

Food at the Audubon Center of the North Woods: nutrition, allergies, special dietary needs

Family atmosphere

The kitchen staff at the Audubon Center wants to make everyone feel welcome at our family's dinner table. As a residential center, we are more like a family home than a hotel. Where do people congregate during gatherings at your home? The kitchen. The dining hall is that central gathering place for us at the Audubon Center. Meals are a time when different types of people come together physically and emotionally to share meals and stories. Additionally, adult guests will be glad that the coffee pot is always on and a selection of herbal and black teas are available as well. Thank you for helping to support sustainably grown selections.

Healthy bodies and a healthy environment

As an environmental education organization, we recognize that food is a valuable natural resource with far reaching implications with regard to both healthy people and a healthy environment. Diets that are rich in fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and whole grains, as well as low in hydrogenated oils, sugars, and chemical additives and preservatives, contribute to healthy bodies. Foods that are procured locally with minimal processing, pesticides, and herbicides contribute to more healthy environments and economies.

Whenever possible, we promote these basic values. Like any family or small business, though, we are limited financially and geographically in what we can offer.

Vegetarian diets

Many of our participants and some staff members are vegetarians. We recognize the value of a meat free diet – it can be better both for healthy bodies (lower saturated fats and more fiber) and a healthy environment (less resource intensive to produce). To support those who choose a vegetarian diet, we always provide a meatless alternative at lunch and dinner. We're also proud to feature at least one meat-free meal each week.

Providing for special dietary needs (see chart listed below)

We want our guests, especially those with food allergies and special dietary needs, to feel safe as they sit down to eat in our dining hall. We cook nutritious meals in a safe manner to ensure our guests are comfortable and well fed. However, we cannot accommodate every situation and need. The following is a brief list of what we CAN do to help.

1. We can provide any and all information regarding the food being served in as timely and accurate manner as possible. This includes access to all food labels.
2. In many cases, we can provide an alternative to our standard menu items (e.g. nut-free option). This requires advanced notice – at least **two weeks** ahead of your program.
3. The more time in advance we have the information, the better we can prepare. It is often impossible to accommodate once your program has started.
4. We can provide limited storage space for supplemental food and drinks for our guests, both dry storage and temperature controlled (food cannot be kept in the dorm!).

5. We can, within reason, prepare alternative food items (that you provide) when necessary. Prior communication (two weeks) and approval from the kitchen is required for food preparation: heating, baking, or assembly (such as sandwiches, etc.)
6. We can help our guests with special food needs integrate in a discreet manner while being respectful of the needs of the rest of the group

The following is a list of things that we CANNOT do at this time.

1. Provide special dietary needs without a **two week** notice.
2. We cannot guarantee a nut-free environment. We serve items with nuts and traces of nuts (both ground and tree nuts) on a regular basis. We do not serve these items to guests with allergies and can provide alternatives. We encourage parents to send supplemental desserts and snacks, as these are the two areas where there is the biggest risk of accidental ingestion. A microwave is available in our dining hall.
3. Beyond offering PB&J, we cannot make special accommodations for “picky” eaters, with the exception for special needs students, e.g. autism and others. These guests may require unique planning and attention.
4. We cannot allow any guests to use any kitchen equipment. This is a safety, sanitation, and liability issue and no exceptions will be granted.
5. We cannot accommodate certain specialty diets (e.g. low-carb, low sodium). We encourage guests with such special needs to contact our Reservations Coordinator (reservations@audubon-center.org) BEFORE their visit to make arrangements, if necessary. We will be happy to do what we can to help their visit be a safe and nutritious one.

The following information should be provided for EACH guest, both child and adult, with allergies or other dietary needs.

1. The specific kind of allergy or sensitivity
2. The severity of the allergy, i.e. can you be around the allergen? Is it ingestion only or contact? etc.
3. The amount and kind, if any, of supplemental food you are bringing and all details about the food.
4. For minors: Parent or guardian contact information to verify or answer allergy questions that may arise during the program. Sometimes the information provided is not complete.

Please refer to the chart below for more information.

Issue	Audubon Center <u>CAN</u> provide	Audubon Center <u>CANNOT</u>	Comments
Allergies			
Nuts	a nut-free menu for your group or a nut free option at meals for an individual*	promise a nut-free environment	This will require advanced communication with Sarah, our Reservations Coordinator. You can call her at 320-245-2648 or e-mail her at odendahl@audubon-center.org to make her aware of your needs.
Shellfish			Shellfish is only served at special events: Dinner at the Lake or weddings
Eggs, wheat, gluten	ingredient information on items served	provide an alternative menu option with less than 2 week notice.	We always have a wonderful salad bar for lunch & dinner.
Dietary			
Vegetarian lactoovo (eats milk, cheese, eggs)	meatless entrée, like a garden burger, at each lunch & dinner*	provide an alternative menu option with less than 2 week notice.	We always have a wonderful salad bar for lunch & dinner.
Vegetarian (doesn't eat milk, cheese, eggs)	meatless entrée, like a garden burger, at each lunch & dinner*	provide an alternative menu option with less than 2 week notice.	We always have a wonderful salad bar for lunch & dinner.
Vegan (eats no animal products)	meatless entrée, like a garden burger, at each lunch & dinner*	provide an alternative menu option with less than 2 week notice.	We always have a wonderful salad bar for lunch & dinner.
Doesn't eat pork	a pork free menu for your group or a pork free option at meals for an individual*	provide an alternative menu option with less than 2 week notice.	This will require advanced communication with Sarah, our Reservations Coordinator. You can call her at 320-245-2648 or e-mail her at odendahl@audubon-center.org to make her aware of your needs.
Gluten-free diet (celiac disease, or other)	limited gluten-free options and gluten information on all items*.	provide an alternative menu option with less than 2 week notice.	We always have a wonderful salad bar for lunch & dinner.
Low carb, low sodium, fat free	fruit, a salad bar at lunch and dinner, and a balanced and varied menu.	provide specialty items	We encourage you to bring much of your own food. We always have a wonderful salad bar for lunch & dinner with many gluten free, low carb options.
Organics	Some organics in menu options (see "comment" section)	provide strictly organic menu's.	We realize that organic foods are often healthier, but we are not able to promise that all items are organic. Purchases are also made based on locally grown, time of year, cost and EWG's "Dirty Dozen" list.
Avoids hydrogenated oils, saturated fats, corn syrup	fruit, a salad bar at lunch and dinner, and a balanced and varied menu.	provide specialty items	We recognize these are good dietary practices, but we cannot realistically provide them with all our meals.
Picky eaters	peanut butter & jelly sandwiches*	provide alternate menu or special /name brand items	We purposefully serve a wide variety of kid-friendly foods, and can provide peanut butter & jelly if no other peanut allergy participants are being served. However, we do encourage kids to try the food being served. If necessary, you can bring your own (easily microwaveable) foods.
Diabetes	fruit, a salad bar at lunch and dinner, and a balanced and varied menu.	special diabetic menu	This will require advanced communication with Sarah, our Reservations Coordinator. You can call her at 320-245-2648 or e-mail her at odendahl@audubon-center.org to make her aware of your needs.

* with adequate notice