply. And It helped stretch their budget."* **NW Assistance Ministries**

Abba's Pantry

"In our pantry it's client choice they choose the items that they need, its much like going in a grocery store and with the Link2feed it is more efficient and it's faster service. Link2feed has helped us build a better relationship with our clients." **Abba's pantry at Abiding Faith UMC**

"when we decided to make the change to allow people to come into the pantry [client choice], you won't believe how many naysayers I had. Everybody told me what would be going wrong, instead when we opened the very first day and did this, everybody discovered 'hey it works faster'. The people [clients] would say 'oh I don't need that' and so it worked out so much better. We had one lady, when we got to the end, she was sacking up all her groceries she said, 'this is wonderful' she said, 'this is like going to Walmart'." **Pasadena Community Ministries**

*"I have found that the **table model** works for us because of the limited space we have for the food pantry. We have to use the fellowship hall or else we would have to use the route of bagging up items and giving to them as they drive through or serve outside. We try to have a variety of items to try to meet the needs of all our clients as everyone doesn't eat, use or even like the same things. We choose client's choice so the clients can look and see at a glance all the items available and make choices of what they need. Each client is given a piece of paper with how many is in their family to show to the volunteers, so they can get as much as they need for their family. We realize that a family of 6 or 8 would need more than a family of 1 or 2."* **Hebron SDA**

Is your Pantry Ready?

IS YOUR PANTRY READY?

- ☐ I believe clients benefit from selecting their own food in a pantry.

- ☐ I am willing to discuss making changes with my staff.

- ☐ My staff will work with me to put client choice into action at my pantry.

- ☐ I have an idea which client choice model would best fit my pantry's space.

- ☐ I can get, or I already have, the supplies I will need to put client choice into action.

Contact the Partner Services Department at the Houston Food Bank to discuss how to put client choice into action!

Client Choice Appendix

Setting Your Limits

As the need for food increases, finding ways to use resources wisely and efficiently is of very much importance for client choice pantries. Clearly expressing limits to clients will assist with this effort. There are many ways to set your food limits for clients. The following are a few options for consideration:

• Limit by pound

• Limit by number of items

• Limit by category and number of items

• Limit by nutrition

DISPLAY LIMITS

There are a variety of ways to express the limits to your clients.

Signs

Placing signs above items can assist clients as they are making decisions as to what food they will be receiving from the pantry.

Bridging for Tomorrow

Food Cards

Food cards allow clients to see the limit by nutritional value and household size. Example food cards are provided in English and Spanish for your reference.

Food Cards

The following are two different examples of food cards. Feel free to make your own version of these examples and change the quantities to best suit your pantry. Laminate them and give them to your clients to use as a guide as they select their foods. As your inventory changes, you may use a dry-erase marker to add items to the laminated card. Cards can be translated to another language to best suit the needs of your clients.

Photo Credit: NW Assistance Ministries

The food cards may also be posted in a visible area in your pantry.

1-2 persons in your household

Grains/ Granos	**2-3 items**
Vegetables/ Verduras	**3-6 items**
Fruit/ Frutas	**3-6 items**
Dairy/ Producto Lácteos	**2-3 items**
Meats & Non Meat Protein/ Carnes Y Frijoles	**2-3 items**
Combination Foods/ Comidas Combinadas	**1-2 items**
Fats & Oils/ Grasa y Acietes	**0-1 item**
Sweet Foods/ Comidas Dulces	**1 item**

3-4 persons in your household

Grains/ Granos	**4-5 items**
Vegetables/ Verduras	**7-9 items**
Fruit/ Frutas	**7-9 items**
Dairy/ Producto Lácteos	**4-5 items**
Meats & Non Meat Protein/ Carnes Y Frijoles	**4-5 items**
Combination Foods/ Comidas Combinadas	**3-4 items**
Fats & Oils/ Grasa y Acietes	**0-1 item**
Sweet Foods/ Comidas Dulces	**1 item**

5-6 persons in your household

Grains/ Granos	**6-7 items**
Vegetables/ Verduras	**11-12 items**
Fruit/ Frutas	**11-12 items**
Dairy/ Producto Lácteos	**6-7 items**
Meats & Non Meat Protein/ Carnes Y Frijoles	**6-7 items**
Combination Foods/ Comidas Combinadas	**5-6 items**
Fats & Oils/ Grasa y Acietes	**1-2 items**
Sweet Foods/ Comidas Dulces	**2 items**

7-8 persons in your household

Grains/ Granos	**8-9 items**
Vegetables/ Verduras	**13-14 items**
Fruit/ Frutas	**13-14 items**
Dairy/ Producto Lácteos	**8-9 items**
Meats & Non Meat Protein/ Carnes Y Frijoles	**8-9 items**
Combination Foods/ Comidas Combinadas	**7-8 items**
Fats & Oils/ Grasa y Acietes	**1-2 items**
Sweet Foods/ Comidas Dulces	**2 items**

3-Day Food Supply

HOW TO PROVIDE A 3-DAY FOOD SUPPLY

The amount of food a client leaves your pantry with should be based on their household size. The goal is to provide each person in the household with approximately a three-day supply of food. For example portion/household sizes, please refer to the client choice food cards.
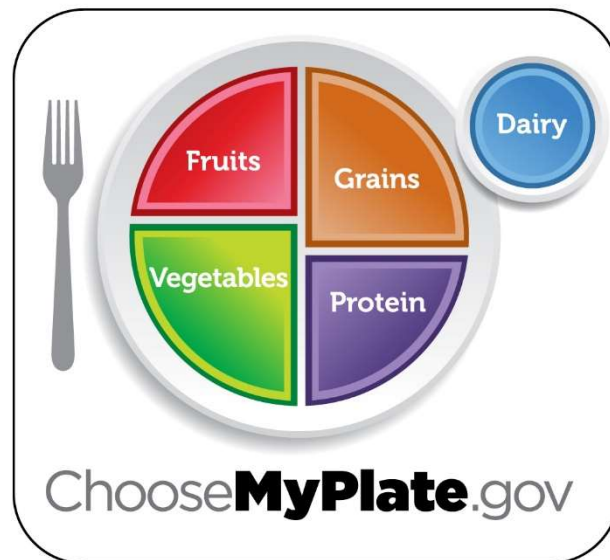
Photos like this can be accessed by visiting http://www.choosemyplate.gov/ and selecting Print Materials. This website is operated by the USDA. Use these tips with your clients for healthier selection:

