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School Food
Service
Continues
to Grow!

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how can we strengthen school food service

By Clayton Yeutter
Assistant Secretary

THE DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture and school food service workers across the Nation have enjoyed a long and productive association.

Since assuming my role as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in January, I have been most impressed by the tremendous job done by the Federal-State-local child nutrition programs.

We at the Federal level are well aware that it is you in the States and communities who deserve much of the credit. The accomplishments of these programs are a tribute to your professional dedication and service.

In total, the lunch program now provides nutritious lunches to more than 25 million children in over 86,000 schools. Some 8.8 million of these youngsters—more than double the number 4 years ago—are getting free and reduced-price meals because their parents can't afford to pay the regular price. All in all, school lunches are now available to 85 percent of the Nation's school-children.

And the newer, more specialized school breakfast, and special food service programs for non-school situations are providing additional nutrition to thousands upon thousands of children, mostly those from poor families.

I was able to get a firsthand look at these activities in New Orleans when I visited one of 40 city schools offering summer food service. The success of the program, which was jointly sponsored by the city's recreation and school food service departments, illustrates the value of involving school food service personnel in summer operations.

Many cities and towns completely

close down their school lunchrooms during the vacation period, leaving the summer food service program to other sponsors, often inexperienced and unfamiliar with food service operations. We know it doesn't have to be that way. In New Orleans, all 130 of the school food service workers employed in this year's summer program asked for the assignment, and their experience and talents made all the difference in achieving an effective smooth-running food service.

We were pleased that the Child Nutrition Advisory Council added the summer food service program to their list of priority concerns in their report for 1972. The Council is now over 2 years old and has made notable contributions in studying the child nutrition programs and recommending improvements. In recent meetings the group has focused on such areas as nutrition standards for child food service programs, reaching schools without food service, increasing student participation in existing lunch programs, and nutrition education and training.

Looking at child nutrition programs over the long term suggests, in my judgment, the need for caution in pressing for further legislative changes in the immediate future. Recent years have seen extensive alterations in the laws and procedures governing these programs. They have demanded tremendous adjustments on the part of each of you. Now we all need time to fully assimilate the recent provisions, and to study the impact of these changes on our clientele, the children.

A good example is the recent change in the law regarding control



of food sales deemed in competition with the Type A lunch. What will be the true effect of State and local control over this aspect of school feeding? Indications are that States are moving promptly to assume their responsibilities in this area. We need an opportunity to see how that approach works before trying still another.

One of the most fundamental changes was the adoption of a national standard for determining a child's need for a free or reduced-price lunch. By any measure this program has been highly successful. The present 8.8 million needy youngsters receiving meals free or at reduced cost owe much to your individual efforts to achieve wide public understanding of their needs. It is important that you continue to give this special attention in order to maintain and enhance its effectiveness. Serving the needy in school lunch programs is of widespread public interest; it must continue to be a high priority for all of us responsible for program operations.

In all areas, sound program management requires us to continually assess our priorities and establish realistic objectives. To do this, we must keep attuned to changing economic and budgetary conditions, public attitudes, and the expectations of the young people we serve.

We must become managers of change. It isn't enough to stand still with the same program concepts, the same techniques, and the same communications channels if we are going to strengthen school food service.

Currently, the Department has some significant changes on the agenda which should broaden your opportunities to meet the needs of

your many school lunch customers.

Many of you have asked for greater flexibility in meal standards to allow for more menu variety to meet local needs and tastes. Through a contract with Colorado State University, we are currently testing the possibility of restructuring the meal standards to a nutrient basis, as an alternative to the Type A food group structure. During the first year's work, the experience of the 30 participating school lunch menu planners, who put the nutrient standard approach into everyday use, shows it has promise. Moreover, you don't need a Ph.D. in science to use it. We plan to continue the study, working toward the development of practical guidelines to put the system to work on a wider scale. Potentially, it offers a workable alternative to the Type A pattern, combining new flexibility with the assurance of meeting nutrition standards.

One preliminary result of the nutrient standard study showed that youngsters drink significantly more milk when they're offered a choice. In accord with recommendations of the American Dietetic Association and the National Advisory Council on Child Nutrition, the Department has announced new rules to allow a wider choice of milk served with meals provided under child nutrition programs. Schools can now offer a choice of fluid whole, lowfat, skim or cultured buttermilk, unflavored or flavored milk.

In another move to add flexibility, convenience, and nutrition to child feeding programs, the Department has been looking at the use of various engineered or alternate foods. After an initial proposal and careful

consideration of three such foods, we have decided to move ahead with an amendment to the rules allowing their use in child nutrition programs. The products include: protein-fortified macaroni; textured vegetable protein (chiefly for use as a meat extender); and fortified bakery products for breakfast and snack programs, primarily in schools with limited facilities.

