

Nora's Notes

NORA'S MID-MORNING BREAK

Last autumn, after we introduced Jamie's lunches at Kidbrooke School we decided to get rid of all the junk food at mid-morning break. As I no longer sold chocolate bars and crisps, I suffered a loss of income for the school. I had to work out how we could start selling healthy snacks, things we could prepare quickly in the kitchen on a daily basis, with a good margin and which would sell at snack-type prices.

It's really important for the children to have something nourishing to eat at break time, especially as some of them have clubs at lunchtime and so might miss the lunch time service.

We tried selling cereal and fruit bars for a while, but they weren't very popular, which I was actually quite pleased about as I was very wary of the additives that were in them. The following snacks were a success:

SNACKS FOR MID-MORNING BREAK

- baguette with cheese and salad or tuna
- panini with ham, ham and cheese, or cheese
- cheese on toast with tomato sauce using crusty ends of bread
- tortilla wraps with fresh chicken
- popcorn
- fruit salad
- carrot cake
- flapjack
- shortbread

WHAT'S HAPPENED AT KIDBROOKE

The kids

This autumn we've got the first intake of primary children from other schools in Greenwich serving Jamie's menus. They came for an induction day in the summer and it was really good to see them all enjoying the healthy food with no fuss at all.

I'm really strict about making sure the staff put everything on the plate, so that every child has to take a complete meal. This way, we're slowly getting the children to eat everything and they're definitely eating more vegetables.

We even ran out at Christmas dinner last year, which shows they've changed their habits!

We have also found that it is a good idea if you can ask some of the older children to help serve and put the salad on each plate. The younger children seem to be much more inclined to take it if someone they know is serving it.

The kitchen staff

A year on, all of my team want to cook the healthy food. They take pride in their work and they're very committed because it's really interesting, they're not just cooking the same old thing. We have a rota system so that over a period of time, everyone takes part in all the jobs.

They love preparing the fresh food. There's a completely different atmosphere in the kitchen. Sometimes they take tips they've learned in the kitchen to try at home too.

The extra hours needed to do the fresh prep are still a problem though.

Jamie's menu

All of Greenwich schools are now using all fresh meat and vegetables. It's a good idea for everyone in your local area to meet up to help encourage each other and to share ideas and tips. We did this in Greenwich with cooks from other schools and it was very helpful.

All of the chicken dishes are bestsellers.

The balsamic beef recipe is very popular, especially with nice fresh mashed potato. We have it on the menu all through the year but in the winter it is one of the children's favourite choices.

We have proper Cumberland sausages which, again, we serve with fresh mashed potato along with red onion gravy and a choice of fresh vegetables. We get much better feedback from the children (and more empty plates) on these sausages than we did when we used frozen sausages.

Jamie's recipe for the base tomato sauce is the best way of getting vegetables into the children without them even knowing. I can't stress how important it is. We use it on pizza dough as the sauce, on the panini and cheese on toast for mid-morning break, in the balsamic beef and spaghetti bolognese, basically in everything we can. It ensures that each child eats as much veg as possible. You can develop your own recipe for this sauce with all the fresh ingredients that may be spare but try and get at least 7 or 8 different veg into the sauce and then add your tinned tomatoes and blitz it all up in a blender. You'll be surprised at how easy it is to do this, we now do it every other day without even thinking.

We still struggle to get the children to eat the fish dishes – but I have found that the most popular is fish in creamy curried coconut sauce. The kids still really miss the fish fingers.

You may be worried about how you are going to achieve the new guidelines on oily fish, especially as tinned tuna doesn't count because it loses its omega oils in the canning process. Two of Jamie's recipes can have the right kind of fish (mackerel, sardines or salmon) substituted: tasty fish pie and tuna arrabbiata,

You can find all of these recipes in Jamie's school pack, which you can download for free from: www.jamieoliver.com/schooldinners.

Just keep trying with the recipes – you will eventually find one that the majority of children like. I am going to try using tinned salmon in a couple of our regular recipes and see how it goes. But every school is different so it may take you a little bit of time to find the right recipe.

GENERAL KITCHEN TIPS

- Really try not to waste any food.
- You can do a lot of prep work the day before – this means that Mondays are very tricky. Try and plan your menu so that on Monday you're serving something that you have all the ingredients for (eg pizza) so that you're

not waiting on any suppliers to deliver. You can make the dough and you have the base sauce done on Friday and kept in the fridge over the weekend.

- Make sure that everyone on the team understands their specific duty and they are given enough time to get to grips with it. I also try and give lots of encouragement. An important job is prepping as much as possible for the next day: prepping veg, peeling potatoes, prepping all the bread for sandwiches, getting breadcrumbs ready, weighing up ingredients.
- Try giving the children tasters so that if they are ever not familiar with something, you give them the opportunity to try it first.
- On our kitchen rota we have one person whose job it is to check the fridges and take out anything that needs to be used. The fridges are cleaned and checked every day and everything in them is clearly labelled and dated.
- Try and give yourself as much time as you need to go through your recipes before ordering. Once you are familiar with the recipes and all the different ingredients, I promise it will get easier as you will know what you need each week for that week's menu. Do try and keep an order pad in the kitchen so you can make a note as you get low on certain things.
- Try and make sure that all the jobs are prioritised to ensure that the kitchen runs as efficiently as possible.
- Don't worry if for the first few weeks your kitchen does not seem as organised as it usually is. Take your time and you will eventually get there.

Good luck!
Nora

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