

# Local Foods, Lucas County

## Connecting Farms, Health, and Community

## Farm to School: Serving Local Foods

School Food Service managers across the country are increasingly adding local foods into their daily offerings. This exposure can make a positive impact on the overall health of the student, and possibly the whole family. How do you get the students to try these new foods? And continue to purchase these new items? A number of activities can be conducted in the cafeteria to increase participation in your Farm to School program.

### Taste Tests

Taste testing is a great tool for a food service program looking to make healthy changes to its menus at minimum cost. No one wants to see students throw good food away.

Taste tests can help ensure the product is salable before making it a permanent part of the school menu. The food sample could be anything from a single slice of fruit or a 2 oz. portion of a prepared entrée.

#### Tips for a successful taste test event:

- Determine a goal and outcome for the taste test. What do you want to accomplish?
- Have menu ideas in mind when choosing a food item to test. Try to use something you might serve regularly instead of a one-time unique item.
- Involve as many school staff and parents as possible. Students may be more interested in the product if there are lots of adults supporting the event. Plus, more support makes serving and cleaning up easier!
- Involve students in distribution of tasting surveys and collection of results- give them a reason to be invested in the outcomes.

### Menu Planning

Planning menus involves much more than listing which foods you offer each day. Meals must meet USDA's Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, but should also offer a balance of flavors, variety of textures and colors, and be eye-appealing.

Look at their existing menus and determine where a local product may be substituted for established purchases. Or, consider a new menu item based on the price or availability of local produce or other menu items.

#### Menus That Move

Ohio Department of Education (ODE), in collaboration with food service directors across Ohio, and The Ohio State University have developed a set of seasonal cycle menus which utilize local Ohio foods in season. Menus are based on ease of preparation, cost, and taste.

- [www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Food-and-Nutrition/Resources-and-Tools-for-Food-and-Nutrition/Menus-that-Move](http://www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/Food-and-Nutrition/Resources-and-Tools-for-Food-and-Nutrition/Menus-that-Move)

USDA's Community Food Systems and Team Nutrition programs also offer a variety of tools from across the country for Menu Planning:

- [www.healthymeals.fns.usda.gov/menu-planning-0](http://www.healthymeals.fns.usda.gov/menu-planning-0)
- [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources#MenuPlanning](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-resources#MenuPlanning)

#### Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Consider adding local foods to your Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). It's a great way to expose students to foods they have not tried before!

# Resources for Lucas County

Ohio State University Extension- Ohio Local Foods resources [www.localfoods.osu.edu/resources](http://www.localfoods.osu.edu/resources)  
Online Food Directories for Ohio Consumers- [lucas.osu.edu/node/444](http://lucas.osu.edu/node/444)

Ohio Farm Bureau: Lucas County- grassroots membership organization that works to support our state's food and farm community. Phone: 419-849-2128 [www.ofbf.org/counties/lucas/](http://www.ofbf.org/counties/lucas/) Email: [lucas@ofbf.org](mailto:lucas@ofbf.org)

Ohio Department of Agriculture Ohio Proud program- helps consumers find and purchase products grown and made in Ohio. Phone: 1-800-IMPROUD (1-800-467-7683) [www.ohioproud.org/](http://www.ohioproud.org/) Email: [ohioproud@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:ohioproud@agri.ohio.gov)

Ohio Department of Health Seed to Salad Toolkit- assisting schools in implementing and promoting salad bars [www.odh.ohio.gov/health/healthylife/healthyeating/salad.aspx](http://www.odh.ohio.gov/health/healthylife/healthyeating/salad.aspx)

Ohio Smarter Lunchrooms- Taste testing resources and materials [www.ohiosmarterlunchrooms.com/resources/stickersclings/](http://www.ohiosmarterlunchrooms.com/resources/stickersclings/)

Ohio Action for Healthy Kids- Taste Testing in Schools Resource Guide [www.ohioactionforhealthykids.org/resources/nutrition/](http://www.ohioactionforhealthykids.org/resources/nutrition/)

## Promotion and Marketing

What messages are you trying to promote through your Farm to School program? While there may be many reasons for serving local foods, most can agree that increasing consumption of healthy foods is important.

Consider your goals when marketing local foods in the cafeteria. There are a number of tools for promoting local foods in your cafeteria. Which will you use?

- Events: Harvest nights, assemblies, family events with taste tests
- Print materials: table tents, posters, school newsletters, flyers, bulletin boards
- Word of Mouth: morning/afternoon announcements, mentions from cafeteria staff
- Social media: school websites, Facebook, Twitter

### Harvest of the Month

A number of states have developed promotional programs for specific fruits, vegetables, and other local food items. Consider showcasing one local ingredient every month or each season. Schools may serve the item just once or may prepare the food in several different ways throughout the month to highlight how it can be used.

Connect with your producer or supplier! Develop materials about the people and places who supply your local foods. Invite farmers to your cafeteria during meals, allowing students to ask questions about the food and farm.

### Press Coverage

Invite local news outlets to cover your local foods story. The more positive coverage the program receives, the more likely you are to receive support (monetary or otherwise!) from your community.



Photo Source: [news.schoolsdo.org/2014/05/ore-1st-graders-grow-lettuce-feed-classmates/](http://news.schoolsdo.org/2014/05/ore-1st-graders-grow-lettuce-feed-classmates/)

## Salad Bars

Salad Bars are a great venue for serving local foods, rotating offerings as seasons change. Researchers in Los Angeles concluded that a salad bar in the cafeteria can significantly increase fruit and vegetable consumption among students<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>:[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17610759](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17610759)

Contact your local OSU Extension office for more information.

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