

# Cafeteria Promotions

## School Taste Test Guide

- Free and nutritious taste tests in schools expose students to foods they might not otherwise have a chance to try. Taste tests can increase enthusiasm for trying school provided lunches, which are most nutritious.<sup>1</sup>
- Soliciting regular feedback from participants can help school staff better understand which foods to serve during meal times and keep students engaged with the school meal program.
- Repeat exposure to new foods and routine nutrition education can improve the dietary intake of students.<sup>2</sup>

**Resources, tips, and more are available below to help implement and sustain taste tests in your school.**

### Collective Participation

- Engage parent and **student volunteers**, local **college nutrition students**, and school/district **food service teams** to help host a taste test.
- Coordinate with cafeteria and custodial service members if using the school kitchen and lunchroom.
- Teachers can **encourage students** to keep an open mind and a positive attitude, as well as be a **healthy role model**.



### Taste Test Basics

Strategies for maximizing impacts of the taste tests by engaging staff, students, and community members. Includes sample survey and voting ballots.

Source: Food Corps

## Taste Test Tips

**Timing:** Offer taste tests routinely and on days when lunch is served for the full amount of time (i.e., not on half/short days) so that students have enough access and time to try the taste test.

- Taste tests outside of the cafeteria and lunch period help to keep in mind students who arrive late or don't visit the cafeteria

**Options:** Preparing and offering a food in different ways makes students more likely to try the food again because their experience with the food is not limited to one exposure.

- Allow students to explore by providing recipes and newsletters with information about the food from the taste test.

**Education:** Get kids excited to participate with posters and stickers. Nutrition lesson plans and workbooks can also connect the taste tests with in-class learning.



## Feedback

Tracking participation and feedback from students and staff is an important step to ensuring taste tests are serving their intended purpose.

- Students can place stickers on a board indicating “I loved it”, “I liked it”, or “I tried it”. Alternatively, they can place their cups into ballot bins with the same options, or fill out a paper survey.
- Data should be collected and **shared with the district or school Food Service Director.**

# Key Resources and Relevant Articles

## For increasing school meal participation



### Farm to School Resources

Includes posters, activities, teaching lessons, and instructions to help bridge the gap between farm and school.

Source: CA Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom:



### Taste Test Guide Book

A longer guide by the Food Corps Organization with thorough details about hosting and organizing taste tests.

Source: Food Corps

### Hosting a Taste Test

Timeline and tips for hosting a taste test, emphasizing social emotional health and nutrition education.

Source: Action for Healthy Kids

### Taste Test Promotion Graphics

Stickers, posters, social media graphics, and event tips to promote the cafeteria taste testings.

Source: USDA

### Tasting and Outreach Guide

Sample outreach letters to administration, volunteers, and suggestions for different types of tastings.

Source: The Lunch Box

### <sup>1</sup> Lunches Consumed from School are Most Nutritious

Flyer promoting the cafeteria by highlighting the nutritional value of school lunches.

Source: USDA

### Article: Repeated taste exposure increases liking for vegetables by low-income elementary school children

Anantha Lakkakula, James Geaghan, Michael Zanovec, Sarah Pierce, Georgianna Tuuri. Repeated taste exposure increases liking for vegetables by low-income elementary school children. *Appetite*, Volume 55, Issue 2, 2010, Pages 226-231, ISSN 0195-6663, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2010.06.003>.

Source: Science Direct

### <sup>2</sup> Article: School-Based Strategies to Improve Acceptance of Healthier Foods and Dietary Patterns

Bahnfleth C, Cole NC, Kingshipp BJ, et al. School-Based Strategies to Improve Acceptance of Healthier Foods and Dietary Patterns: A Rapid Review [Internet]. Alexandria (VA): USDA Nutrition Evidence Systematic Review; 2022 Jun. doi: 10.52570/NESR.FNSRR.RR1

Source: USDA

### Article: Strategies to Improve School Meal Consumption: A Systematic Review

Cohen JFW, Hecht AA, Hager ER, Turner L, Burkholder K, Schwartz MB. Strategies to Improve School Meal Consumption: A Systematic Review. *Nutrients*. 2021 Oct 7;13(10):3520. doi: 10.3390/nu13103520. PMID: 34684521; PMCID: PMC8538164.

Source: Nutrients



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