

UNIT 9: NEWER TRENDS IN FOOD SERVICE

INDUSTRY

Eating out has become a way of life. In the past, people eat in a restaurant to celebrate a special occasion or it was a weary traveller on the lookout of bed and board. Today, practically everybody who steps out of the house for work, education, or business has at least one main meal away from home. Many food joints to shoot every stratum of society have mushroomed in towns and cities. Many of these places are unlicensed, with the food handler having little or no knowledge about nutrients and nutrition, health and diseases.

Need for Serving Nutritional and Health-Specific Meals

Foods provided by residential institutions, such as boarding schools, college hostels, hospitals and old- age homes, are probably the one source of nutrition for the residents and must be adequate. The list of residential institutes is long, and it is the responsibility and moral obligation of the caterer to provide a nutritionally adequate meal to the resident. Sample menu based on the principles of meal planning and recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) should be provided to the caterer to ensure that the meal is balanced as well as attractive, appetizing, & affordable.

While selecting commodities, fruits and vegetables at the proper stage of maturity, which are fresh and intact, should be purchased. If convenience foods are to be purchased, their costs should be considered. The food standards laid down by the govt. of various commodities should be checked especially for compulsory standards. For example, the fruit product order for processed fruit and vegetable products such as tomato sauce, pineapple slices in syrup, etc.

Just planning a balanced meal is not sufficient. The nutrients present in the food should be conserved while preparing food, and cooking practices that enhance nutrients should be observed.

To make quick money, hygienic practices are ignored or sufficient investments in proper storage and cooking equipment are not made, leading to the vicious cycle of diseases and malnutrition affecting work efficiency and productivity.

Some Common Practices Which Reduce the Nutritional Value

- Buying poor quality fruits and vegetables in bulk because of the lower rate.
- Improper storage leading to further loss of nutrition.
- Faulty cooking practices such as using excess water and then evaporating it to get correct constituency, washing vegetables after cutting.
- Overcooking and discarding cooking water (for liquor)
- Soaking vegetables in water
- Cooking in an open pan
- Keeping hot food over the extended service period.
- Repeated reheating of entire food instead of reheating quantity required.
- Adding alkali to speed up the softening of pulses and vegetables and to preserve the green colour.
- Using Ajinomoto (MSG) in all preparations to bring out the flavour of food. Ajinomoto is used in soups in place of stock permitted level in food is 1%.

Nutritive Value of Fast Food and Junk Food

The fast-food industry is growing rapidly all over the world to provide a quick meal to the customer at an unaffordable cost and in very little time. In India, the fast-food industry comprises mainly of south Indian, Punjabi snacks and popular MNCs like KFC, MC'D, Pizza hut, etc. Many products have been modified to suit the Indian palate and respect religious sentiments. Many of these providers take away or drive-thru services as well as a sitting area to eat food on the premises. Modern commercial fast food is often highly processed & prepared & industrial fashion. Most items on the menu are prepared at the central supply facility & then shipped to individual outlets where they are reheated/cooked or assembled in a short time. The central kitchen ensures consistency in product quality & ability to deliver the order quickly to the customer eliminating labour & equipment cost in the individual restaurant.

Nutritional Evaluation of Newly Launched Products

A wide variety of convenience foods are available and new products and attractive packages are being launched every day to meet the growing demands of working women, single families, the elderly and commercial establishment who are too busy to invest valuable time and labour in pre-preparation.

The newly launched products in the market can be categorized under 5 heads namely:

1. Basic product: needs some preparation before cooking e.g. shelled green peas
2. Ready to cook products: needs no further preparation before cooking e.g. frozen green peas
3. Ready to use products: must be prepared and heated e.g. instant tomato soup powder

4. Pre-cooked products: a prepared dish which needs heating before consumption e.g. paneer makhanvala
5. Table ready products: packet can be opened and eaten e.g. potato chips

Many products launched in the market make health claims which at times could be misleading. Convenience is not the main criterion, but meeting the days' nutritional needs should be checked. Some newly launched products based on soy proteins, flax seeds, carotene, and vitamin E rich oils have distinct benefits while other foods such as non-dairy creams have both advantages because of no cholesterol and disadvantages because of fatty acids composition of vegetables, oils seeds.

Antioxidants

They are compounds that prevent oxidation. Oxidation is the process that turns newspaper yellow and cut apples into brown. Oxidation leads to degenerative changes in our bodies. Antioxidants such as vitamin C, Vitamin E, beta-carotene and selenium help protect against free radical damage. They scavenge free radicals and protect body cells against cancer. They prevent atherosclerosis and coronary artery diseases (CAD).

The sources of antioxidants are listed below:

- Vitamin E soya oil, sunflower oil., almond, spinach, and mint
- Vitamin C amla, guava, green leafy vegetables, and all citrus fruit
- Beta-carotene all green leafy vegetables, and all yellow-orange and red fruits and vegetables.
- Selenium whole grain, pulses, green leafy vegetables and cauliflower
- Non- nutrient antioxidant phenolic compounds, flavonoids, and isoflavones present in beans, cloves oats, tea, coffee, etc.



