Healthy Food and Special Dietary Requirements for IETF meetings
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Abstract

This document describes the basic requirements for food for folks that attend IETF meetings require special diets, as well as those that prefer to eat healthy. While, the variety of special diets is quite broad, the most general categories are described. There can be controversy as to what constitutes healthy eating, but there are some common, generally available foods that comprise the basis for healthy eating and special diets. This document provides some recommendations to meeting planners, as well as participants, in handling these requirements.

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1. Introduction

While much of the success of IETF protocols can be attributed to the availability of large cookies and readily available beer, there are some IETF participants for whom such items aren’t compatible with dietary restrictions or the choice to eat a healthy diet. So, while the IETF Tao [RFC6722] describes the IETF as "a place to go for ‘many fine lunches and dinners’", for folks with dietary restrictions, meals can require the most planning and be one the most stressful aspect of the meetings. Certainly, the tao clearly states that folks are on their own for lunches and dinners, however, the meeting fee does cover (some of) the cost for the food provided at breakfasts and breaks. The dietary restrictions are quite varied, but fall into general categories based typically on medical, religious, health and ethical reasons. While [RFC6640] describes some food considerations which are very useful for the average attendee, it intentionally does not address the dietary restrictions described in this document.

Most folks are generally understanding of dietary restrictions for medical conditions such as diabetes, celiac disease, and folks with severe allergies to foods such as peanuts that cause immediate anaphylactic and often life threatening reactions. In general, folks respect the special diets required for religious reasons and for folks who have chosen to follow a healthy and vegan/vegetarian diet, which for some folks also has a religious basis. More subtle food allergies and sensitivities, as well as less common medical conditions (e.g., PKU) can sometimes be more difficult to handle, both in terms of the understanding by the general public and food service staff. It is also important to note that these dietary restrictions are not just an inconvenience, but rather they can introduce a barrier to full participation by a subset of the population. The logistics involved in obtaining the appropriate food can interfere with participation in the meeting sessions, as well as informal discussions.

2. Overview

In general, most folks on restricted diets are very resourceful in terms of researching the meeting venue and determining availability of "safe foods". Folks with these food restrictions typically are proficient at managing these situations provided they have access to information or are able to talk directly with food service staff, in particular the head chef. However, in some cases, this can be more difficult in terms of access to the "safe food" when folks are in foreign countries where their native language (or a language in which they are very fluent) is not widely understood or when the meeting venue is in a more remote geographic location. Indeed, many of the
folks with dietary restrictions arrive at the meetings early enough to scout out locations for finding "safe food". However, at times, the hotels modify their typical food service offerings, such as ordering from menus to just providing a more restricted subset of food choices, to optimize the handling of the large crowds and limited time during the lunch period. Typically, the extra food service areas (carts, etc.) that some meeting venues use to handle the lunch crowds do not offer any food appropriate for several of the dietary restrictions. Meeting venues that are not co-located with the meeting hotel, in particular those that are not located in the city center, typically introduce the most problems in terms of availability of safe food. The cafes that may be located at the venue typically do not have any safe foods available and often the availability of food for participants in the general area of the venue (i.e., close enough so folks can get back to the venue for afternoon meetings) is very limited at these locations.

Many folks with dietary restrictions compensate for the lack of readily available safe food by bringing food from home to the meeting. In the case where the meeting is in the home country, there is likely no issue with this practice. However, many meetings require a large number of IETF participants to travel to foreign countries, many of whom prohibit the participants from bringing outside food. Since the food from home often provides a large part of the sustenance for participants with restricted diets, this can introduce a large problem - either the participant goes without or they violate the laws of a particular country and don’t declare the food to avoid confiscation. While folks with restrictions due to medical conditions can bring a doctor’s letter, there is still a risk of the food being confiscated, since it is highly unlikely that the folks handling the situation are able to make a decision outside the rules with or without the letter. Certainly, participants have a choice, although difficult in cases where the meetings are required for their jobs, as to whether or not they attend a meetings. IETF is an open and inclusive organization, thus facilitating accessibility to safe foods should be a human factors consideration for the meetings. In addition, laws in some countries (e.g., American Disabilities Act in the U.S.) classify some medical conditions as invisible disabilities (e.g., celiac disease, food allergies, hearing issues) and thus require that accommodations be made for dietary restrictions for medical reasons, in the same way as accommodations are made for other disabilities. The American Disabilities Act applies to non-profit agencies that serve the public.

