6 Basic Principles to Consider

The following principles are based on research concerning various **environmental cues that influence eating behavior**. They are true in school lunchrooms as well as in restaurants, food courts, and even in your home kitchen!

- Manage Portion Sizes
- Increase Convenience
- Improve Visibility
- Enhance Taste Expectations
- Utilize Suggestive Selling
- Set Smart Pricing Strategies

Let’s look at each principle separately...
Use smaller containers, plates, and serving utensils for foods you wish to limit.

Large portions = eating more

Small portions = eating less

Pay attention to the number of servings per container!

**Nutrition Facts**

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<th>Serving Size</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Calories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
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</table>
Serve Smart: Serve yourself only what you want to eat – then put the rest away and out of sight.

Why it works: People will “clean their plate” even after they are full... even when they don't like what they are eating!

Fun science:

“Crouton Salads” & Unlimited Dressing

&

Stale Popcorn Giveaway
## Make healthy foods more convenient

* The easier it is to eat a food, the more likely we are to eat it!  
* Make healthy foods easy to get to by putting them on the middle shelves of the pantry and refrigerator, in front.  
* Put indulgent treats at the very top or bottom shelves, in the back.

### Manage Portion Sizes

**Increase Convenience**

- Improve Visibility
- Enhance Taste Expectations
- Utilize Suggestive Selling
- Set Smart Pricing Strategies

### Drive Thru

**Open 24 Hours**
Snack Smart: Measure out “snack packs” of healthy snacks for easy grab-and-go snacking – or for breakfast on the go!

Why it works: People will “clean their plate” even after they are full... even when they don't like what they are eating!

Fun science:

The Secretaries’ Sweet Tooth

&

Chocolate Milk Hide-and-Seek
Give Milk the Edge

- Rearranging the coolers to highlight white milk resulted in an increased rate of purchase by approximately 46%

- Removal of flavored milks in lunchroom caused daily milk sales to decrease nearly 11%
Out of sight, out of mind.

* Simply seeing a brownie or other high-calorie food can lead to unplanned consumption – we crave it and eat it before we think twice.

* Conversely, the image or presence of a healthy food option can lead to consumption of healthier foods. In one school, simply moving a salad bar 3 feet to the center of the serving area tripled salad sales!
Snack Smart: Keep healthy foods where you'll see them – at eye level in the pantry and refrigerator – and more indulgent foods in the back and out of sight. Use opaque storage containers for indulgent foods and clear storage containers for healthy snacks.

Why it works: It's easier to avoid temptation when you desire healthy foods instead. Make healthy foods easy to spot!

Fun science:

the Fabulous Fruit Bowl

&

First Foods Are Favorite Foods
* Food tastes how we **expect** it to taste – which is why it’s such a shame that people are taught to think healthy foods are yucky!

* Name, appearance, and reputation create our expectations.

**If it looks delicious and sounds delicious... it must be delicious!**

- Food **tastes** how we **expect** it to taste – which is why it's such a shame that people are taught to think healthy foods are yucky!

- Name, appearance, and reputation create our expectations.
Talk It Up to Spice It Up!: Get kids excited about healthy foods by creating fun, imaginative names such as “X-ray Vision Carrots.” Increase the allure of adult foods by adding appealing details: “tangy smoothie,” “Texas barbecue,” or “crisp garden salad.”

Why it works: It's (almost) all in your head!

**Fun science:**

A Wine (or Burrito) by Any Other Name

&

Color Counts with Pasta Portions
The Name Game

- Use cool or appealing labels to describe foods
  - Carrots → X-Ray Vision Carrots → Doubled the consumption of carrots
  - Bean Burrito → Big Bad Bean Burrito → Increased burrito consumption by more than 40%! (It could have been more, but they sold out in the second of three lunch periods!)

Why not “Extreme Yogurt”, “Mega-Milk” “Champion Cheese” & “High Flyin’ Flat Bread”
Say what??

* Attitudes are contagious! We are influenced by people around us.

* Signs and verbal prompts influence us to see and desire products.

Would you like some salad with that pizza?

Try Today's Special! It's delicious!

Fruit comes with your meal!
Make Peer Pressure a Positive Force!: Encouraging others to eat healthy foods will help you reach your own nutritional goals. Order first at restaurants. Don't be afraid to be a leader!

Why it works: Birds of a feather flock together! People often follow the example of those near them, so start a healthy trend!

