

Desserts

with a Local Flavor

Menu Planning Board Outcomes Produce Changes

Marine Corps mess halls answer the call for sweet treats with a vast variety of desserts that changes everyday to maintain high satisfaction with meals.

Unlike the regular 21-day Marine Corps cycle for entrées, desserts have a local flavor with variety the topic of discussion during annual menu planning boards. Any changes to the master menu are determined at that time, including the variety of desserts.

“The desserts are selected and determined during the local Menu Planning Board,” said Chief Warrant Officer Hunter Higgins, operations officer, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, Okinawa, Japan. “During the Menu Planning Board, any requests made by service members are considered. Upon completion of the Menu Planning Board, the Master Menu is created by the MCIPAC [Marine Corps Installations Pacific] Base Food Service Staff. According to MCO 10110.14M, a minimum number and types of desserts will be served for every meal.”

Marines at Okinawa are served at least three dessert choices for every meal. Marine Corps Order (MCO) 10110.14M of the Marine Corps Food Service and Subsistence Program requires that one type of pie, cake, cookie, bar or pudding be provided with each meal.

“However, dessert choices available in Marine Corps mess halls are decided according to the acceptability factor of each dessert,” he said. “At this time, no changes have been discussed.”

DEPARTMENT OF DESSERTS

Department of Defense (DoD) Menu Standards are another factor in the choice and availability

Marine Lance Cpl. Hezekiah E. Presley stands next to the dessert cart at the 12th Marines Mess Hall on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan.

(PHOTO BY: LANCE CPL. MANDALINE HATCH, USMC)



A slice of cherry pie is a sweet finish to a meal at the 12th Marines Mess Hall on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan.

(PHOTO BY: LANCE CPL. MANDALINE HATCH, USMC)

SPECIAL CITATION: DESSERTS



Slices of cake and pie, along with assorted puddings are among the dessert options at the 12th Marines Mess Hall on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan. (PHOTO BY: LANCE CPL. MANDALINE HATCH, USMC)

of dessert options in Marine Corps mess halls.

Sharlene Holladay, warfighter and performance dietitian, Headquarters, Marine Corps, explained that mess hall dessert bars also should serve fresh fruit, which may be cut and be available as a salad; at least one reduced-fat option, such

as a sweetbread or baked item; and baked trans-fat free (0 grams of trans-fat per serving) items.

"The current variety of desserts offered is vast and varied by day to meet the customer preferences," Holladay said. "The variety of desserts and fresh fruits allow for options on any given day. The consistent messaging that all foods can fit in moderation and support performance nutrition will prevail."

DoD Menu Standards also supplement the variety of desserts available in mess halls with healthier items. "Fruits are available during each meal for patrons that desire healthier alternatives," Higgins said. "Yogurt is also provided during the breakfast meal. However, cakes, cookies and pies are also available to patrons during lunch and dinner service."

Greater variety eventually makes its way onto the dessert menu through manufacturers working to develop and present new options or other changes that better comply with diet/nutrition requirements.

"Additionally, the Marine Corps attends food shows and requests specific items from the vendors to meet



Marines choose cookies for a dessert at the 12th Marines Mess Hall on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan.

the Marine Corps mess hall program 'Fueled to Fight,'" Higgins said.

Steady research and evaluation to expand menu variety is conducted at headquarters and command levels. "Collectively," Holladay said, "the

military services representatives evaluate products as members of the DoD Food and Nutrition Board, members of the Joint Subsistence Policy Board (JSPB) and in collaboration with DLA representatives and the DoD Natick Laboratories analysis team."

Culinary specialists working in mess hall kitchens have the opportunity to prepare dessert options from scratch based on the resources allotted to, and available at each location, Holladay said. Otherwise, she said, prepared desserts are used as well.

Marine Corps bases acquire the ready-made desserts, as well as the ingredients culinary specialists use to make them from scratch, through Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Troop Support. "Much like the beverage options, desserts are acquired from the prime vendor contract through DLA and at the periodic samplings done at installation level," she said.

CONSUMPTION

Since DoD and Marine Corps standards set guidelines for the availability of desserts in mess halls,

and local planning boards add items to the menu annually, Holladay finds that consumption is steady rather than trending up or down.

In fact, Higgins noted that, according to mess hall managers at the 3rd Marine Logistics Group, Okinawa, desserts are consumed by fewer than half of the patrons using the dining facilities.

Whether Fueled to Fight color-coding criteria and nutrition education is influencing Marines to eat desserts less frequently or not is hard to determine.

“To date,” Higgins said, “the effects of nutrition education on patron dessert choices in our mess halls has not been measured.”

Holladay, however, expects to discover clues about the influence that Fueled to Fight and nutrition education is having on dessert consumption in the future.

Meanwhile, the Fueled to Fight color-coding criteria includes guidelines for dessert ingredients and contents. “Ideal products need to be trans-fat free, less than 10 percent saturated fat, less than 30 percent total fat, low in added sugar and contain some fiber,” she said.

Otherwise, desserts are served according to portion sizes set out in the Armed Forces Recipe Service (AFRS).

“All dessert items are prepared according to the Armed Forces Recipe Cards, which includes the portion size,” Higgins said. “Food service personnel are not authorized to deviate from recipes unless authorized



Cut fresh oranges, apples, melon and pineapple served at the dessert bar for breakfast, lunch and dinner are among the many healthy options available at the 12th Marines Mess Hall, on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan.

by higher authority.”

Food service personnel throughout the Marine Corps follow the same regulations. “Currently, our culinary teams are required to follow the Armed Forces Recipe Service (AFRS), which is a compendium of high-volume food service recipes written and updated regularly by the United States Department of Defense Natick Laboratories, and used by military cooks and by institutional and catering operations,” Holladay said.

—GFS

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