We need to consume much more than the RDA for the antioxidant effect.

Significance of Nutritional Labelling

Nutrition facts labels tell you about the nutrition of a particular product. This information includes serving size, the number of servings in the package, calories per serving and the amount of various nutrients contained in the product. Once you understand the labels, they can help you follow a healthy diet and make it easier to choose the most nutritious foods.

Maintaining a Healthy Weight – Reading nutrition labels can help you make the right food choices when you are trying to lose weight or prevent weight gain. In a study published in the “Journal of the American Dietetic Association” in April 2000, people told by their doctors to lose weight for health reasons who used nutrition labels consumed fewer calories, more fiber and less saturated fat, sugar, and carbohydrates than the people who didn’t use nutrition labels.

Nutrient Consumption – Many Americans don’t consume enough fiber, iron, calcium, and vitamins A and C, so these are always included on nutrition labels. You can use the percent daily values listed on the label to give you a good idea of which foods are high or low in these essential nutrients. Foods that contain at least 10 percent of the daily value for a nutrient are good sources of that nutrient, and foods that contain 20 percent of the daily value for a nutrient are considered high in that nutrient.

Considerations – While nutrition facts labels can be helpful, not everyone understands the information included or the importance of it. A study published in the “American Journal of Preventive Medicine” in November 2006 found that people who had low levels of literacy and numeracy often didn’t understand these labels and that even some people who were more literate sometimes had trouble interpreting nutrition facts labels. Doctors and other health



providers need to provide education to their patients on how to use these labels when making dietary recommendations.

Prebiotic and Probiotic Food

Probiotics:

These are “good” bacteria that help keep your digestive system healthy by controlling the growth of harmful bacteria.

Prebiotics:

These are carbohydrates that cannot be digested by the human body. They are food for probiotics.

The primary benefit of probiotics and prebiotics appears to be helping you maintain a healthy digestive system.

Good Sources of Probiotics:

One of the best sources of probiotics is yogurt. It has good bacteria like lactobacillus or bifidobacterial. Look for “live or active cultures” on the label to be sure your favourite brand of yogurt is a rich source of probiotics. Other good food sources are sauerkraut, miso soup, fermented, soft cheeses (like Gouda), and even sourdough bread. The common feature of all these foods is fermentation, a process that produces probiotics.

Good Sources of Prebiotics:

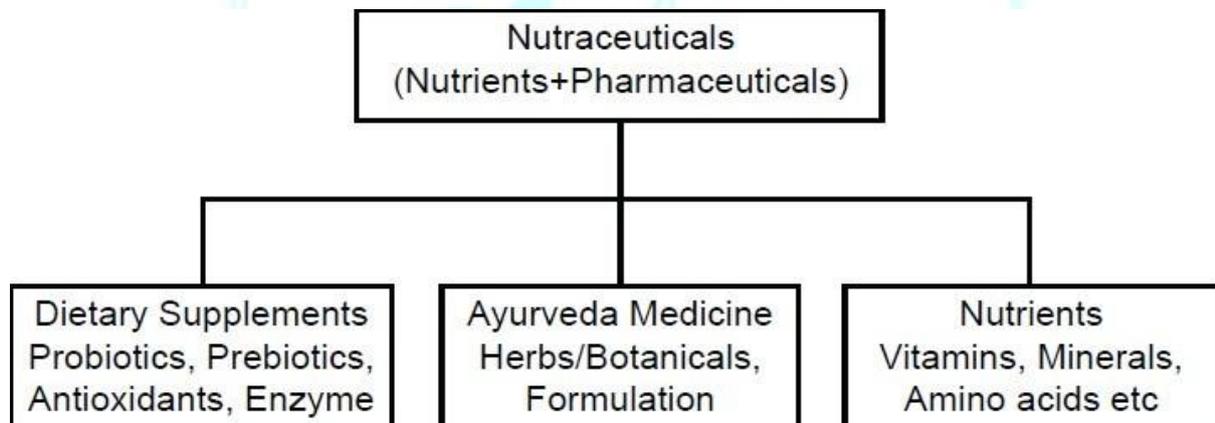
To help maintain a healthy level of prebiotics, you can feed them with the foods you eat. Foods rich in prebiotics include asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, bananas, oatmeal, and legumes.

Nutraceuticals

Nutraceutical, the words “nutrition” and “pharmaceutical”, is a food or food product that provides health and medical benefits, including the prevention and treatment of disease.

“A nutraceutical is a product isolated or purified from foods that are generally sold in medicinal forms not usually associated with food. A nutraceutical is demonstrated to have a physiological benefit or provide protection against chronic disease.”