The objective of this document is to summarize some common requirements for all special diets. The focus of this document is to provide information for individuals/organization that choose venues (Section 5), meeting organizers (Section 6), participants (Section 8)
and the meeting venue staff (Section 7) to meet some basic requirements for these dietary restrictions. It is recommended that these recommendations be more formally adopted by the first two groups (i.e., those that choose venues and those that organize and run the logistics for the meeting) into their procedures.

This document is not intended to provide comprehensive information about any of these dietary restrictions, but rather the restrictions are described in a very general sense, with a few examples, to provide the context for the recommendations in this document. The references include cookbooks that are representative of the special diets discussed in this document. Most of these cookbooks provide a basic overview of particular dietary restriction, lists of safe ingredients, etc. There are a plethora of websites with tons of more information on this topic and specific dietary restrictions.

In addition, this document discusses the importance of providing remote attendance for folks whose conditions limit their ability to travel. It is hoped that by increasing the availability of foods for folks with these restrictions could increase the ability for some folks to attend the face to face meetings.

While discussion of this document was originally targeted for the ietf-food@employees.org mailing list, it has become increasingly clear that this is something that the community as a whole needs to understand, thus the author is prepared to open the floodgates again, in particular due to the decision to hold yet another meeting in a remote location (IETF-86) in Orlando, without consideration of these requirements.

3. Conventions and Terminology

This document uses the following terms:

Celiac disease: A medical condition which requires a diet entirely free of wheat, rye, barley and most oats. The reaction, as in food allergies, is to the protein in these grains, which is gliaden or most often referred to as gluten. Of particular concern for this dietary restriction is that even the smallest amount of the offending food can trigger the manifestation of the illness. This website provides an excellent overview: <http://celiac.nih.gov/>

Food additives: Anything added to food which is typically not natural in origin, such as artificial flavors, artificial colors/dyes, nitrates/nitrites, sulfites/sulfates, mono-sodium glutamate (MSG). This list is not comprehensive and some of these additives (i.e., the latter three) are naturally occurring in foods,
however, the levels/volume of the substance is a fraction of what is typically added to foods.

Food allergies: Typically refers to a food to which one has a fairly immediate and sometimes anaphylactic reaction. These allergies are typically recognized in that folks produced IgE antibodies to a specific food. There are also foods in which the reaction is delayed and one typically produces IgG antibodies. There are also acute mucousal reactions such as to gluten, in which case IgA antibodies are produced. It is not uncommon for folks with food allergies to also have food intolerances.

Food intolerances: Food intolerances can be less severe than food allergies in that the reaction is often delayed and isn’t typically life threatening. The reactions cover a very broad range of symptoms such as gastrointestinal reactions (e.g., from dairy or gluten), oral reactions (swelling, mouth ulcers, etc.) flu-like symptoms such as overall muscle aches, headaches, fatigue, sinus congestion, etc. In a small subset of folks, there can be fairly severe neurological impacts producing ADD/ADHD symptoms, severe anger, seizures, etc.

Halal: Halal is commonly used to refer to food that is permissible according to Islamic law and is special diet followed by most Muslims. One of the areas of most concern for this diet is the source and processing of meat. In one sense, the Halal requirements are extremely close to Kashrut standards followed by those who consume a Kosher Diet. As with a Kosher diet, pork is never acceptable.

Healthy: In the most general sense, healthy refers to a diet that is typically void of processed foods, highly processed sweeteners, food additives, food preservatives, hydrogenated oils, etc. In some cases folks such as those on Vegetarian and Vegan diets would add animal fats to this list. And, obviously, foods with wheat are not considered healthy for celiacs, even foods with natural sweeteners are often unhealthy and of course, any food to which one is allergic is not healthy. So, in this document, the terms is used to refer to a diet based on vegetables and some fruits, along with appropriate proteins, grains, and healthy fats, all of which are suitable for a variety of special diets.

