Nutrition Recommendations for the Homeless

**Meals:** just think a protein, veggies, some fat (usually in the foods) and some starch (preferably from a root vegetable or whole grain like brown rice or quinoa.)

**Lasagna with meat** is actually really a good choice as the protein in the meat and cheese, tomatoes (put in extra ground veggies for nutrients) are the veggies and the pasta is the starch. Avoid pasta dishes that do not have protein. So, have meat sauces instead of red sauce without meat. As with all people, they’ll be healthier with protein at every meal and snack.

**Stews** – one pot dishes that have meat, veggies and potatoes have everything they need in one dish

**Thick soups** – like stews

**Casseroles** – as long as they have protein (a decent amount), lots of veggies, and some starch like potatoes or rice. Avoid ones with canned soups as the base and that are devoid of vegetables. Make them from real food. If you get someone looking online for healthy casseroles, you could provide a wide variety of different ones.

**Something fresh** - This is one area most of the real homeless I worked with crave. They eat so much processed crap, that an apple or peach or some fresh veggies are a real treat. Maybe offer salads or fruit if you find they want that.

**Snack Items:**
- **Bars** - there are several soft bars out there now too. The Zing bar (although maybe too expensive) is an option – great nutrients. Get someone searching for soft bars and give the company a call for potential donations... Costco has a Stabilyze bar (I think) that may be soft.
- Nuts – soft ones may work like raw cashews
- Nut butters like peanut butter (or any kind) – the kind that doesn’t need refrigeration
- Applesauce in the small containers that do not require refrigeration

**Please Avoid:**
- All sugars and things made with flour like breads, crackers, cookies – added sugar. This will only worsen depression/anxiety and processed foods zap nutrients. They will most likely crave sugar when they don’t have access to alcohol, but what you should give is protein. It’s the antidote to detoxing or sugar/alcohol cravings.
- All Soda – Soda is the worst possible thing you could offer someone who doesn’t eat regular meals. Soda will make them feel full with no nutrition.
- Apples and Hard food – We have many guests with teeth issues, and these can not be consumed easily
Meal ideas for homeless who use alcohol

The best thing to counter alcohol is protein. They will want sugar, but give them protein. When they can get fresh stuff, things like meat, which would be great. Amino acids, the breakdown of protein, helps with brain function, so could help with depression. On the street, I would try to stock them up with:

A multivitamin would be great but most will not comply with taking that daily. It may be a waste of your money. These must always be taken with food for absorption. Chances are his gut and liver are shot, so not sure how much they’d get.

If you can get l-glutamine capsules, that would help more. It provides the nutrients that the gut lining prefers for healing.

- Baby food – if they’ll eat it. They have great nutrients and I found at our food bank that many with problem teeth were happy to take baby food.

- Smoothie powder – all in one meal type. Read the label and make sure it has many carb grams as well. In one serving, shoot for >15-20 grams protein, >25-30 grams carbohydrates. If he can get water, and has a jar (glass, plastic, whatever), he can shake the shake and drink it. If he’s willing. Some of them even have a lot of vitamins in them, so that would alleviate the need for a multivitamin/mineral.

- When you shop with them, for that day, get them meat and veggies (deli broccoli salad or something) and bread (whole grain only). Just enough for that day at least.

- Cans of beans – give them a can opener, but if you are a homeless shelter, chances are you hand those out like Kleenex.