

Education

Did you know...



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**SAVOUR
THE FLAVOUR**



Focus On Education

Welcome to this year's edition of Focus On Education.

Safe to say, school caterer challenges aren't going away. In fact, they're increasing.

Cost pressures, demand for special diets and greater choice are all increasing. Plus, new school food standards are now being introduced to support children's health, which means menus will need to adapt. Get advice on how to do this on page 4.

Put yourself in the best position for the new autumn term with preparation tips (page 8), stock up to keep children hydrated (page 7) and learn about what it takes to be school caterer of the year (page 11).

We hope this guide will set you up for a great school year.

Katie Hinchliffe & Philip Dawson.
Out of Home team, Unitas Wholesale



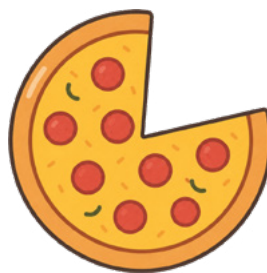
Bar & Kitchen

Insights



25% of parents say their child has a packed lunch because they don't like school meal choices

Source: ParentPay Group



85% of local authority caterers report a gap between government funding and the cost of providing a meal

Source: Association for Public Service Excellence



60% of local authorities have seen an increase in the demand for special diets

Source: Association for Public Service Excellence



A guide to new School Food Standards

To give children nutritious food every day, School Food Standards have been updated. Here, we set out the changes and ask Louise Wagstaffe, Senior Culinary Advisor at Premier Foods for her advice



What has changed?

Parents are worried about their children's diets, with 74% having at least one concern about their child's nutrition. In particular, foods that are processed or high in sugar are adding to growing health concerns, including higher levels of obesity and tooth decay.

The new School Food Standards are designed to give children healthier, fresher options for breakfast and lunch. Expected to be introduced in September 2027, the suggested changes include:



Deep-fried foods will no longer be served



High fat items like pizza and sausage rolls won't be available every day



Most days, fruit will replace sugary desserts



No confectionery, sweets or chocolate to be served

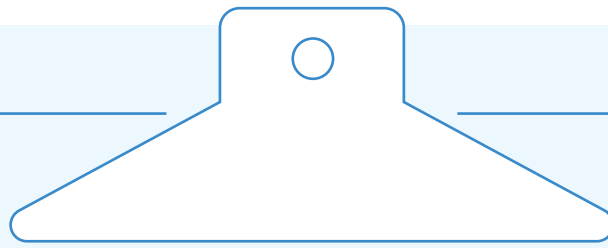


One or more portions of vegetables or salad must be served with each main meal every day

Source: Department for Education

See all the proposed changes





How can schools adapt?

Louise says that to meet the new standards, caterers don't need to rethink their whole menu, but just shift their mindset. She explains, "The principle is simple: keep the dishes students love, just make them work harder nutritionally."



Reformulate, don't remove

The most successful kitchens aren't stripping menus back, they're re-engineering them. Take a classic like cottage pie. By moving to a 50/50 blend of beef and lentils, enriching the sauce with vegetables, and using Bisto gravy, you maintain flavour, improve fibre and reduce cost all without changing the dish's identity.



Focus on flavour

If there's one thing that consistently drives uptake, it's flavour. This is where products like gravies, bouillons and cooking sauces come into their own. A well-made broth using Sharwood's Katsu Cooking Sauce, and Bisto Vegetable Boullion Paste or Powder allow you to build in vegetables, control portion sizes and reduce reliance on fried items.



Rethink desserts

With sugar reduction high on the agenda, dessert is under scrutiny, but removing it entirely risks reducing meal uptake, particularly in secondary schools. Work with fruit and create a dessert that feels familiar but delivers more nutritionally. These still provide that 'treat' moment, but in a way that aligns with emerging standards.



Go plant-forward

Plant-based eating in schools isn't about trends, it's about practicality. Dishes like lentil bolognese, chickpea curry or vegetable fried rice allow caterers to reduce meat content without compromising satisfaction. The key is not to label these dishes as 'vegan alternatives,' but simply as good food that stands on its own.

Try this
standards-friendly
Sweet Potato and
Lentil Curry



Kellogg's®

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Hydration preparation

Nutritious food is important, but so is free access to fresh drinking water and other healthy fluids

How much water do children need?

- Children aged between four and 13 need to drink between 1.1L and 1.7L of water a day
- Boys aged nine to 13 need more fluids than girls
- Active children may also need to drink more regularly
- This is between six and eight glasses of fluids
- Intake should be spaced across the day

What types of drinks are best for children?

- Plain still or carbonated water
- Plain unsweetened or unflavoured semi-skimmed, skimmed or lactose free milk
- Plain soya and oat drinks, unsweetened and fortified

Secondary school children can also have:

- Fruit or vegetable juice with plain water or milks as above (no added sugar or honey)
- Tea, coffee and hot chocolate

To stop children from consuming too many 'free' sugars, the following drinks should be limited:

- Fruit juices or smoothies
- Squash-type drinks, including those labelled 'no added sugar'
- Fizzy drinks



Stock Aqua Libra cans

Refreshing and recyclable, Aqua Libra's cans of still and sparkling water are crafted with UK-sourced pure filtered water. Perfect for on-the-go hydration.



Get ready for

BACK



SCHOOL

RESET &
REFRESH
FOR THE
NEW
TERM!

The upcoming September term is a great chance to reset and refresh. We've got tips from school catering experts to help you feel prepared



TACKLE FOOD WASTE

Kath Breckon, Knorr Professional Education Ambassador, says "Having worked in school catering for over 30 years, I have seen first-hand how much food can go to waste. Because of this, throughout my career, I have been working to create flavoursome, healthy and enjoyable dishes while actively maximising ingredients and reducing food waste."