Kosher: A Kosher diet is based on specific rules for food source, preparation and handling that are typically followed by many Jews. The strictest rules are around the source and preparation of meats. In particular meat and dairy must not be mixed and in most cases utensils that have been used to prepare non-Kosher foods cannot be used. Pork is considered non-kosher.

Phenylketonuria (PKU): A medical condition requiring a low protein diet and avoidance of any food containing phenylalanine (e.g., aspartame). The diet for PKU is often comprised of large amounts of fruits and vegetables in specific portions since the daily intake of protein must be monitored. Grains can be consumed in
moderation. The manner in which the food is prepared must be known as ingredients used in cooking and added prior to serving (e.g., butter) need to be identified as they can contribute to the total amount of protein.

Special Diet: Special Diet: Refers to any diet for which the source, method of preparation, handling and serving of the food must all be known. In this document, this term is used to refer to any of the dietary restrictions discussed.

Vegan: A Vegan diet entirely excludes the use of animals for food (including animal by-products such as cow’s milk, butter, eggs, honey, etc.). Many folks adopt a completely vegan lifestyle and eschew the use of animals or animal by-products for any purpose (e.g., no leather shoes). In terms of dietary restrictions, one can view a vegan diet to be a subset of a vegetarian diet.

Vegetarian: A vegetarian diet is one which excludes the consumption of meat products, usually including fish. Some vegetarian diets also exclude animal by-products such as egg and dairy. Vegetarians that do consume egg and dairy products are sometimes referred to as lactoOvo-vegetarians and those that consume dairy products, but no eggs, are referred to as lacto-vegetarians.

4. Requirements for Special Diets

While there is no strict definition as to what qualifies as a "healthy" diet, there are a variety of diets that individuals choose based upon a desire to maintain good health and prevent disease as well as to treat specific diseases.

Allergies are a key reason that some folks must follow a specific diet. In terms of the number of folks that require special diets, it is estimated that anywhere from 3% to 7% of the population has food allergies. The top eight allergens are: milk (cow), eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (such as almonds, cashews, walnuts), fish (such as bass, cod, flounder), shellfish (such as crab, lobster, shrimp), soy and wheat. It should be noted that the allergic reactions are to the protein found in the food. For example, an allergy to milk is most often due to casein, which is the most common protein found in cow’s milk. Thus, any other food product that also contains casein (e.g., butter and cheese) can also cause an allergic reaction. While intolerances to specific foods may not elicit a true allergic reaction, individuals with food intolerances typically must also avoid the offending food. For example, some individuals are lactose intolerant and thus they also cannot consume cow’s milk as described on the following website: <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/lactoseintolerance/>.

It’s estimated that about 5 percent of the U.S. population is
vegetarian and about 0.2 percent of the U.S. Population being vegan. Twenty-five percent of the population has the genetic predisposition to develop celiac disease. It is estimated that as little as 0.3 percent of the individuals with celiac disease have been diagnosed. Both the U.S. and Europe are actively working to educate the medical community on the high prevalence of undiagnosed celiac. In some countries, the rate of diagnosis has doubled in recent years. This trend is expected to continue, thus as time goes by the need for food accommodating this diet will increase. As of 2009, about 15% of the U.S. Population were following a gluten-free diet. Western Europeans and those of European descent experience the highest incidence of Celiac disease. Although, it is not specific to those ethnic groups and has been found in all populations around the world.

Dietary restrictions for religious reasons include those who follow Halal, Kosher and some folks that follow Vegan/Vegetarian diets. Halal is commonly used to refer to food that is permissible according to Islamic law and is special diet followed by most Muslims. One of the areas of most concern for this diet is the source and processing of meat. In one sense, the Halal requirements are extremely close to Kashrut standards followed by those who consume a Kosher Diet. As with a Kosher diet, pork is never acceptable for a Halal diet. Fish with scales are considered both Halal and Kosher. Shell fish are controversial and are a common allergen, thus recommended to be avoided as part of planning for foods to accommodate a broad range of dietary restrictions.

