

EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

School Foodservice

Vol. 17, 2022

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...for school foodservice professionals





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Campus Students Craving

When it comes to snacking, on-demand fresh and healthy snacks are very popular.

83% of college students surveyed said they prefer healthy options for snacks.

MAKING THE CONNECTION



95% of campus food directors surveyed said they use social media to connect. **85%** said social media tools are very important for promoting **foodservice venues**. In addition, the real time feedback helps directors improve their foodservice programs.

CAMPUS DINING APPS

MAKE IT EASY and INTERACTIVE! College dining apps help operators connect their offerings with student lifestyles. For example, students utilize apps to find food choices available across campus in real-time. Features that allow students to track calories, among other things, are top-rated.

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Fresh, Fast... Fuel!

Today's students have had nutrition education and are well-versed in the benefits of healthy food. This knowledge is what is driving the choices they make for themselves.

There was a time when hiding the healthy ingredients in menu items was considered the way to go. The desire to have full transparency on the ingredients for health and allergen awareness is what is important to students today.

Students want fresh, fast fuel for wellness

There are more fruits and vegetables on the menu than ever before and healthy fats have found their place in a balanced diet.

Although in place for many years in public schools, a recent Y-Pulse study found...

82% of universities said their campus has a wellness policy or program in place.

Of the other 18% that did not have a formal policy, 45% said a program was pending.

Mood-Boosting Foods

Students are connecting what they eat to brain health and how they feel emotionally. Awareness of food choices that can help consumers be more calm, alert, confident, and more are attracting students more than ever.

Educating students on the benefits that food can have on mental wellness and offering menu items that include these foods is a great addition to a successful wellness program.

Source: School Nutrition Association, www.schoolnutrition.org



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Blueberries are loaded with antioxidants, vitamin C and a compound called anthocyanin. Blueberries promote brain health, boosting short-term memory, concentration, and focus.

Kale contains vitamin B6, folate, and iron, which are all essential for the production of serotonin and dopamine, the feel-good hormones.

Chickpeas support the production of the feel-good hormones serotonin and dopamine and vitamin B6, which can help prevent anxiety.

Spinach contains the vitamin folate which reduces anxiety and promotes a feeling of calm.

Carrots contain lutein, which can help you feel more alert.



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USDA Response to Supply Chain Disruptions

Promised \$1.5 billion in assistance to schools for purchasing supplies to ensure students have access to healthy meals.

Waived financial penalties for any meal pattern shortcomings caused by supply chain issues.

Permitted school districts to enter into emergency, non-competitive procurement contracts with companies for the 2021-22 school year. This allows schools to make last-minute purchases at grocery stores.

Source: USDA, FACT SHEET: USDA Provides Broad Support to Ensure School Meal Programs Succeed

School Lunch Foodservice Professionals

With all of the challenges, they never give up! Their dedication to making sure all children have healthy food to eat is remarkable. With resilience, creative solutions, successful partnering, connection to the needs of every child, and a lot of extra work, they are keeping students well-fed and nourished. They are the true super heroes!

The Concerning Challenges for School Foodservice Professionals

The School Nutrition Association conducted a survey identifying the top challenges reported from foodservice operators across the country. See the findings below.

1. Menu items not being available in sufficient quantities
2. Supplies/packaging not available in sufficient quantities
3. Menu items discontinued by manufacturers
4. Staff shortages

90% of districts with 25,000+ enrolled students reported staff shortages as a significant challenge. The increased need for staff to accommodate adjustments needed due to supply shortage challenges and covid protocols, and everything else increases the labor shortage concern.

5. Rising costs

In the survey, 97% of respondents said higher labor and product costs created significant challenges.

It is the determination of school foodservice professionals that ensures all students have healthy meals available to them, which in some cases is the best meal of the day for them. See page 12 for a look at how some operators are navigating the challenges.

Source: School Nutrition Association, www.schoolnutrition.org

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Flavor Trends Students Love

Bold and adventurous flavors are very popular with kids today. They are interested in exploring exciting new flavors and learning about fresh spices.

It is a great time to be creative, especially as school foodservice operators work more and more with what they have on hand while minimizing waste.

A wide variety of sweet and savory spices ignite the taste buds, including Cinnamon, Turmeric, and Chili Peppers. So whether it's a Nashville Hot Chicken sandwich or a Curried Vegetable Quinoa Bowl, students have discovered the flavors and benefits of spice.

As plant-based menu items continue to gain popularity with students, more creative plant-based offerings such as Apple Beet Wheatberry Wraps, Watermelon Edamame Poke Bowls, and Vegetarian Sloppy Joe Lentils are hitting the menu.

Creative flavors can also be used to pump up healthy snacks. Ideas for various fun, delicious and healthy snack ideas include homemade beet fries, ranch popcorn, Sunbutter banana rollups, and hummus with veggies to keep them energized all day.

Source: Chartwells, www.chartwellsk12.com



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Tips for Successful Campus Grab-and-Go

1. Turn Popular Menu Items Into Perfect Grab-and-Go Options

Consider providing a variety of garden-fresh, prepackaged salads for those students missing salad bars. Serve your popular hot menu items in trendy grab-n-go bowls that travel easier.

