

Menu and Program Engagement for Student Inspired Meals

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Agenda



Today's Objective:

Identify next steps to increase the availability of scratch-cooked, student-inspired meals in your school food program

- Menu planning strategies to expand student inspired meals
- How Scratch Cooking Can Help
- Student & Community Engagement
- Recipe Ideas

About the Chef Ann Foundation

Founded in 2009 by Chef Ann Cooper, the Chef Ann Foundation is a 501c(3) nonprofit that provides school communities with tools, training, resources, and funding to create healthier food.

To date, we have reached over 14,000 schools and 3.4 million kids with healthy school programming.



The Importance & Power of School Food



- More than 30 million children eat school lunch every day in the U.S.
- Over 76% of those children receive meals for free or at a reduced rate
- School food is an opportunity for so many current challenges: academics, health, career, environment, and equity
- Healthy school food is a multifaceted solution that can directly benefit current and future generations.

Menu Cycles



A menu that repeats itself throughout a time period, while allowing for the repeat of popular items.

- Lunch: 4-6 week cycle
- Breakfast: 2 week cycle

Student Inspired Meals: Where to start?

- Know your vision
- Your district food standards and Wellness Policy
- Gather feedback from students, staff and parents
- Do you have recipes? Or how will testing happen?
- Start planning several months in advance



Why is a Cycle Menu Helpful?

- Committing to a plan
- Helps you streamline your purchasing
- Allows kitchens/staff to establish better work patterns
- Kids respond well to routine
- Not starting from scratch each week



Full Year Approach



Why?

- You'll know exactly how many times an item will hit the menu
- It will help you with your commodity planning
- You'll know exactly how much you need to purchase and when
- Allows you to weight more expensive items vs less expensive items

Develop Criteria for your Menu

- What is your target food cost?
- How many items do you want to menu per day?
- Do you have vegetarian items?
- How will your menu items impact storage, refrigeration, freezer space?
- How to balance menu options to drive participation?
- Do you have the equipment necessary to make this item?



You have a Cycle Menu but want to make it longer..

Tips:

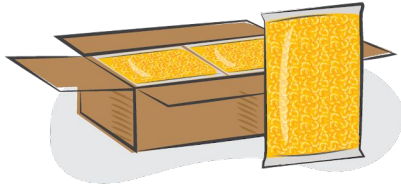
- Popular items can repeat themselves 2-3 times per cycle or even weekly
- Opportunity to menu something unique or more expensive
- A 6 week cycle doesn't look the same each month on a calendar
- Not as repetitive
- Can help with utilization and inventory

Scratch cooking can make
student-inspired meals possible.

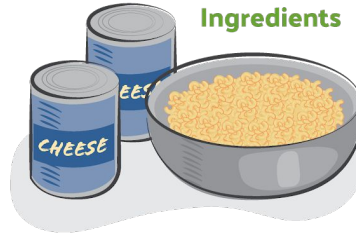


Scratch Cooking Continuum

30+
Ingredients



20+
Ingredients



5
Ingredients



Heat & Serve

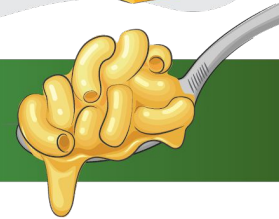
Precooked, prepackaged,
and often ultra-processed

Speed Scratch

Combination of ready-made
products and minimally
processed ingredients

Scratch Cook

Cooked using a recipe
with whole, fresh ingredients



Common Top 20 Items and Scratch Alternatives



Breaded Chicken Patties or Chicken Nuggets



Honey BBQ Chicken Drumstick

Common Top 20 Items and Scratch Alternatives



Pre-Packaged Bean & Cheese Burrito



In-house Bean & Cheese Burrito

Common Top 20 Items and Scratch Alternatives



Pre-Packaged Grilled Cheese



Toasted Cheese Sandwich

Common Top 20 Items and Scratch Alternatives



French Toast Sticks



French Toast Casserole

Salad Bars as a Gateway

- Jicama and Cucumber
- Greek Garbanzo Beans
- Moroccan Carrots
- Southwest Quinoa
- Tabouli



Ok, so we need to connect with students,
how?

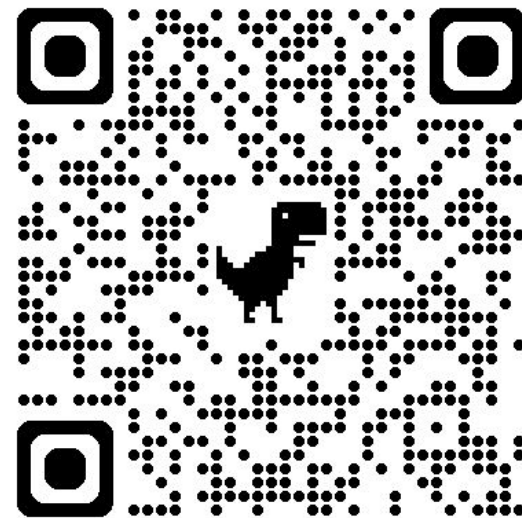


Taste Testing

- Try out a new scratch-cooked item before it's served on the menu
- Make trying unfamiliar menu items fun and enjoyable
- Help reduce food waste in your school's cafeteria by encouraging consumption
- Receive feedback from your customers
 - Potential to grow ADP