Dietary restrictions due to medical conditions impose very stringent requirements on the food, in particular for allergies and food intolerances. Celiac disease is a good example of a medical condition that requires extreme care in the preparation and handling of the food. In many cases, this requires that the food is not processed or prepared anywhere near those grains. For example, it would not be appropriate to use the utensils, bowls or pots/pan that have been used to prepare foods containing those grains without thoroughly cleaning and only metal or glass should be used since trace amounts of the grains can attach to plastics and wood. For example, this means that neither plastic nor wood cutting boards that have been used for these grains can be used. Nor, can the foods be prepared in the same area or even near an area where the grains are being used for food preparation. In general, this requires designating ahead of time a specific area to be used for the preparation of these foods and ensuring that the food preparer and anyone that handles or serves the food uses appropriate methods to avoid cross contamination. In terms of serving the food, providing plastic utensils and dishes, while not environmentally friendly, helps to avoid one potential area of cross contamination for most of the diets.
In general, the same rules that are required for handling food for medically restricted diets applies to all other special diets in terms of avoiding cross contamination. Meat products require special consideration in ensuring that food suitable for vegetarians/vegans is not contaminated, that appropriate meat products are provided for folks on Kosher/Halal diets and that the meat products are unprocessed and thus suitable for most allergy/intolerance special diets, with the obvious exception that folks that are allergic to fish can’t eat fish, etc..

There are laws in many countries and jurisdictions (e.g., U.S., E.U.) that make it illegal to mislabel foods that are Halal or Kosher. At this time, food manufacturers in many jurisdictions (e.g., U.S., U.K, E.U.) must include all ingredients on the labels of any packaged food product. The following are examples of the requirements for such: [http://food.gov.uk:80/foodlabelling/](http://food.gov.uk:80/foodlabelling/), [http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/foodlabelling/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/labellingnutrition/foodlabelling/index_en.htm), [http://www.fda.gov/food/lablingnutrition/default.htm](http://www.fda.gov/food/lablingnutrition/default.htm). Many products also contain designations as to whether the product is vegetarian or vegan, however, the standards for these labels are not as clearly specified or restricted. Manufacturers are required to specifically label the food if it contains any of the top 8 allergens.

In terms of detailed information available to food service establishments in order to accommodate these special diets, the (U.S.) National Restaurant Association [NRA](http://www.restaurant.org) has produced a comprehensive guide for food service establishments to ensure that they appropriately handle food specifically for allergies and intolerance, but could be used to avoid cross contamination and ensure that only "safe" foods are served.

The fundamental requirements for the provision of food to accommodate special diets consists of the following:

1. The meetings should be held in a location where markets that sell foods for special diets are conveniently located.
2. The right food should be accessible to the participants at the meeting venue.
3. Food that is served at the venue should be prepared and served by appropriate methods as described above.
4. The meeting coordination and venue staff should be made aware of participants requiring such food and should be willing to accommodate such requirements.

The subsequent sections of this document describe the responsibilities of the following organizations/individuals in meeting these requirements:
5. Venue Selection

Accommodating the requirements for special diets starts with the selection of the venue. The following describes some criteria and suggestions that can significantly impact the availability of foods for special diets relative to the venue. It is recommended that these criteria and suggestions be considered as part of the evaluation and negotiation process in the selection of a venue. Other than the last criteria, if a venue cannot satisfy these criteria, then the venue should be deemed unsuitable for an IETF meeting.

1. Accessibility to "healthy" food: Meetings that are located in the city center of large metropolitan areas significantly increase the accessibility to foods for special diets. Food markets are generally within walking distance and the number of restaurant options improve the potential for a healthy meal. In addition, the opening hours for food markets don’t entirely overlap with meeting times, thus allowing the attendee to find healthy/safe food without having to miss a meeting (which is the primary objective in attending the meetings for most attendees).

2. Onsite accommodations: While the location of the meeting dramatically impacts the availability of food near the meeting venue, the logistics of the meetings do require the accessibility to healthy/safe food during the meetings. The folks that negotiate the contract should ensure that the venue is willing and able to make accommodations for basic requirements in Section 4. Section 7 outlines specific requirements for the venue and food service staff that provides useful input into this requirement. Information as to the number of attendees for whom the accommodations are required can be based on the information available from previous meetings, with updated information provided once the majority of the registrations for the meeting.
have been completed. In addition, folks that negotiate the contract should ensure that attendees are allowed to bring in outside food and beverage. This is a necessity in the case that the venue fails to provide adequate food onsite. More importantly, it is a medical necessity for some folks to always have specific types of food and drink readily available (e.g., for diabetics or others with blood sugar issues).

