



WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION IN A NUTSHELL

The Lifecycle of Farm to School:



Processing

Benefits to Processing Local Foods

Food Service Benefits:

- Expanded menus and menu variation.
- Ability to customize cuts and portions to best meet your meal service needs.
- Potential for cost savings.
- Increased engagement and skill-building for school nutrition staff.
- Increased participation in your school meal programs.
- Increased satisfaction in school meal programs from the school, community, students, parents, and administration.
- Student exposure to how fresh foods are grown and prepared for consumption.

General Benefits:

- Access to high-quality, locally produced food.
- Potential for cost savings.
- Improved environmental sustainability by reducing transportation costs and packaging.

Produce Food Safety

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in your school food safety plan are your best guide to handling fresh produce prior to and during processing:

- [Approved Food Sources](#)
- [Receiving Deliveries](#)
- [Storing Food](#)
- [Washing and Handling Fresh Fruits/Vegetables](#)

Processing Practices

Ergonomics

To be safe and avoid both short-term and long-term injury, it is important to consider the way you work in a kitchen. Implement the following techniques to reduce the risk of injury:

- Decrease the weight of items lifted.
- Vary tasks versus using a repetitive motion for long periods of time.
- Adjust the height of the work surface to be comfortable.
- Place supplies and equipment in easy reach.
- Utilize anti-fatigue mats and personal protective apparel (i.e., gloves, ear plugs, padding)
- Take breaks when needed.

Cutting and Chopping

Precisely cutting and chopping produce improves the appearance of foods and helps to ensure even cooking. Types of cuts and chops include:

- Small dice: cube cut in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch pieces.
- Medium dice: cube cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces.
- Large dice: cube cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ inch pieces.
- Julienne or matchstick cut: thin, rectangular cut in 1-2 mm strips. Commonly used for stir fries, in wraps, or in salads.
- Brunoise cut: smallest dice from a julienne cut. Use in soups.
- Batonnet: Largest stick cut, foundation for large dice. Great for items on the salad bar.
- Chiffonade: Thin slice on herbs and leafy greens. Stack the leaves, roll into a cylinder, and thinly slice. Well suited for garnishes.

For photo examples of each cut or chop, see the [Basic Cutting and Chopping Techniques](#) resource.

Blanching and Shocking

Blanching and shocking are commonly used to prepare vegetables for freezing. This process slows/stops the loss of flavor, color, and texture. To blanch, place the vegetables in a pot of boiling water. The brief time in the boiling water will [depend on the vegetable](#), usually 1-5 minutes. After blanching, immerse immediately in ice water for the same amount of time used during boiling (except for corn-on-the-cob).

Freezing

Freezing is a great way to preserve fresh produce during the peak of harvest, taste, and quality. Wash produce thoroughly before freezing and blanch and shock as needed. Dry well and pack tightly in freezer bags or trays with the air removed. Store at 0°F or lower for 8-12 months.

Roasting

Roasting is used to enhance flavor through caramelization and browning. Roast foods at a high temperature, above 400°F and uncovered. Roasting works best on full and half sheet pans for foods such as meats and vegetables.

Thawing for Service

Food safety is key when thawing frozen foods. As soon as food becomes warmer than 40°F, bacteria can begin to grow. Thaw foods in a refrigerator at 40°F or less or in cold running water less than 70°F. Never thaw foods at room temperature or in warm water. Most frozen vegetables do not need to be thawed, except for corn on the cob or leafy greens.

Quantity Math for Fresh Produce

Utilize the [USDA Food Buying Guide](#) (FBG) to determine how much fresh produce or meat to process for meal service. The FBG can help you determine how many pounds of raw, unprocessed product to purchase to yield a desired number of servings at a specified serving size. For assistance with the FBG or calculating a quantity to purchase, contact a [Public Health Nutritionist](#).

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