



SCHOOL FOOD HAS CHANGED



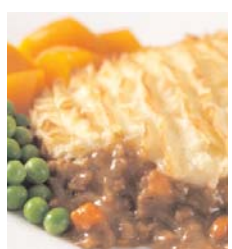
There has never been a better time to send your child for a school lunch as there are some major changes being made to the food provided at all schools. From now on, all school meals will contribute towards a healthy diet and the fuel children need to be at their best every day. That's great news for all school children because research has shown that a healthy meal at lunchtime can improve a child's concentration and actually help them to learn. Menus within schools now contain more fruit and vegetables than ever before, and the majority of processed foods have been replaced with healthy, homemade alternatives.

HOW AND WHY?



The Government introduced nutritional guidelines in 2006 to ensure that every child would receive a healthy balanced school lunch. All schools have been working extremely hard to meet these guidelines, and in September this year, additional guidelines were introduced. The 14 nutrient based standards will ensure that all children receive a good balance of essential nutrients such as zinc, iron and protein. In most schools, a school lunch provides children with up to three of the recommended five a day – every day! Many schools are also becoming more environmentally aware and are using more locally produced ingredients, meaning less food miles and therefore reducing their carbon footprint. Most schools are also using free-range products where possible and source meat only from within the UK.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL MEALS



All schools, whether primary or secondary are working towards the government's guidelines. However, the types of food served and the dining environments that the children eat in are obviously very different. In primary schools, children are taught the social skills of eating in a dining room environment, and also encouraged to adopt good eating habits including how to hold a knife and fork correctly. They choose their own meal (with a little help from the catering staff!) and are encouraged to try new foods and to eat vegetables and salads alongside their main meal. The foods served to primary school children are much more traditional and form the basis of a two course set meal at a set price.



In secondary schools the pupils expect a different type of dining experience. They are used to eating at high street restaurants and fast food outlets and so are much more choosy about what they want to eat and how they want to eat it! However, the guidelines have to be adhered to and so catering staff use their extensive skills to provide healthy, nutritious food that the secondary pupils will want to eat. They do this by providing meal deals and promotions and also by trying to mirror the dining environments that exist on the high street – deli areas, pasta counters and salad bars. The secondary school dining experience is an ever - evolving one as caterers work hard to ensure that they keep one step ahead of the high street alternatives.





Whether it's a primary or secondary school meal, the benefits of choosing a hot meal at lunchtime can't be underestimated – here's just a few benefits to think about:

- Healthy and nutritious, each meal has the correct balance of nutrients
- Choice and variety, a different selection served each day
- Great value for money
- Convenient, saving you time
- Fun and social, your child will learn vital social skills

Where else can you get a two-course lunch for less than the price of a cup of coffee on the high street?

CATERING STAFF



School catering staff provide a very important service to both primary and secondary school children. The type of school lunch that a child eats can have a huge affect on their ability to concentrate within the classroom and so affect their overall learning capacity. Many catering staff hold nationally recognised qualifications and are trained to a high standard. In fact many of them hold more catering qualifications than so-called celebrity chefs, many of whom are simply self-taught! Catering staff today are both passionate and enthusiastic about the food they produce and serve, and play an important role in educating children to eat healthily. Many of our staff are parents too. They understand the concerns parents have regarding food choices for their children. Many members of staff are trained in customer care and will ensure each child has a nutritious lunch.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS



- Bananas are a quick and simple food that can fill you up while on the go.
- Sandwiches on wholemeal bread with healthy fillings like tuna salad, grilled chicken or vegetables are a healthy alternative
- Never underestimate the good old potato. A baked potato with tuna and salad is a great source of energy and also fills you up for hours. TOP TIP: Remember to eat the skin; it contains more vitamins and minerals.
- Also choose water over fizzy drinks, it contains no calories and keeps you hydrated which is really important when taking part in sports and other physical activities.
- If you want a tasty snack why not try dried fruit or seeds – they are full of good fats and will keep you full for longer.

GIVE IT A GO!

School meals have never been better – that's a fact!

Don't just take our word for it – see for yourself. Many schools invite parents in to try a school lunch so why not contact your school and see if you can sample one of the nutritious meals on offer. School meals have changed and are constantly evolving so make sure you do the best for you child and sign them up for a school meal today!

