

Food and drink guidance for event organisers

A guide to creating nourishing food and drink environments at events

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

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Why this is important

This resource supports event organisers to make nourishing food* and drink options more accessible at community events.

Food and drink are often central to the event experience and whanaungatanga (connection and relationships) and reflect manaakitanga (care and generosity).

Event organisers play an important role in shaping the food environment* at community events. Nourishing food and drink options can be drawn from many cultures and traditions, reflecting the communities taking part in the event and showcasing the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

By setting expectations for the food and drink provided, organisers can help create an event environment that supports healthy, thriving communities. Even small changes that increase access to nourishing options can contribute to the wellbeing of whānau across a range of settings.

For terms marked with an asterisk (*), see Explanatory Notes.



A checklist for event organisers to host events with a nourishing food and drink environment

This checklist outlines the intended direction for a nourishing event food and drink environment and highlights key areas to consider. It's a useful starting point for identifying what you're already doing well and where there may be opportunities for easy wins.

The phased approach on the following page provides further guidance and practical steps to build on existing efforts, starting with achievable changes and progressing towards stronger standards over time.

- ☐ Free drinking water is available and easy to find.
- ☐ Most stalls offer nourishing food options.
- ☐ Nourishing options are easy to find, visually appealing and competitively priced.
- ☐ A range of portion sizes are available to suit different appetites and budgets.
- ☐ Prizes, giveaways and sponsorships are not centred on sugary and ultra-processed food* (such as fast food vouchers).
- ☐ Food and drink guidance is shared early with stallholders to support menu planning and provide clear expectations and information about the event approach (see Appendix 1 and Food and Drink Guidance for Event Stallholders).
- ☐ Stalls offering nourishing options are recognised and promoted – for example, through signage, maps or featured locations.
- ☐ Breastfeeding is welcomed and supported through signage and access to comfortable, appropriate spaces such as a whānau zone with shade, seating, "breastfeeding welcome here" signage and access to drinking water.

For technical support with assessing your menus, please feel free to contact food@heartfoundation.org.nz (Nationwide) or workplace@diabetesfoundationaotearoa.nz (Auckland only).

A phased approach to creating more nourishing food and drink environments

Event organisers can influence the food and drink environment in a range of ways. Some events may choose to start with small changes, while others may be ready to introduce stronger nutrition standards over time.

This phased approach provides flexibility, allowing organisers to select the option that best suits their event, community and resources.

Focus area	Phase 1: Getting started	Phase 2: Building healthier choices	Phase 3: Setting event standards
Communication and planning	Share guidance with stallholders, sponsors and partners early	Provide practical support (menu ideas, pricing and placement guidance)	Include expectations for food and drink in contracts and agreements
Drink options	Ensure water is available and easy to find	Encourage water as the main drink and promote lower-sugar options	Consider limiting or excluding beverages with added sugar
Food options	Encourage most stalls to offer at least one nourishing option	Encourage a greater proportion of nourishing options across stalls	Consider setting expectations for a proportion of nourishing menu options
Food to limit	Encourage lighter cooking methods (grilling, baking)	Encourage reducing food high in sugar, fat and salt	Include expectations for limiting deep-fried food, processed meat and high-sugar items
Pricing and promotion	Encourage display of nourishing options	Encourage pricing, placement and combo deals that support nourishing options	Promote or prioritise stalls that meet food and drink expectations
Portion sizes and upsizing		Encourage a range of portion sizes to suit different appetites and budgets	Include expectations for avoiding low-cost upsizing or deals that promote larger portions of high-fat and high-sugar food (a small price increase for a much larger serve of hot chips or fizzy drink)
Incentives and recognition for stallholders		Offer incentives (reduced fees, preferred locations)	Promote or prioritise stalls that meet food and drink expectations (featured signage and promotion)
Prizes and giveaways	Avoid ultra-processed food or drink as prizes	Encourage non-food rewards	Include expectations that prizes do not include ultra-processed products
Sponsors and partners		Prioritise partners supporting water and nourishing options	Ensure alignment with event food and drink expectations

Examples from New Zealand

A number of events and organisations in New Zealand have introduced food and drink guidelines to support healthier event environments.