New Recipes & Tasting Events



Taste testing how-to guide on The Lunch Box

Chef Demonstrations

- Smells, sounds, and visual appeal of cooking can make your cafeteria come alive
- Offer an interactive experience that is appropriate for all age groups

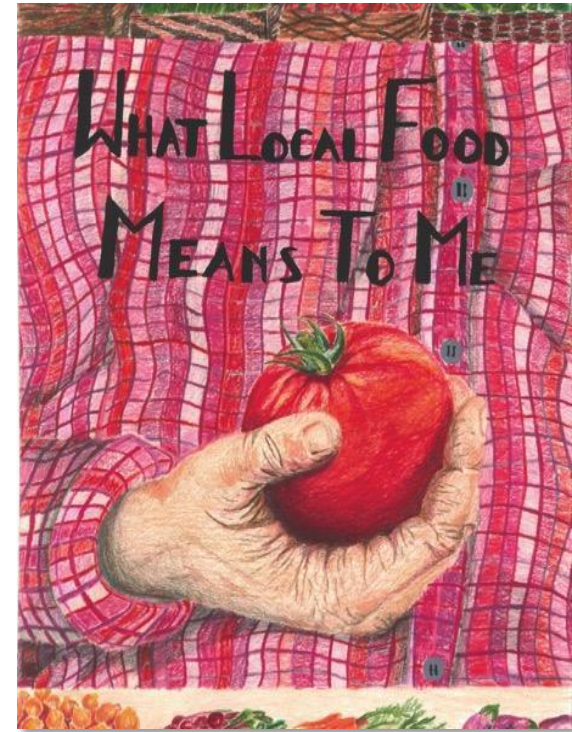


Local “Celebrity” Supporters



Art Contests

- Connecting your school food program to the classroom increases food literacy among students.
- Art contests are an especially easy way to work with teachers (art teachers in particular, if the district has them).
- When planning an art contest, we recommend incorporating a theme or prompt such as Harvest of the Month or worldly flavors.



Junior Chef Competitions

Elementary



Secondary



Student-Inspired Recipe Ideas



Student Inspired Meals

- Bison Mac Bowl
- Three Sisters Stew
- Black Bean Empanadas
- Chicken Pozole
- Chickpea Masala
- Crazy Curry Bowl
- Kashmiri Tofu Stir Fry
- Honey-Sriracha Salmon Bowls



Bison Mac Bowl

- Garlic
- Onion
- Celery
- Carrot
- Elbow pasta
- Diced tomatoes (canned)
- Ground bison
- Olive oil
- Kosher salt
- Ground pepper
- Beef stock
- Frozen corn



Three Sisters Stew

- Butternut squash
- Yellow onion
- Garlic
- Green pepper
- Corn
- Diced green chiles
- Spices
- Canola oil
- Diced tomatoes
- Pinto beans
- Chicken stock



Black Bean Empanadas

- Calzone dough
- Black beans (canned)
- Corn (frozen)
- Shredded cheddar
- Diced chile peppers
- Ground cumin
- Ground red chili pepper
- Kosher salt
- Paprika
- Parsley flakes
- Olive oil



Chicken Pozole

- Diced chicken
- Dried pasilla pepper
- White hominy
- Yellow onion
- Oregano
- Salt
- Chicken base
- Water
- Tomatillos
- Cilantro



Chickpea Masala

- Garbanzo beans
- Neutral oil
- Diced tomatoes
- Ginger root
- Jalapeño
- Garlic
- Chili powder
- Curry powder
- Baby spinach
- Salt
- Red onion
- Cilantro



Crazy Curry Bowl

- Brown rice
- Water
- Tempeh
- Curry powder
- Chili powder
- Frozen broccoli
- Snap peas
- Carrots
- Garbanzo beans
- Garlic powder
- Black pepper
- Kosher salt
- Coconut milk



Example:

Surplus of Salmon in Dillingham, Alaska



Dillingham, Alaska



Honey-Sriracha Salmon Bowl

- Raw salmon
- Soy sauce
- Honey
- Sriracha
- Garlic
- Cucumber
- Edamame
- Mayo
- Canola oil
- Brown rice



Objective:

Identify next steps to increase the availability of scratch-cooked, student-inspired meals in your school food program



Questions?



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- Facebook: Chef Ann Foundation
- Instagram: @chefannfoundation
- X: @ChefAnnFnd
- LinkedIn: Chef Ann Foundation
- TikTok: @chefannfoundation



Or visit thelunchbox.org for more recipes
and resources