3. Repeat venues: Meetings that are located where previous meetings have been held can greatly facilitate (or dramatically inhibit) the accessibility to safe/healthy foods. The attendees from previous meeting(s) already have the information on accessibility to the healthy/safe foods which should influence venue selection. If the post-meeting surveys include questions as to the availability of foods for these specific diets at the venue, the folks that select the venue know a priori whether the venue is suitable in this respect. For cases of first time attendees for a specific location, relevant information can be gathered from attendees that have previously visited the city.

6. Meeting Coordination

IETF meeting coordination staff are typically pro-active in meeting the needs of folks with special dietary restrictions when they’ve been made aware. The meeting registration form includes a field for participants to indicate dietary restrictions. Accommodations including the following have been provided:

- At one venue that served many cookies with nuts, the meeting staff was able to ask the food service staff at the meeting venue to have some nut free cookies available and labeled as such.
- The staff are very accommodating in ensuring special meals are provided to participants that attend meetings where meals are provided in cases where they have been made aware (e.g., WG chairs lunch).
- The availability of safe/healthy foods at the breaks has increased. For example, frozen fruit bars have been available at the traditional Thursday ice cream social and veggies have been available at some of the afternoon breaks.

The following summarizes the recommendations for special diets that meeting planners should be able to accommodate with some pre-planning, and as noted above have already been pro-active in accommodating:

1. Ensuring that specific foods for special diets is available at the IETF meeting hotel restaurants, along with information on the accessibility to such in nearby markets/restaurants. These
accommodations should be available starting on the Friday nite prior to the meeting week, since some folks arrive early for pre-meetings and the tools session.

2. Determining special dietary needs of participants during registration and communicating any additional requirements to the venue staff and to the meeting hosts that are sponsoring the Sunday evening reception and social event who may be directly planning and coordinating the food for those events.

3. Providing information about the provisions for special diets in the participants IETF registration packet and on the IETF meeting attendee mailing list.

4. During the meeting, responding to the concerns raised by participants in terms of the problems encountered. In general, this requires serving as a facilitator between the participant and the venue staff. It should be noted, that in general this situation intervention should only be required in cases where the participant has done their part with regards to the necessary accommodations for their special diet per Section 8.

7. Venue and Food Service Recommendations

Since IETF meetings are typically held at full service venues, accommodating special diets is a service that can typically be provided, in particular with advance notice that allows the venue to properly plan. Planning is required to ensure that the basic requirements identified in Section 4 can be satisfied.

The following summarizes the recommendations for special diets that the venue and food service staff should be able to accommodate with some pre-planning and meet all the requirements.

1. Agreement with meeting planners during the contract negotiation phase that they can at least meet the basic requirements in Section 4.

2. Providing information about the provisions for special diets on check-in and readily available at all food service locations within the venue.

3. Ensuring that specific foods for special diets is purchased in time to meet the dietary requirements starting on the Friday night prior to the meeting week, since some folks arrive early for pre-meetings and tools session.

4. Training chefs if necessary to ensure food for special diets is properly prepared. Noting, that the majority of chefs receive training to accommodate special diets. There is a food service training guide published by the National Restaurant Association (the other NRA) [NRA] that provides explicit details for restaurants in accommodating food allergies that applies
generally to other dietary restrictions.

5. Training waitstaff on the need to clearly document the special dietary requirements when food is ordered.

6. Training waitstaff to effectively communicate with the food preparers and servers (which are not always the waitstaff in some food service locations) to ensure that the preparation, handling and serving of the food for the specific dietary restriction is understood.

7. During the meeting, ensuring food that is available at evening reception, breakfast and snacks is arranged to avoid cross-contamination. Items of particular concern are ensuring that products with nuts are clearly labeled and not co-mingled with nut-free products, meat products are separate from dairy products, wheat products (e.g., bread, bagels, muffins, etc.) are separated from safe food items such as fruit and ideally a list of ingredients is readily available for any prepared foods.