2. Reimagine Your Current Equipment

You may be able to convert your existing equipment to meet your grab-n-go needs. For example, turn the heated wells you use at your buffet into grab-n-go shelves by adding heated well covers. And keep your to-go products at optimum serving temperatures by placing them under your buffet warmers. Likewise, if your cold wells are adequately chilled, they can hold prepackaged and prechilled items, such as sandwiches, salads, and cold drinks, fresh and ready to go.

3. Invest In Your To-Go Operation

While repurposing your equipment is a great solution, you may need to complement your creative solutions with some new equipment. To take your to-go operation to the next level, investing in equipment that makes food safer and more accessible for students can go a long way. Bring innovation to the scene with food lockers, and heated shelves for state-of-the-art solutions.

Beyond preserving food temperature and quality, they allow for frictionless loading and unloading, and can accommodate large volumes of food.

4. Pay Attention To Takeout Containers

Once you've made over your menu and know what you're offering, it's time to start planning your packaging needs. From bowls to takeout boxes, take inventory of what kind of takeout containers you'll need. Consider tamper-resistant containers or tamper-evident labels for added security. Visible sanitation measures and sustainability are important to students; this is your chance to demonstrate environmental responsibility with eco-friendly packaging.

5. Get The Word Out

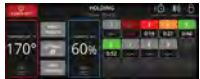
Proactively communicate dining hall changes, such as menu updates or adjustments in the type of service you're offering. Take advantage of social media to spread the word about your to-go food offerings. Be sure to include grab-and-go locations and updated menu offerings on an interactive campus foodservice app.

Source: Hatco Corporation, www.hatcocorp.com



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Back Together Again



Breaking bread together is something all of us desire to increase after COVID. Students are happy to enjoy meals together again, and the social interaction is good for them. In addition, thanks to the free lunch initiative from the USDA's National School Lunch Program, students have the opportunity to enjoy meals at no cost throughout the 2021-2022 academic year.

Eating together also inspires students to try new foods and be more involved in their food choices.

Source: Chartwells, www.chartwellsk12.com



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How School Foodservice Professionals Are Navigating The Challenges



The supply chain problems have caused food delivery delays and the advent of food items that never arrive at schools. In addition, labor shortages, rising costs, and increased demand have caused significant challenges. Below are some of the things schools are doing to ensure there is enough food to go around to every child.

- Streamlining menus to take advantage of food on hand with a concentration on minimizing waste.
- Improving communication with vendors to identify shortages and missing items before trucks arrive.
- Local sourcing and on-premise gardens.
- Increased analysis and planning to identify better where food shortages may come up and what alternatives could be applied.
- Partnering with local restaurants, suppliers, and vendors to replenish food supplies. Have backup plans in place.
- Picking up food from central locations and delivering to individual schools themselves.
- Raising salaries where possible and applying bonus plans to attract and keep employees. Some operations reported that they enlist temporary staffing agencies to bring in help.
- Getting creative with menu items. Scratch cooking and combinations of pre-made and homemade items.
- Investing in equipment and supplies that offer more versatility and labor-saving opportunities.
- Consulting with equipment partners to utilize the equipment they have for various new applications.
- Staying informed on trends, funding available, and information from partners, organizations, and fellow school foodservice operators.

Sources: K-12DIVE, Supply Chain Woes
School Nutrition Association, www.schoolnutrition.org



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K-12 Top Food Trends

Culinary experts and registered dietitians from Chartwells K12, a company that creates custom dining programs for 4,500 schools across the country, unveiled the top food trends for kids and their families in 2022.



Breakfast All Day

Here to Stay! – Breakfast, brunch, and “brinner” keep trending for kids! Traditional favorites like a Breakfast Burrito and a Sausage, Egg & Cheese Biscuit are just as likely to be seen on menus as creative offerings from Chartwells K12’s all-day breakfast concept, Rush Hour, as a Spicy Chicken & Tater Tot Breakfast Biscuit Sandwich, Breakfast Fried Rice or Ham, Mozzarella and Spinach Whole Grain Breakfast Popover.



Handheld Foods

A popular choice and easy option at lunch, as well as between school, sports, and fun with friends! Bento boxes filled with meats, cheese, veggies and hummus top the list of favorites, and who doesn’t love Taco Tuesday?

Veggies and Plant-based Protein

Vegetables and plant-based foods are taking center stage! With kids placing a high priority on personal health and the health of the planet, protein replacements and vegetarian options are the star of the meal.

Ethnic Flavors

Eating meals at school is often the first place a child will get to taste and learn about foods from outside their family’s recipes or traditional cultural dishes.

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Noodles, Noodles, Noodles

Noodles in any form top the list of menu picks and have long been a culinary favorite for children.

Fresh From The Garden

Kids are developing a lifelong connection with their fruits and vegetables, coming from local farms. An indoor, hydroponic garden enables students to grow their own produce at school and brings the latest innovations and the freshest flavors to the cafeteria.

Source: Chartwells, www.chartwellsk12.com



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