



Nutrition Services Frequently Asked Questions

Do wealthy schools get different food from the poor schools?

We have 17 different menus posted on the website. All meals served at OUSD schools feature the same high quality food and ingredients regardless of school location. Whether that food is prepared on site or in our central kitchens depends on the cooking and serving facilities available. The grade levels served at each school site also impact the menu in terms of the kinds of entrees and portion sizes.

Who plans the menus? Are students involved?

Our menu planner is a Registered Dietitian (RD) who works closely with our Farm to School Supervisor and managerial staff to plan meals, source items and develop new recipes. Students are invited to taste test potential new menu items several times per year; their input is invaluable.

Why is the food served in the cafeteria not the same as the posted menu?

Most times substitutions occur because of supplier issues. Our vendors deliver to a central supplier that then fulfills orders for our schools. At times, the supplier will run out and substitute items that we did not order.

Occasionally substitutions are made because of personnel or equipment problems. Some examples are the assigned employee is not able to be at work, the oven or refrigerator breaks down, and hot water in the kitchen is down.

These situations are frustrating for both our students and our employees.

Why does my school get packaged foods?

Commercially packaged foods are on the menu only when that food item meets menu requirements, are well-liked by our students and are economical. Central kitchen packaged foods are sent to schools when the facilities or labor at your school are unable to support a cooking kitchen.

When will the new central kitchen be ready to send meals to schools?

The ground breaking for the new central kitchen located at Marcus Foster is planned for December 2015. The expected date of completion is one year later. However, the



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transition to the new central kitchen will be phased in over a few years as the satellites are converted to finishing kitchens to accommodate the new system.

How will meals from the central kitchen differ from today's meals?

More cooking, more local control, better tasting food! OUSD NS will move forward in our efforts to serve less processed foods and more locally sourced foods. Further progress made in this area is hampered by the current infrastructure.

Why can't we have organic produce?

We source locally as much as possible. If organic produce growers can provide produce in quantity, cut up in the ways our kitchens need it, whole fruit in uniform sizes and deliver to all our sites at affordable prices, we would certainly buy organic.

Why can't we have an outside contractor, like Revolution Foods, prepare school meals?

Equity – All schools get the same foods. The appearance and taste may vary due to each site's facilities (equipment, plumbing, refrigeration, etc.). The food may be cooked on site, served that day; or produced in a central kitchen, packaged, delivered and reheated the next day for service. An outside vendor would have to deliver to all our schools (including the cooking sites), not just some.

Higher Cost – An outside vendor provides only food and at higher prices than we can. Nutrition Services would still have to pay to administer the program – central office operations (applications, bookkeeping, training, etc.) and site staff to ensure federal guidelines for reimbursable meals, food safety, etc. The cost of staffing would remain the same.

When the meal program costs exceed federal and state reimbursements, the school district would have to subsidize Nutrition Services through the general fund.

Why don't we serve soy milk?



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Federal regulations require the serving of dairy milk for a reimbursable meal. Non-dairy replacements have to be nutritionally equivalent to dairy milk and are generally more expensive.

Most students tolerate and enjoy dairy milk. However, young adults particularly minority students may develop lactose-intolerance as they age. Milk is offered but does not have to be taken. Drinking water is available in or near cafeterias at all meal times.

Why can't school groups or parents sell food during meal times?

National School Lunch regulations do not allow the sale of foods when school meals are being served. We encourage all our students to eat school meals to get the proper nutrients necessary for health and success at school. Whether a student likes the food or not is a matter of personal preference though we really want them to like our food. Unfortunately, many of the foods that people want to sell do not meet the district wellness policy – e.g. cup of soup, candy, soda, fried chips.

What happens to leftover meals?

We do not reuse food that has been reheated. We throw it out unless your school has arranged for charities to pick up the leftover foods. We want to ensure that the food given to charities meet food safety standards. Call Nutrition Services to arrange for food donations.

Can hungry students get another meal?

Legally we cannot provide another meal or extra meal components to students. Many of our cafeterias have share tables where students place uneaten school meal items for sharing with students who would like more food.

Who determines the meal times?

The school administrator sets meal times. Please contact your principal if you have suggestions for change. Our goal is to provide an adequate amount of time for students to eat their meals.

Why do I have to take a fruit or vegetable with my meal?



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The meal program is funded by the National School Breakfast and National School Breakfast Programs. Federal regulations stemming from the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act mandate that a student must take a fruit and/or vegetable in order for the School

District to be paid for that meal. If not, we lose payment for that meal. This rule was a result of research showing that most children do not eat enough fruits and vegetables daily.

Can students and teachers use our cafeteria equipment to heat food from home? Can students and teachers use our refrigerators to store food?

Cafeteria equipment can only be used for the meal program - federal funds paid for the equipment expressly for that use. Food service workers are responsible for the cleanliness and the proper use of the equipment. We have had incidences when non-cafeteria staff and community members have left equipment broken or dirty. Occasionally food service workers return to work and find ovens that were left on or refrigerators accidentally turned off. Improper use of our equipment can lead to broken/missing equipment or spoiled food which negatively impacts students, food service workers and our budget.

Why do adults have to pay for food?

School lunches are intended for students and are publicly-funded. Providing free meals to adults is a violation of federal law. Even where all students at a school eat for free, that food is not cost-free. Nutrition Services is obligated to track all our meals even those that we may be forced to discard in order to be in compliance with federal regulations.

If I filled out an LCFF form, do I need to do a meal application form too?

It depends. The two forms are not connected.

Under Local Control Funding Formula your school receives state funding based on the demographic profile of the students they serve. LCFF funds are used to improve outcomes of students.

Meal applications are used to determine eligibility in the federal School Lunch Program. Some schools that are designated Provision II or CEP (Community Eligibility Program) do not require meal applications to be filled out annually. Free/reduced price lunch rates at a school may be used to determine eligibility for some federally funded programs.