

Food Tasting Sessions

WHAT

Food tasting sessions, which can also be called taste testing, can be used to find out what residents think about meals that could be offered on the menu (for example, taste, temperature, consistency).

WHY

Before valuable time and money is spent changing meals or incorporating new meals in the menu it is important to know that the meals will be enjoyed. Having meals on the menu that residents enjoy will reduce waste and help keep residents happy and healthy.

It can be difficult to get some residents to try different foods that they are not used to. Having a taste testing can give these residents the opportunity to try new foods in a safe and comfortable setting.¹

Participation in a taste testing can also give residents the opportunity to talk about their food, making them feel included and even reminisce on the good old times which can lead to some interesting conversations!¹

HOW

This depends on the way the food at your facility is cooked:

A. If the food is cooked outside the facility at a Central Production Unit (CPU) and heated up before the meal at the facility then you can contact your catering company to ask when they can do a taste testing of some new meals. Your catering company will bring the meals to you but the basic outline of the process below is still the same.

B. If the food at your facility is cooked on the premises (cook- serve) then you can liaise with your facility catering staff to arrange the taste testing.

- Liaise with your catering manager to arrange a time suitable to hold a meeting to discuss the taste testing. A good time is when all of the residents are together for example at a residents meeting. Then you can discuss what meals the residents would like incorporated in the menu and which ones need to be taste tested.
- The catering staff can work on developing the meal/s for taste testing.
- Arrange a time for the food tasting session. The best time to hold a taste testing might be at a meal time, say lunch, when they are thinking about food services and hungry.
- When the taste testing has been arranged send out a flyer about the upcoming event to the residents, their families and staff.
- Develop a form to record results of the taste testing (see the example we have developed on the back page).
- Hold the taste testing and ask residents, their families and staff to fill out the results form (specify whether they are a resident / family / staff).
- Compile the results.
- Feedback the results at the next residents meeting.
- Incorporate the results of the taste testing into your menu.

1. Bartl R, Bunney C. *Best Practice Food and Nutrition Manual for Aged Care Facilities*. Gosford: Australian Nursing Home and Extended Care Association; 2004.

TASTE TESTING RESULTS FORM

Please fill in your **score rating** for each meal selection:

1. I would choose to eat this
2. I would eat this if I didn't like the alternative
3. I would not eat this

MAINS

Meal	Score rating (1 or 2 or 3)

PUREES

Meal	Score rating (1 or 2 or 3)

Thank you for taking part in today's taste testing!