

Buyers Guide.

GENERAL: This guide has been developed to assist region and installation personnel in their decision processes when selecting or retaining subsistence items. Particular attention has been devoted to meat, poultry, or seafood items. *Processed fruits and vegetables are also covered by this guide.* While not all inclusive, this Guide provides detailed guidance and specifications for most standard meat, seafood and poultry items required in the recipes and menus of the Army Food Program.

- a. North American Meat Processors Association (NAMP) descriptions should be used wherever possible to ensure that standard industry descriptions are provided to vendors when selecting items to catalog for soldier feeding.
- b. Supervisory personnel (Food Program Managers (FPM), Installation Management Command (IMCOM)- Region and/or Tactical Food Advisors)) should use this guide to ensure that correct product specifications are being followed FPMs must ensure that any item selected for evaluation for possible catalog inclusion meets the requirements of AR 30-22 and this guide.
- c. IMCOM-Region and installation Food Program Managers (with tactical food advisors) should semi-annually review their local catalog using these guidelines to ensure that Army standards are being met. Items that do not meet established standards should be replaced.
- d. Supervisory personnel (Food Program Managers (FPM) and/or Installation Management Command – Region (IMCOM-R)) should also use this guide when reviewing catalogs to ensure that correct product specifications are being followed.
- e. Dining facility managers may use the guides for product identification in the receiving process and for training within their dining facility staffs.
- f. Please contact CSPD, ACES OD, JCCoE for any further assistance required.

GOALS: Mutual goals of the Army Food Service Program, and the Subsistence Prime Vendor Program, are to obtain the highest quality subsistence items affordable within our Basic Daily Food Allowance (BDFa).

- a. Many items within the vast spectrum of commercial products being offered do not fit within the Army Food Program parameters. This may be due to domestic availability, price, the level of quality (high or low), extremely perishable (short shelf life), preparation methods, holding capabilities, diner acceptability, or a combination of all.

b. The frequent purchase of exotic or extremely expensive meats, seafood, or dessert items for dining facilities is not recommended and should be strictly controlled by Food Program Managers. Items such as alligator tail, quail, Alaskan king crab, lobster tail, precooked “baby back ribs” and some prepared entrée’s and desserts are considered as high cost subsistence items. These items are not used in the monthly computation of the BDFA. While these items may offer upscale changes to menus their cost will often exceed the constraints of the BDFA and they are not to be considered a part of normal menus. Any use of items of this nature should be infrequent and limited to special meals or occasions such as “Super Suppers”, “Ethnic Celebrations” or Holiday Meals.

c. Many installations have indiscriminately selected pre-cooked items for use in daily menus. These items are also not included in the BDFA computation and excessive use of pre-prepared items should be discouraged. While these items may offer ease of preparation they increase costs and reduce the training and experience available to food service personnel. While reducing labor for contractor operated dining facilities we see no reduction in contract price commensurate with the use of these items.

d. *Food Operations Sergeants and managers will remain responsible for maintaining menus within established standards and the status of their respective dining facility accounts as stated in this regulation.*

PROCEDURES FOR NEW ITEMS: Installations/commands desiring to add or change catalog items should first contact their prime vendor. The initial effort should be to purchase an item carried by the vendor and providing the benefit of the DSCP maintained Manufacturers Pricing Agreement (MPA) and National Allowance Pricing Programs (NAPA). **Should the prime vendor desire to offer private (house) label products the item must equal or exceed the desired item in quality and price.** Food Service Management (Menu) Boards (FSMB) should follow procedures for new products contained in AR 30-22, paragraph 3-18. Care must also be taken to ensure compliance with the menu standards contained in DA Pam 30-22, paragraph 3-71 when selecting items for use.

a. The commercial food industry continues to develop and offer “**value added**” products for institutional use. These are often touted as labor saving and include processing and partial or complete cooking by the producer. While many are highly acceptable and may fill a specific need (precooked bacon, breakfast sausage, spareribs, meatballs) they may also carry an increased cost burden for dining facility accounts. Food service operators must determine “**plate cost**” or “**what does it cost to feed one portion?**” when considering any item for catalog listings.