We worked under contract with food researchers at Rutgers University to involve the food industry in developing and testing many such new ideas in fortified and engineered foods. It was an important and worthwhile step toward bringing the benefits of food research and technology to bear on the needs of the child feeding programs.

Now that the first initiatives have been taken, we intend to shift our emphasis toward developing a system to facilitate the introduction and use of commercially developed foods that can make a nutritional and practical contribution to these programs. Each year brings a fresh crop of new food products to market and today's market offers a multitude of food items that are not in the form of "traditional foods."

At this stage we feel the Department's major role in this area should be to evaluate the usefulness and adaptability of new products for possible use in child nutrition programs. Our judgments will, of course, be based on thorough review of nutritional acceptability data supplied by industry. We will then be better equipped to answer the questions many of you are asking on how to credit certain combination food products to the requirements of the Type A lunch pattern. In fact, that is



a prime objective of our new efforts.

The use of a nutrient standard in menu planning would naturally eliminate the need for sorting out combination foods to fit the Type A pattern. It would also underscore the need for a sound, objective basis for evaluating new food products, not only in terms of nutrients provided, but also their potential overall impact on school food service and the children we serve.

Any subsequent changes this may mean for the Type A pattern or meal standards for child nutrition programs would be subject to the rule-making process, which gives all those concerned and interested a chance to comment on the proposals. Our goal is simply to provide you with a range of alternatives for accomplishing your tasks.

Currently, the school lunch program is serving about half the youngsters enrolled in U.S. elementary and secondary schools on a daily basis. We're reaching a lot more than that, for not all our customers participate on any one day.

Without question, we've come a long way in a few short years, but the question remains: Where are those youngsters we're not serving daily? Who's feeding them? On a local basis, those answers will have to come from you.

On a national basis, we find that there are two groups "outside" the child nutrition programs. First, nearly 5 million children nationwide do not have access to these programs because the schools they attend have no food service. Of these, some 2.6 million are in public schools and the remainder are in parochial and other nonprofit private schools. Among

those children are certainly many who would be eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

We have placed a high priority on making school lunches accessible to all children, in keeping with the intent of Congress and the recommendations of the National Advisory Council on Child Nutrition. The Food and Nutrition Service has been working closely with school officials across the country to encourage more food service programs.

And in recent months such organizations as the United States Jaycees, the American Medical Association's Auxiliary Nutrition Committee, the American Legion, and the U.S. Catholic Conference have joined in the national effort to "get lunches to children."

In many instances, it's a matter of selling the school administrator and the local school board on the advantages of child nutrition programs. I do not believe it would be either possible or appropriate to mandate school participation in these activities. Important decisions on education matters have traditionally been functions of State and local governments and, in my view, that's where the responsibility belongs.

Even as we strive to make it possible for 5 million youngsters to be able to get a lunch at school, there's another group of "unreached" children—those who don't take advantage of the lunch bargain available to them in participating schools. Naturally, it's their choice, and we want to keep it that way. We want our customers to be satisfied. The question is: How do we get these youngsters to choose the nutritious

Type A lunch at school everyday?

This problem was given a high priority by the National Advisory Council. FNS, in cooperation with State and local school lunch directors, undertook a study to find out what factors influence participation of teenagers in the lunch program. The study encompassed 10 high schools with average daily participation of 84 percent, and 10 schools that averaged 12 percent.

The study demonstrates the importance of three factors: the attitude of school administrators; efforts to "merchandise" the Type A lunch through information-education campaigns and pricing relative to a la carte; and student involvement in planning. The study demonstrates that these factors can significantly increase participation when applied in the low participation situations.

The report presents a tremendous challenge to all of us—and to you especially. It helps pinpoint some of the answers to questions which I'm sure you in the food service field ask yourselves and your co-workers all the time. In short: What can each of you do to get more children into your lunchrooms? What inspires kids to eat the nutritious lunches you serve?

We've got some of the answers now—or at least some very strong clues. Now it is up to all of us to put the knowledge into practice in order to meet the mutual responsibilities we have to the nutritional health of America's children. ☆

Excerpts from remarks by Assistant Secretary Yeutter at the Convention of the American School Food Service Association, August 2, 1973.

A look at High Schools: What makes lunch sell?

EACH YEAR MORE and more children are being brought into the National School Lunch Program through the campaign to enlist "no-program" schools. But there remains a large group of "unreached" children—those who have access to lunch programs in their schools, but do not participate on a regular basis. Finding ways to reach these youngsters is one of the biggest challenges

facing the child nutrition programs.

Because this problem is particularly evident in high schools, FNS has undertaken an in-depth study in representative high schools to find out what makes school lunch sell.

