



SY2022-23 **PURCHASING & MENU TIPS** for School Nutrition Programs

Economists, analysts and other supply chain experts expect supply challenges across all sectors to persist well into 2023, and the feedback from recent listening sessions among K-12 school nutrition stakeholders affirms this grim prediction. School meal operators are likely to face more extraordinary product delays, shortages and substitutions for food, paper goods, other supplies, kitchen equipment, vehicles and technology components. SNA asked its Industry Advisory Council members to provide practical tips for school nutrition operators and other school procurement officials to help mitigate some of the difficulties and provide for more reliable meal service to students in SY2022-23.

- Place back to school orders with distributors and manufacturers a minimum of six weeks before your first requested delivery date to ensure that you have products on hand to serve students. Schools reopening in late July and early August should have already taken this step; if not, work on a Plan B *now*.

- If you receive weekly deliveries, place orders to cover the first three weeks of school; order for four weeks if you receive deliveries every other week.

- Continue to place orders a minimum of two weeks before delivery dates to provide maximum flexibility for the fulfillment of ordered products and possible substitutions.

- Forecast future needs and communicate them to vendor partners to ensure suppliers can plan for an accurate volume. But stay focused on accuracy with actual orders and getting these to vendors with sufficient lead time.

- Adopt a menu cycle dominated by products/ ingredients that can be or are already stored in large quantities, as well as those that have proven readily available. Be sure your suppliers know you use a cycle menu.

- Focus on purchasing versatile products/ingredients that can be used in multiple ways across your menus.

- Remember that manufacturers are limiting the number of product forms, sizes and formulations to maximize line time and manage costs. This means that more schools will be ordering the same products, increasing the demand without any flexibility in the schedule.

- Plan to make good use of USDA Direct Delivery foods on your menu.

- Use the summer break to sweep little-used items, conduct inventory and organize freezers, coolers and dry storage areas.

- Work with your team to identify opportunities to create additional storage spaces.

- Leverage all communications to indicate that your menus are subject to change without notice due to ongoing supply chain issues.

- Prepare Plans B, C and D, applying your experience from last year. Keep shelf stable products on hand for last-minute "emergency" meals.

- Adopt an attitude of flexibility regarding product substitutions, delivery changes and price increases. Record-high inflation affects all U.S. businesses, and many suppliers to the K-12 segment have had to increase prices as of July 1, and will be unable to hold future prices until the economy settles down.

LEAD TIMES

There are many steps to getting products and supplies to your school kitchens—and all of them are experiencing unusual disruptions. When vendors inform you of "lead times," consider this calculation:

Time for manufacturers to receive customer forecasts and orders and plan to produce items that meet requested supply volumes.

PLUS

Time for manufacturers to receive raw materials (for products and packaging), produce/process items and package them.

PLUS

The transit time it takes to get products from manufacturers to distributors, who have their own lead times in getting the product to you.

SNA is refreshing its online Supply Chain/Back to School Resource Center with updated tools and materials.

Visit www.schoolnutrition.org/back-to-school regularly.