


Salad Bars in Missouri Schools

Success Story

Columbia Public Schools



One of the biggest challenges Columbia Public Schools (CPS) faces is balancing what children will eat with what is healthy for them while keeping it affordable for families. CPS Food Service Director, Laina Fullum describes how salad bars make it possible for them to tackle this challenge.

Salad Bars in Every School


The salad bar stands to remain a permanent fixture in CPS. They were first introduced in Columbia schools around 1995 as a way to increase fruit and vegetable intake among students. Currently, every school in the district uses one while some even have two. The salad bar is available to all grade levels except pre-kindergarten. Fullum firmly believes all students have the capability to use the salad bar and stands firm when elementary principles suggest otherwise.

As new schools open Fullum ensures they are equipped with a salad bar. Most of the time, schools strategically place the salad bar outside of the kitchen, but before the pay station for the most efficient flow through the serving line. Salad bars are used for both lunch and breakfast. Both sides of the bar are used when possible to help move children through faster.

Make it Attractive and Fun

We eat not only with our mouths, but with our eyes. Items on the salad bar have to be visually appealing to the students in order to make them want it. Some of the ways CPS does this are:

- Giving items special names such as “Berry Blast” instead of berry cobbler.
- Using long shallow 2-4 inch pans to display foods.
- Rotating different themes through out the year.
- Decorating lunch rooms and serving areas to get kids attention.



Another way they get students on board with healthy eating is connecting the lunchroom with the classroom. The district food service staff provide nutrition education on a variety of topics and do fruit and veggie tastings throughout the year.

Fitting In Fruits & Veggies

With produce season in full swing during warmer months, the salad bar becomes a popular choice among students. When available, they rely mainly on local farmers involved with the Missouri Food 4 Missouri People program. CPS provided approximately \$15,000 last year to local farmers in stocking of their salad bars.

Columbia Public Schools

Enrollment
16,807

Free & Reduced Meal Eligibility
38.9%

Average Daily Participation
59% Lunch



“Winter is a sparse time for the salad bar because fresh fruits and vegetables are cut down. Parents take notice of the salad bar during the fall and summer months,” Fullum said.

When faced with a shortage of local produce, Columbia schools turn to a local vendor to stock their salad bars.

Choices Abound

When given a choice, such as a salad bar offers, students are more likely to eat their fruits and vegetables. Fullum noted that a salad bar allows students to have fresh produce at all meals and for them to choose for themselves. Columbia increases variety by serving both hot and cold versions of foods to their students.

“How many meals per week we sell off the salad bar varies depending on if we have different items... about 60 percent or more take from the salad bar,” Fullum said.

In addition to the usual fruits and vegetables CPS offers these items on the salad bar:

- Oatmeal
- Granola
- Fresh, Seasonal Missouri Produce
- Beans and Rice
- Hummus
- Yogurt and Fruit Parfaits

Tips for Success

Fullum offered these tips for schools interested in starting a salad bar:

- Gain support from school or district leadership; it is essential for success with your program.
- Get the most out of their salad bars by using them at both breakfast and lunch serving periods.

Salad Bars and Wellness Policies

Salad bars are an easy way to improve the nutritional content of the food offered to students eating in your lunchroom. Here are some ideas for making your salad bar options healthier:

- Offer more **fresh** fruits and vegetables
- Add **whole grains**, such as granola and cold salads with whole grain pasta, barley or other whole grains
- Add **beans** to bulk up the protein
- Lower the **sodium**—fresh produce is naturally lower in sodium
- Offer **low-fat dressings and cheeses** to decrease fat content
- Offer a **protein** item at breakfast, such as a hardboiled egg
- Offer **dark green and orange fruits and vegetables**, such as dark leafy greens and carrot sticks
- Increase **variety**—use the salad bar to try new foods.

For more information about adding a salad bar to your nutrition program, visit

www.saladbars2schools.org



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