

Portion Accuracy Challenge – 1 Ounce Meatball

Purpose

This hands-on activity demonstrates how visual estimation can differ from actual weight and reinforces the importance of using accurate measuring tools, especially scales, when portioning foods in school foodservice operations.

Learning Objectives

- Recognize how difficult it is to accurately estimate weight by sight alone
- Demonstrate proper use of a digital scale to measure portion sizes
- Explain why accurate measurement supports consistency, cost control, and student satisfaction

Materials Needed

- Play-Doh or modeling dough
- Digital food scale (set to ounces)
- Small plates or deli sheets
- Disposable gloves (optional)
- Paper towels or wipes

Activity Instructions

1. **Estimate:** Shape Play-Dough into what you believe is a 1-ounce meatball without using a scale.
2. **Predict:** Decide whether your portion is under, over, or exactly 1 ounce.
3. **Measure:** Place the meatball on the digital scale to find the actual weight.
4. **Adjust:** Reshape and reweigh until the meatball equals exactly 1.0 ounce.

Group Discussion & Teaching Moment

- How close was your original estimate?
- Were portions more often over or under 1 ounce?
- How does incorrect portioning affect cost, yield, and student satisfaction?

Key Takeaway: Estimating by sight alone is unreliable. Using the appropriate measuring tool—especially a scale for weight—ensures accuracy, consistency, and quality in school meals.

Trainer Notes

- Meat/meat alternates are credited by weight, not appearance
- Accurate portioning supports nutrition compliance, budgeting, and equity
- Connect this activity to scales, scoops, and standardized utensils