The first phase of the national study has been completed. It defines the major factors influencing teenage participation in child nutrition programs, and tests the validity of the factors believed to stimulate high participation. The results suggest guidelines for State and local school lunch directors to use in their efforts to boost participation in their high schools.

The year-long study was conducted in cooperation with the FNS Regional Offices, and State and local school lunch directors. Twenty high schools across the country were surveyed—ten with an average daily participation of over 80 percent, and ten with less than 20 percent.

The 20 schools represented a total enrollment of 23,500 students—with an average enrollment of 750 students in high participation schools, and 1600 students in low participation schools. FNS staff members visited each school a number of times to try to find out why some schools enjoy good turn-out, while others suffer low participation.

The attitudes and opinions of students, faculty, and food service personnel show how they feel about food and health in general, Type A lunches, and the school's overall food service program.

A questionnaire was prepared and given to 50 students in each of the 20 schools surveyed. On an average, one out of every 15 students in high participation schools and one out of every 32 students in the low participation schools received the questionnaire.

Here are significant results of the study:

★ *Closed vs. Open Campus.* Seventy percent of all schools visited had "closed campus," where students were not allowed off school grounds during lunchtime. The high participation schools with open campus were in rural areas where off-campus attractions were limited.

While it had been thought that

closed campus was THE most important factor in high participation, study results show that it is not. Two-thirds of the low participation schools had closed campus—and still had less than 12 percent of their students eating the Type A lunch. In fact, 64 percent of the students from all ten low participation schools reported never eating the Type A lunch at all.

Low participation by students in closed campus high schools is one of several results that show a strong desire by students to be treated as customers, not as part of a captive audience.

★ *A la Carte Service.* The extent of a la carte service in a high school proved to be a major difference between the high and low participation schools.

Eighty percent of the high participation schools had limited a la carte arrangements, and the Type A lunch was obviously a better buy than "the sum of its parts" a la carte.

Conversely, 90 percent of the low participation schools had extensive a la carte programs. In some cases, administrators felt that a la carte service would meet the students' needs and be more economical to operate. None of the low participation schools made a strong effort to promote or "merchandise" the Type A lunch as more nutritious or economical.

★ *Attitudes of Administrators and Faculty.* Part of Type A's lackluster in low participation high schools may stem from indifferent or negative attitudes held by administrators and faculty. Whereas all of the administrators polled in the high participation schools had very positive feelings about the National School Lunch Program and its benefits, only two of the ten low participation school administrators were positive in their feelings. The lunch programs at the schools of these two administrators subsequently met with the greatest success in a later part of the study which involved testing methods of increasing participation.

The indifferent attitude of some administrators may come from having so many other demands upon their time. The study showed that

"Box lunches" made a big hit with these California high school students. In a special test to boost participation, the cafeteria staff packed a complete Type A lunch in easy-to-carry cardboard boxes. The kids could eat them anywhere they liked—under the trees or at picnic tables on campus.

food and nutrition are not of major concern to many school administrators who are contending with such things as drug abuse, violence, political pressures, and curriculum.

★ *Student Attitudes.* A survey of student eating habits points to the crucial need in the teenager's diet for a balanced, nutritious meal at school—only 40 percent of BOTH high and low participation students responded that they ate three balanced meals daily. Nonetheless, many students had negative feelings about the Type A lunch even in the schools with high participation, where a student eats an average of 3.9 lunches a week.

Only one-fifth of the students from both high and low participation schools reported eating a nutritious breakfast. And, of those who ate snacks before lunch, only one-fifth chose nutritious snacks.

Students in both high and low participation schools indicated a desire for a more appetizing Type A lunch, with larger portions—and for less money. The average lunch cost to students in high participation schools was 32 cents, as opposed to 44 cents in low participation schools.

The study revealed that while two-thirds of the students in high participation schools viewed the Type A lunch as important to their health, fewer of the students in low participation schools did so. This was considered a crucial difference, and was





taken into account in the suggestions for raising participation later in the study.

Another significant finding was the desire of more than three-fourths of the students in both high and low participation schools for more choice within the menus—possibly several alternative Type A lunches. They also wanted to participate in menu planning.

Contrary to some common expectations, only half of the students polled considered hot dogs, hamburgers, pizza, french fries, or lasagna among their top five favorite entrees. Less than 15 percent of both high and low participation students listed vegetables among their

least favorite foods.

Also in both high and low participation high schools, more than half of the students interviewed felt that there was not sufficient time allotted for students to get to the cafeteria, go through the line, eat, and get back to class. This attitude has a direct impact on participation. If the lines are too long, students will often get a snack or not eat.

The condition of the facilities in both high and low participation schools was fairly similar, with some attractive and some drab cafeterias in both groups. Students generally would like to eat in more pleasant surroundings, but this factor was not as important to them as being able

to take part in planning the menu.

