



WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION IN A NUTSHELL

The Lifecycle of Farm to School:



**Menu
Planning**

Benefits to Menu Planning with Local Foods

- Expanded menus and menu variation.
- Access to high-quality, locally produced food.
- Potential for cost-savings.
- Increased participation in your school meal programs.
- Increased satisfaction in school meal programs from the school community – students, parents, and administration.
- Creates a more sustainable school and community.

Addressing Barriers

- **We utilize cycle menus.**
 - Consider different cycle menus depending on the season (i.e., fall, winter, spring).
 - Try removing the least popular item(s) on the cycle menu and replace with a dish that showcases a local ingredient(s). You may consider leaving that day blank or creating a placeholder until closer to the month/week when the menu is published so you know exactly what local foods you might have/can get.
 - Analyze your menu for commonly served ingredients, such as ground beef. Could you purchase that item locally?
- **We use mostly USDA Foods.**
 - Use your USDA Foods as a base to feature local foods (i.e., develop a different chicken sandwich for each season using your USDA chicken but incorporating local ingredients as the topping).
 - Concentrate on seasonal vegetable and fruit components as the place to make your updates and new items. Make a seasonal chicken sandwich that you serve already assembled, for example: Spring Chicken Sandwich: cucumber slices, pickled shredded carrots and lime dressing; Summertime Chicken Sandwich: sliced mozzarella, sliced tomatoes, pesto mayo; Fall Harvest Sandwich: sauteed bell peppers, mushrooms, and onions; Hearty Winter Chicken Sandwich: parmesan crust melted onto chicken, tomato sauce.
- **We do not have a salad bar.** Find ways to add variety to the serving line by using $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{1}{3}$ pans. Feature those fresh garden foods prominently even if there are only 2. If you've got winter squash and cranberries let those be what is on your garden bar. Move away from always having the same "safe" veggies out every day.
- **We are short-staffed.** Build up your staff's skills so that within the time you have they will feel confident to do this work and proud to serve these foods. Start with a small project, let

them have several times to try, find the person (s) who is motivated to make the seasonal chicken sandwich the most exciting thing on your menu, let them do it.

- **It is hard to deviate from what we know.** If you have one or two items you make “homemade” or from scratch that you are proud of and students accept, choose that menu item to change each season. For example, you make a baked rotini with diced chicken and a parmesan sauce. Seasonalize it without changing the vegetable subgroups so it stills fit into your weekly menu:
 - Spring Pasta Bake: add carrots and spinach
 - Summer Pasta Bake: add red bell peppers and broccoli
 - Fall Pasta Bake: add tomatoes and fresh herbs like basil, parsley, and cilantro
 - Winter Pasta Bake: add butternut squash and kale

Where do you find local foods?

- [Wisconsin Local Food Database](#): Find a map and list of local food producers that sell to schools.
- [REAP Farm Fresh Atlas](#): Features Wisconsin farms, farmers’ markets, restaurants, stores, and other businesses that sell local food and use sustainable production and business practices.
- Visit your local farmers’ market and speak directly to producers. Connecting face-to-face can be a great way to establish a relationship with a local producer in your community.
- Talk to neighboring districts. Do your colleagues purchase from a local producer who may be able to provide food to your district as well?

Food Safety Considerations for Purchasing Local

- Follow your existing food safety plan! It should contain much (if not all) necessary information for buying and receiving local foods.
- You can tell producers that food should come to you like it would be presented at the farmers’ market.
- Feel free to take a farm tour to establish confidence in the food safety of your local producer. You may want to bring the students there as well!

The Goal

The goal is to change your menu planning process. When you first plan your menus, consider what will be in-season during that time of the year instead of making swaps for items you can get locally after your menu has been planned.

Menu Planning Workshop Video

View [clips](#) from the Menu Planning workshop on October 6, 2022, at Nourish Farms!

“This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.”