8. Allowing outside food and beverage. While all the items listed above dramatically increase the accessibility to safe food, there will still be times that an attendee cannot ascertain whether certain foods are safe and thus cannot be consumed. In addition, certain medical conditions require that attendees always have specific types of food and beverages on hand (e.g., diabetics and others with blood sugar issues).

While this list might seem quite onerous, a similar approach is used by a variety of organizations including public schools, overnight summer camps for kids, airlines that still provide meals for international flights and a broad range of other conferences from small to large.

8. Participant Recommendations

The following summarizes the recommendations for special diets for which the participant is responsible. These recommendations allow the individual to pro-actively ensure that adequate food is readily available during the meeting, for lunch in particular:

1. Ensuring that the accommodations booked for the meeting can accommodate any food or medication which requires special handling such as refrigeration (e.g., insulin for diabetics and any other supplements, medications or foods which are important for other special diets). Many hotels will provide a refrigerator in the room. Some hotels have microwaves in the rooms or in common areas. In many cases, it can be a really good idea to stay at a hotel near the venue, where food preparation items and refrigerators are standard. Many of the major chains have residence style hotels and one can often find corporate
apartments for rent in major cities. For example, there was a residence type hotel right next to the meeting venue in Philadelphia. The room rate was identical. There were also two Whole Foods markets within walking distance. Thus, for folks on special diets, we really had an optimal setup. Often, the residence/suite style hotels will also do shopping for you (with a list provided in the room).

2. Bringing special dietary items (including medications, etc.) that are typically not generally available, especially in airports or when arriving off hours in an unfamiliar location, in carry on luggage. It is often very, very helpful (and sometimes necessary) to have a letter from your healthcare provider documenting the need to travel with these items. Also, this will typically allow you to go through security with a freezie pack in a lunch cooler.

3. Indicating the dietary restriction when registering for the IETF meeting.

4. Monitoring the IETF "food" mailing list for information as to availability of specific special diet foods, including food markets, nearby food service establishments, as well as at the venue.

5. Gathering the available special diet information upon arriving at the venue.

6. Sharing information on the IETF "food" or IETF meeting specific mailing list as to local food service establishments and markets near the venue during the meeting.

7. Communicating effectively with the food service personnel your specific dietary needs. While the expectation is that the venue and meeting planners have done their job, ensuring that one gets the right food requires effective communication every step of the way. Thus, the same approach that one uses elsewhere should also be used at the meetings. One can never assume that everything has been taken care of by someone else. And, as with anything that involves many people doing the right thing, there is always room for human error. A very effective tool for communicating this information are food allergy cards available on several websites, some of which allow you to enter all your restrictions and print them yourself. Others are pre-printed and purchased from the vendor. These cards can be given to the food service staff. This is very helpful for staff that are unfamiliar with handling special dietary requests, as oftentimes these cards trigger a visit from the chef. In virtually all cases a discussion with the chef on your dietary requirements results in the precise food that you have require.

8. Thanking the folks that do take the effort during the meeting to accommodate your special dietary needs and ensuring that the food service staff are adequately tipped in locales for which this is a custom.
9. Specific Food Recommendations

While specific foods for the special diets can be quite diverse and sometimes contradictory (e.g., meat for vegans/vegetarians, seitan for celiacs, etc.), there are also sufficient readily available foods that can meet the requirements of the majority of the special diets. There are a plethora of recipes in cookbooks and on websites that address all these various diets, including many that combine the diets, such as [kosher-veg] and [cornucopia]. Stores such as Whole Foods, with locations in virtually all major U.S. cities, as well as in the U.K., typically handle this in an exceptional manner, as well, as they often have a salad bar section that consists of very plain and clearly labeled foods. Most Whole Foods stores also have lists of specific foods in the store that are safe for a variety of special diets. Many airlines that provide special meals typically use the same basic meal to accommodate all special diets, in many cases just substituting an alternative protein such as the ubiquitous portobello mushroom for the meat to accommodate a vegetarian/vegan diet. Also, many restaurants do have a subset of their menu that can typically accommodate special diets and in many cases the menus either label the items as such or include a note indicating that dishes can be prepared to accommodate dietary restrictions.