The results of the study suggest that the key to increasing participation in many schools is to make the food as attractive and appealing as possible and to promote the lunch by increasing student awareness of the value of the Type A lunch.

To test this hypothesis, five of the low participation schools were selected for further study. The critical factors isolated as encouraging high participation were incorporated into the programs of these schools. The findings showed:

★ With efforts made to merchandise and promote the Type A lunch, the average daily participation in one Missouri high school increased 127 percent. The students responded favorably to promotions designed to show them how much money they could save by purchasing a “special” lunch instead of the same items a la carte.

The Student Council at the high school set up a committee to continue promotion of the program, and efforts were started to involve the school’s district office in promotional efforts. The students at the high school were pleased with the new service—not only with the promotional posters, but also with the increased choice and variety.

★ The “box lunch” approach (marketing a hamburger, french fries, a salad or fruit, cookie and a choice of milk from an “express line” at the cafeteria’s snack bar) raised a Texas high school’s average daily participation 60 percent without detracting from the regular plate lunch service. Again, the Student Council and the art department were involved in the “kick off campaign.”

The findings from the study are included in a report, which is being made available to Regional Offices and State Educational Agencies. These offices will be able to use the report to further explore and test means of increasing participation among high school students. ☆

2 Ways to make Scho

By Benedicto Montoya

Schools throughout the country are seeking new ways to increase participation in the school lunch program and to insure that children eat a complete Type A meal.

In several Oregon schools two different approaches—one directed at elementary schoolchildren, the other at high school students—are meeting with considerable success.

IN BEAVERTON SCHOOL District, Beaverton, Ore., lunch is an experience in dining and nutrition. Meals at six of the district's 26 elementary schools are served family style, with students eating in small groups of six to eight classmates. In each group one child sits at the head of the table and serves as host or hostess for the week.

The hosts and hostesses arrive in the cafeteria about 5 minutes before the other children. They set the tables and prepare for their dining companions while cafeteria personnel use carts to wheel serving bowls of salads, desserts, and hot rolls to the tables. Just minutes before their classmates arrive, the student leaders pick up the main dishes from the steam table.

In addition to setting the tables, hosts and hostesses go to the kitchen for seconds and clear off the tables when the meal is completed. They also introduce guests, begin the meal, and set an example in acceptable behavior and manners. Children who bring sack lunches sit at the table with their classmates and take their turns as hosts or hostesses.

Hosting a meal is a great honor for the children, says district school food supervisor Ethel Parr. Even the



youngest children (first graders) quickly learn how to do it.

The idea for family style dining, according to Mrs. Parr, grew out of an annual week-long camping trip conducted by the school for the older children. The youngsters studied nature and ecology—and ate family style. When the campers returned to the school cafeteria, the teachers were amazed at how well-mannered and courteous they were, and family style serving was born.