• **Fruits/Vegetables**
Choose a variety of colors and try to fill half of your plate with these foods.
• **Grains**
Try to choose whole grains over white, refined breads, if available.
• **Protein**
Choose lean meats such as tuna, chicken, turkey, & fish. Opt for a 95% lean choice if you select
ground beef. Beans are a good source of protein, too.
• **Dairy**
Choose low-fat or fat-free products such as 1% or skim milk or reduced-fat yogurt and cheese

Making the Most of It

DOES YOUR PANTRY SERVE FOODS COMMONLY NOT CHOSEN BY CLIENTS?

Offer recipe suggestions that can help clients see the use for these foods. Offering tips on how to prepare these items can help.

Examples

• **Beets** can be sliced and used to add a splash of color and flavor to salads. Beets can also make a vibrant and delicious side dish.

• **Split Peas** can be used in stews or can be added to pasta dishes or casseroles

• **Small turnips** can be sliced and added to salad for a hint of sweet flavor. Large turnips can be baked, boiled, sautéed, or steamed and used as a healthy side dish.

• **Spinach** can be used in salad or can be cooked down in a pan and tossed in with pasta or onto boiled potatoes.

• **Cabbage** can be chopped and used in soup or to make homemade coleslaw (you can also use turnips for coleslaw.)

• **Rutabaga** can be boiled and garnished with salt, pepper, and parsley for a nice, warm side dish. Try steaming and then tossing a rutabaga with olive oil, salt, pepper, and minced garlic.

Staple foods can be used for a variety of meals and snacks.
Encourage your clients to plan several meals and snacks using their staple items:

Examples
• **Boxed Cereal**: Cereal can be eaten alone or can be crushed and added to low-fat yogurt for a healthy snack. Cereal can also be a good addition to an easy homemade trail mix.
• **Peanut Butter**: This is a great topping for many fruits and vegetables. Use peanut butter on celery, bananas, or apples (or your favorite fruit) for added flavor and protein.
• **Canned Tuna**: Tuna can be mixed with light mayonnaise and eaten with bread as a sandwich or scooped onto a salad. Also, tuna salad can be a great spread for wheat crackers. Add diced celery for an added crunch.
• **Canned Vegetables**: Compliment meals with vegetables. Corn can be used for added color and texture to mashed potatoes or can be added to salsa or a Southern-style salad for an extra crunch.
Canned pinto beans can be mashed with vegetable oil and used as a dip or spread for baked tortilla chips or burritos. Also, canned vegetables are a great addition to soup.

Use This Instead

Offer these commonly stocked items that can be emergency substitutions for items that your pantry may not supply. Help your clients keep cooking homemade meals!

Ingredient Substitutions

• 1 Cup Buttermilk: 1 Tbsp. lemon juice or white vinegar + enough milk to make a total of 1 cup (let stand for a few minutes).

   1 cup of plain yogurt can work as well

• 1 Medium Clove of Fresh Garlic: 1/8 tsp. garlic powder or ¼ tsp. instant minced garlic

• 1 Tbsp. Fresh Herbs: ¾ to 1 tsp. dried herbs

• 1 Tbsp. Fresh Lemon Juice: 1 Tbsp. bottled lemon juice or white vinegar

• 1 Tbsp. Yellow Mustard: 1 tsp. ground mustard

• 1 Cup Milk: ½ cup evaporated milk + 1 cup water or non-fat dry milk prepared as directed

• 2 Cups Tomato Sauce: ¾ cup tomato paste + 1 cup water

• 1 Cup Plain Yogurt: 1 cup sour cream

• 1 tsp. Baking Powder: ¼ tsp. baking soda + ½ tsp. cream of tartar

• ¼ Cup Dry Bread Crumbs: ¼ cup finely crushed cracker crumbs, corn flakes, or quick-cooking/old-fashioned oats

• 1 Cup Broth: 1 tsp. bouillon granules (or 1 cube) dissolved in 1 cup of boiling water

• 1 Cup Packed Brown Sugar: 1 cup granulated sugar mixed with 2 Tbsp. molasses or dark corn syrup

• 1 Cup Light Corn Syrup: 1 cup granulated sugar + ¼ cup water

• 1 tsp. Pumpkin or Apple Spice: ½ tsp. ground cinnamon, ¼ tsp. ground ginger, 1/8 tsp. ground allspice, and 1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg

Key Points & Tips

- Client choice is about choosing from a variety of food no matter how big or small.

- Allow pantry customers to select food from your inventory.

- Aim for a variety and balance of foods from each of the food groups.

- Arrange pantry shelves or tables according to the food groups. This can help pantry customers make better and more balanced food choices.

- Rotate your stock. Use the First In First Out system.

- Be generous with fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Offer whole grains (whole-wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal) as much as possible.

- Provide lean protein options such as tuna, beans, and venison.

- Keep low-fat dairy products on hand when possible compared to dairy products made from whole milk.

- Hand out recipes from other sources.

- Make a place for snacks, cookies, pastries, and other goodies. Your customers will enjoy the special treats.