



# SCHOOL FOOD CHARTER

JAMIE'S FOOD VALUES

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Here is a set of food values we believe should underpin every school meal service. With a bit of planning and negotiation, you'll find them easy to adopt. You'll notice a dramatic difference in the health of the children in your care, your school cooks will find mealtimes more rewarding, and your teachers will see improved concentration and better performance in the classroom.

You can also use this practical plan for any community food project and for your families at home.

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- 1. Serve Fresh Food** - Make fresh, raw ingredients the basis of your school meals. Ditch the heat and serve. Empty your freezers and fill your fridges. Don't cheat with processed sauces, pre-cooked meats, or dried mixes. The most basic kitchen equipment will help your cooks to peel and chop fresh veggies quickly for sauces and toppings. Raw food isn't a health risk unless you have poor kitchen hygiene.
- 2. Check Ingredients** - Make a point of always knowing what's in the food you serve. Appoint someone in the kitchen to be your label watch-dog. Don't just look for the USDA symbol. How many ingredients do you recognize? How many are adding nutritional value to the food? Real food, cooked fresh, doesn't need additives, preservatives, or anything artificial. Processed food is often full of these things.
- 3. Don't Sell Junk Food** - Make sure all the food choices for kids at school are healthy choices. The kids who eat fries, chips and candy, and drink soda every day instead of having a good meal don't get the nutrition they need to grow and learn properly. It also sets them on a fast track to health problems that could plague them later in life.
- 4. Honor the Meal** - Stop snacks and fast food. Make sure each child gets a proper meal for breakfast and lunch. Put a bit of everything on the plate. If kids just choose their favorites, they won't get a balanced nourishing meal. Serve it on washable plates with cutlery - no styrofoam means less waste. Give kids time to sit down and eat and ask adult volunteers to join them and supervise. Eating meals together builds social skills and can make lunchtime a fun part of the day they will look forward to.
- 5. Tough Love** - It takes time and patience to get children to eat something new, and it may take a few weeks for your new menus to be accepted. Remember that kids don't always know what's best for them, so if they resist, don't give in. Persevere in the knowledge that they will be better nourished. Put out small tasters, challenge the kids to try them, and use the menu board to make the new dishes sound special. If it tastes great, the children will soon want to eat it!
- 6. Don't Supersize** - Make sure your portion sizes aren't too big, especially for little kids. Using the age guidelines will also help to reduce your waste.

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- 7. Serve Water** - Kids need drinks because their bodies need hydration, not extra calories. They get enough soda outside school. Remember that sports drinks, flavored milk and fruit juice contain sugar, too. Water is the best thirst quencher, and it's free!
- 8. Eat Seasonal** - Fruit and veggies in season are usually cheaper and tastier. They will also allow you to get creative and vary the weekly menu.
- 9. Eat Local** - The First Lady, Michelle Obama, says that, "Everyone needs a farmer." They're the guys who grow your food, remember. Hook up with your local farmers and serve some of their food in your school, even if it's only once a semester. Tell the story of where it comes from. Make sure kids don't grow up thinking food comes from a package.
- 10. Grow Something You Can Eat** - A pot of herbs and a tomato plant are enough to show kids how to make a salad and teach them the basics of mixing ingredients and flavors. It also gives them a way to touch, feel and interact with the food they put into their mouths and understand where it comes from. Knowledge gives them the power to make good choices.
- 11. Communicate** - Take a whole-school approach. Get everyone to sign up to these food values. Tell people why they are important for your school. That means kids, parents, teachers, cooks, janitors, custodians, school nurses, and the food suppliers. With their support you can make real, lasting change.
- 12. Celebrate Food!** - Food is our friend, not the enemy. Teach kids that food is fun. Put food at the heart of your school culture and teach kids how to cook. You'll see how they love playing and messing around with it. And it's a skill that will serve them for the rest of their lives.

#### **WHY ADOPT THESE VALUES FOR YOUR SCHOOL?**

- They're easily achievable.
- They're highly cost-effective.
- They can meet federal nutrition standards, so your meals will get reimbursed.
- Kids like it – as long as you psyche them up for the change.
- Teachers like it – their students achieve better grades and concentration.
- Parents like it – their kids are healthier and eat their veggies!
- Healthcare providers like it – they see a dramatic reduction in preventable diseases.