**Fun science:**

I'll have What She's Having... &

Supermarket Smart Carts
Money Talks.

* People like to save money, but it can backfire... many examples of "bundling" result in eating LOTS of unplanned, unnecessary, and even unwanted calories.

* Nutritionally speaking, a Value Meal is a really bad deal!
Make a Bundle with Healthy Bundling: Encourage lunchrooms and restaurants to offer healthy food “bundles” for a discounted price: for example, a salad or sandwich + water + fruit instead of a soda and fries, or one cookie + milk instead of three cookies.

Why it works: A way to save money and feel better? Two, please!

Fun science: Cash for Cookies
Increase Access to Reimbursable Meals

- Increase the perceived variety of more healthy a la carte items
- Decrease the variety of less healthy selections
  - Ex.: pre-cut vegetables and health bars rather than chips and cookies
  - Integrate whole grain options into food items (ex.: pizza with corn or whole wheat flour)
- Changes to school lunch foods should be made gradually (Ideally, over the summer or in increments)

ADD THESE TO THIS
Increase Convenience of Healthier Foods

Daily Salad Sales increased 200-300% within two weeks

New Location for Salad Bar

Old Location for Salad Bar

Daily Salad Sales increased 200-300% within two weeks

Cash Register #1

Cash Register #2
Lunch Line Redesign

School cafeteria redesigns are much criticized for offering the kind of snack foods and desserts that contribute to childhood obesity. But banning junk food from cafeterias, as some schools have tried, or serving only carrots or tofu, can backfire. Students then skip lunch, bring in their own snacks or head out for fast food. We've even seen some pizzas delivered to a side door.

Children and teenagers resist heavy-handed nutritional policies — and the food that is associated with the heavy hand. No food is nutritious, after all, until it is actually eaten.

A smarter lunchroom wouldn't be draconian. Rather, it would nudge students toward making better choices on their own by changing the way their options are presented. One school we have observed in upstate New York, for instance, tripled the number of salad students bought simply by moving the salad bar away from the wall and placing it in front of the cash registers. Experiments that we and other researchers have done in cafeterias at high schools, middle schools and summer camp programs, as well as in laboratories, have revealed many ways to use behavioral psychology to coax children to eat better. Here are a dozen such strategies that work without requiring drastic or expensive changes in school menus.

- Putting apples and oranges in a fruit bowl, rather than a stainless steel pan, more than doubled fruit sales.
- Moving the chocolate milk behind the plain milk led students to buy more plain milk.
- Putting the salad bar away from the wall and putting it in front of the checkout register nearly tripled sales of salads.
- A "cash for cookies" policy — that is, forbidding the use of lunch tickets for desserts — led students to buy 71 percent more fruit and 55 percent fewer desserts.
- Decreasing the size of bowls from 18 ounces to 12 ounces reduced the size of the average cereal serving at breakfast by 24 percent.
- Requiring or encouraging the use of cafeteria trays increased vegetable consumption: students without trays ate 21 percent less salad but no less ice cream.
- Giving healthy food choices more descriptive names — for example, "creamy corn" rather than "corn" — increased their sales by 27 percent.

Students given a choice between carrots and celery were much more likely to eat their vegetables than students forced to take only carrots.

Keeping ice cream in a freezer with a closed opaque top significantly reduced ice cream sales.

When cafeteria workers asked each child, "Do you want a salad?" salad sales increased by a third.

Creating a speedy "healthy express" checkout line for students who were not buying desserts and chips doubled the sales of healthy sandwiches.

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Learn More!

About Our Work

- School nutrition: A kid’s right to choose
  Los Angeles Times, February 3, 2012
- Some U.S. lunchrooms to get cheap makeover
  UCLA, September 29, 2011
- Interview with Dr. Brian Wansink, Master of Lunchroom Trickery
  The Lunch Tray, March 31, 2011
- Smarter Lunchrooms Lead Kids to Eat More Salad
  ScienceDaily, April 27, 2010

MORE NEWS

Smarter Lunchrooms Movement

Lunch Line Redesign

A smarter lunchroom wouldn’t be draconian. Rather, it would nudge students toward making better choices on their own by changing the way their options are presented.

Lunch’d: Part One

Three Easy Actions

- Create a healthy items-only convenience line or window stocked with all types of healthy foods: milk, fruits, veggies, premade sandwiches and salads, and lowest-fat/lowest-sodium entree items.
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THANK YOU!

The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement and the BEN Center

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References


