

FOODSERVICE APPLICATIONS

Marianne Wilcox, M.S., R.D.
Menu and Food Systems Manager, Saga Corporation

Many of the clinical dietitian's functions can effectively use the personal computer. Particularly patient nutrient intake studies, menu planning for the individual patient and menu planning for the general diet category.

Two critical elements of these functions, menus and recipes, link the clinical and foodservice aspects of the Dietetics Department. Menu planning must be a team effort so that concerns of the clinical dietitian as well as the production manager are met. The menu plan, i.e., what the patient will consume, is dramatically influenced by the recipe used to prepare the food.

Therefore, it is essential that the computer software supports both the clinical and foodservice aspects of the Dietetics Department. The software must include four files: 1) food item or ingredient file, 2) recipe file, 3) menu file, all reflecting what happens at your specific account -- not some theoretical account. The fourth is a nutrient data base. All this is necessary if the nutrient analysis is to accurately reflect what the patient consumes.

The recipe data base and software for nutrient analysis must be able to handle purchasing an item in one state but using it in a different form and food items consumed in both raw or cooked states, depending on the recipe. Also, the software must be able to exclude the inedible portion of the ingredient. These features are necessary to account for varying stages of preparation and consumption for the accuracy of the nutrient analysis.

Once the software and data are in place, actual food production is the next step. Recipes must be scaled or adjusted and produced correctly. An ingredient room ensures that ingredients are measured accurately. Proper portioning based on the standard or specified portion must be followed because the nutrient analysis is based on the standard recipe and the specified portion size.

The USDA Nutrient Data Base for Standard Reference is the basis for Handbook 8 revisions and for many of the nutrient data bases available today. A goal for this discussion group will be to develop recommendations for improvements to this data base. To list a few problem areas:

1. Lack of nutrient data for different stages of consumption, i.e., drained vs undrained fruits.
2. Cooked data only given for all components of the recipe including oil and breading or batter, i.e., fish and shellfish.
3. Lack of data for manufactured products, i.e., croissants, crepes, wonton wrappers, etc.