



A Chef's Recipe for Success: Using USDA Foods

Chefs can play an important role in helping children learn about food and the importance of healthy eating using USDA Foods.

USDA Foods Basics for Chefs:

Serving Up Nutritious Options

The USDA Foods program helps improve the nutritional value of school meals by offering more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains than ever before. Not only do these healthy foods taste good, but they are also lower in sugar, salt, and fat.

The improved nutritional value of USDA Foods help support USDA's strengthened school meal standards and continue to reflect current nutrition science and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

How does the USDA support schools by providing great foods for children?

USDA Foods offers a variety of healthy food choices including fruits, vegetables, lean meat, fish, poultry, low-fat dairy and whole grains. Schools are able to select the USDA Foods that support their menus. Schools work with their State Agencies to make healthy and tasty USDA Food choices each school year. Check out the USDA Foods Available:

www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/foods_available.htm



How much USDA Foods can schools receive each school year?

Schools earn a Planned Assistance Level (PAL) on lunches served each year. So, increasing the amount of lunches served helps to increase the amount of USDA Foods schools can order.

How do USDA Foods support school food budgets?

USDA Foods makes up approximately 15 to 20 percent of the food served in each school lunch. Over 100,000 school districts nationwide are eligible to receive USDA Foods. USDA assists schools in stretching their food budgets by purchasing large quantities of high quality foods for schools across the nation, realizing significant cost savings that gets passed on to school nutrition programs.

USDA Foods: Healthy Choices for Our Schools

Nutritious food is essential to a healthy life. The USDA Foods program provides our Nation's school children with nutritious, safe, appealing, and 100-percent American-grown food.

Did you know... that USDA Foods meet rigorous food safety standards set by Federal regulatory agencies and USDA's two purchasing agencies – the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Farm Service Agency.





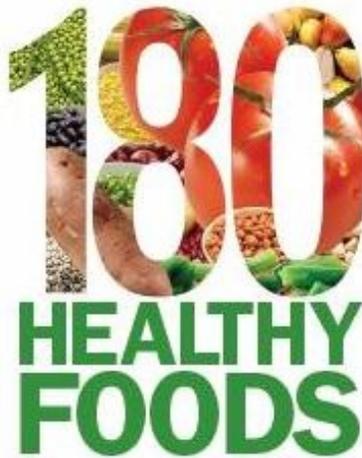
Chefs Move TO SCHOOLS

A Recipe for success:

When you decide that you want to work with your local school district, here are some ingredients for success:

Bring with you:

- **Collaborative spirit:** Collaborate with your local Child Nutrition Director to help develop an annual nutrition education plan to feature different USDA Foods each month.
- **Culinary techniques and expertise:** Working with your school district's Child Nutrition Director, you can help to create exciting and updated recipe ideas that children want to eat using USDA Foods.
- **Reading glasses:** The National School Lunch Program is driven by many rules and regulations. It's imperative that you understand the ground rules before you get started.
- **Sharp pencil:** Child Nutrition budgets are extremely tight and every penny counts! Challenge yourself to explore a variety of ways USDA Foods can be used in the program to help keep costs low without jeopardizing flavor or nutrition.



How can Chefs use USDA Foods to ignite children's natural curiosity to promote healthy eating and understand where food comes from?

- **Offer** USDA Foods as part of nutrition education, including food tastings and cooking demonstrations.
- **Develop** an annual nutrition education plan to feature different USDA Foods each month to help promote foods tied to the menu and the growing seasons.
- **Schedule** training classes with Child Nutrition Staff to demonstrate culinary techniques using USDA Foods to enhance their cooking and presentation skills.
- **Volunteer** to create an afterschool Cooking Club to help children develop a love and understanding of foods and how to use them to make delicious and healthy meals. Working with your Child Nutrition Director, USDA Foods can play a part in this kind of activity.
- **Review** the USDA Foods Toolkit for more resources and additional program information: www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/healthy/Toolkit.htm
- **View** and use the USDA Foods Video in the USDA Foods Toolkit to spark conversations.

Avoid bringing:

- **Outside food:** The foods in the National School Lunch Program are carefully selected to ensure they meet the program nutrition requirements. If you want to bring in food from outside the program, always check with the Child Nutrition Director to be sure it will fit into the program nutrition standards.
- **Butter, salt and sugar:** There are strict guidelines on the amount of fats, salt and sugar that are allowed to be used in the National School Lunch Program.

For more information go to:

www.fns.usda.gov/USDAFoods

USDA Foods Mobile Site