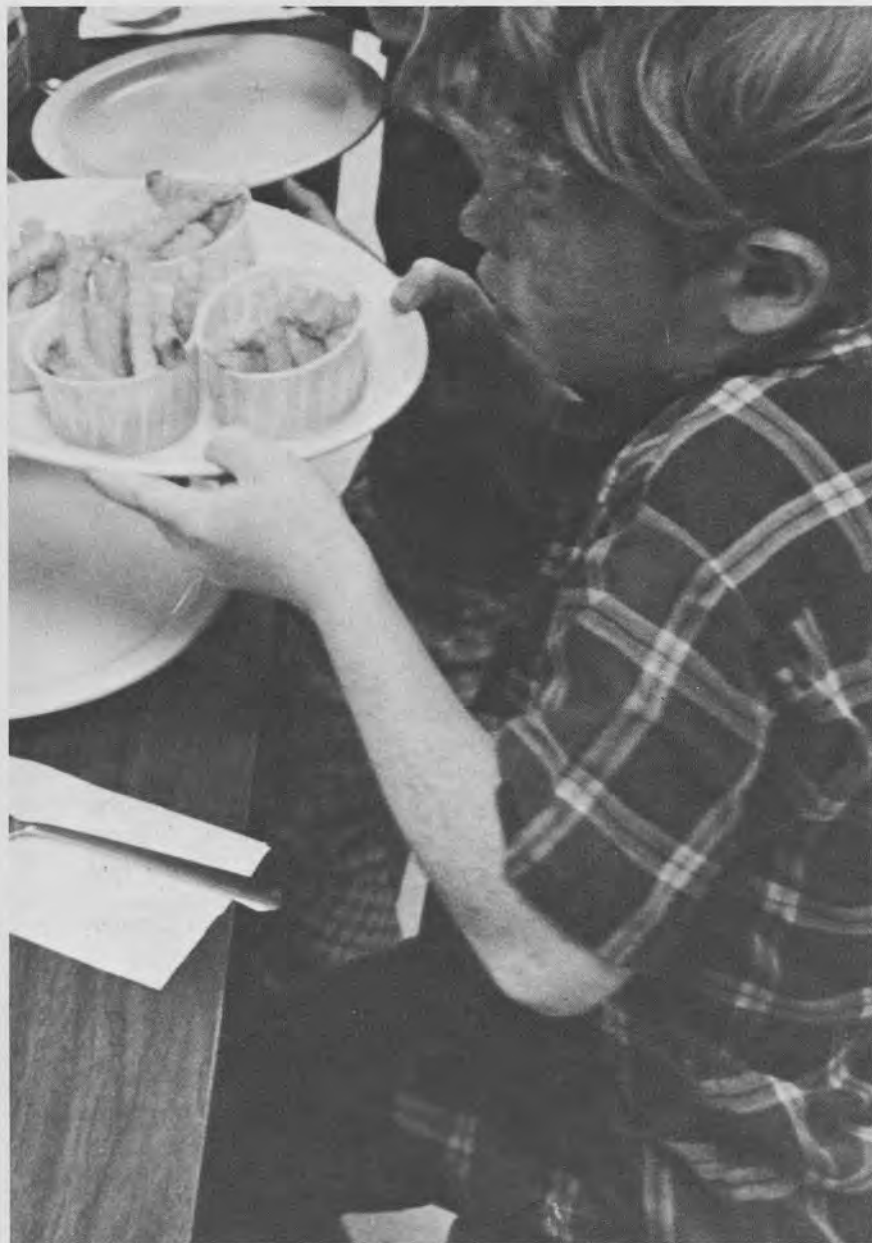
Courtesy and table manners are

stressed during mealtime, but rules are kept to a minimum. The children learn from the good example of the host or hostess and get helpful hints from the school personnel. At the start of the school year each student gets a copy of "Tips on Table Manners," a pamphlet based on comments of students.

Hosts and hostesses are also reminded of their responsibilities by the cafeteria manager when they begin their week-long duties.

Mrs. Parr points out that schools

ol Lunch FUN!



Lunch is a lesson in nutrition and dining for these Beaverton, Ore., youngsters. The children eat "family style" in small groups and take turns serving as host or hostess.

area has been left much cleaner after the noon meal since family style feeding began.

Equipment-wise, Mrs. Parr explains, switching to family style required only the addition of relatively inexpensive serving carts. It was necessary to replace the trays with dishes, but the trays were usable in the district's other schools.

"It costs more to feed family style," she says, "but only because the children eat more." Food waste has been found to be minimal and greater amounts of food are being consumed. "Children are more agreeable to serving themselves than being served." And they like the friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

School lunch, Mrs. Parr explains, can compete with playtime in the schoolyard. In the traditional method of feeding, children will wait in line to be served but often rush through the meal or not finish so that they can get out and play. Younger children, who eat slower,

using family style serving feel that it is one way a lunch program may be used as an educational experience. It can help students learn to cooperate in a group setting, accept responsibility, and be self-directed.

At the six Beaverton schools using this approach, only one teacher is on duty in the cafeteria during the lunch period. In keeping with the spirit of family style, the teacher tries to supervise as indirectly as possible.

Cafeteria personnel, freed from

serving in a lunch line, also walk around the lunchroom and encourage the children to eat a balanced meal and to take small servings of foods they might not try. Mrs. Parr says that knowing the cook has a tremendous effect on a child's acceptance of new foods.

Each student takes his plate, utensils, and milk carton to the disposal area. The host or hostess then clears the serving dishes from the table and wipes it clean for the next group. School custodians say the cafeteria





Hosts and hostesses at Beaverton get ready to pick up the main dish at the steam table.

see others leave and feel pressured to finish their lunch. In family style serving, the children spend all their time in the cafeteria eating at the table and are dismissed by table by the teacher on duty.

It is very important, Mrs. Parr warns, that all school personnel—from custodian to principal—believe in family style feeding. "All will be involved," she says. For the teacher it requires teaching more than academic subjects. "Success depends on the attitude and willingness of the teacher to plan classroom ac-

tivities that will supplement those of the cafeteria.

"Family style serving does not solve all cafeteria problems," she continues, "but it does offer an excellent opportunity for students to learn by doing."

Because of the success of family style feeding in the Beaverton School District over the past 3 years, ten other Oregon school districts and one in Washington have visited the program and expressed an interest in having similar arrangements in their schools.

AT GRANTS PASS HIGH School, the school lunch program is designed to serve "customers," says Richards Miller, State school food and nutrition services coordinator.

