

Parent Guide to Plant-Based K-12 Food Service

Menu Change, Explained: Plant-Based Foods' Power to Nourish Growing Bodies and Minds

The school day just got healthier and more climate-friendly--and our school is working hard behind the scenes to offer new plant-based lunch menu options for our students. Together we can make a difference and help our kids develop healthy habits for life.

We are proud of this progress and hope to join the many districts around the country adopting healthier plant-based menus with support from the student body, teachers, food service professionals, principals, school board and parents (just like you!).

The new meal options serve up more whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables along with a healthy plant-based protein so kids can concentrate better, achieve higher academic performance and improve attendance.



The Perks of Plant-Based Food

Even small changes like one balanced plant-based meal a day can make a big difference for your child's long-term health. Consider just a few of the benefits:

- **Better school performance.** Plant-based diets are associated with better [performance](#) in the classroom.
- **Boost fruit and vegetable consumption.** With most US children [failing to meet](#) national recommendations for fruit and vegetable, eating one plant-based meal a day is a great way for students to get their nutrients.
- **Lower risk of chronic illness.** Eating plant-based [leads to](#) lower risk for a number of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer.
- **Lower risk of obesity.** Plant-based diets support people in maintaining a [healthy weight](#), which is important for [overall health](#).
- **Rich in nutrients and flavor.** Plant-based recipes provide plenty of protein, whole grains, fiber, vitamins and nutrients -- not to mention delicious flavor.
- **Healthy Growth.** Studies [show](#) that children whose diets emphasize plant-based foods grow as tall or taller than those on the Standard American Diet.

How can families help their children enjoy school lunch?

- **Explore the new menu together.** You have the power to encourage your children to build a healthy plate at school and home. Review the school menu with your kids and encourage them to try new foods, especially the healthy foods offered.
- **Try new things together.** Your child picks up all of your attitudes and behaviors – including [your](#) eating habits. Since kids love to copy what their parents do, they are likely to mimic your willingness to try new foods. Try new things together at home. Kids need many opportunities to try a new food before they acquire a taste for it.
- **Go on a grocery store run together.** Grocery shopping can teach your children about food and nutrition. Help your children make healthy choices. Share where vegetables, fruits, grains and proteins come from with your child.
- **Get them involved.** Encourage your child or teen to join in taste-testing events or surveys about school lunch, when available.