b. A **cost to benefit analysis** must be conducted (for any considered item) to identify the cost impact the item will have on dining facility accounts. This process should be followed in all purchasing decisions. Product yields must be a

prime factor in the analysis. **Proper cost analysis on products must be based on the portion cost and portions yielded and not the per pound price.** To properly evaluate competing items you must compare individual serving costs and then decide if any additional cost is justified and if your facilities can absorb the cost within authorized allowances. FPMs should also investigate the price stability of the product. Is it an item that experiences frequent price fluctuations? Is it offered at a low price that will experience numerous increases in the following months? Can the vendor offer price stabilization for extended periods such as six or nine months or one year with no increase?

c. FPMs and FOSs should also closely review the handling, cooking and holding characteristics of any item being considered. Vendors of marinated, tenderized, precooked items (as well as raw) should be required to fully describe their processes and what impact they have on how we handle the product. **The product should be evaluated in its received state, in its preparation phase, and in its end or serving state.** What was required to prepare the item? Is specialized equipment or training required? How much shrinkage or loss was experienced? How does it hold on the serving line or in food warmers? What is the stated shelf life? Does the product perform as advertised?

d. Any vendor desiring that we use their product should be able to fully explain **“why we should use their product over others”**. This is especially important when we are asked to change an item of one brand for a like item of another brand. **There must be some benefit that accrues to the Army Food Program to validate or support the switch.** This may be in quality, price, storage, handling or preparation methods. This is not meant as an obstacle for vendors but as an education for us. Each product change requires changes to our recipe and master item files, and requires that we consume existing inventory to permit deletion of items being replaced and possible re-education of food handlers. **Change for the sake of change is not beneficial to our program and is not recommended.**

e. General or unlimited use of precooked items without detailed cost analysis is not recommended and should be strictly limited by Food Program Managers. FPMs and FOSs, should carefully review convenience or prepared products for their intended use, frequency, cost, and possible impact on contract operations. Precooked items (generally) should be considered for specialty items, to ease short staffing in facilities, when there is infrequent use and when use of a precooked item can increase the quality offered at affordable pricing.

f. Conversely, precooked items often may have absorbed preparation and cooking losses in their cost. The portion yields of these items may overcome the initial cost. Products such as precooked bacon and breakfast sausage are extreme examples. For example; One pound of precooked bacon normally yields roughly the same number of servings as three pounds of raw bacon.

Precooked breakfast sausage may in fact have a lower portion cost than raw. The shear time saving convenience of pre-made meat balls may justify a price that is higher than the raw ingredients for this item.

SELECTION OR RETENTION OF ITEMS: General guidance for the selection or retention of subsistence items is:

a. The standards established within the **North American Meat Processors Association** "Meat Buyer's Guide" will be used wherever possible in the selection of beef, veal, pork, lamb, or poultry items. CONUS Installation FPMs and FOSs should investigate the feasibility of utilizing fresh (never frozen) beef, pork and poultry products where possible. Army facilities will primarily use beef products processed from USDA choice or select grades. Alternatively, facilities may use certain no roll (un-graded) items as shown in the enclosed item list. The user must determine the intended use of the product to properly determine the relative quality grade required. **Utility grade (or below) is not authorized in Army dining facilities.** The specific grade requirement is shown for each item on the enclosed list of item descriptions. The Army standard for ground beef is for 85% lean meat and not more than 15% fat. Soy protein (TVP) as binders or extenders **ARE NOT** permitted. Products identified as "fritters" must be individually evaluated to determine acceptability. Breading should not exceed the following percentages for the listed items; Veal Patties NTE 30% breading, Beef Steak fritter NTE 30% breading, or chicken fritters NTE 35% breading. Items exceeding these percentages should not be cataloged for use in Army dining facilities.

