

Fresh Perspectives Series

Examining common misconceptions surrounding school meals to offer guidance on how to steer the conversations within your community!



Claim: “School Meals Taste Gross”

Let’s Take a Closer Look...

Response: The idea that school meals are "gross" is an outdated narrative that needs to be **reevaluated**. Sure, tales of bland, mystery meat, and mediocre meals circulate, but these myths do a disservice to both students and school meal programs. Many school cafeterias have had a **major makeover**, now serving up dishes that are vibrant, nutritious, and delicious. Take a peek at what's really cooking in Arizona school cafeterias!



Humboldt Unified School District
Prescott Valley, AZ



Palominas Elementary School District
Hereford, AZ



STAR Charter School
Flagstaff, AZ

Every school lunch can feature a selection of the following components: whole grains, lean protein, a variety of vegetables, colorful fruits, and low- or non-fat milk. Schools strive to serve the **freshest ingredients** whenever possible.

Crucial Points to Chat About...

Here are our recommended points to offer during any discussion to effectively express your commitment and efforts to serve delicious and appealing food at your sites:

- **Emphasizing Nutritional Balance and Variety:** Discuss how you plan to incorporate a **balance of a variety** of foods into each meal. Note that school meals adhere to **strict regulations** on fat and sodium, which may impact taste, but preserve nutritional quality nonetheless.
- **Talking about Cultural Inclusivity:** Emphasize your commitment to offering meals that reflect the **diverse cultural backgrounds** of your students and that you are using familiar ingredients that appeal to your students' palates.
- **Sharing your Fresh and Local Ingredients:** Share your plans to source **fresh, local ingredients** whenever possible. Mention that local sourcing enhances the taste and nutritional value of meals, while also supporting local farmers and reducing the **environmental footprint**.
- **Engaging in Student Feedback and Engagement:** Discuss how you plan to actively **involve students** in the menu planning process by encouraging their feedback/suggestions to ensure the meals are **tailored to their preferences**.



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