Creating Healthy Menus with USDA Foods
Overview

USDA Foods Background

Christina Riley, MS, RD
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School Meals Recipe Resources

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USDA Foods Nutrition Initiatives

Support School Meal Pattern Requirements by:

✓ Increasing fruit and vegetable options
✓ Only offer whole grain options to schools
✓ Reduce sodium, fat, and added sugar
✓ Conduct taste tests, pilot purchases, and seek feedback from schools on USDA Foods
USDA Foods Available

- 200+ food items
- Vegetables/Beans (low-sodium or no salt added)
  - Fresh, frozen, canned, dry
- Fruits (no added sugar or extra light syrup)
  - Fresh, frozen, canned, dry, 100% juice
- Whole Grains
  - Brown rice, whole grain pasta, rolled oats, whole wheat flour, whole grain tortillas, whole grain pancakes
- Meat/fish
  - Beef, pork, chicken, turkey, fish*
- Other protein items
  - Eggs, nuts/seeds, cheese*

*Specifications emphasize reduced sodium and fat profiles
DoD Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program
New USDA Foods Products

• Apple slices (individual bags)
• Baby carrots (individual bags)
• Broccoli florets (frozen)
• Chopped spinach (frozen)
• Dried cranberries
• Diced mushrooms (bulk)
• Pinto beans (bulk)
• String cheese
Reformulated USDA Foods

- Catfish strips
- Fajita chicken strips
- Ham products (whole, sliced, diced)
- Mozzarella cheese products
- Spaghetti sauce
USDA Foods In Development

- White whole wheat/enriched flour blend
- Unseasoned chicken strip
- Whole grain-rich blend pastas
- Frozen vegetable blends
Creative Recipe Resources

Project Bread: Let’s cook Healthy School Meals
http://support.projectbread.org/site/PageServer?pagename=childrenandschools

Indiana DOE: Sizzling School Lunches
http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/nutrition/sizzling-school-lunches-chef-cyndie.pdf

Vermont DOE: New School Cuisine

Idaho DOE: Chef Designed School Lunch
http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/chef/chefDesign.htm
Let's cook HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS

Recipes for school nutrition directors that meet USDA requirements
Cookbook context

- Outgrowth of Project Bread’s *Chefs in Schools* Program
  - Launched in 2006 to provide culinary consulting to low-income school districts and Head Start programs across Massachusetts

- Purpose of the resource:
  - Provide creative, easy to follow recipes that:
    - Meet USDA guidelines
    - Are cost-effective
    - Appeal to students
100 easy to use recipes:
- Sections on M/MA, Grains, Vegetables, Sauces
Chicken and Spinach Quesadillas

BY NICK SPEROS, SCHOOL FOOD CHEF, PROJECT BREAD’S CHEFS IN SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

“I called them ‘tacos’ when I served them to some of the kids in Lawrence. Funny thing was that they ate them more readily than when I called them quesadillas. Gotta love ‘em.”
—Chef Nick, Project Bread’s School Food Chef

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**100 easy to use recipes:**
- Sections on M/MA, Grains, Vegetables, Sauces
- Portioned to 100 servings

**Meets USDA guidelines:**
- Meal patterns
- Nutrients

**Cost-effective:**
- No specialized equipment
- Not overly labor intensive
- Maximizes USDA foods

**Student tested for selection & CONSUMPTION**

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### Chicken and Spinach Quesadillas Recipe

**YIELD:** 100 SERVINGS (K-5)  
**SERVING SIZE:** 1½ CUPS

- 9½ pounds seasoned and cooked chicken, diced
- 2¼ medium onions (¾ pound)
- 3 tablespoons chopped garlic
- 4½ tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 26½ pounds raw spinach, partly trimmed
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese (¾ pound)
- 11½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese, low fat and low sodium  
  (about 3 pounds)
- 100 8-inch whole-wheat tortillas (10 pounds)
- 2 #10 cans salsa  
  (about 1½ gallons)

**Preheat oven to 350° F.**

Carefully warm the chicken in the steamer or oven until it reaches an internal temperature of 145° F.

In the meantime, sauté the onions and garlic in the oil until soft and translucent; add salt.

In batches, sauté the spinach in the onion and garlic mixture, just until warm. The spinach should be just beginning to steam and should be releasing some liquid. Dump the spinach into a perforated hotel pan to cool and drain.

Once the spinach has cooled enough to touch, squeeze out as much juice as possible.