Miller, who for many years was an "operations man" with a large Eastern-based restaurant chain, has brought to the high school food service techniques used by many of the Nation's most successful quick food service operations.

Traditionally, Miller points out, school lunch has served a "captive audience." However, with open campuses and a myriad of other activities competing for the time and attention of students, "school lunch needs to be competitive."

The State school lunch director feels that the traditional method of feeding students—the line 'em up way—is outdated, especially for high school students. "It's an attempt," he explains, "to adapt an elementary type feeding system to young adults. In the food service business—commercial or nonprofit—if you are stagnant, you are on the decline."

The Grants Pass High School's redesigned lunch program, now in its second year of operation, is, according to Miller, the only one of its kind. Starting from scratch, he personally designed the layout, determined the type of equipment and facilities that were to be installed, and how things were to be operated.

Assisted and supported by district school food service supervisor Doris Reader and cafeteria manager Wilma Harvey, Miller planned not only to feed his customers efficiently, but to entice them into eating as well. The lights over the serving lines, for ex-

ample, are the kind that enhance the appearance of the food. And they are placed in such a way as to focus attention on the food rather than the distracting food preparation area behind the serving line.

Because Miller believes that hot food should be served on warm plates, there are plate warmers.

There are also special racks used to bring frozen french fries to room temperature before cooking in order to maintain the proper cooking temperature in the deep fryer. "If you want consistently good french fries, you don't plunge frozen french fries into boiling oil," he says.

Bakery products ranging from danish pastry to several different types of breads and rolls are baked fresh daily. Hamburger buns go from oven to customer within 1½ hours. Miller explains that it is sometimes necessary to take the buns directly from oven to the freezer to cool them enough to slice and butter.

The 1/6-pound hamburger is cooked as the customer waits, and here, too, it's to a Miller formula—"35 seconds on each side for the best hamburger around."

And, there is a milk shake offered (10¢ extra) that is made according to a USDA-approved formula. The formula for the shake, according to Miller, was researched for a year. He calls it a "Type A Shake."

The cafeteria's customers are offered a selection from seven protein-rich entrees. They select one. The entrees include: a diet plate, a sandwich plate, a hamburger or cheeseburger plate, and three hot plates, such as country style steak, spanish rice or chicken pot pie.

There are ten fruit and vegetable selections from which customers choose any three; and three bread and cereal selections, from which they choose one or two.

As a "bonus" to the Type A lunch, the cafeteria offers three choices for dessert. Miller explains that in most school lunch programs the dessert is part of the Type A lunch and meets the fruit-and-vegetable or bread-and-cereal requirement. At Grants Pass, the dessert selection is

in addition to an already complete Type A lunch.

The method by which the students are served the wide selection of Type A meals—the Multiple "A" Selection System—is called the Ultra High Speed Open Square.

As the name implies, it is an open square to which the customers are admitted in a regulated flow. The open square system, according to Miller, can serve up to 60 customers a minute. However, he warns, it doesn't just happen—it requires training of food service personnel and customer confidence in the quality and quantity of food.

When the customer enters the cafeteria, he is given a menu, so that he can determine his selection as he awaits his turn in the square.

For the program to operate as planned, a number of conditions must exist. Miller explains that there must be 90 percent "repeat" customers, of which 40 to 60 percent make their menu selection before entering the square. Of all customers, 25 percent must select one of the three quick-to-fix sandwich plates. And finally, Miller stresses, service must be good, fast and efficient, and quality must keynote every aspect of the program.

The State school food and nutrition service coordinator has instilled in the Grants Pass cafeteria staff the thought that the product is not just food but attitude as well.

"Facilities," he says, "are not

enough. You can systemize. You can take pains to insure that food quality is good. But, if the climate isn't right, it's all in vain."

He points to his experiences in the commercial food service business and his approach to putting "sick" restaurants back into the profit column. "What was lacking in most cases," he says, "was a little love in the soup."

Miller looks upon the Grants Pass operation as a laboratory where students are learning good nutrition.

In the beginning, he explains, the customer may have selected three fruits from the ten fruits and vegetables offered. But soon, the students began to experiment with a variety of fruits and vegetables.

"Whether it's conscious or not, students are selecting a well-balanced meal and getting an idea of what it's all about. In some cases," says Miller, "they've gotten to this age without ever experiencing proper meal selection before. When they get out of school, they'll go to a grocery store and make a choice based on their experiences here."

At Grants Pass as in Beaverton, school food service has broken with tradition and met with success. In both cases it's not just improved food preparation that has made the difference, but the involvement of school personnel beyond the food preparation and serving stages. Or, as Richards Miller might say, it's "putting a little love in the soup." ☆



Grants Pass High School students move quickly through the "open square" serving area.