b. Standards for seafood products are contained in the **US Standards for Grades of Fishery Products.** All seafood products must comply with legal requirements to be from US Flagged vessels and processed in US plants. These products must originate in facilities listed in the "USDC Approved List of Fish Establishments" and should carry the PUFI shield. Seafood products included in the US Standards for Grades of Fishery Products must meet requirements for Grade A or equivalent. Products such as imitation Shrimp (over 50% breading) or "fritters" exceeding 35% breading will not be used in Army dining facilities. Extenders/binders (Not to exceed 40%) are normally permitted in limited items such as stuffed crab, crab cakes or salmon fritters or salmon patties. Fish used to fabricate imitation crab or lobster products is authorized.

c. All processed fruits and vegetables must meet the established **US Standards for Grades for Processed Fruits and Vegetables.** Processed fruits will meet **Grade A** requirements to qualify for inclusion on Army catalogs. **Grade B** will be accepted in lieu of Grade A when USDA and DSCP research supports that Grade A is consistently unavailable in quantity or cost prohibitive from commercial industry. Grades less than Grade B will not be purchased for Army dining facilities. The Grade requirement for processed vegetables may be established by each installation as US Grade A or US Grade B. As catalogs are

updated all references which combine requirements as for “US Grade A or B” will be removed. Grade requirements for processed vegetables should be discussed with the subsistence prime vendor before establishing the level desired. Many vegetables classified as “Grade B” will perform better in large feeding operations and where items are placed in warmers or held on serving lines. Some “Grade A” vegetables are in fact too fragile for use in cafeteria style feeding situations. The FPM must also ensure that items established with a quality level of Grade B are priced as Grade B and not Grade A.

d. **EXTREME CAUTION** must be exercised in the use of products treated with chemical or protein based tenderizers such as **Ficin, Bromelin or Papain**. Operational methods for Army dining facilities must be considered when developing menus and selecting products. Enzyme treated items serve well where the product is taken from refrigeration, cooked and served in one continuous operation. **These products are not well suited to holding periods (in food warmers or on serving lines) after preparation.** Ficin is activated at 90 degrees F and inactivated at 145 degrees F. Bromelin is activated at 90 degrees F and inactivated at 140 degrees F. Papain is activated at 140 degrees F and inactivated at 185 degrees F. Products must be cooked to very well done to inactivate the enzymes. The practice of large dining facilities to prepare quantities of product in advance of serving makes the use of these items questionable. **Once activated these tenderizers do not stop until heat inactivated or there is nothing left to tenderize. The use of these “tenderizers” is not recommended for Army garrison facilities and should be strictly limited by FPM.**

e. Marinades, “pumps” or “rubs” such as water, broths, natural juices, and flavor enhancers are permitted and may provide products that will perform better than non-marinated items under mass feeding conditions. These items are somewhat tenderized in the cooking process and will hold up better over longer periods than non-marinated. Once again “What will I use this for?” “What is my intended benefit with use of this product?”

f. **All poultry items (except those not graded such as cooked breast or wing or chunks) must be USDA Grade A or equivalent.** While the USDA “Grade A” shielded product is preferred it is not mandatory. Any product not shielded must meet the same specification upon audit or inspection.

g. Pork products are not graded by the USDA. To establish clear requirements, the Standards for Pork provided in the Meat Buyers Guide of the North American Meat Processors (NAMP) Association will be used wherever possible.

VISITS OF VENDERS, MANUFACTURERS OR BROKERS: Prime vendors, manufacturers, brokers or others will not visit dining facilities to seek sales without the expressed permission of IMCOM-R and installation FPM supervisory

personnel. Vendors are encouraged to visit facilities to demonstrate and provide training or assistance with products already listed on the installation catalog. Subordinate commands must work through the FPM to invite vendors to provide this service. "Mini Food Shows" relative to only segments of the installation/organization and not the whole will not be conducted. Vendors arriving at dining facilities without proper approval will be reported to the FPM immediately and directed to his or her office.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF AND OBLIGATION TO CONSUME PRODUCTS. (CUTTINGS, DEMONSTRATIONS). Product cuttings or demonstrations are used primarily to perform one or more of three functions. These are to: evaluate new products, resolve complaints of products not meeting specifications or quality, and to provide training on products currently utilized at the installation. A product cutting or demonstration should be used in the decision process when selecting new items for dining facility use. Installation FPMs may schedule demonstrations for the expressed purpose of investigating a specific product for possible use. As part of the product demonstration, manufacturer's representatives may bring chefs or marketing personnel to teach food program personnel how to use currently cataloged products more efficiently, or how to market the products to their customers more effectively.

