

Fresh Perspectives Series

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



Claim: “School menus are limited and boring...” Let’s Take a Closer Look...

Response: School menus can be both **vibrant** and **exciting**! Arizona School Nutrition professionals not only adhere to federal guidelines and regulations, but also unleash creativity in school meal offerings. They aim to present a diverse range of flavors and cuisines that represent the **varied backgrounds** of their students. This approach not only fulfills nutritional requirements but also cultivates an engaging culinary experience that inspires students to try new tastes and make healthier choices. Additionally, many schools are partnering with local farms and suppliers to obtain **fresh ingredients**, ensuring meals are not only nutritious but also support the local community. Below are just two examples of what Arizona districts are offering this year!

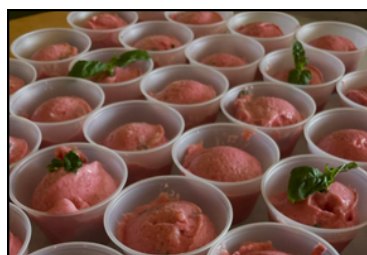


Teriyaki Chicken w/ Brown Rice Dumplings

Fresh Produce:

- Strawberries
- Asian Pears
- Orange
- Bean Sprouts
- Greens

Humboldt Unified School District
Prescott Valley, AZ



Strawberry Basil Frozen Yogurt

- Fresh strawberries
- Fresh basil from [Fork Farms](#)

Osborn School District
Phoenix, AZ

From 2023 until June 2026, Arizona schools have utilized the [Try it Local: Arizona's Local Food for Schools Program](#). This program has been temporarily funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) via ADE's participation in the Local Food for School Cooperative Agreement Program. The goal of this initiative is to enhance the procurement of local foods for school meals, while also providing support to small, local, and socially disadvantaged farmers and producers. By participating in this program, schools are empowered to create menus that are not only nutritionally balanced but also reflective of the community's agricultural richness and provide new and exciting food items to students!

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:

- **Highlight Diversity in Menu Options:** Emphasizing the variety of cuisines offered can encourage students to explore new flavors and broaden their palates.
- **Showcase Freshness and Local Sourcing:** Discuss how partnering with local farms and suppliers helps to provide fresher, more flavorful ingredients while also supporting the community.
- **Focus on Nutritional Value:** Reinforce how the menus are designed to meet or exceed federal nutritional guidelines.
- **Incorporate Student Feedback:** Mention any initiatives that involve students in the menu planning process (i.e. taste tests on new menu items), which can make them feel more invested in their meals and increase satisfaction.



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