Combine the spinach with the warm chicken, and add the two cheeses; mix until the ingredients are evenly dispersed. Taste for seasoning; adjust if necessary.

Using a 3-ounce scoop, put the mixture into the tortilla and spread to distribute. Fold the tortilla in half and place on a sheet pan covered in a piece of sprayed parchment paper.

Copiously spray the top of the quesadillas with pan release spray and cook for 8 minutes, until golden brown.

Allow to sit for 5 minutes before cutting into three wedges.

Serve with corn and black bean salad, sour cream, and homemade salsa.

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**NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION**

| CALORIES | 269 | SODIUM  | 676.61 MG | SATURATED FAT  | 10.04% |

**USDA REQUIREMENTS MET**

- 2 OUNCES MMA
- 2 OUNCE EQUIVALENTS WHOLE GRAIN
- ¾ CUP TOTAL VEGETABLES  
  (½ CUP DARK GREEN VEGETABLE,  
  ¼ CUP RED OR ORANGE VEGETABLE)
Creative, well executed recipes can improve student nutrition without impacting sales.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>% OF STUDENTS SELECTING ENTREE</th>
<th>AVERAGE % OF ENTREE CONSUMED</th>
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<tr>
<td>PRE CONTROL SCHOOL</td>
<td>PRE CHEF SCHOOL</td>
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100.0% 100.0% 100.0% 100.0% 74.0% 79.7% 71.3% 77.4%

Source: J.Cohen, S.Richardson, E.Parker, P.Catalano, E.Rimm; A comparison of choice architecture and chef-enhanced meals on long term selection and consumption of healthier school food. ; 2014; Manuscript submitted for publication.
Kids will take (and eat!) their vegetables if they look, smell, and taste great

Source: J. Cohen, S. Richardson, E. Parker, P. Catalano, E. Rimm; A comparison of choice architecture and chef-enhanced meals on long term selection and consumption of healthier school food. 2014; Manuscript submitted for publication
Let’s Cook Healthy School Meals

- 100 easy to use recipes
- Rigorously tested to meet USDA guidelines
- Cost-effective for school environments
- Taste-tested with students
- And, best of all:

FREE!

Download at www.projectbread.org
New School Cuisine

Nutritious and Seasonal Recipes for School Cooks by School Cooks
Vermont Agency of Education

- Green Mountain Healthy Kids Challenge
- Team Nutrition Grant

Child Nutrition Programs

VT FEED  ⇔  SNA VT
Goals

• Dietary Guidelines for Americans

• Increase student knowledge of healthy food and nutrition in schools

• Nutrition environments ~ coordinated approach for rapid school-wide change in school food culture

• Intensive training and support for school food service staff, teachers and administrators

• Recipe development and testing of new food and menu items
  • Green and bright orange vegetables
  • Fresh fruits
  • Whole grains,
  • Dried peas and beans
  • Lean, low fat meats/meat alternates
Action Steps

- Nutrition Education Institute
- Technical Assistance
- Action Plans
- Wellness Policies
- HUSSC Applications
Action Steps

• Proposed Recipes
• Training
• Recipe Development
• Recipe Testing
• New School Cuisine
Vegetables

• Fresh & Local
• USDA Foods
  • Peas
  • Green Beans
  • Corn
  • Diced Tomatoes
  • Broccoli
  • Sliced Carrots
  • Sweet Potato Chunks

Green Bean, Cranberry & Sunflower Seed Salad

Three Sisters Soup
Whole Grains

- Brown Rice
- Whole Wheat Pasta
- Whole Grain Tortillas
- Rolled Oats
- Whole Wheat Flour

Sesame Noodles with Chicken and Vegetables
Lean Meats

- Ground Beef (85 – 15)
- Turkey Taco Filling
- Diced Chicken
- Frozen Eggs
- Cheeses

Meatballs

Sloppy Farmer Joes
Beans, Peas & Legumes

- Garbanzo Beans/Chick Peas
- Great Northern Beans, Black Beans, Red Kidney Beans
- Lentils
- Refried Beans

- Lentil Soup
- Sweet Potato & Black Bean Salad
- Braised Greens & Beans
Fruits

- Frozen Apple Slices
- Applesauce
- Dried Cranberries
- Blueberries

Vermont Maple Apple French Toast Bake

Wheat Berry Salad
Benefits
Chef Designed School Lunch

Ed Herrera, MPA, SNS
Developing the Partnership

• Project written into a Team Nutrition grant to support USDA Foods with the new meal pattern

