

Eat the Rainbow Salad Bar Best Practices Guide

5 tips to help your students eat the rainbow!



Photo 1: "Vegetable Lot" is licensed under [CCO](#).

1. Plan a rainbow of color through your menu

Serve a variety ([all five](#)) of vegetable subgroups in an eye-appealing and tasty way

- ✓ Try colorful, fresh, new recipes
- ✓ Serve [in season](#) local foods – include [Montana Harvest of the Month](#) items
- ✓ Taste test these colorful recipes
- ✓ Market these items with student-developed signage or promotions, or with creative names.
- ✓ Include a flavor station as part of the salad bar

2. Keep food safety in mind

Make sure to follow food safety guidelines for preparation, service and storage of salad bar foods.

- ✓ Review the [Handling Fresh Produce on Salad Bars](#) resource
- ✓ Use a Standard Operating Procedure for salad bars
- ✓ Purchase local foods according to [procurement guidelines](#)

3. Use marketing and pizzazz to create a new or enhance your existing salad bar

- ✓ Use the *Eat the Rainbow Salad Bar Best Practices Checklist*.
- ✓ Present your salad bar with pizzazz using the many excellent salad bar resources from The Lunch Box- <http://www.thelunchbox.org/programs/salad-bars>
- ✓ Location – salad bar is located in a high traffic area, is easily accessible to students and staff, and is accessible from both sides
- ✓ Marketing – colorful service dishes, eye-appealing set up, clean, inviting, signage, draws the eye
 - Sort the fruits/vegetables by color
 - Use descriptive words
 - Promote the salad bar on your menu and on your school website - name your salad bar "Garden Bar" or "Harvest Bar" or "Fresh Choices Bar", "Eat the Rainbow Bar".
 - Great opportunity to showcase local foods
 - Serve Montana's seasonal foods
 - Participate in the Harvest of the Month Program

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4. Production and cost control
 - ✓ Utilize [USDA Foods](#) on the salad bar to stretch your budget.
 - ✓ Consider cost control methods:
 - Use of leftovers – repurpose into a scratch-made soup or a different salad, fruit smoothies, or a soup
 - Experiment with different service styles- slices vs. wedges, rings vs. strips, etc. to see what your students prefer
 - Consider portion size – adjust per food item (smaller for more costly foods, bigger for less expensive items), or pre-portion into ¼ or ½ cup servings, sliced/wedged fruit vs. whole fruit
 - Use of shallow pans and changing those pans between lunch periods
 - Offering less fruit/vegetable choices on the main line (less hot vegetable choice on main line)
 - Good place to offer legumes – to meet meal pattern
 - Correct use of Offer vs. Serve
 - Use a Salad Bar Production Record (see sample attachment) to streamline paperwork and monitor amount prepared, used and left over

5. Engage students. Check out the [Let's Eat: Engaging Students](#) in Smarter Lunchrooms guide. Students can be valuable partners by providing direct feedback on menu items, ideas to enhance the school meals program, including the salad bar, and developing marketing materials.
 - ✓ Create a School Lunch Advisory Council to include 2-5 students, the school food service director, and 1-2 adult mentors (teachers or other school staff).
 - ✓ Students read the daily menu highlighting new recipes/salad bar items over the daily announcements
 - ✓ Ask students to provide creative names and/or marketing materials for your new recipes.
 - ✓ With guidance from school food service director, let students pick 2 recipes from each veg. subgroup (Dark Green, Red Orange, Beans/Peas/Lentils). Compare both recipes and have them vote on the one they like best
 - ✓ Involve students in [conducting taste test](#) and share results on a poster in the lunchroom.
 - ✓ Offer new recipes with a taste test along the main service line by giving a small sample, offer on the salad bar with a creative name and signage, or host a taste test in the cafeteria or a classroom
 - ✓ Ask the school's favorite celebrities (sports teams and/or mascots, speech and drama, student clubs, favorite teachers or staff) to help with taste tests to generate excitement or to be "salad bar superheroes" for a salad bar promotion

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