



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 low 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. Get your creative ideas for current USDA Foods by reviewing the USDA Foods Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods-expected-be-available>

How much USDA Foods can schools receive each school year?

Schools earn USDA Foods dollars based on the number of 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 meal. Over 100,000 schools 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 get passed on to school nutrition programs.



For more information go to:
www.fns.usda.gov/USDAFoods



Chefs Move TO SCHOOLS

A Chef's 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:** Work in partnership with your local child nutrition director to help develop an annual nutrition education plan that features different USDA Foods each month.
- **Culinary techniques and expertise:** Work alongside the school district's child nutrition professionals to create new and improved recipes with customer appeal using USDA Foods.
- **Reading glasses:** Understand the ground rules of the National School Lunch Program which is guided by Federal, state, and local regulations aimed at providing all children access to meals that support the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Review and adhere to the local food safety regulations and the school district's HACCP plan.
- **Sharp pencil:** Challenge yourself to explore a variety of ways USDA Foods can be fully used in the program to help keep costs low without jeopardizing flavor or nutrition. Child Nutrition Programs face financial constraints that limit food costs, unlike restaurants or other institutional foodservice operations.

Avoid bringing:

- **Outside food:** Check with the child nutrition director for prior approval of all foods used as part of the school meals program, including nutrition education activities. There are guidelines on the amount of fat, salt, and sugar allowed. All foods should adhere to the National School Lunch Program nutrition standards.

- **Unapproved equipment:** Review equipment list to be used in all food production activities with the child nutrition director. Equipment should be safe to use, durable, and easy to clean and sanitize, such as equipment approved through the National Sanitation Foundation®.
- **Outside marketing:** Engage in activities aimed to promote the school nutrition program, including nutritious meals using USDA Foods. Refrain from marketing of business ventures or products during volunteer activities.

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 that features a variety of USDA Foods which promote the school nutrition menu and connect USDA Foods to the growing seasons.
- **Schedule** training classes with child nutrition staff to demonstrate correct culinary techniques using USDA Foods to enhance child nutrition professionals' cooking and food 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. Include this activity as part of your annual nutrition education plan that features USDA Foods each month.
- **Review** the USDA Foods Toolkit for more resources and additional program information: www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-foods-toolkit
- **View** and use the [USDA Foods Video](#) in the USDA Foods Toolkit to spark conversations.