



# Dietitian's Corner

## The "Loaf" - Part II

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Shortly after I completed the last **Dietitian's Corner** article, *The "Loaf" with a Bit of History*, a warden contacted me regarding the usage of "the loaf" as the standard meal in the segregation unit. The goal would be to make segregation even less inviting than it already is, thus further deterring inmates from inappropriate behavior. As foodservice professionals, most of us are raising our eyebrows right now with "this is an invitation for litigation" running through our minds. The warden was interested in not only professional opinions, but also what experiences others may have encountered as a result of using the loaf. This resulted in a survey in which many of you participated (See Exhibit A).

We are all familiar with the American Correctional Association (ACA) standards and often use these standards as a guide or as part of compliance when our facilities are ACA accredited. Though compliance to these standards is voluntary, they are viewed as valid and acceptable standards of operation within the industry. One of these standards, relating to food, makes direct referral to the preclusion of the use of food as a disciplinary measure (ACA Standard 3-4301, Ref. 2-4252/Adult Correctional Facilities). This standard stresses that inmates and staff, except those on special medical or religious diets, should eat the same meals, and food should not be withheld as a disciplinary sanction.

The "Loaf" is identified by many different names, including Special Management Meal, Behavioral Loaf, Nutri-Loaf, Prison Loaf or just The Loaf. In the end, all of these foods are similar in concept but may differ slightly in composition. They are generally designed to meet the basic nutritional needs of an adult inmate by providing from 2,400-3,900 calories per day with a distribution of approximately 10-15 percent protein, 50-79 percent carbohydrate and 5-38 percent fat. After preparing/baking each individual recipe, which is usually divided into three loaves, a loaf is provided (from the same recipe/batch) to the inmate for each meal. The choice of beverage to be served with each meal varies depending on the reason for serving the food loaf. It is often served in a disposable container with no eating utensils.

The survey was intended to establish the rationale for using the food loaf, what it was made from, how it was prepared and served and which, if any, additional foods were offered with the meal loaf. In addition, comments were solicited about any litigation issues concerning the use of the food loaf. There were nineteen respondents to the informal survey.

- More than half of the respondents used the food loaf in their facility/agency.
- Seven identified discipline as the main motive, while three identified behavioral modification as the reasoning.
- Nine used formulated recipes developed from a trial and error method designed to meet the current DRI levels (although two respondents were still in the testing stage).
- One even blended the day's meals (individually) added oats, formed into a loaf, baked and served the respective loaf.
- Most facilities offered both a regular and a vegetarian or vegan

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selection, though neither option provided increased flavor.

- Some offered additional food selections, such as an orange and margarine with each meal. One offered the beverage selection of that meal and others only offered water, if anything.
- The duration of the use of the food loaf ranged from one meal to thirty days, though the length of time for the majority ranged only from one to three days.
- In the majority of the cases, administrative and/or medical personnel had to sign-off on the use of the food loaf and strict monitoring procedures were followed.
- Two respondents indicated that they had been sued, but indicated that both cases were resolved favorably toward the prison authority.
- Three indicated that their facilities were currently ACA accredited and two more were having their facility look into accreditation.

Once nutritional calculations were achieved for the recipes, they were “signed-off” for meeting nutritional adequacy by the dietitian in charge of developing/analyzing the recipe. The food loaf was designed to meet nutritional needs, but it was not designed to make one want to stay on this diet regimen for long periods. It is described as bland, often brown and grainy, akin to a bran muffin but without much taste.

The ingredients are things that one would find in a well-balanced diet, but they are not in proportions that one usually looks for when shopping. It is not spiced like the food one is accustomed to eating.

The ‘loaf,’ whether a Special Management Meal or other recipe, can be a sound alternative to the regular dining format at any correctional facility. Whether the food loaf is used as a result of severe, deviant, anti-social behavior by the inmate or as a protective measure so that the inmate is less likely to injure themselves, is up to the discretion of the individual governing agency, warden or jail administrator. Keep in mind the mandates of the agency and ensure that all food guidelines are met. Keeping appropriate documentation and the development of a written procedure for implementation and use should be standard operational procedure when dealing with this type of controversial issue.

### Can We Help You?

As always, we welcome your questions and input on topics that are of interest to you as ACFSA members. If you would like to submit articles, questions or any other communication, please contact me at (330) 499-0809 or email [bwakeen@neo.rr.com](mailto:bwakeen@neo.rr.com) or visit the ACFSA Website at [www.ACFSA.org](http://www.ACFSA.org) or the CD-HCF Corrections Sub-unit Website at [www.CDHCF.org](http://www.CDHCF.org).

## Exhibit A

# Questionnaire:

1. Does your facility use a “food loaf” for disciplinary measure?

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2. What is in the loaf, (i.e. the days meal blended and baked, a special recipe, etc.)?

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3. Does the recipe consider any medical or religious issues?

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4. What is the caloric content?

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5. Does it meet 100 percent of the DRI's?  
If not, how do you compensate, or do you?

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6. Do you serve a beverage with it? If so, what and how much?

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7. Under what circumstances is it used?

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8. What is the minimum and maximum duration of its use?

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9. Do you approve (sign off) the loaf as nutritionally adequate?

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10. Has (have) your facility(ies) ever been in litigation over this?

A. Have you been involved with it, providing documentation or as an expert witness, etc.?

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B. What was the outcome?

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C. Is (Are) the facility(ies) that you represent with regard to the information in this questionnaire ACA accredited?

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**Please fax this questionnaire to Barbara Wakeen at 330-497-2531 or email answers to [bwakeen@neo.rr.com](mailto:bwakeen@neo.rr.com).**