a. When product demonstrations or cuttings are to be conducted the FPM will request that the prime vendor invite desired company representatives to present their products at the FSMB. The prime vendor may also suggest producing companies known to provide products of the type required. Vendors may be asked to demonstrate their product at one or more dining facilities or subordinate command food management boards to gauge Soldier acceptance of the products. Food service representatives of sister services being served under the same contract should be invited to all cuttings or demonstrations where decisions to add or delete catalog items may occur. Product sample size should be limited to quantities required to support sampling during the cutting or demonstration. If conducted in a dining facility, the sample size shall be limited to a quantity to support not more than 100 soldiers or 50% of the average headcount for that meal, whichever is less.

b. The FPM should follow-up on these actions to ensure the desired companies are represented at the cutting or demonstration. The actual cuttings or product demonstrations will be supervised by the FPM. Prime vendors should assist in the invitation of producing vendors and arranging for product availability. **Prime vendors will not conduct or supervise the cutting nor the grading forms used to evaluate competitors.** Evaluations must be controlled by the FPM. Procedures for cuttings and demonstrations are fully explained in AR 30-22 and this Pamphlet. When scheduling a demonstration, you should provide the vendor ample time to provide product information, including: NAPA, product packaging, or shelf life information. Investigate preparation methods, nutrition information, how the product will help managers to meet Army menu standards, cost data, and whether or not the product is already carried by the SPV. The FPM must

provide sufficient time for each vendor and therefore must limit the number of product cuttings or demonstrations to the time available.

c. The decision to add products to the catalog rests with the customer. Every effort should be made to achieve a consensus of the customers relative to items that are to be added or deleted from a catalog. While each service has certain unique requirements, experience has shown that all services will use like items for most menus or recipes. The FSMB members will vote and a decision will be rendered respective to each item evaluated. Items selected are added to the catalog using the DSCP new item request form.

d. Army policy relative to items requested by Army installations remains:

When the PV brings in a product (not previously maintained in their inventory) the requesting installation will ensure consumption, preventing loss to the PV and the government. If required, the prime vendor will notify the installation of product non-movement. This must be done prior to product expiration or use by date. The FPM will direct the issue of inventory on hand at the PV to installation facilities (mandatory issue). When the stock is consumed the product(s) may be deleted from the catalog. Items Special Ordered by an installation or organization must be accepted upon arrival. FOS will not refuse delivery of special request items that are delivered at the agreed time and in the proper condition.

FILE MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS. Army installations utilize the Subsistence Total Ordering and Receipt Electronic System (STORES) to pass orders from AFMIS to the prime vendor. Some units utilize the "STORES-on-the-Web" system. The electronic catalog on all STORES systems supports customers for a specific geographic region. This includes all DOD and some non DOD customers. It may therefore contain numerous items that were not intended, suitable or approved for Army use.

a. The critical control point for Army subsistence purchases is the Army Food Management Information System (AFMIS) Master Item File (MIF). The AFMIS Recipe File provides food operations personnel access to item ordering and preparation information. The Master Item File (MIF) controls the ordering and inventory control of all items. Items not entered to the MIF will not be passed to the recipe file. The AFMIS system will not provide information or accept orders for items not on the MIF. Proper maintenance of these files will ensure that your installation is purchasing only authorized subsistence items. It will also aid dining facility managers in their inventory control, menu preparation, costing and ordering functions.

b. Maintenance of the MIF is the responsibility of the installation Subsistence Supply Manager (SSM) (previously TISO) with item approval of the installation FPM. For items that are to be deleted from the installation catalog the FPM must ensure that dining facilities deplete their inventory. The AFMIS system will not

permit deletion of an item as long as there is inventory recorded in even one dining facility.

c. Maintenance of the AFMIS recipe file is the responsibility of the installation FPM. For OCONUS areas this responsibility rests with the FA or FPM which supports the Subsistence Supply Management Office (SSMO) and the AFMIS system.