KATH'S TOP TIPS

- Make more from your peelings. Potato peelings make great homestyle crisps, baked with a drizzle of oil and seasoned with Knorr Professional Powder Bouillon
- If you have veggies left over turn them into flavoursome chutneys, marmalades or salsas, pickles or pasta sauces
- Get your staple ingredients working harder. Freeze any leftover eggs or bread (clearly labelled) ready to use later

FOR RECIPE



SCAN HERE





ENCOURAGE UPTAKE WITH EXCITEMENT

Erin Ward, Executive Chef at Holmer Green School, says, "I'm always thinking of ways to encourage students to try stuff they're fearful of. This starts with bringing the team onboard to get the kids excited about what they're eating. We don't want them to think 'ugh spag bol again', we want them to shout 'yay, it's pasta day!'"

ERIN'S TOP TIPS

- We do a lot around theme days. When we had fish and chip day for British Food Fortnight, I put an inflatable seagull up in the canteen. The kids went mad!
- We promote special menus around the school on posters and TV screens so the students can look forward to what's coming
- We want the kids to learn about what they're eating too. Use educational sheets or tasters to get them engaged



FOR RECIPE



SCAN HERE

RESET ON ALLERGENS

Louise Wagstaffe, Senior Culinary Advisor at Premier Foods, says, "One of the biggest operational shifts in school catering is the growing need for robust allergen management and understanding of different dietary needs. It's about process, discipline and consistency, not just ingredients."

LOUISE'S TOP TIPS

- Well trained staff are central to success. Set some hours aside pre-term to reset expectations and processes, with hands-on refreshers across the year
- Look around your kitchen and double-check that your equipment and allergen-free zones are clearly marked out
- Set up a system for adjusting your menu across the year so you can build in customer feedback or new products





TREAT

Whip up excitement at lunch

Get the kids excited with this delicious, good-looking pudding, all within School Food Standard sugar guidelines!

Angel Delight Strawberry Shortcake

Serves: **20** Skill rating: **MEDIUM**

Ingredients

- 200g softened butter
- 200g caster sugar
- 4 eggs
- 200g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 tbsp milk
- 80g McDougalls No Added Sugar Strawberry Jelly
- 500ml boiling water
- 150g No Added Sugar Angel Delight Strawberry Whip
- 500ml water
- Fresh strawberries, sliced lengthways



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 170C. Line a 33cm x 22cm baking tin with baking parchment.
2. Cream butter and sugar until pale. Beat in eggs one at a time. Fold in flour, baking powder and milk. Mix until you have a smooth cake batter.
3. Place into the tin, spreading evenly so you get an even rise. Bake for 25 mins. Allow the cake to cool fully, then slice horizontally.
4. Mix the McDougalls No Added Sugar Strawberry Jelly into boiling water, then divide between two clean 33cm x 22cm tins.
5. Pour the water into a large mixing bowl. Add the No Added Sugar Angel Delight Strawberry Whip and whisk for 30 seconds on low speed. Scrape down, then whisk for 4 mins on high speed.
6. Pour on top of the set jellies, reserving a little for decoration. Top each jelly with a layer of sponge, then place in the fridge for 30 mins to set.

**Vanilla & Blueberry
Dessert**



**Angel Delight Vanilla
Whip with a Chocolate
Craquelin Choux Bun**





School Chef of the Year Erin Ward

Tell us a bit about your school

I'm Executive Chef for Holmer Green School. We have just under 1,300 pupils at secondary, ages 11 to 18. We run three services a day - breakfast, break and lunch - and they are always hungry!

What were your winning dishes for School Chef of the Year and how were they created?

The spec for the competition was to make two courses, a main and dessert at £1.70 a head for both. The dessert had to be 50% fruit, meet all school nutritional guidelines and use some sponsor products from Premier Foods.

I like to hero cheaper cuts of meat, so I created a pork mince bao bun with fresh slaw. It had a spring onion sauce which used all the extra peelings and packed in more nutrients.

My dessert was 'Sweetchoes' - sweet nachos made from wholegrain wraps, sugar and cinnamon and topped with a lime mousse and fruit salsa.

We tested them as a freebie with the school kids and they absolutely loved the dessert's novelty factor. So much so they've asked for it several times since. Yes, of course, nutrition is important but it shouldn't always be the lead as it can put kids off. I like to give people the 'yums' and make food fun.

How did it feel to win SCOTY?

It was my first time competing, so I'd already written myself off because several others had taken part in previous years. When they shouted my name, there were a few expletives and I burst into tears. I was so proud and totally shocked. A lot of work and love went into it so it was really nice to see it rewarded and pay off, but totally unexpected!

What did you learn from the experience?

If something terrifies you, it's probably worth giving it a go, because you never know how it's going to work out. I'd previously shied away from competition, thinking it was intimidating and that everyone would be better than me.

The best bit of advice I got was to give it your best and take it step by step. You might not always come out the best but it's a great opportunity for personal growth and to showcase yourself.

What do you think makes an excellent school chef?

You've got to have a passion for what you're doing. Even if you're serving lasagne and fish and chips, you still need to care. You're serving memories that they'll look back on and, in some cases, you're giving children the only hot meal they'll have that day. If you're outgoing and willing to work hard, you'll find it really rewarding.

COMPETITION

WIN £50



Calling all chefs!

Whether you're a fine dining chef, café owner, school or care home chef, we want to see what you're making!

HOW TO ENTER

Post a picture of your food to Instagram or X and tag us - @barkitchenmag #feedyoureyes

THE PRIZE

£50 Amazon gift card plus you get the chance to promote your venue in Bar & Kitchen magazine



#FEEDYOUREYES



T&Cs HERE

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