

# MENU PLANNING PROGRAMMING

## Situation:

Menu planning brings many benefits; it saves time and money by making grocery shopping more efficient and reduces unplanned trips to buy one or two items. It improves organization, adds variety and creativity to meals, improves food safety, and frees up time for physical activity. A study at Cornell University demonstrated that people save up to 15 percent on their total food bill by planning. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, the average American family of four (married couple with two children) spent approximately \$185 per week on food (away and at home) in 2009 which equates to \$9,620 annually.

The menu-planning program was offered in Spanish to Sweetwater County Spanish speaking residents. Three classes were taught of about 90 minutes each at Overland, Desert View, and Sage elementary schools. Classes were taught by the nutrition and food safety area educator in February 2012. In addition, a variety of activities were implemented during classes such as planning a sample menu, recipe exchanges, and new ideas of planning "MyPlate," the USDA's food icon for dietary guidelines to help consumers think differently about food choices.

The program was requested by School District #2 of Sweetwater County. It advertised the class by sending invitation letters home with all Hispanic children. Advertisements were placed at all elementary school bulletin boards. The English as a Second Language director, Monica Anderson, made some final calls as a reminder of the class.



**Josefina Ibarra, R.D., L.D.**  
*University Extension Educator  
Nutrition/Food Safety  
West Area/Lincoln, Sublette, Sweetwater,  
Teton, and Uinta counties  
(307) 352-6775  
jibarra@uwcc.wy.edu*

## Impacts:

Seventy participants, 48 adults and 22 children, from Sweetwater County attended the program. Cent\$ible Nutrition Educator Wendy Nielson and Monica Anderson participated in this program.

All participants completed a post-evaluation, enabling measurement of new attitudes gained such as a better plan of weekly and biweekly meals and an increase in fruit and vegetable intake by mixing different food groups within daily meals and snacks. The following are significant impacts reported by them, considering 48 out of 70 participants filled out the questionnaires.

- 75 percent of participants are more comfortable planning their meals with information learned
- 50 percent of participants agreed to increase their fruit and vegetable intake by planning their menus ahead of time
- 100 percent plan to make some type of change to start planning their menus

All participants rated the overall quality of the program, and all thought information given was very helpful.

The following was reported:

- 100 percent rated the overall program good to outstanding

Participant comments: (translated to English)

- "I like the explanation about how to look for healthier products."
- "I learned how to plan a menu for a week."
- "I know I have to eat more whole grains and vegetables."

Spanish speaking communities are well informed of the benefits of menu planning and, most importantly, are able to identify UW Extension as a valuable resource to address their nutrition and food safety needs in Spanish.

# for Spanish-speaking audiences

*75 percent of  
participants  
are more  
comfortable  
planning their  
meals with  
information  
learned*