In a special training program, cashier Jeanne Lamison learns how to handle food coupons.

Cashiers Learn How Food Stamps Work



Jeanne Lamison was in school the other day. No matter that school was situated on the unfinished second floor of a brand new, not-yet-open supermarket, where busy workmen were hammering—it was still school.

Jeanne and seven fellow students were learning the intricacies of being a cashier in a Wayne, N.J., supermarket set to open a few weeks later. The store is part of a major food chain, which provides the special training course to all new employees in the six Northeast States it serves.

One session in the 30-hour course is devoted solely to how the Federal food stamp program works.

Cashiers must learn for example, which of the items sold in the store cannot be purchased with food stamps.

"A food stamp customer comes to the checkout counter with soap, cigarettes, beer, and aspirin," said Customer Service Manager Kathie McCraig, who ran the training program. "Can he or she pay for any of them with food stamps?"

The answer, the trainees soon learned, is no. Only food for home consumption, excluding alcoholic beverages, can be purchased under the program.

The new employees also learned such things as how to handle tax

and soda bottle deposits and make change in stamp transactions. In making change, cashiers use undorsed 50 cent stamps and store scrip instead of cash.

During the session, John Garrett, head of the Mount Holly, N.J., FNS field office, distributed booklets prepared by FNS for cashier guidance, and explained more about the food stamp program.

"When you consider that a store that fails to comply with the regulations can be disqualified from the program for a period of 30 days up to 3 years," he told them, "you'll understand how important it is to know the rules."

Later, after the lesson, Mr. Garrett said he has conducted some 150 training sessions in the last 6 years.

"Any food store—from a huge supermarket chain to a family-owned grocery—can request cashier training from me," he explained.

Of course, food stamp trade can be big business. According to an executive of the chain, the largest store in the Bronx, N.Y., conducts about \$100,000 a week in food stamp business—a substantial fraction of its total volume.

"We expect the new Wayne store, our 100th store, to handle a large volume of business, using 15 cashiers at peak hours. Although food stamp trade will probably not be a major factor here," the store executive said, "we still feel training in it to be essential."

In addition to special training programs for new stores, the chain also has seven regular centers for training new personnel and for periodic retraining. Students are paid their normal starting salary throughout the training program.

Apparently the training pays off. John Garrett explained, "We have definitely fewer compliance problems with this chain than with many other stores."

And according to Jeanne Lamison, the cashier-trainee who lives in Wayne, "You get really scared thinking of standing behind the register when people are waiting in line and you're expected to know all the rules. This training gives me more confidence in myself." ☆

Nursery Helps Food Stamp Clients

THE WAITING ROOM of the Tuscaloosa, Ala., food stamp office is typical of the hundreds of other food stamp office waiting rooms throughout the country—with one exception. This room is huge.

The building, once a church, has been converted for office use, and the one-time sanctuary serves as the waiting room. The front and rear sections of the building are used for office space.

In much the same manner as when the building was a church, long rows of benches face the front of the room. In them people wait to purchase food stamps, while in the rows facing the rear in another section of the room, others wait to be interviewed by caseworkers.

On an average day, over 400 people will file into this room to obtain their food stamps. Many of these are mothers with small children, who, unlike many youngsters in other food stamp certification offices, do not hang onto their mothers and make the visit a weary one.

On the contrary, the children look forward to the trip. The moment they enter the door, broad grins appear on their faces as they rush to the nursery in the rear of the room.

The nursery is filled with tables, chairs, books and toys of every description. Here they play games, hear stories, enjoy cookies and fruit juices, and meet new friends.

"They all have lots of fun," says Pat Hargrave, a former school teacher, who is chairman of the project for the Women of the Covenant Presbyterian Church. "At the same time, the mothers have a chance to relax for a few minutes."

Ruth Kornegay, food stamp supervisor, wonders how they managed before the Presbyterian women started the nursery. Sometimes, she recalls, pandemonium reigned as tired children romped around the room, upsetting chairs and not knowing what to do with themselves.

The project was conceived at a meeting at which a speaker enumerated many opportunities for service in the community. One suggestion was that the women operate a nursery in the food stamp office.

The women took it from there. In a short time, they converted the rear section of the building into a nursery complete with chairs, tables, books, toys, and all types of games.

Each day two women serve as nursery managers, conducting the children in their games, serving refreshments, telling stories, and making them feel at home.

"As you might well expect," says Mrs. Hargrave, "the volunteer workers have more fun than the children."

The owner of the Piggly Wiggly Supermarket nearby, H. B. Looney, was so excited about the project that he offered to furnish refreshments, including cookies, peanut butter, crackers, fruit juices, along with plates, cups, and napkins.