• Chef Brenda – registered dietitian and culinary trained chef

• Resource for School Foodservice – develop cycle menu compliant with new meal pattern and encourage use of USDA Foods
Implementation

Recipe Development

• Chef Brenda’s recipes were developed from scratch
• Recipes were revised based on students’ feedback
• Created two week menu cycle based on the new meal pattern
Implementation

• Tested recipes in a K-12 school kitchen with limited equipment

• School transports ~200 meals per day

• Provided 6 hands-on trainings, 2 per region
Results

Foodservice Staff

• “Finally, a way to serve fish that the students will eat!”
• “Thank you, thank you, thank you. Please keep great recipes from Chef Brenda coming.”
• “When I first heard about the chef recipes, I thought they would be too expensive to make and include ingredients we didn’t have. These recipes are very reasonable to make in school lunch.”

Students

• “I like the way all the different foods are mixed together.” – 3rd Grader
• “I like that this meal is so healthy.” – 4th Grader
• “This meal is out of this world.” – 6th Grader
• “The flavor is sooo good.” - 6th Grader
Week Two Menu Cycle

**CHEESEBURGER SALAD WRAP***
- Applesauce
- Baked Beans
- Milk

**BBQ ROASTED CHICKEN***
- Pizzas Green Beans
- Blueberries
- Ranch Potato Wedges
- Roll
- Milk

**THAI CHICKEN AND BASIL BARLEY***
- Asian Fresh Vegetables
- Sliced Pears
- Milk

**FISH TACOS***
- Bean and Broccoli Salad
- Orange Slices
- Milk

**VOLCANIC MEATLOAF***
- Strawberry Green Salad
- Mixed Fruit
- Roll
- Milk

**SOUTHWEST BURRITO***
- Corn
- Watermelon
- Milk

**MOZZARELLA CRUSTED POLLOCK***
- Vegetable Pasta Salad
- Sweet Potato Sticks
- Apple Crisp
- Milk

**MANDARIN CHICKEN RICE BOWL***
- Stir Fry Vegetables
- Sliced Pears
- Milk

**CILANTRO PORK SALAD WRAP***
- Carrot Sticks
- Sliced Strawberries
- Milk

**BREAKFAST BURRITO***
- Seasoned Black Beans
- Orange Wedges
- Milk
Cheeseburger Salad Wrap

“It tastes like a hamburger, mixed with a taco, mixed with a salad. This is my new favorite food.”
   - 2nd Grade Student

“This is the best, healthiest hamburger I have ever had.”
   - High School Student

Student Voting Results

90% liked this lunch
5% were in the middle
5% didn’t like this lunch
Cheeseburger Salad Wraps: Chef Tips

• Mozzarella cheese is a great USDA food to use
  ➢ Purchasing a food processor is a great way to shred cheese
  ➢ Idaho Dairy Council provides attachments for mixers that shred cheese

• Offer spicy options, but consider the sodium in the product
  ➢ Hot sauce
  ➢ Pepper jack Cheese
Student Response
Best Practices

Liberty Charter School staff & Chef Brenda
The Results

• 6 regional trainings - cooking classes
• Estimate that 25% to 33% of schools use at least one Chef Designed School Lunch recipe
• Chef Designed School Breakfast menu project currently being developed
Chef Designed School Lunch Highlight Video

• Chef Designed School Lunch Cooking Demonstrations were filmed and are available on the Idaho CNP website
Sizzling School Lunches
Indiana Cooks with Chef Cyndie
Tools for Schools

• Your one-stop guide to nutrition standards for school meals and snacks:
  • Free nutrition materials, training, and recipes for school food service
  • Smarter Lunchroom strategies
  • Tips for offering more fruits, vegetables, and whole grain-rich foods
  • Grant opportunities
  • Best practices from other schools
  • Regulations and policies

http://www.fns.usda.gov/healthierschoolday
Flexibilities

- Phased-in Breakfast implementation
- Option to offer a daily meat/meat Alternate at breakfast
- Allowed students to take just one-half cup of fruit or vegetables under OVS
- Removed the starchy vegetable limit
- Pushed out the second sodium target by an additional year

- Lifted the weekly maximums on grain and meat/meat alternates
- Allowed frozen fruit with added sugar
- Clarified allowable whole grain-rich corn products
- Provided two-year flexibility for schools that cannot obtain acceptable whole grain-rich pasta
- Provided Smart Snack exemption for grain-only entrees served at breakfast
We want your feedback!

• Keep sharing your best practices, challenges, and concerns.
Questions?