Background: The RENIs are the latest recommendations on the intake levels, by Filipino population groups, of energy and nutrients (the invisible constituents of the diet). Previous studies translating the 1989 Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs), the predecessor of the RENIs, into one-day menus and subsequent visualization and/or actual consumption of their serving portions were limited to caregivers of children and adults. The amounts of foods/food combinations in one-day menus, that are both RENI-adequate and just “enough” for specific individuals (considering age, sex and physiologic state) have yet to be set.

Objectives: (1) To develop one-day menus that provide levels of energy and nutrient intakes that meet the 2002 RENIs; and (2) To standardize RENI-adequate reference amounts for specific foods/food combinations that can be consumed by an individual or individuals within specific population groups.

Methods: Two one-day menus were initially developed to set reference amounts for specific foods/food combinations. The one-day menus designed to meet the RENI levels were formulated, with consideration of: (a) the desirable contribution to total energy of carbohydrates (55 percent-70 percent), proteins (10 percent-15 percent), and fats (20 percent-30-percent), and (b) variety, using different foods (preferably commonly consumed foods) from within the same food group or from among the different food groups, per menu. The Philippine Food Composition Tables were used to compute for the energy and nutrient contributions of the food items incorporated in the menus, based on edible portion. Each of the two one-day menus was served and cooked, to the RENI population groups (according to their respective requirements), one menu per day: Menu 1, with rice for breakfast, lunch and supper, and Menu 2, with bread for breakfast. Each population group was represented by three apparently normal subjects who were asked to determine whether the amounts of the foods/food combinations that they consumed at mealtime were “enough” (“sapat”), or “too much” (“sobra”), or “too little” (“kulang”). The reference amounts of foods/food combinations in a menu were those found by two or more subjects to be just “enough”. Adjustments were made for the different population groups, in terms of amounts and kinds of food items served to meet RENIs. These reference amounts were subsequently used in developing four (4) sets of seven (7) one-day menus which, on the average, meet RENI levels.

Results: The four sets of seven one-day menus developed met 100 percent of the energy and 100 percent (or more) of the protein, vitamin A, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin C, and calcium intake recommendations, for both males and females. However, the menus met 100% of the recommended iron intakes of the males only. The contributions of the different food groups to total energy and nutrient intakes were similar for the four sets of menus. The method used, although tedious, demonstrated that translating the RENIs into acceptable meal planning practice is achievable, tapping on the new additions to the traditional food supply (e.g. fortified foods), adopting healthy eating habits (e.g. milk-drinking and fruits for desserts).

Recommendations: The actual food consumption testing for the rest of the one-day menus is recommended to standardize and set the reference amounts of the other foods/food combinations that are not included in Menus 1 and 2.