The women use the opportunity to provide as much instruction as possible in proper eating habits and better nutrition. The Food and Nutrition Service's coloring books, furnished by the FNS Tuscaloosa Field Office, are used, and the walls are filled with colorful pictures and drawings. ☆

Type A -the Ethnic Way

By Elaine Brand



Chinese, Spanish, and "soul food" meals provide a taste of home for some of these young New Yorkers—and expand the food tastes of their classmates.

FAMILIARITY BREEDS contempt . . . or does it?

It doesn't where children and school lunch are concerned. The foods that kids know, the dishes they get at home, are the ones they'll eat.

And when home is in Manhattan's famous Lower East Side, home-style cooking tells a capsule history of New York City immigration in recent years.

So when the local school board began running its own school lunch program last year, the focus was on foods with an ethnic twist: "arroz con pollo" . . . chicken and rice, seasoned in the Puerto Rican style. And Southern fried chicken, with collard greens and cornbread . . . "soul" food a black child would savor. Even chow mein and fried rice, straight out of Chinatown traditions.

The city's school board was decentralized 3 years ago into 32 local independent districts. Last September, Community School Board District 1, covering 20 elementary and junior high schools in the Lower East Side, became the first to opt for a food service separate from the central board.

A food committee was established in each school, with four-sided representation from parents, students, administrators, and lunchroom personnel.

The committees were asked to decide what kind of lunch program they wanted.

The ground rule was that all lunches had to meet USDA guidelines for a Type A lunch, so that the district would be eligible for financial aid, donated food and equipment assistance from FNS.

At that time, the four junior high and 16 elementary schools in the area had four food arrangements: bulk frozen food sent in by an independent company, individual fro-

zen pre-packed meals, "soup and sandwich" lunches from the central board, and limited in-school cooking.

The parents wanted fresh, hot, cooked food for all, with some dishes representing ethnic tastes. They suggested particular dishes and the recipes for them.

Student preferences were obtained from school surveys undertaken as class projects. The children wanted foods reflecting their ethnic backgrounds, as well as the always-popular hamburger, hot dog, pizza, and hero sandwich.

The committees decided to employ an outside food service management firm, a small and growing concern that offered the greatest flexibility.

Food is purchased just one month in advance, based on feedback from the previous month.

The "satellite" method of preparation is best suited to present facilities. Main dish entrees are prepared in large serving trays in the five schools with big kitchens, and delivered daily ("satellited") to the other schools where they are kept hot until lunchtime. Most side dishes are prepared in each school. Only four schools have not yet been brought into the new program.

Hiring 30 local residents to augment the kitchen staffs and local firms to supply delivery trucks gave community involvement a boost.

Lunch was launched in February, with an ethnic meal planned once a week, according to the "community menu" worked out by the food committees. The ethnic groups represented are Puerto Rican (with 73 percent of district enrollment), black (15 percent), and Chinese (8 percent). Possibly some meals will be geared toward the remaining 4 percent, a conglomeration of Jewish, Polish, Rumanian, Irish, and Italian extraction.

USDA-donated chicken, turkey, rice, chopped beef, beans, and other items are used in the ethnic meals. Also, donated foods used in regular lunches help offset the cost of special spices and foods purchased for ethnic dishes.

The program's flexibility has been

a definite advantage. For example, when the first Chinese lunch was served, the non-Chinese children, especially the younger ones, would not eat the chow mein because of its strange-looking bean sprouts. The next time, the menu was changed to roast pork fried rice, along with an egg roll, pineapple, and fortune cookie.

Food education has helped increase student acceptance of new foods. Every teacher, parent, and child receives a copy of the monthly menu, which is printed in English, Spanish, and Chinese. They are urged to discuss the foods and their nutritional benefits.

Teachers get a letter pointing out the dates of ethnic meals, with a suggestion to show their classes a sample tray to familiarize them with unusual foods. Junior high home economics classes cook dishes using school lunch recipes and make recommendations on changes.

The second Chinese meal was a resounding success; a follow-up survey indicated that 95 percent of all students liked it. The meal appealed to Chinese students, and introduced other children to new foods.

An unexpected benefit was that fortune cookies turned out to be a teaching tool for reading, since there ensued avid comparing of everybody's fortune!

Since the program began, an increase in participation has been accompanied by a dramatic decrease in plate waste. About 12,000 of the 15,000 students in the district take part in the lunch program. Most non-participants are older pupils who go home to eat.

About 6,000 children also receive breakfast in school. An ethnic flavor has been incorporated here, too, with dishes such as Spanish-style farina (made with vanilla extract, sugar, and cinnamon).

The multi-ethnic approach to school feeding has quickly taken root with Community School Board District 1. By providing meals that bring a bit of home to school for some students, and add to the education of others, the lunch program takes its place as an integral part of local life. ☆



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