- ASB Polyfest – restrictions on the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages and certain food, including hot chips and fried chicken.
- Sanitarium Weet-Bix Kids TRYathlon – vendor menus prioritise water and exclude soft drink, energy drink and deep-fried food.
- Water-only school events – many schools have adopted water-only approaches to sports days, gala days and community events.
- Council venues and events – some councils have introduced policies that limit the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages at publicly owned venues – for example, see Healthy Food and Drink Policy | Christchurch City Council.

These examples show the range of approaches organisers can take from providing guidance to stallholders to including food and drink expectations in vendor guidelines agreements, contracts or event policies.

Balancing food and drink offerings

Events often include a variety of food and drink stalls, including those that specialise in one particular type of food such as baking, desserts or drink. How this guidance can be applied may look different for these stalls.

Event organisers can support a balanced food and drink environment by considering the overall mix of stalls across the event and how they are arranged within the event layout. For example, organisers may choose to spread different types of stalls across the event site to help ensure attendees have easy access to a range of food and drink options.

With appropriate support and guidance from event organisers, all stallholders can contribute to creating a food and drink environment that meets the needs of their community.

Examples

Event organisers could encourage stalls that primarily sell items such as cookies or donuts to:

- offer a range of portion sizes to suit different appetites and budgets
- use clear pricing that supports customer choice without encouraging overpurchasing – avoid upsizing deals that incentivise buying larger quantities
- make free drinking water available nearby or direct attendees to water stations
- consider offering a variety of products, including smaller or lighter options where appropriate (smaller cookies, less icing-heavy options).

Supporting and promoting breastfeeding at events

Supporting and promoting breastfeeding is an important consideration in event planning. It helps create inclusive, family-friendly environments that support the health and wellbeing of babies and their families.

Event organisers can support this by:

- displaying breastfeeding-friendly signage at the event – free downloadable signage is available from Resources | Baby Friendly Aotearoa New Zealand
- providing access to comfortable seating, shade and drinking water
- considering a designated whānau-friendly space or quiet area for those who prefer a more private setting for feeding and caring for their baby.



Appendix 1: Email template to stallholders regarding food and drink expectations

Clear and early communication with stallholders helps build a shared understanding of the event's food and drink approach. It also gives stallholders time to plan menus, source ingredients and consider any changes they may wish to make.

This example email can be adapted by event organisers when inviting or confirming food and drink vendors. It is intended to support positive conversations with stallholders about how they can contribute to a food and drink environment that offers a range of choices for event attendees.

Example email

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your interest in being a food stallholder at [Event Name]. We appreciate the important role food vendors play in creating a welcoming and enjoyable event for our community.

At [Event Name], we aim to create a positive event environment that supports the wellbeing of our community and our whānau. As part of this, we encourage stallholders to offer a range of food and drink options, including nourishing choices alongside traditional event food.

What this means for stallholders

Where appropriate, we encourage food vendors to consider:

- offering a variety of food options, including some more nourishing choices
- offering water or lower-sugar drink options
- offer a range of portion sizes to suit different appetites
- preparing food using methods such as grilling, baking or steaming instead of deep-frying where possible.

You do not need to change your entire menu. Small changes can help make a big difference. The attached Food and Drink Guidance for Event Stallholders includes practical ideas and examples.

A few things [we encourage limiting] OR [that are prohibited]

To align with the event's food and drink values, we encourage stallholders where possible to limit;

- drinks with added sugar
- pricing or promotions that encourage overpurchasing – for example, low-cost upsizing offers or deals
- promotions involving lollies or sugary products (see HE3310 Fundraising and team activity ideas to support welllbeing) for alternative ideas

Support for stallholders

We recognise that every stall operates differently, and we are committed to working collaboratively with vendors. If you would like to discuss ideas or explore options for your business, we are happy to help.

Thank you for helping us create a fun, welcoming event that offers a range of food and drink choices and supports the wellbeing of our community.

Ngā mihi

[Name]

[Role / Event organiser]

[Organisation]

[Contact details]

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