Such products may range from isolated nutrients, dietary supplements and specific diets to genetically engineered foods, herbal products, and processed foods such as cereals, soups, and beverages.



Critical Evaluation of Fast Foods

- Fast food refers to those kinds of food that are prepared and ready to be eaten within the shortest time possible.
- Additionally, fast food constitutes foodstuffs that are available for sale in restaurants and stores made up of ingredients that can be preheated or precooked without any problem and served in a takeaway form.

- Fast foods are characterized by high-fat content, high calories, high cholesterol, and quick, convenient and high sodium concentration.
- Similarly, it is inexpensively made from ingredients that are cheap such as fat meat and refined grains. These kinds of foods are not only available in restaurants but also in vending equipment as well as 24-hour expediency stores.
- Examples of fast food include the following, sandwiches, hot dogs, pitas, fried chicken, French fries, chicken nuggets, tacos, pizza, hamburgers, fish and chips and ice cream to mention but a few.

Merits of Fast Food

Saves time:

The most notable argument brought forth in support of fast food is that it saves time as well as convenience. On the same note, fast food saves time in the context that one will not engage in all those activities of buying, cleaning such foodstuffs, cooking as well as washing dishes. It is also true that when one gets home after a tiresome day thus very tired and bored, the efforts needed to cook can be substituted with having fast food.

Saves money:

Similarly, fast foods are cheaper. This is because they are made from cheaper ingredients such as refined grains, meat with a lot of fat among others instead of ingredients that are expensive and nutritious such as vegetables, lean meat, and fresh fruits. On the same note considering people who live alone, the expenses of cooking are much higher compared to when buying fast food.

Health advantage:

Even though those opposing fast food claim that it results in various problems in human health, it is worth noting that fast foods have contributed to taller and individuals with higher life expectancy.

Sharing and convenience:

Fast foods are usually packed in a way that it can be taken out of the restaurant and eaten from anywhere, be it in the car, office, at the bus station. Additionally, unlike other kinds of food, fast food comes with the absolute advantage of splitting and sharing between or even amongst individuals.

Reliability:

A study carried out asking “why individuals bought fast food” established that the reliability of such kinds of food is what propels them to buy. Fast foods are easy to obtain, are in plenty, varied and readily available.

Nutritional information:

Most of the fast-food joints have adopted a culture of making available the information concerning nutrients of their food. It is worth mentioning that with such kind of information as well as many foodstuff varieties, one has a chance to choose the best kind of food that suits them.

Demerits of Fast Food

Health issues:

It has been brought forth that fast foods are characterized by high-fat content, high calories, high cholesterol, and quick, high sodium concentration and made from ingredients that are cheap such as fat meat and refined grains. All these pose a greater risk to human health. Too much eating of fast food with such health problems as obesity, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disorders, and liver problems.

Heart attack:

Fast foods are prepared using Trans-fat which is an artery-clogging fat. Food prepared using this fat includes French fries as well as chicken nuggets to mention but a few.

Increased high blood pressure:

Fast food contains a good deal of sodium concentration, this aggravates the risk of high blood pressure.

Obesity:

Continual eating of such kinds of food means that we accumulate a lot of calories in our body that are not useful leading to individuals being obese.

Liver problem:

Since the liver is responsible for purification/filtering of harmful substances as well as producing substances that help breakdown fats, when fast foods are consumed every now and then, the liver will be overloaded and damaged. This, in turn, leads to very serious health problems that can be fatal.

Addiction:

It has been documented that fast food is addictive. What this means is that individuals who are used to eating such foods cannot go for long without having a bit of such food.

Family bond:

The issue of fast food has been brought forth as another factor that jeopardizes family bonds. This is because no or very minimal time is used in preparing food together, leave alone eating together. Young people are spending more of their time in having a meal with their fellow friends other than their family members.

Psychologists hold that mealtime is a family meeting where every member is in a position to share their thought, ideas, problems as well as feelings. This usually helps in strengthening the bond between and among family members. This is in jeopardy during this era of growth in fast food industries.

Lower nutritional content:

Fast food has been linked and it is a fact that most of them apart from pizza lack dietary fiber as well as essential micro-nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. It is worth mentioning that food that lacks fiber brings with it several stomach complications such as constipation.

Expensive:

Although previously it was stated that fast food is inexpensive, that was only true when considering an individual buying such kind of food cooking at home. It is important to note that a family visiting or buying fast food once in a while is not that expensive, but when this is done more often, then the amount of money spent can be quite much more as compared to if the family could just buy the food in supermarket, take the time to prepare it and enjoy a dinner or lunch together as a family

Conclusion

We should not advocate for doing away with fast food due to its various disadvantages, but that we should not fight the industry and bring it down to its knees but rather champion for further improvement of fast food that will bring out high quality and healthy food. This will indeed ensure that people consume healthy foods and at the same time cushioning those that depend on the industry for their daily bread from economic uncertainty of doing away with the sector.

