



Celebrate School Lunch

Let's Talk About School Lunch

The National School Lunch Program offers children an opportunity to eat a nutritionally balanced meal during the school day. Children who eat nutritious meals are ready to learn and have energy for physical activity.

School lunch menus are planned to provide children with the nutrients they need, and must not contain too much salt, fat, or sugar. Over the past 10 years, national rules have improved the quality of school food dramatically. School cafeterias are now offering more whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables—some grown on nearby farms. Meals always include a fruit and a vegetable along with the entrée, and some districts allow students to select multiple, or even unlimited, fruits and veggies.

School Lunch at Your Child's School

Most school districts post information about school meals on their website, including the monthly menu for all schools in the district. Your child's school may include the menu in parent newsletters or other materials sent home.

If your family qualifies, your child may receive a free or reduced price lunch. For information on applying for free or reduced price meals or setting up a meals account, contact the main office at your child's school.

Make the Most of School Lunch:

- Review the lunch menu with your child each week and identify which days they'll buy lunch, and what items they are interested in selecting. Encourage them to try foods they haven't had before—they may discover their new favorite food.
- If the menu lists fruits and vegetables served with each meal, challenge your child to eat a different fruit or vegetable every day.

- Check with your child's teacher or principal to see if parents are welcome to eat lunch in the cafeteria. Bring cash to purchase a lunch (usually less than \$3) and talk to your child and their friends about the meal. Be sure to use positive words when discussing healthy foods.
- If your child packs a lunch, they can still take advantage of the healthy items available in the cafeteria: the fruits and vegetables that come with the full lunch can be purchased separately to go with a packed lunch.

What Makes a School Lunch?

Schools must offer servings of all of these items for school lunch:

- Meat or meat alternate
- Grains (must be whole-grain rich)
- Milk
- Fruit
- Vegetable

Students may choose which items they take, but a complete school meal **MUST** include:

- A fruit OR a vegetable
- At least two other items

...but students **may take all five items**. Some districts allow students to take multiple, or even unlimited, fruits and vegetables.

Talk to the cafeteria staff at your child's school to find out about the fruits and vegetables offered.

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