The following summarizes some basic foods that can accommodate the majority of special diets that the venue coordinator and food service staff should be able to accommodate with little pre-planning since they are the foods that provide the basis for most healthy diets. In addition, almost all of these items require very little preparation, thus the potential for cross-contamination is fairly low by observing the basics of a clean prep area and clean utensils, etc. Also, many of these items can be delivered by the food service distributors ready for serving (e.g., salads and even some meats). Virtually all the foods can be served cold, as most folks find a cold meal acceptable for breakfast and lunch since dinners at IETF meetings tend to be larger, hot meals:

- A variety of fresh fruits available at breakfast, lunch and for breaks, when cookies, etc. are served. The fruit must be kept separate from the cookies, etc. to avoid cross-contamination.
- A variety of fresh vegetables, either served raw or steamed and served plain, available at lunch either on a buffet or on the menu.
- At least two greens (without preservatives) for a salad base available at lunch and dinner – e.g., Romaine and spinach – served separately as some folks cannot tolerate the oxalates in fresh spinach.
Lean proteins such as beans, steamed fish and steamed, grilled or deli meats such as chicken or beef, with at least one kosher option and ensuring that the meats are unseasoned and without fillers. Note, that the meats can be served cold, thus prepared the night before and actually this may be very economical for the food service establishment where fresh foods are typically more desirable - e.g., fish spoils most quickly, thus cooking what’s left from the dinner the night before is economical and efficient. For some folks, these foods are eaten for both breakfast and lunch.

Also, to accommodate folks that can handle various spices and seasonings with their food, a range of condiments such as the basic salt and pepper, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise and Tabasco sauce, as well as minimal salad dressings such as vinegar and oil. These items are readily available at virtually any food service establishment.

Within the food preparation environment for these foods and in the case of buffets, avoiding dairy altogether is recommended as it is a common allergen, not eaten by vegans, has special rules for a Kosher/Halal diet, 50 percent of celiacs cannot tolerate dairy and the most health conscious of people typically recognize that cow’s milk, pasteurized in particular, is not a particularly healthy food.

The following food options would be nice to have available, but may require some pre-planning depending upon the venue, but in general can be purchased/prepared ahead of time, thus should not be particularly difficult to support:

- Alternative grains such as Quinoa - can be served as a hot breakfast cereal or served as a side dish as an alternative to rice or cracked wheat salad (Tabbouleh) - the latter could be made using leftovers from breakfast. In the case of breakfast, side options such as maple syrup and dried fruits like raisins can be used to sweeten (in the same manner as these items are served with oatmeal).
- Rice crackers as an alternative to wheat based grain products.
- Hummus as a protein alternative for breakfast and lunch. Hummus keeps quite well, thus the food service staff would only need to prepare a large enough batch to last the week.
- Sprouted beans as a salad/protein alternative for breakfast and lunch.
- Soups that would accommodate all diets such as non-dairy Squash or vegan lentil soup. As with the meats, this soup could be made with leftovers served from the previous evening.
- Nuts and seeds (e.g., pumpkin, sunflower, etc.), including nut butters, as alternative protein sources for folks. These are suitable for all meals and snacks.
Snack bars as an alternative to the cookie option at breaks. There is a wide range of healthy snack bars available, with many being either free of all allergens, vegan and kosher or at least accommodating 2 of the 3 main restrictions. For example, bars with honey are not vegan, but may be suitable for all the other special diets. Many of the manufacturers of these snack bars will provide a certain number to non-profit organizations for their events for marketing and as a public service.

10. Security Considerations

This document neither defines nor extends any Internet protocol, thus there are no particular security considerations. One could consider the information as to which participant requires a special diet to require some level of privacy, but in general, this isn’t considered particularly private for most folks. As noted in Section 8, one can never assume that the food offerings are safe and the individual should always confirm such.

11. IANA Considerations

This document requires no IANA registrations.

12. Acknowledgements

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13. Informative References


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